



# THE TRUST TIMES

**FEBRUARY 2024**  
*Find Courage in Kindness*

## ***When Love is a Universal Language***

Everyone is so nice and the people in Bukit Lawang are so open and friendly. Even without being able to speak their language I already feel at home. - Page 1

## ***When Everywhere is a School, and Everyone is a Teacher***

This was a memorable moment as it felt like we were engaging in a real student teacher relationship, as opposed to my being the foreigner sitting in watching a class, void of real human interaction. - Page 4





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# When Love is a Universal Language

By: *Miranda Van Hanaghem*

First of all, I want to thank the people at the Trust for their warm welcome. Everyone is so nice and the people in Bukit Lawang are so open and friendly. Even without being able to speak their language I already feel at home.

I initially applied for the Sustainable Business Program, however I've also gotten involved in the other programs offered by the Trust. For me, as new volunteer it has been so great to experience and learn about their involvement with the local community and all the children. The first 2 weeks I was invited to participate in almost every program offered by the Trust, taking place in the different towns around Bukit Lawang (Porli, Kendit, Landbau) teaching the Youth Ranger and English lessons. From now on I will be more involved in the lessons at the Trust with the youngest children (5-6 years old).

I must say that I am very impressed by the way the teachers (Agnes, Yessie, Arya and Olya) teach the children and how they interact with them. In every way possible they also try to involve us "Bule" (an Indonesian word for foreigners), as we are called by the locals, in this program. Giving us the opportunity to get to know all this lovely kids without being able to speak any Bahasa.

Now that I have been at the BLT for almost 3 weeks I would like to be (and will be) more involved with the youngest children in the Trust. Although every child is as precious to me, my heart always goes out to those few children who need just a little more attention. Either because of their minor "disabilities" or because they have the skills/are a little more ahead than others. The only problem I am facing right now is the language.

Especially being a non-native English speaker, learning another language other than Dutch (and some French and German) it is really hard and frustrating not to be able to communicate as I would like to.

Every day I feel exactly like those young Indonesian kids with their beautiful smile and dark eyes looking at us in total despair because they have no idea what we want to tell and teach them.

Even though there is a language barrier at the moment I truly hope to give them all I can so they will be able to grow up to precious adults and maybe one day in the future they will remember us "Bule" from the BLT.



Everyone is so nice  
and the people in Bukit Lawang  
are so open and friendly.  
Even without being able  
to speak their language  
I already feel at home.

~Miranda~



# Wildlife of Bukit Lawang

By: David Bromley

I have been a fan of wildlife since my university days and I now work for the RSPB, a UK wildlife charity that protects habitats for birds. When I got a place on the BLT volunteer team I was very excited. Not only is it my first time in Asia and my first volunteer teaching trip, but there would be lots of new wildlife to discover!

Just from the roof of the Trust I have already spotted some exotic birds with my binoculars, including: Yellow Vented Bulbul, Pacific Swallow, Brown-throated Sunbird and Ornate Sunbird.

The rural areas around the Trust are also a good place to spot birds. In a nearby rice paddy field I spotted a Sooty-headed Bulbul, Long-tailed Shrike, Scaly-breasted Munia, Intermediate Egret and Collared Kingfisher.

During my second week we were invited on a short jungle trek to see a special flower, the Amorphophallus, which only blooms for three days every eight years. It was very special and I feel very lucky to have seen one. We saw lots of wildlife on our two day jungle trek, including: Thomas's Leaf Monkey, Pig-tailed Macaque, Lar Gibbon and a very close encounter with an Orangutan.

I am very happy with all the wonderful wildlife I have already seen, but by the end of my time here I hope to see some of the large birds of prey that soar over the mountains and one of the Hornbills that live in the jungle.



Ornate Sunbird (*Cinnyris ornatus*)



Collared Kingfisher (*Todiramphus chloris*)



Thomas Leaf Monkey (*Presbytis thomasi*)




Corpse Flower (*Amorphophallus titanum*)



# The Jungle Adventure!

By: Zoe Haydon

*Jungle trek, jungle trek, in Bukit Lawang, see the monkeys, see the birds, see Orangutan, hey!*   
(to the tune of jingle bells)

Whether or not you choose to venture out on a jungle trek during your time in Bukit Lawang, you'll have a hard time escaping this little jungle-jingle. It is known and sang by almost everyone here- and for good reason. The wildlife here is incredible. Sumatra is the only remaining place on earth where 5 large animals live together. Rhinos, tigers, bears, elephants and (of course) orangutans. I've been lucky enough to have seen 6 orangutans in their natural habitat so far. With one incredibly close encounter with a mother and baby! Pro tip- hide your bananas! Thus far, I have already been on 3 separate jungle treks one here in Bukit Lawang to see orangutans and two in Batu Katak, to see the two species of largest flowers in the world

I had never anticipated that I would be signing myself up willingly to trek through the jungle in this heat- but here I am desperate for more. The two day trek with fellow volunteers is (although physically demanding) certainly not limited to fitness-freaks. As we trekked we passed groups of people of varying ages and physical abilities, (one couple must have been in their late 70s!) The guides are incredibly knowledgeable and ready to assist as you when the terrain gets tough! They do all they can to ensure you have an amazing time, from sharing fascinating facts about the beautiful surrounding nature and animals, preparing 5/6 meals, playing games with us, and helping to steer the rafts at the end of day two. The beauty of the rainforest is breathtaking.

It is difficult to keep trekking when everything catches your eye, all you can do is observe in awe. As the sunlight sparkles through leaves illuminating the fauna all around you. The overnight trek is the perfect outward bound adventure, incredible Mountain views, delicious food, delightful company topped off with the thrill of river rafting through Bukit Lawang.

I want to full heartedly thank BLT for these once in a lifetime experiences. For pushing me out of my comfort zone and showing me what I can accomplish.

Two days in the jungle? Yes, please. And I will do it all again.



The wildlife here is incredible. Sumatra is the only remaining place on earth where 5 large animals live together. Rhinos, Tigers, Bears, Elephants and (of course) Orangutans.

~Zoe~



## *When Everywhere is a School, and Everyone is a Teacher*

*By: Susannah Charlotte Barrie*

So far in Indonesia I have had many many interesting experiences but one that I particularly enjoyed was the cultural diversity class. I really enjoyed talking about different local and national superstitions/traditions and their origins. There are some things that you might look at initially and view as strange (especially as a bule), but after talking them through they actually make a lot of sense.

I feel like I got to clarify certain cultural things that I hadn't properly understood beforehand and hadn't wanted to ask about in an environment that I felt comfortable in. Something that struck me in the trust was one specific class where all the children lined up after class to give me a 'handshake', bringing my hand to their head. I had not understood the reasoning behind this at the time and it was interesting to find out that this is a common thing for students to do towards their teacher.



This was a memorable moment as it felt like we were engaging in a real student teacher relationship, as opposed to my being the foreigner sitting in watching a class, void of real human interaction. Going forward I am excited to explore new traditions, thereby hopefully reaching a better understanding of this beautiful country and its rich culture and heritage.



## *A Day in The Porcupine River*

*By: Hasan Bowman*



In December, we went to Landak River to enjoy a picnic lunch ('Landak' is a porcupine in Bahasa Indonesia). It was really fun floating down the river. After a while Matt found a big bamboo stick and that was also entertaining to float down with. "Fetch, human" was another exciting game. Someone would throw a stick off a point and another person had to jump in the water, swim around the point, and speed down the river to fetch the stick with their mouth.

Another activity we did was propping the bamboo stick upright and trying to throw rocks into the opening. This was not easy, seeing as the bamboo stick was about two and a half meters tall and only five centimeters wide. But eventually Jesse got a pebble in. Skipping rocks also kept us busy. It was fun to skip them across the river and have another person on the other side skip them back to you.

We also enjoyed making fires. First we started one with hardwood chips. Then Olya started one with bamboo skin shavings. On both fires, we cooked bananas. We discovered that peeled bananas cooked in banana leaves had a more smokey flavor than bananas cooked in the peel.

As we walked home, we laughed about good times we'd had and were more connected as a BLT team.



## *Welcome Onboard!*

### **Our New Programme Coordinator!**



**Hi, I am Arya!** I was raised in Medan, where a lot of my life experiences began. I studied communications science before taking on the positions of ESL teacher and liaison officer. During my university life, I explored many facets of my life, it is a patchwork of voluntary activity, like a colorful picture, various colors combined into a beautiful painting. Throughout my path has been my exploration of new things.

For me, education acts as a guide in the dark jungle, illuminating every step of life's path. I believe when children can understand and apply classroom learning to their daily lives, this is a truly extraordinary achievement.

I see myself as someone who helps plant knowledge, like a gardener. I want to plant more seeds and hope to keep telling stories that inspire people. I feel like it is more than work, it is life.



*be free where you are*

**BUKIT LAWANG TRUST**





# Welcome Onboard!

## Our Orangutan Cycle 2024 Volunteers!



**Susie**

I am an English student who had just completed high school and wanted to come here for my gap year. I love teaching kids and wanted to experience new places and meet new people. One thing that was a bit of a culture shock for me was just how many people constantly want to talk to you- people act like you're a celebrity and it can be a bit overwhelming. Going forward I want to go to uni and hopefully carry on volunteering with the local community while I'm there.

Volunteering here has been amazing because I've had the chance to really interact with the local kids and see the country from a new perspective. You get to be there on your own and do exciting new things with the security of a supportive community and others who really understand what you're going through.



**David**

I am from the Yorkshire coast in England. I work for the RSPB which is a conservation charity that specialises in protecting habitat for birds.

This is my first volunteer trip and the BLT was the tropical adventure I was looking for. It is also my first time in Asia so there were a lot of culture shocks for me, though my most memorable thing was meeting an Orangutan in the jungle! I have really enjoyed the trip so far especially meeting new people and trying new things.

I will definitely plan more volunteer trips in the future.



**Zoe**

I am from Jersey in the Channel Islands. Previously I was in education and then working in a cafe. I knew I wanted to see and experience different cultures and gain new perspectives, while actively making a difference in the world. For these reasons

I knew volunteering would be for me. I came out here aged 18 and have spent my birthday at the trust. I was at first apprehensive to celebrate my birthday so far away from home, but spending it with the staff and other volunteers was an experience I will never forget. These guys feel like my second family.

The most memorable moment for me (aside three separate jungle treks) was when a young boy scanned the shelves in the library to select a book that I had brought to donate. Needless to say that was emotional. While the volunteering work I have done so far has been for the community, subconsciously I have grown immensely as a person.



# Welcome Onboard!

## Our Orangutan Cycle 2024 Volunteers!



**Miranda**

I am from the Netherlands and currently working (remote) as an independent Travel agent. Before I have been working for 25 years as a financial director of my own Taxi-and Touringcar company. When my children were younger, I am a mother of 3, I volunteered at their schools. In my spare time I was a trainer at our local gymnastics club for more than 30 years and specialized in children with special needs. After suffering from illness and a severe burn-out a few years ago I made the decision to drastically change my life and take a leave of 6 months to explore the world, meet new people, countries and cultures. Initially, I signed up for the Sustainable Business Program as I wanted to use my experience an entrepreneur to support the local community. But since the Trust offers several programs I am also involved in the teaching part which I like as well. I hope to be able to give them something they may need for their own future. I love to work with the children in small groups or one-on-one. It makes my day if I see all those smiling kids being grateful for all they have and the experience and knowledge they gain here at the Trust.



**Pearl**

I am from jersey Channel Islands. Before coming to BLT, I worked on a small family ran farm in a farm shop, selling fresh fruit and vegetables.

I wanted to have a brand new experience to push myself out my comfort zone whilst helping and supporting a locale community. Helping to make an impact on other people's lives and the environment gives me a sense of purpose. Working with like minded people who share the same passions and desires to help communities and nature is rewarding

The most memorable thing for me whilst being in Indonesia and working for the trust is meeting all the amazing people who make this happen. Working with like minded people to expand what is already happening here is amazing. Being in Indonesia is a completely new experience for me and being so involved in the culture here is eye opening. So far this experience has taught me many lessons and I hope for this to carry on.



## why you should join with us..

"Volunteering at BLT has nurtured my passion to help children learn about nature and the importance of it. I will continue to implement the lessons I have learn whilst volunteering here at BLT to help expand my career once I am home. So far this experience has been incredible I couldn't recommend it enough."

- Pearl

"I know that when I leave the BLT and this village where everyone is so nice and friendly I will bring with me a lot of new friends in my heart, knowledge and understanding for the local culture and habits but most of all a lot of beautiful memories. As it's important to collect memories and not things!"

- Miranda

"I have grown immensely as a person. BLT has held my hand as I've crossed the bridge from girlhood to becoming a young woman.

I could not recommend this experience enough. Bukit Lawang is like no other place, you must come and see it to believe it."

- Zoe

*Because we believe that  
what comes from the mind will change the mind,  
what comes from the heart will touch the heart,  
and what comes from life will change the other life*

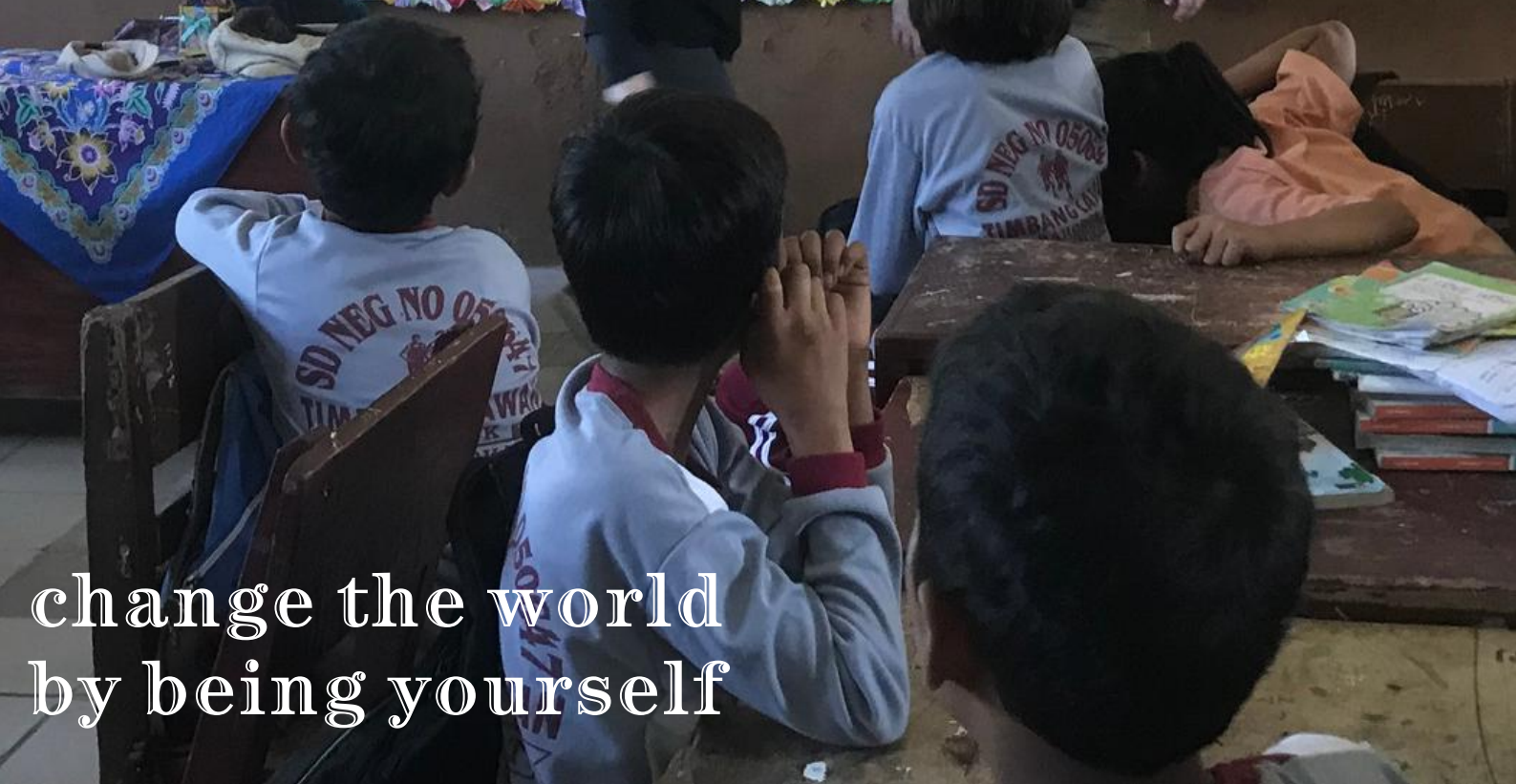


*make a change with us!*





DIRUMAH  
REPUBLIC  
INDONESIA



change the world  
by being yourself