

## No justice for C. Kalimantan orangutans



In their habitat: Orangutans relax in a tree in Central Kalimantan. JP/J. Adiguna  
The Kalimantan orangutan population is increasingly under threat, with the discovery of the remains of several of the great apes that had been killed in forests in the region in recent months.

According to the Centre for Orangutan Protection (COP), a non-governmental organization focusing on efforts to protect this endangered species, the remains of four orangutans were found recently in the concession area of PT. Sarana Titian Permata 2, one of the companies under Wilmar International group, in Central Kalimantan.

One of the dead orangutans was found hanging from a tree, apparently after having been shot, the centre reported on Sept. 6 along with other findings.

Until Thursday, however, no suspects had been named in relation to the deaths.

The Wilmar Group relocated at least 75 orangutans as it cleared forests in Central Kalimantan to make way for its oil palm plantations.

Meanwhile, a total of 983 orangutans were removed from the concession area of Makin Group, Goodhope Asia, IOI Group, BW Plantation, Union Sampoerna, Triputra Persada, Musim Mas and Best Agro International, the COP says.

This figure doesn't include the orangutans that died on their way to the Nyarumenteng Reintroduction Center, managed by the Borneo Orangutan Survival Foundation, near Palangkaraya.

Hardi Baktiantoro, the center's habitat campaigner, said that rather than this program being a success, the relocation of orangutans from their original habitats exemplified the government's failure to protect the species.

Hardi said that a big problem was that the public often regarded forests as nothing but natural resources, and disregarded such areas' roles in the broader ecosystem, including as habitats for rare fauna.

He explained that palm oil plantation workers saw orangutans as pests because they sometimes ate the palm oil seedlings.

However, orangutans only ventured into plantation areas because their natural habitat was being eaten up by oil palm companies, he said.

“The conflict between oil palm plantations and orangutans shows there is an overlapping in land use allocation. The government should investigate the issuance of permits at the local administration level. The government should address the orangutan deaths quickly,” he said.

Daniek Hendarto, the center’s orangutan campaigner, said the Forestry Ministry needed to work faster to investigate crime scenes and collect evidence when reports emerged of crimes against orangutans and other species.

The Central Kalimantan Natural Resources Conservancy Agency should learn from the East Kalimantan agency, which had demonstrated a professional approach to investigations of wildlife killing.

“Of the two orangutan killing cases handled in East Kalimantan, at least six people from two different companies were arrested. The case is now ready to go to court,” he said.

Kutai Kartanegara Police in East Kalimantan had worked with the National Central Bureau (NCB) of Interpol Indonesia on the murder of orangutans in the province.

Kutai Kartanegara Police public relations division chief Adj. Sr. Comr. I Nyoman Subrata said his office had worked Interpol to investigate the orangutan deaths because one of the suspects was of foreign nationality.

Nyoman added that his office had named five suspects in the case.

“We have now arrested four suspects, and have named the last one, who is the general manager of PT Khaleda Agroprima Malindo, as a suspect,” he said.

Subrata said the general manager had ignored the police’s first summons. The police will summon the suspect again on Thursday, he said.

“If he again fails to fulfill the police summons, we will [arrest] him.

Since the suspect is of Malaysian nationality and is thought to be in his country, we have requested assistance from Interpol.”

Between 2008 and 2010, police declared four people suspects in relation to the killing of orangutans in Puan Cepak village, Kutai Kartanegara. The four suspects were PT KAM senior estate manager Pua Chuan, plantation chief Widi and two others, IM and MJ. The four suspects were charged with violating article 21 of the law on natural resource conservation, which carries a maximum penalty of five years’ imprisonment and Rp 100 million in fines.

Police managed discovered documents showing fees paid for pest (orangutan) extermination, a rifle that was used to kill orangutans, 85 pieces of bones thought to have been from orangutans, monkeys and proboscis monkeys (bekantan) as well as seven photos of orangutans being killed.

The case of orangutan killing first made headlines after a resident of Muara Kaman district reported it to authorities and provided photos to a Samarinda-based newspaper in September.

According to COP data, more than 900 orangutans have been relocated to make way for logging activities, with most rescued from oil palm plantations, while between 1,800 and 9,000 have been killed.

In Sampit, Central Kalimantan, the East Kotawaringin Natural Resources Conservancy Agency (BKSDA) rescued four orangutan babies from the local community between October and November.

One of the young orangutans was one year old and was being looked after by a health worker working at an oil palm plantation.