



Natural
Climate
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An NCS Lighthouse

Rimba Raya

Project/Programme Type	Agriculture, Forestry and Other Land Use (AFOLU) under the Reduced Emissions from Degradation and Deforestation (REDD+) mechanism.
Description	Rimba Raya was the first validated REDD+ project – ever – under the Verified Carbon Standard (VCS) and helped define the criteria by which all projects are measured. It is also one of the largest REDD+ peat swamp forest projects in the world, avoiding nearly 130 million tonnes of carbon emissions. It protects one of the most highly endangered ecosystems in the world, home to hundreds of at-risk mammal species, and develops livelihood programs for surrounding villages (addressing all 17 of the UN Sustainable Development Goals) to provide education, employment and hope for the future. In doing so, Rimba Raya provides a buffer zone between the palm oil industry and the Tanjung Puting National Park, home to one of the last remaining wild populations of orangutans on earth.
Location	The Rimba Raya Biodiversity Reserve is located in the tropical peat swamp forest on the Southern Coast of Borneo in Central Kalimantan province, Indonesia.
Scale	Rimba Raya generates carbon credits from approximately 47,000 hectares, with the balance of the project area being buffer surrounding the carbon accounting area.
Number of credits sold	33,000,000 from 2014 until June 2019.



Impacts

Impact To-Date

The Rimba Raya Biodiversity Reserve protects land that was slated to be converted into palm oil estates. The project area is rich in biodiversity, including the endangered Bornean orangutan and 50 other endangered species. It has an estimated 36,505,191 tCO₂e of net emissions reductions to date.

Rimba Raya works closely with the 14 communities that surround the project area to develop social programs that enhance their livelihood and standard of living. The project addresses all 17 of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through initiatives such as a floating medical clinic, water purification systems, and education programs.

Projected Longer-Term Impact

Rimba Raya is expected to achieve 127,330,645 tCO₂e emissions reductions throughout the project lifetime.

They will continue working with local communities to generate unique benefits in terms of the planet, people, and their prosperity. This includes employing 200 people, providing medical services to village members, and releasing 150 orangutans from the care facility into the project area's forests.

Rimba Raya is a living example of an economically viable alternative to deforestation. They are demonstrating that protecting endangered peat swamp forest is commercially, socially, and environmentally advantageous by creating a model that can be replicated across Indonesia for decades to come.



A REDD+ Project Gives Orangutans a Second Chance

When Biruté Galdikas went to Borneo to study orangutans in 1971, the island was covered in ancient forests. Over five decades, her career in science also became a career in conservation as she watched Indonesia lose almost half of its original forest cover and emit more greenhouse gases than all but a handful of industrialized countries in the world. “The way you save orangutans from extinction is by saving forests,” says Galdikas, who founded Orangutan Foundation International and is now an Indonesian citizen. “What we really need are the old monumental primary rainforests that used to typify Borneo.”

One of Borneo’s best remaining stretches of orangutan habitat is the peat swamp at the [Rimba Raya Biodiversity Reserve](#) near Tanjung Puting National Park. It was slated to become a palm-oil plantation in 2008 when an American businessman named Todd Lemons called Galdikas out of the blue. He said he had wanted to help orangutans. “I said to him, ‘If you’re serious, come to Borneo, talk to me,’” she remembers. “And by golly the next week he was there on my doorstep.”

Galdikas and Lemons spent three days together. He told her how global businesses were waking up to the threat that climate change posed to their portfolios—and how this might create opportunities to protect forests more effectively than before. “Forests never had pricing mechanisms as standing forests, but only as derivatives like timber or agricultural

land,” Lemons says. He wanted to find a forest whose value to society he could translate into a number and protect by selling carbon credits. Galdikas told him about the forest near Tanjung Puting, and Lemons persuaded the Indonesian government that they had value as standing forest rather than being converted to oil palm plantations. He turned the forest into the Rimba Raya Biodiversity Reserve, a living example of an economically viable alternative to deforestation.

Not only is Rimba Raya prime orangutan habitat, but its peat swamps also store more carbon than any other kind of forest on earth: the thick damp soil is essentially the precursor to coal.



Todd Lemons
InfiniteEarth,
Co-Founder

Forests never had pricing mechanisms as standing forests, but only as derivatives like timber or agricultural land.

With this mechanism, we are now able to give standing natural forests a value that is disassociated from their extraction value.



**36,505,191
tCO₂e
of net
emissions
reductions**



**7 villages
provided
with water
filtration
systems**



**200
people
provided
with
employment**



**14
communities
working
together with
Rimba Raya**

**Follow the
progress**





The drainage and burning of peat swamp has made Indonesia one of the world's worst carbon polluters. Lemons and his partners at InfiniteEARTH wrote the first forest carbon accounting methodology to measure avoided carbon emissions from deforestation; and Rimba Raya was the first project to become validated by the Voluntary Carbon Standard (VCS) for meeting the standards of the United Nations' Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+) initiative in 2010. Since then, Rimba Raya has sold approximately 33 million carbon credits to corporations like Microsoft and Allianz to fund its conservation and development activities. "With this mechanism, we are now able to give standing natural forests a value that is disassociated from their extraction value," Lemons says.



Biruté Galdikas
Orangutan
Foundation
International

The situation is very dire in terms of global climate change.

As the climate warms, the fruit trees that orangutans depend on will become less productive.

The best way to keep carbon in the soil has been to provide economic opportunities for local communities. "The underlying driver of forest degradation is poverty, so we've invested in community enterprises to diversify the local economy away from anything destructive and extractive," Lemons says. Rimba Raya has provided solar power to three villages around

the project area; installed commercial water filtration systems in seven villages; supports local women-owned egg farms and shrimp-paste manufacturers; hands out educational scholarships; and builds libraries and community centers in the stakeholders' communities. It also created a floating medical clinic on the Seruyan River and provides villages with free medical care. In 2020, an audit under VERRA's SD VSta standard found Rimba Raya was the first REDD+ project to contribute to all 17 of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals.



Jim Procanik
InfiniteEarth,
Co-Founder and
Managing Director

This reforestation effort has the compound benefit of repairing the degraded forest, providing a stable food source for orangutans and long-term income diversification for local forest-dependent communities.

By giving local people alternatives to oil palm and logging, Rimba Raya has created a safe haven for orangutans in the forest. It has funded the activities of Orangutan Foundation International in the project area, including the release of 25 adult and two newborn orangutans, and is constructing several release camps throughout the reserve. For Galdikas, Rimba Raya not only provides badly needed habitat but is also part of the solution to an even bigger threat. "The situation is very dire in terms of global climate change," she says. "As the climate warms, the fruit trees that orangutans depend on will become less productive."

Protecting peat-swamp forest is thus a way to provide crucial habitat for orangutans while also mitigating the larger trends that put the species at risk. As the market for carbon credits takes off, Rimba Raya is using the additional revenue to fund large-scale community farms by replanting thousands of native fruit trees. "This reforestation effort has the compound benefit of repairing the degraded forest, providing a stable food source for orangutans and long-term income diversification for local forest-dependent communities," says Jim Procanik, InfiniteEarth's managing director.



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About the NCS Alliance

The NCS Alliance (NCSA) conveys the voice of businesses, NGOs and solution providers on the need to mobilize a high integrity demand for high quality Natural Climate Solutions (NCS). The Alliance focuses on to identify opportunities and barriers to investment in the NCS voluntary carbon market and also serves as a forum for knowledge sharing and technical capacity building to ensure natural climate solutions reach their full potential in abating climate change. In an effort to build trust in high quality NCS, the NCSA has established the NCS Lighthouse programme.

For more information visit www.wbcsd.org/nscsa and follow us on LinkedIn.



About NCS Lighthouse Programme

The NCS Lighthouse Programme aims at shining a light on projects and programmes that can be used as examples of good practice for supply and are a beacon in the path to developing trust in NCS for people, nature and climate. The NCS Lighthouses aim to help elevate the successful human, environmental, and climate stories behind these initiatives.

The NCS Lighthouses, selected based on screening criteria developed by an NCSA Taskforce comprising NGOs, businesses and solution providers, have demonstrated alignment to the NCSA's quality principles for NCS credits, as presented within '[Natural Climate Solutions for Corporates](#)'.

The NCS Lighthouse Programme is made possible with generous funding support from the We Mean Business Coalition.

Disclaimer

Inclusion of an NCS project or programme in the NCS Lighthouse Programme does not imply a recommendation to purchase, trade or retire credits associated with the Lighthouse.

The NCS Alliance and its members take no responsibility for the purchase, trade or retirement of credits from these projects and programmes. Instead, it recommends that individuals, companies and other organisations procuring credits as part of their climate strategies conduct their own independent due diligence to validate the quality and environmental integrity of their purchases.

The NCS Alliance secretariat in no way benefits financially or by other means from the selection.

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