

# The Borneo Wire

The Newsletter of The Borneo Project

Spring 2006

## Another microhydro success: community protects upstream rainforests; eliminates need for fossil fuels



Above: Inspecting the reservoir. Forest protection will ensure the streams of Terian always flow clear. Right: The turbine at full throttle at the commissioning ceremony.



Three years in the making, the community-managed microhydro project of Terian, Sabah, is now running smoothly. In exchange for strict protection of upstream rainforests in the buffer zone of Crocker Range National Park, Terian received a state-of-the-art microhydro turbine with a grant from the Seacology Foundation. The turbine provides six kilowatts of clean, quiet electricity to light 50 houses and power school computers, a rice mill, and communal refrigerators for forest produce.

Petrol generators and fuel, which once had to be backpacked in on grueling eight-hour hikes through the mountains, are now obsolete. The Kadazan-Dusun have lived in this roadless watershed for over 100 years, combining rice farming with gathering in the forest. The Terian project is now the second successful microhydro initiative of the Borneo Project, Green Empowerment, and Partners of Community Organizations (PACOS).

The first project at Long Lawen, Sarawak, dramatically reduced erosion in the upstream watershed. PACOS has now started a third project in Bantul, southern Sabah, that will be completed in April 2006. Congratulations to the people of Terian!



Top: Signing the forest protection Memorandum of Agreement.

Bottom: Milling rice in the power station. All photos by PACOS.

## Rumah Nor's federal appeal will set precedent for indigenous rights to protect ancestral lands

Using a simple community-made map of traditional boundaries, and oral testimony from elders and neighbors, the Iban community of Rumah Nor won a stunning court victory for indigenous land rights in Sarawak in 2001. The victory stopped further conversion of their lands to paper pulp plantation, and established the right of native communities to protect primary forests designated as traditional preserves. In response, hundreds of communities began making their own maps and filing court cases. The state of Sarawak then passed an Ordinance that made such mapping a punishable offense. Nevertheless, communities continued to map and win

rights in courts and negotiations to stop industrial land grabbing and ecological destruction. All that may change now that the Rumah Nor victory was partially overturned in an appellate court in 2005. But the inhabitants of Rumah Nor are standing strong, taking their case to the federal court in Kuala Lumpur to win back their lands. With *pro bono* assistance from ten leading native rights lawyers, the community will ask the court to clarify exactly what information is needed to win a land claim. This case may be decided as early as fall 2006, and will determine the ability of hundreds of communities to defend their forests and farms.



The plaintiffs in the Rumah Nor case face continuing state repression, including a new criminal prosecution for "illegally squatting" on lands they won full rights to in 2001. Headman Nor Anak Nyawai, seated front left, insists he will take their land claim "all the way to Kofi Annan, if I have to. I will never give up the struggle to have our lands saved for our grandchildren." Photo by Jessica Lawrence.

March 29, 2006

Dear Friends,

Good news: **The Borneo Project is moving to Borneo!** In response to an invitation from one of our partners, we've decided it's time for the Project to have a permanent presence on the ground. Starting May 2006, my partner, Shawn Sullivan, and I will be relocating to Kota Kinabalu, Sabah, setting up a city-based office and making frequent trips to the interior to coordinate with indigenous Dayak communities struggling to protect endangered rainforests and human rights.

We will be working with our long-term partners as well as new communities. Our Berkeley office will close to reduce costs, but we'll continue to receive mail here. Volunteers will coordinate mailings and events from the home and office of Project Founder Joe Lamb. Mark your calendars for the upcoming **Raffle Party on May 21st!**

I'll be sending quarterly PDF newsletters from Borneo by email only, so **send us your email address** if you'd like to be on the recipient list (Note our **NEW** email address: **borneo@borneoproject.org**).

2005 was a good year for our community partners. They completed astounding amounts of work, and won over \$375,000 in **new grants** to protect their heritage.

At Berkeley's Sister City of Keluan/Uma Bawang, over 5000 rainforest tree **seedlings** were raised and replanted, along with 4000 **rattan** seedlings. Neighboring Penan communities replanted an additional **10,000 trees**. Keluan has also finally moved into their new longhouse, built with traditional Kayan wooden roof shingles instead of hot, noisy aluminum sheeting.

Over 28 **new land rights court cases** were filed, and 30 communities **mapped**. We provided **scholarships** to three Penan youth for community organizer training. The women's group of Long Lunyim harvested their first crop from their **organic garden**. And the network of six **solar powered radio stations** now links nomadic Penan with their allies.

Elsewhere in Borneo, there is great news for rainforests along the Indonesian-Malaysian border. Just yesterday, both **governments agreed to CANCEL industrialization plans** that would have destroyed vast primary forests for oil palm plantations! Now the "Heart of Borneo", which harbors up to six percent of the world's total biodiversity, has a chance to survive. But these forests are **still endangered**, despite declarations of new protected areas. Why? For the same reasons over 50% of Borneo's forests are now gone, and all forests, including the National Parks, are slated for logging, fires, and extinction: global demand for cheap hardwood, local economies and politicians dependent on the timber industry, corruption of law enforcement, and perhaps most important, **lack of land rights for indigenous people, who would save these forests if they could**. Until these four conditions are changed, the Heart of Borneo is not safe. There are illegal loggers everywhere on the island, supplying "legalized" wood to hundreds of sawmills. Thousands more factories throughout Asia process this wood, with much ending up in the US. Only Dayak communities with a strong stake in forest preservation have been effective in stopping illegal logging.

**What you can do:** 1) **Avoid buying** Indonesian or Malaysian rainforest hardwood when you choose furniture, plywood, chipboard, mouldings, or dowels. Unfortunately, Home Depot, Lowe's, and other so-called "environmentally committed" retailers continue to profit from these destructive products, in smug violation of their promises. 2) **Support** the communities who depend on the rainforests of Borneo. Now more than ever, they need our cooperation. Again, I extend thanks to you on behalf of our

partners throughout Borneo.

-Jessica Lawrence



Endangered mystery: the newly discovered mammal of Borneo, known only from photos taken by camera trap in November 2005, East Kalimantan, Indonesia. Photo © WWF Kayan Mentarang & D. Augeri

## 10th anniversary of mapping training builds GPS & GIS skills



Photo by Jessica Lawrence

2005 marked the tenth anniversary of Borneo Project's mapping trainings in Malaysian Borneo. The first training was held in the longhouse of Berkeley's "Sister City" of Uma Bawang/Keluan, using simple compass and tape techniques, a far cry from the computer wizardry of today's community mapping technicians. Last fall at the PACOS training center, Alexander Evans, PhD Candidate at the Yale School of Forestry & Env. Studies, taught GPS, ArcGIS, 3-D models, and satellite image analysis to over 20 advanced and 30 beginning mappers from across Sarawak and Sabah.

At left: Mapping workshop participants from the Kinabatangan Orangutan Conservation Project show off their newly-produced maps. The maps, with GPS points overlaid on topographic maps and satellite images, are used to inform local communities and authorities where wild orangutans nest, where elephants bathe, and where riparian forests must be more vigilantly protected. The Kinabatangan river in eastern Sabah is one of the most valuable biodiversity hotspots in the world. With Borneo Project support, local people are organizing to protect its treasures.

# Borneo Project in Action



**Bakun Dam Update.** Dozens of Kayan and Kenyah longhouse communities are suing the Sarawak government for evicting them from traditional lands to make way for the floodwaters of the Bakun megadam. Now Sahabat Alam Malaysia has invited a Borneo Project mapping trainer to be an expert witness in the November 2006 court hearings, where communities will present their maps and claims.

**Bridging the digital divide: New website will allow indigenous partners to create their own content.** Thanks to a generous donation from Jane Metcalfe and Louis Rossetto, founders of *Wired* magazine, Radical Designs of San Francisco is restructuring our website to allow us to further bridge the digital divide between indigenous peoples and the online world. Our partners in Borneo will soon be able to create their own pages with photos, written testimonies, video, and audio, without needing to purchase computers or expensive software, or learn web-building code. We're looking forward to the results!

**Priority 2006: Help the Penan fight for their rights.** First they need citizen status! The vast majority of Penan do not have birth certificates or citizen identity cards. This prohibits them from filing court cases about land rights, human rights violations, resource destruction, or water pollution. It allows the government to ignore their petitions to send teachers and doctors to the villages. When undocumented Penan apply for citizen status, they are told they will be fined US\$300 each for not having registered at birth. If they raise the money, they are often told to wait ten years for the documents to be processed. In 2006, the Borneo Project will help local activists tackle this fundamental problem, and move toward common goals of protecting the cultural and ecological heritage of forest peoples. Your support makes it happen!

## Special Thanks: Volunteers & Donors of 2005 & 2006

### Volunteers

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### Donors

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Ravenswood Winery  
Rivoli's Restaurant  
Silver Lining Jewelry

Photos by Jessica Lawrence



Zoe Pancoast and Carson Lamb show off their new Borneo Project T-shirts (red with black crab designs). Photo by Carrie Wilson.

### New! Borneo Project T-shirts & Tote Bags

with Iban tattoo design of mythical dragons or crabs. American Apparel shirts in red, cranberry, grey, black, or dark green. With black or white design. Child sizes 4 or 6, Women's small, Adults S,M,L,XL. \$10 Children's, \$15 Adults, \$8 Tote Bags (black only). Order online at [www.borneoproject.org](http://www.borneoproject.org)'s Donate page.

### Books For Sale: *Nomads of The Dawn: The Penan of the Borneo Rainforest.*

Gorgeous photography books now available for just \$30 each. Order online at [www.borneoproject.org](http://www.borneoproject.org)'s Donate page.

### Tour Borneo with ecologists!

The University of California alumni travel group, Beartreks, is planning a trip to Borneo sometime in 2007, open to all regardless of affiliation with UC. If interested in learning more, contact Mel Harte at [melharte@yahoo.com](mailto:melharte@yahoo.com). She will alert all interested parties as plans develop.

**The Borneo Project** supports indigenous communities struggling to protect rainforests and develop sustainable livelihoods. We coordinate technical trainings, small grants, volunteers, citizen diplomacy, and international outreach.

The Borneo Project is sponsored by the Earth Island Institute, a non-profit 501c3.

For more information contact us at:

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<b>Insert: RAFFLE FOR THE RAINFOREST</b>	
<b>Drawing and Party May 21, 2006</b>	
<b>Dozens of great prizes including a vacation in Lake Tahoe!</b>	
<b>Buy your tickets now and support rainforest conservation!</b>	

Coming down the Wire...

*Borneo: the world's third largest island is divided between Malaysia, Indonesia, and Brunei. It lies just southwest of the Philippines and straddles the Equator. Over 50% of its rainforests are already gone, with lowland forests expected to disappear completely by 2010.*

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## The Borneo Project

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