



Charlie is graduating!

Your August 2022 foster update

Fierce and determined... and soon ready to go home! It only seems like yesterday Charlie arrived at the Orangutan Care Centre and Quarantine (OCCQ). Thanks to your continued support we have watched Charlie flourish from small beginnings to grow into a very impressive example of an orangutan.

Over the years he has progressed from infancy to adolescence under the watchful eyes of his caregivers. Charlie has enjoyed releases to forest school where he has acquired essential life skills. Orangutans have a long childhood and usually learn everything from their mother. Here at OFI, orangutans learn to rely on themselves, their peers and caregivers, to gain the knowledge they need to survive in the wild upon their ultimate return to the great forest. Charlie has studied nest making, learned how to interact with his peers and now knows how to forage for food in the Learning Forest.



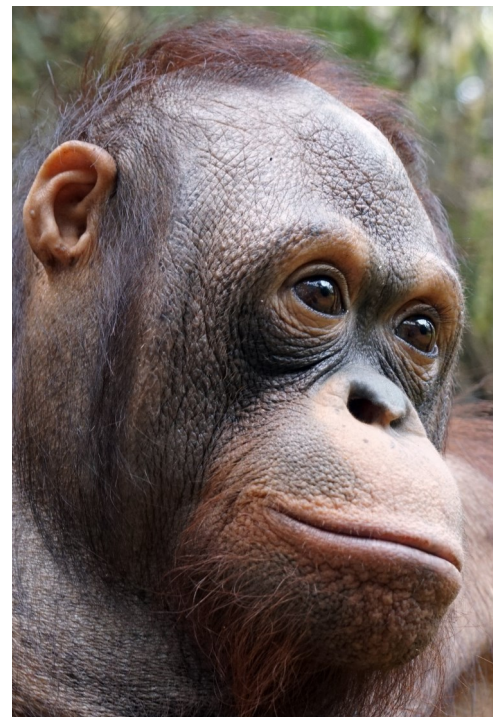


According to Dr. Biruté Galdikas who has studied wild orangutans for over 50 years, orangutans eat over 400 different foods, mostly fruit, but also insects and plant matter such as bark and young leaves. Charlie has been an excellent pupil learning about the flora and fauna of the forest. It is not for nothing that orangutans are known as the Gardeners of the Forest.

Charlie has become more independent with each passing day as he has grown. We can confidently say that Charlie possesses all the necessary "technical" skills he needs to navigate the wild and has, in effect, "graduated" from forest school with flying colours.

Charlie is now a formidable sight. Males can be up to twice the size of female orangutans. Over the last year Charlie has rapidly grown in size. He also shows signs of developing the male orangutan's signature cheekpads or flanges. This is a sign of dominance and in the wild some males achieve the status of "king". Flanged males are more desirable to females and consequently, seem to father more offspring. Charlie's cheekpads along with his throat pouch will make him stand out among the crowd. His throat pouch helps to amplify vocalisations such as the long call which flanged adult orangutan males make to attract a mate and intimidate rivals.

But it is also his personality that makes Charlie stand out. He is fierce and determined! When we first moved him from the infant nursery to the juvenile facility he tried to get back on his own. We soon decided that we would honour his obvious wish and take him back to the nursery. When he discovered that a caregiver had treats in his/her pocket, there was no stopping him, even as an infant, from getting those treats from that pocket, even as he battled the caregiver's efforts to deny him!



As such it is no longer safe for Charlie to be released to the Learning Forest, both for himself and his human caregivers. Male orangutans are almost 8 to 10 times stronger than humans and become much less tolerant of other males, even human, as they grow older. Consequently, we can no longer provide regular updates, as Charlie has progressed to his next stage of rehabilitation, while he awaits the next chapter in his life. In short, it is time for him to leave our foster program.

Charlie will still receive the best care that we can provide. This includes daily branches for him to play with and use to practice nest making. His sleeping enclosure is kitted out with high platform and big barrels for him to climb and rest upon. He also enjoys enrichment, ranging from parcels that he must open and sort through for treats, to flavoured fruit ices on particularly hot days, as well as surprise food and other enrichment.

The next time that Charlie is released might be the day that we take him to a Haha sanctuary in the forest for a "soft release" or he goes back to the wild immediately for a "hard release". Given his determined and strong-willed nature, we suspect that Charlie will be able to successfully go back to the wild immediately once the time comes! Whichever it will first be, we look forward to informing you of this day which would not have been possible without your continued support and donations.



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