



MEDIA RELEASE

Monday, 14th June 2021

2021 QUEEN'S BIRTHDAY HONOURS LIST HAS ANNOUNCED ORDER OF AUSTRALIA RECIPIENT FOR SERVICES TO CONSERVATION AND THE ENVIRONMENT IS KOBE STEELE, FOUNDER AND PRESIDENT OF ORANGUTAN FOUNDATION INTERNATIONAL AUSTRALIA.

Kobe Steele, Gold Coast conservationist and orangutan advocate, has been awarded a Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) for services to conservation and the environment. The award was announced in the Queen's Birthday 2021 Honours List on 14th June 2021.

The Order of Australia has been given to Kobe Steele in recognition of her work as Founder and President of Orangutan Foundation International Australia (OFI Australia) over the past 9 years.

Since establishing OFI Australia in 2013, Kobe has made it her mission to ensure a home for orangutans and the other endangered species who share their rainforest home, raising over \$2.5 million to support orangutan conservation and to purchase and save critical orangutan habitat to protect what is left of the ancient rainforests of Borneo.

Kobe met her first orangutan in 2008 during a trip to Borneo, shortly after the tragic death of her only child Kristin. It was during this trip she visited the Orangutan Foundation International (OFI) Care Centre and Quarantine, where, still in deep mourning, she met a little orphan orangutan infant named Faisal. Faisal filled Kobe's heart with pure joy and elation which she had believed she would never feel again.

In that moment Kobe pledged to do something in return to help orangutans as they had helped her. "Faisal gave me back my happiness. I have orangutans to thank for that. They gave me back purpose in my life," said Ms Steele.

To help raise funds for OFI's orphan orangutan Care Centre, Kobe began running not-for-profit Borneo Orangutan eco tours, and in 2012 she met Dr Biruté Mary Galdikas, OFI President and Founder and internationally renowned environmentalist, anthropologist and the world's foremost orangutan expert. Dr Biruté shared the plight of the orangutan and her vision to ensure that wild orangutan populations and their tropical rainforests will thrive into the future.

Totally inspired by that meeting, Kobe established OFI Australia soon after and has dedicated her life to saving orangutans ever since.

Ms Steele said: "Orangutans are in trouble. They are one of humankind's closest relatives, yet all three species of orangutans are now critically endangered due to the destruction and degradation of their habitat.

"Human activities such as logging, conversion of forest to palm oil plantations, mining and urban expansion are the major factors contributing to the decline of orangutan populations. It is estimated that if their forest habitat continues to decline at the current rate, orangutans could become extinct as populations in the wild within decades," said Ms Steele.

Kobe is incredibly honoured and humbled to receive an OAM, especially during such a momentous year, as 2021 marks 50 years since Dr. Biruté Galdikas made camp in the jungles of Borneo to begin her pioneering study of orangutans.

"I feel so very privileged to support Dr Birute's vital work to protect and preserve the critically endangered orangutan and their tropical rainforest home," said Ms Steele.

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Media enquiries

Please phone Sarah van de Scheur on 0419 281 165 should you wish to interview Kobe Steele.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Kobe Steele

PAST AWARDS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

International Board Member for the World Biological Corridor. The World Biological Corridor is an international project for the benefit of all – a continuous area as an ecological belt around our planet, that will unite countries, people, plants and animals, jungles, forests, reserves, savannas, marine habitats of algae forests , reefs, areas of high geological interest, ultimately natural spaces, ensuring the survival of species, thus trying to maintain a continuous path of global biodiversity.

Women at Work 2015 International Women's Day Leadership Award for Global Charitable Endeavours for her work on behalf of orangutans and OFI.

First woman in Australia to host her own National Music TV Show.

Kobe Steele full biography: <https://orangutanfoundation.org.au/our-staff/kobe-steele/>

Orangutan Foundation International Australia

Supports and continues the orangutan and forest conservation efforts initiated by Dr Biruté Mary Galdikas and Orangutan Foundation International (OFI) in Kalimantan, Borneo. Dr Galdikas, who is Patron and a Board Member of OFI Australia, is an internationally renowned environmentalist, anthropologist and orangutan expert.

OFI supports the conservation, protection, and understanding of orangutans and their rainforest habitat in Borneo, while caring for and rehabilitating ex-captive orangutans for release back into the wild. By supporting OFI Australia you are helping to preserve orangutans, along with the other endangered, threatened, displaced or vulnerable species of wildlife that share their tropical rainforest habitat.

Visit <https://orangutanfoundation.org.au/>

Order of Australia

The Order of Australia recognises Australians who have demonstrated outstanding service or exceptional achievement. It was established on 14 February 1975 by Elizabeth II, Queen of Australia, on the recommendation of the Australian Government. Nominations for the Order of Australia come directly from the community.