



Borneo
Nature
Foundation

SEBANGAI

FIELD COURSE



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WHAT IS BORNEO NATURE FOUNDATION?

Borneo Nature Foundation (BNF) is a not-for-profit conservation and research organisation. We work to protect some of the most important areas of tropical rainforest in Borneo, safeguard the biodiversity that is found there and help to preserve the indigenous culture of the region.

BNF uses data collected by our highly-skilled field research team as the basis for protecting and managing forests. We have particular expertise in monitoring the distribution, population status, behaviour and ecology of Borneo's flagship ape species the Critically Endangered Bornean orangutan (*Pongo pygmaeus*) and Endangered white-bearded gibbon (*Hylobates albibarbis*). Our wide-ranging biodiversity and forest research is used to make the case for conservation and demonstrate the harmful impact of logging, land conversion and forest fires. We provide training and build capacity for local students, researchers and conservation-area managers, and work with a number of local partners to implement successful conservation projects.

Our longest running programme, the Orangutan Tropical Peatland Programme (OuTrop) identified the Sebangau Forest as the largest population of orangutans in lowland Borneo, bringing the region to the forefront of orangutan conservation efforts, and leading to the award of National Park status in 2004. BNF supports and empowers community-led initiatives, such as anti-logging patrols and fire-fighting teams, and as a direct result of these efforts illegal logging was stopped in 2005.

In the Sebangau National Park peat-swamp forest, in partnership with the University of Palangka Raya, BNF conducts long-term ecological research, environmental education, and the replanting and restoration of damaged areas. Our major research findings are based on data collected by volunteers, students, interns and researchers; the courses provide much-needed employment and financial benefits for the local community; and this builds the local and international profile of this important forest.





WHY STUDY WITH US?

research, biodiversity, conservation and education with prospective students during this field course. We have trained over 280 volunteers, 60 research students and 15 interns in a wide range of conservation biology topics since the organisation was established. We continue to focus on capacity building at both the international and local level, and hope to share our expertise to equip students with the tools they need to develop their own research and conservation initiatives through these field courses.

In the Sebangau National Park peat-swamp forest we monitor the behaviour, distribution, density and ecology of orangutans, gibbons and red langur monkeys; survey biodiversity; and monitor changes in forest structure, productivity, regeneration and disturbance in the different peat-swamp forest habitat-types. We are looking for intelligent, fit, enthusiastic individuals who are eager to learn new skills and knowledge in conservation biology.

With almost twenty years of research experience within the Sebangau forest, BNF is supported by both international and local scientific experts to share their knowledge about primates, mammals, botany, ecology,

Students will gain a wide variety of skills from navigation to field ecology and surveying techniques, to peat-swamp forest restoration approaches. We are looking for students who will thrive in a remote jungle setting in a small camp with simple facilities and are eager to learn within this environment. In return we offer a challenging, exciting and educational two week experience of field research and conservation in the Bornean rainforest. We offer a window into a career in conservation biology and, hopefully an unforgettable experience!



The Sebangau National Park peat-swamp forest is 580,000 hectares of peat-swamp habitat, the largest single area of lowland rainforest remaining in Kalimantan (Indonesian Borneo). We work together with the University of Palangka Raya and the Sebangau National Park authority to undertake our projects and advise on habitat and species management.

Peat-swamp forests are remarkably diverse and home to over 30% of the remaining population of wild orangutans in Borneo. Peat forms here under waterlogged conditions through the incomplete breakdown of organic matter – dead leaves, branches, fallen trees – which has built up over many thousands of years to create a thick peat layer up to 18m deep in places. Standing atop the peat is a rich tropical rainforest, with a huge diversity of plant life, including large timber trees, such as ramin and swamp meranti, a wide variety of pitcher plants and sustainable commercial species, such as rattan and rubber trees.

Nine species of primate, including the orangutan and white-bearded gibbon, are found in peat-swamp forests in Borneo. Other notable animal life includes the sun bear, bearded pig,

clouded leopard, sambar deer, civets, treeshrews, water monitors, pythons, over 200 species of bird including the rhinoceros hornbill, Wallace's hawk eagle and the endemic Bornean bristlehead; and a large and diverse invertebrate community.

Our Sebangau base camp is just inside the edge of the forest approximately one hour, by car, boat and, uniquely, small train, from the provincial capital of Palangka Raya. Facilities in camp are basic but comfortable, including accommodation in purpose-built dormitory huts, washing and toilet facilities, office and laboratory, kitchen, drinking water and cooks.

We have a network of trails and permanent study plots inside the forest. We also carry out research at satellite camps in the heart of the jungle, where we camp in basic huts for up to a week at a time.



A photograph of two men standing in a dense tropical forest. The man on the left is of Southeast Asian descent, wearing a green long-sleeved shirt and a backpack. The man on the right is a white man with a beard, wearing a camouflage jacket and holding binoculars. Both are looking upwards towards the forest canopy. The text 'WHAT WILL YOU EXPERIENCE?' is overlaid in large white letters.

WHAT WILL YOU EXPERIENCE?

FIELD COURSE PROGRAMME

We have two primary field studies. The first is to understand peat-swamp ecology, with a special focus on the density and distribution of orangutans and gibbons. The second study is to assess changes in habitat condition and determine the impact of our conservation activities on both habitat conditions and biodiversity. Each of these two studies is undertaken at our main site and at satellite camps. As we proceed, you'll learn about habitat and biodiversity monitoring techniques, as well as a range of forest skills, basic data analysis techniques and participate in discussions related to current issues in ecology and conservation led by our scientists.

Throughout the two-week intensive field course, students will learn the theory and methodology behind our long-term research and conservation projects and practice these methods in the field. These projects include:

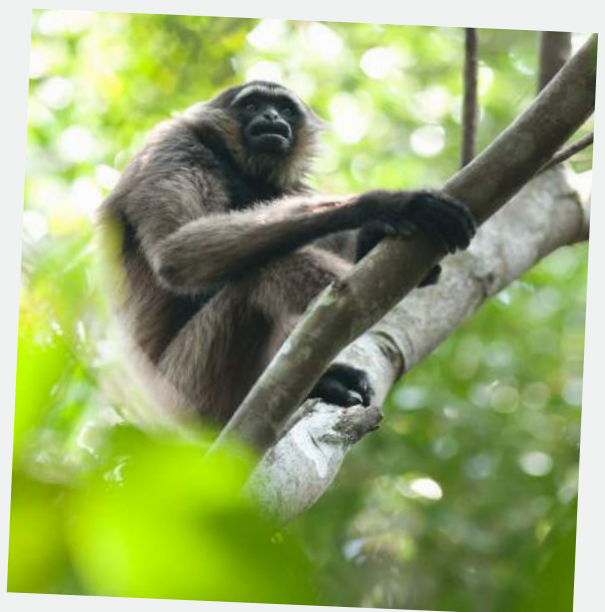
- Orangutan and gibbon population density surveys
- Research and technology-understanding the importance of GPS technology, camera traps and drones in research and conservation
- Surveying indicator species for ecological disturbance - butterflies and dragonflies/damselflies
- Habitat structure and forestry research- establishing and measuring tree plots and carrying



out phenology surveys

- Peat-swamp ecology and importance- incorporating ground truthing, litterfall collection and water level monitoring
- Threats and conservation solutions for peat-swamp forest- assisting with the habitat restoration and reforestation project

Within our biodiversity monitoring research, we also have three long-term primate behaviour projects: orangutan; white-bearded gibbon; and red langur. Students will hopefully have the opportunity to join our field staff during a primate follow and learn how behavioural data is recorded.





ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE

Indonesia is situated on the equator, and therefore has a tropical climate consisting of a wet and dry season. In Borneo, the wet season is usually October to April, and the dry season May to September. The dry season is usually (but not exclusively) a little hotter than the wet season, and obviously not as wet. Both the wet season and the dry season can last longer than expected. Sudden downpours and tropical storms are to be expected.

As Sebangau National Park is a peat-swamp forest, it is very different to a dryland rainforest. It can be extremely wet, and during the wet season it is flooded – the standing water can be waist deep in many places.

Hummocks, tree roots and hidden holes mean that walking can be extremely hard work. Falling over is something of a rite of passage. On top of this the humidity and temperatures are very high. Typical daytime shade temperatures are 32°C at base camp or in the towns and 27°C in the jungle. In the late evenings the temperature can drop in the forest (by up to 7°C), so it can feel quite cool compared to town.

To move around the forest some sections have single plank boardwalks, which may be slippery or broken in some places. The rest of the time is spent walking through the forest itself, which can be very muddy or wet. This makes it a rewarding, yet challenging environment. It is essential that you are physically and mentally fit and able to cope in such terrain.

Hazards and risks in the forest range from mosquitoes, tree stilt roots through to poisonous snakes, spiders and scorpions. Before you start assisting with the work, you will have an induction to the forest and training.

All of our inductions will be carried out in English so you must have a good working knowledge of the English language for health and safety purposes.





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