

Alba the albino orangutan returned to jungle in Indonesia

December 21 2018, by Andi Jatmiko



In this Wednesday, Dec. 19, 2018, photo, Alba, an albino orangutan, is released by a conservationist of the Borneo Orangutan Survival Foundation inside Bukit Baka Bukit Raya National Park in Central Kalimantan, Indonesia. The world's only known albino orangutan climbed trees, foraged for food and began building a nest after being released into a remote Borneo jungle more than a year after conservation officials found her starving and dehydrated in an Indonesian village. (AP Photo/Andi Jatmiko)

The world's only known albino orangutan climbed trees, foraged for food and began building a nest after being released into a remote Borneo jungle more than a year after conservation officials found her starving and dehydrated in an Indonesian village.

The Borneo Orangutan Survival foundation says the great ape, called Alba after thousands worldwide responded to an appeal for a name, has tripled in weight since being rescued in April last year. Her name means "white" in Latin and "dawn" in Spanish.

Alba and another rehabilitated orangutan, Kika, were released inside Bukit Baka Bukit Raya National Park on Wednesday after a more than 24-hour journey from their [rehabilitation center](#) by vehicle, boat and hiking.

The foundation originally planned to create a 5-hectare (12-acre) "forest island" for Alba rather than a release into truly [natural habitat](#) because of [health issues](#) related to her albinism including poor sight and hearing and the possibility of skin cancer.

But the government's Natural Resources Conservation Agency and other agencies decided it was appropriate to release Alba into the wild because of her strong physical condition and intrinsically wild behavior.

She will be electronically tracked and regularly monitored by a medical team.

"Alba has no inferiority complex as we imagined before. She is very confident compared to other orangutans," said veterinarian Agus Fathoni.



In this Wednesday, Dec. 19, 2018, photo. Alba, an albino orangutan, sits inside a cage before being released at Bukit Baka Bukit Raya National Park in Central Kalimantan, Indonesia. The world's only known albino orangutan climbed trees, foraged for food and began building a nest after being released into a remote Borneo jungle more than a year after conservation officials found her starving and dehydrated in an Indonesian village. (AP Photo/Andi Jatmiko)

"I think the real threat actually comes from humans. What we're worried about is poaching where this very special condition makes her a target," he told The Associated Press.

Patrols of Alba's new home by [national park](#) and conservation agency staff will aim to deter poachers, though they admit the number of personnel is limited.

"We don't have enough to cover all the area of the national park but we're confident of covering all the patrol lines that we have set," said national park official Wirasadi Nursubhi

Orangutans, reddish-brown primates known for their gentle temperament and intelligence, are critically endangered and only found in the wild on the Indonesian island of Sumatra and on Borneo, which is divided among Indonesia, Malaysia and Brunei.



In this Wednesday, Dec. 19, 2018, photo. Alba, an albino orangutan, sits inside a cage before being released at Bukit Baka Bukit Raya National Park in Central Kalimantan, Indonesia. The world's only known albino orangutan climbed trees, foraged for food and began building a nest after being released into a remote Borneo jungle more than a year after conservation officials found her starving and dehydrated in an Indonesian village. (AP Photo/Andi Jatmiko)

The International Union for Conservation of Nature, which declared Borneo's orangutans critically endangered in 2016, says their numbers have dropped by nearly two-thirds since the early 1970s as plantation agriculture destroyed and fragmented their forest habitat.

The Sumatran orangutan is a separate species and has been critically endangered since 2008.

Alba, approximately five years old, was given final medical tests and anesthetized for the journey to Bukit Baka Bukit Raya.

Workers shouted "Alba's going home" as her cage was lifted onto a truck at the Nyaru Menteng Rehabilitation Center in Central Kalimantan province on Borneo.

"It's true this is a big gamble but we hope that with our collaboration we will win the big bet we have made today" said the [orangutan](#) foundation's chief executive Jamartin Sihite after releasing Alba from her cage.



In this Wednesday, Dec. 19, 2018, photo. Alba, an albino orangutan, sits inside a cage before being released at Bukit Baka Bukit Raya National Park in Central Kalimantan, Indonesia. The world's only known albino orangutan climbed trees, foraged for food and began building a nest after being released into a remote Borneo jungle more than a year after conservation officials found her starving and dehydrated in an Indonesian village. (AP Photo/Andi Jatmiko)

© 2018 The Associated Press. All rights reserved.

Citation: Alba the albino orangutan returned to jungle in Indonesia (2018, December 21) retrieved 26 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2018-12-alba-albino-orangutan-jungle-indonesia.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private

study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.