

Return to Tembak and Action Agents arrive!

April 28th – May 6th

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This report, written on Sunday 6th in Tembak, is a brief summary of activities over the past week back in Tembak and the arrival of the “Action Agents”. This is a collective name given to the new group of people who arrived this week to join us in Borneo. All of them have made a major contribution and/or personal effort to get here. Five of them – Chris, Amy, Astrid, Molly and Thomas – earned \$5000 and collected 500 supporters each as part of a challenge to join us here. Jodi also achieved this goal and she will arrive tomorrow. Kristi is Thomas’ teacher/guardian and is experienced in safety and first aid. Robert is one of the main film investors and Sam Lara worked to pay her own way to join us, and brought a second camera and is filming activities from within the group.

After spending two days last week on travel and logistics preparation for the Action Agents, we finally set out to return to the village of Tembak with the enclosure that will be the temporary home for Jojo and Juvi and other orangutans brought to Tembak. Ben and Perry had arranged for the enclosure to be cut in half in order to fit on the trucks. They also bought a water tank and thatching for the roof and other materials. Meanwhile in Tembak, Liza was overseeing the building of a hut to house the enclosure and a keeper’s hut, (which she proudly showed the boys on their return). We set off for Tembak finally on Sunday 29th, leaving Kodi, Mark and Fabrice to welcome the Action Agents due to arrive Monday evening.

On the way to Tembak, we stopped in a palm oil plantation to speak to a worker about his choices and working conditions. We also came across a Malaysian palm oil manager and asked him about his motivations and priorities – very interesting. We had to stop at a remote roadside café to download one of the video cards. To get to Tembak by the short route, you have to cross a bridge that is under construction. Until now, we’d been taking our car around the long way, and getting severely bogged. This time, the drivers dropped us at one end of the bridge and the EWs had to carry the cage and water tank across the bridge and load to the second vehicles and then drive approx. 5 km into Tembak across very muddy and chopped up roads, and very steep hills. We made it safely to town and were warmly welcomed by the four EWs still here – Liza, Paul, Tom and Shadrack.

The Eco-Warriors are guests of Pak Tomo who also owns the waru or shop that we frequent for cold drinks, snacks and Bintang. The crew stay in the Blue house owned by Pak Neat and his family, who also provide the food and eating area for the group on their back deck which juts out over the fish farm dam. On Monday, Liza showed us the new buildings for the rehabilitation centre and the reforestation team showed us their work on the nursery. On Tuesday, the group went to the next village to assist them in the river on maintenance work on their hydro-electric system.

Wednesday was the big day – the arrival of the Action Agents. Anticipation had been building for days, and there was washing and preening, and a lovely sense of excitement. Half the group moved out to another house to create room for the new visitors. At midday, the 7 newcomers crossed the bridge into Tembak and were given a traditional welcome by the village. Their delight and joy at being here and meeting the EWs was very infectious, and their first couple of days here were some of the happiest we have experienced. They immediately headed to the river for a ‘mandi’ or swim, and friendships quickly began to form.

The next morning they went straight to work. The first day was spent working in the nursery and in the river collecting sand for replanting. In the afternoon the rain came and they bolted for

shelter. The next few days were full of various activities. They all hauled the two halves of the cage up the hill to the rehab buildings, watched Ali testing the plane and helicopter, helped the women collect vegetables for dinner, went snail hunting and assisted a local in the care of a small monkey and baby owl. Mandi (swimming) was an integral part of every day, and in the evenings they socialised at Pak Tomo's waru or hung out in their very cramped sleeping quarters.

Yesterday we enjoyed a glorious day taking a long boat up the river to another Dayak village where we had lunch and helped the village with cleaning up and collecting sand from the river for building. We swam and toured the village, and met an old woman who the village claimed is 120 years old. The trip back by river boat was completely wonderful, and included some walking while the boats rode the rapids.

It's Sunday in Tembak and all is well in our world. Tomorrow is another day.

Cathy Henkel

