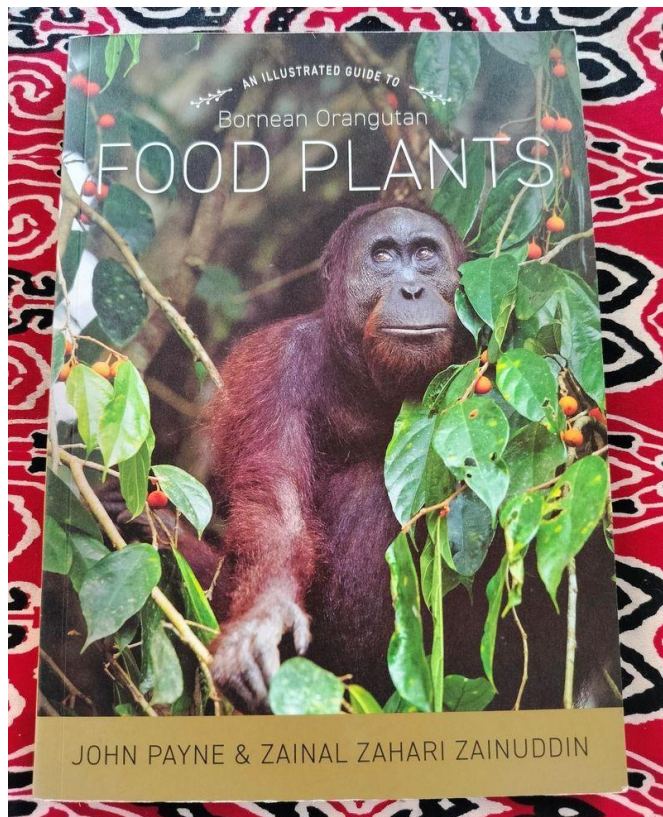


An Illustrated Guide to Bornean Orangutan Food Plants (2023)

Authors: John Payne & Zainal Zahari Zainuddin



This book is an important read for anyone interested in the conservation of the Bornean Orangutan. For many of us, the link between palm oil production, rainforest destruction and declining numbers of orangutans is clear but what do we do about it? The title is slightly misleading as Payne & Zainuddin don't just describe orang-utan food plants but also offer practical solutions to this important conservation challenge. The authors are long term collaborators in Bornean mammal and rainforest conservation and are key members of *Bringing Back Our Rare Animals (BBORA)*, a non-profit organisation in Borneo.

They explain why and what should be done to support the remaining wild orang-utans in Borneo and Sumatra. The section on '*The oil palm and orang-utan context*' argues that whilst the oil palm plantations are bad for biodiversity, nevertheless palm oil and orang-utans might still be able to co-exist, with the primates in small pockets of forest surrounded by oil palm plantations.

A major challenge for these primates, and hence for conservationists, is how to find sufficient food during the periods of scarcity. Payne & Zainuddin discuss the importance of the 'carrying capacity' of forest: the availability of the leaves, flowers and fruits that form the majority of an orangutan's diet' in particular during periods of non-fruiting. They argue that this 'carrying capacity' of pockets of rainforest can be improved through carefully planned planting of key orangutan food species; when established, such plants can guarantee available food for much of the year. To meet 'Sustainable Palm Oil' standards, producers are obliged to take measures to protect endangered wildlife in their plantations. If 'Set aside' land is a requirement of such measures, key plants can be planted in collaboration with landowners to improve carrying capacity. Why not? As the authors point out, orangutans don't injure people and do minimal damage to oil palms.

Having explained the 5 criteria used to determine the best orangutan food plants, the book describes in detail key species within 3 groups of plants that meet them: Figs, Climbing Plants and Trees and it is some of these species that can be selectively planted. These descriptions include some excellent photographs of the plants and orangutans eating them!

The guide is an important publication for orang-utan conservation, explaining how a sensible and collaborative approach can help protect wild orang-utan populations.

The publication is available as a free download at BBORA's website:

www.bringingbackourrareanimals.org

Martin Parry

November 2023