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LAWE CIMANOK AND ORANGUTAN

By: Fakhurradhi

“His eyes reflected deep pain. An examination then revealed five bullets lodging in his body: three in his cheek pad and forehead, one in his back, and one in his right thigh.”

Those who live in Kluet Valley, South Aceh, will laugh whenever they hear “Lawe Cimanok”. In Kluet Language, “Lawe” means water; “Ci” means feces, and “Manok” is chicken. Put them together, they mean chicken poop water. Lawe Cimanok is a village whose water contains chicken’s poop. The meaning should not to be taken literally; it actually tries to portray the intact environment of the village in the past.

According to the elders, there were many deep ponds with crystal clear water located in Alur Tanebok River. Rocks and algae deep in the bottom of the river were clearly visible from above. In the surface, slimy algae sticking to rocks imitated chicken poop, thus the name of **Lawe Cimanok**. Now, Lawe Cimanok refers to the village lying along Alur Tanebok River.

Lawe Cimanok and Orangutan

In August 29 2016, LESTARI Team, together with locals from Gampong Lawe Cimanok and staffs of Subussalam’s Forest Management Unit, found an ill adult male orangutan in a farming area. In the way back, around 5.50pm, the team were surprised to see fallen banana trees. Nispul Iman, the headman of the village, also saw a huge, yellow-skinned animal who was sitting looking tired and sluggish.



Photo:
An adult male Orangutan discovered in a banana plantation, 500 meter from the border of forest area.

I was devastated when I first saw the orangutan who was just 2.5 meter away. With a pale face and a tired, right eye, the orangutan tried to silently communicate its excruciating pain expecting for pity. At the time, its left eye no longer blinked, indicating blindness. It mumbled occasionally as if trying to say, **“Please, help and save me.”**

The team promptly called the authorities to make an immediate evacuation. The information was quickly responded by LESTARI South Aceh Coordinator, Human Orangutan Conflict Rescue Unit (HOCRU) and Yayasan Orangutan Sumatera Lestari – Orangutan Information Centre (YOSL-OIC).

The orangutan was guarded until midnight to prevent him from escaping and protect him from hunters. The next morning, HOCRU team arrived and evacuated the Orangutan with the help of the locals. Around 11.30am, the orangutan left for an orangutan quarantine facility in Sembahe, South Sumatra, to receive the needed medical assistance. An initial examination by HOCRU team revealed that there were five air soft gun bullets lodging in his body: three in his cheek pad and forehead, one in his back, and one in his right thigh. His left eye had been totally blind and his right eye’s vision had dimmed. He was possibly 25 - 30 years old and weighed 55-60 kilogram.

An initial diagnosis explained that his blindness and reduced vision might be due to an infection from bullets lodging in his face. Reduced vision limited his ability to obtain food, move and do his daily routines. Apparently, this had been going on for some time that his health deteriorated.

Lawe Cimanok’s Son

News about the incident spread quickly. There are various opinions about the incident. Many who were involved in the evacuation suggested that the orangutan was given a name. Eventually, the evacua-

tion team and the village authorities agreed to name him **PUTLACI** or **Putra Lawe Cimanok** which means Lawe Cimanok’s son.

Behind the naming, there is something expected by the people. The naming represents the recognition that orangutans, just like humans, have the right to live and stay in Gampong Lawe Cimanok forest. orangutans therefore deserve protection and security. A rumor suggests that **PUTLACI** might be shot by a local resident during durian season from July to August. He ate durians, and thus seen as a threat. He was shot to force him leave the area.

Keuchik Lawe Cimanok, M. Haria, is grateful to have

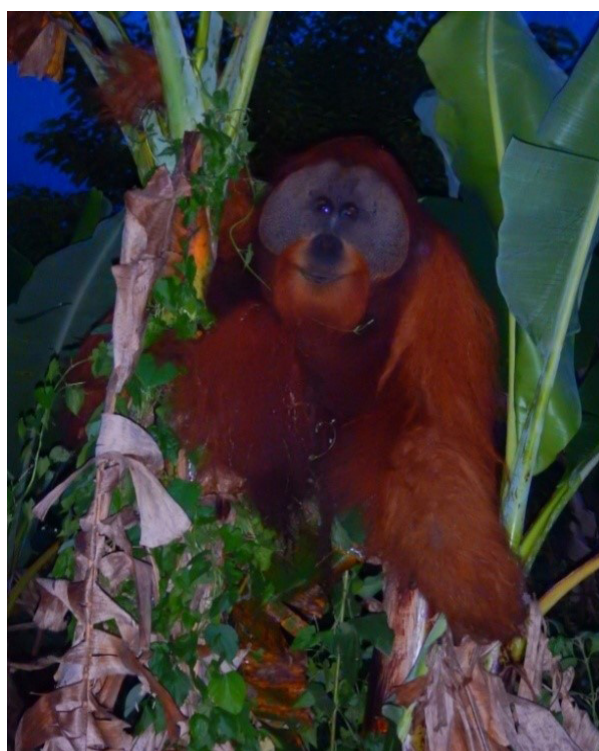


Photo:
An adult male Orangutan found in a banana plantation during night.

LESTARI team helped the evacuation process. But he is also saddened and angered that the orangutan was shot by a resident of Lawe Cimanok. He hopes similar incident(s) will not reoccur.

Orangutan Protection

Human-orangutan conflict is usual in other regions, especially in plantations near to forest. Most of the local people are aware that orangutan is an endangered and protected species. Nevertheless, they are often injured or even killed because they are considered pests to their plantations.

In addition, orangutans have also been hunted and traded for a long time. Hunters know that orangutans are enemy to farmers. So when farmers catch them, they sell them to traders or collectors with an expensive price. Some farmers are no longer merely trying to save their plants, but instead see orangutans as commodity to gain wealth.

As one of the protection measures, LESTARI recommends YOSL-OIC to assist Lawe Cimanok Village to develop a conservation model that can effectively prevent human-orangutan conflict. This initiative can be synergised with the prohibition of air soft gun campaign. The campaign is equally important to protect orangutans from being shot and injured. Repelling orangutans can be carried out in traditional ways that are harmless to them.

LESTARI also recommends the residents of Lawe Cimanok to develop an agroforestry farming model

that is friendly to orangutans. Another method can also prevent orangutans from entering plantation or settlement areas. The measure is align with zoning initiative that is currently developed by LESTARI in Lawe Cimanok. The tribal government should also be pushed to pass customary laws (qanun gampong) reinforcing the protection of Orangtuan. The appointment of Lawe Cimanok as a model of conservation village is urgent. Geographically, the area borders an important habitat of Sumatran Orangutan (*Pongo abelii*), Kluet Habitat Block located in Gunung Leuser National Park.

Orangutan is an endangered species native to Indonesia. IUCN categorises orangutan as a critically endangered species in Appendix I CITES. Measures to protect orangutan has begun since the colonisation by the Dutch. Back then, orangutan protection was regulated under Wildlife Protection Law Number 233 Year 1931. In the entire world, orangutan can only be found in Aceh, South Sumatra, and Kalimantan. According to taxonomy, Sumatran and Kalimantan Orangutans are different. Sumatran orangutans are *Pongo abelii* and the Kalimantan counterparts are *Pongo pygmaeus*.

Orangutan symbolises the invaluable biodiversity. In the wild, orangutans play a great role to help spread seeds especially fruits. A research shows that seeds of fruits eaten by orangutans grow faster in comparison to those who are not eaten by them. Orangutans also control pests because they eat insects and caterpillars on trees. Orangutan is also said to be the closest human relatives.

Photo:
The evacuation process of an adult male Orangutan by HOCRU, LESTARI, and locals in Lawe Cimanok, East Kluet, August 30, 2016.



In Aceh, orangutan is called mawas. It is a mammal with the third highest IQ after Gorilla and chimpanzees. Perhaps, because of their physical resemblance with humans, our ancestors call them “orangutan” which literally means people who live in forests. Protecting orangutans equals to keeping the balance of the nature.