



August 2025

Inaugural Annual Report

Prepared by Joe Figel and Erlinda Kartika

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** Hutan Harimau is the Indonesian phrase for “Tiger Forests”*

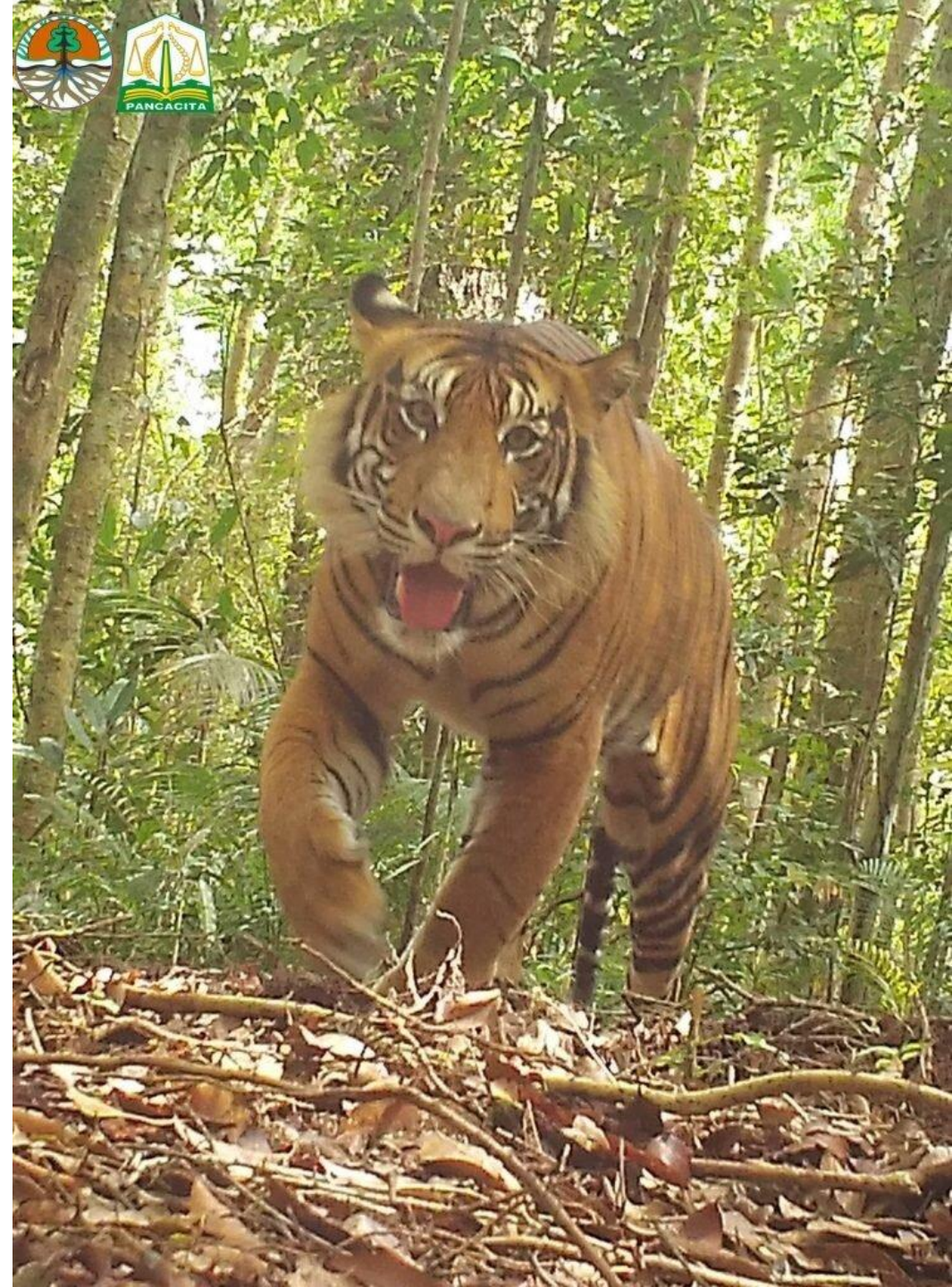




Formally established in July 2024, Hutan Harimau's aim is to function as the leading Sumatran tiger-focused organization.

Until last year, there was no Sumatra-based organization focused exclusively on conserving Sumatran tigers and their rainforest habitats. Hutan Harimau now fills this void.

Our programs focus on monitoring key tiger populations and threat mitigation in the largest intact forests remaining in Sumatra. Many of these forests are unprotected and receive significantly less allocation of resources, which exacerbates chronic threats such as hunting, poaching, and human-tiger conflict.





© Sofian Syarif, Kerinci Seblat National Park, West Sumatra.

- Hutan Harimau envisions a future where tiger populations in Sumatra are secure and thriving, sustained by properly-staffed networks of government and community rangers.
- Our work currently targets research and conservation of Sumatran tigers in the largest intact rainforests remaining in Sumatra. Island-wide, these areas store nearly 5 *billion* metric tons of carbon¹. To put this amount in perspective, United States energy consumption emitted ~4.8 billion metric tons of carbon dioxide (CO₂) in 2024².
- We understand that tigers cannot be conserved without sufficient buy-in from both government and forest-edge communities. Therefore, our collaboration partners for project execution include law enforcement agencies, government forestry offices, and community leaders dedicated to conservation.
- Our tiger monitoring surveys are conducted to identify the most important unprotected areas for the species. This dataset will be used to guide achievement of our main long-term goal of creating Sumatra's first tiger preserve.

¹ Roberts et al. 2025. Global tiger density linked with forest carbon stock, top-down and bottom-up. *Global Change Biology* 31: e70191. <https://doi.org/10.1111/gcb.70191>

² <https://www.statista.com/statistics/183943/us-carbon-dioxide-emissions-from-1999/>

During my first trip to Sumatra in 2005, as a fresh B.Sc. graduate, I had my first look at the challenges of executing a tiger conservation project in a biodiversity hotspot. The striking diversity of flora and fauna was rivaled by similarly varied threats. I saw the machine of advancing agriculture burning forests to a crisp. Roads at the fringes of tiger habitats were oversaturated with zooming motorcycles dodging potholes formed by lumbering 18-wheelers transporting products sourced from lands where rainforests once stood.

Over the next dozen years, tigers were entirely wiped out from two countries (Laos and Cambodia) and undergoing serious declines in another (Malaysia). If we carried on, business as usual, the wave of destruction would reach the spectacular island of Sumatra and wild tigers in Southeast Asia would become extinct. How could we, as a global community, allow this to happen to our most magnificent species?

For tigers ravaged by intense threats – international in scope – solutions will require international assistance. Despite boosted support in recent years, the obligations facing tiger conservationists fluctuate from daunting to overwhelming. Skeptics say the challenges are unsurmountable. But if efforts to conserve tigers appear as a quixotic endeavor, a naïve dream, consult the histories of two other recovered subspecies, both in far worse shape than the Sumatran tiger but a few generations ago: the Amur tiger in Northeast Asia and the Bengal tiger in southwest India.

Tigers can be recovered. Noble conservationists and committed governments have demonstrated this in several countries. In the coming year, Hutan Harimau will produce a roadmap for saving a species. A species whose core habitats store nearly 5 *billion* tons of carbon. A species whose habitats overlap the ranges of ~120 fish species, ~200 species of reptiles and amphibians, 200 mammal species, over 600 species of birds, and several thousand varieties of tropical plants. A species whose habitats provide water supply, flood control, and other essential ecosystem services to ~40 million people.

These are the tiger forests (*hutan harimau*) we are working to save.



© Darman syah

Joe Figel

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joe Figel".

Co-Founder and Science Advisor
Hutan Harimau

“

Two years ago, after graduating with my PhD on Sumatran tiger ecology from Wageningen University, I asked myself what more I could do for tigers and for the people living closest to them...The establishment of a Sumatra-based organization for Sumatran tiger conservation was a breakthrough. For decades, much of the work to protect tigers has been driven by outside groups, often with limited connection to the everyday realities of communities living alongside tiger habitats. A local organization, rooted in the culture, knowledge, and struggles of Sumatra itself...can build trust with local people, integrate traditional ecological knowledge, and ensure that conservation is not seen as an external imposition but as a shared responsibility and pride of place.

For me, protecting the Sumatran tiger is not only about saving a species. It is about honouring my roots, empowering local people, and safeguarding the future of both the forests and the communities of Sumatra. But this mission cannot be achieved alone. Saving the Sumatran tiger requires a collective effort, not only from local communities and national stakeholders, but also from the global community. Tigers are a shared heritage of humanity, and their survival depends on all of us working together.”

~ Dra. Erlinda C. Kartika, Hutan Harimau Co-Founder



With *your* support in our inaugural year, we:

Removed **25** active tiger snare traps from three landscapes.



Established the **first** government-recognized “tiger-friendly village” in West Sumatra near Kerinci-Seblat National Park and the Batanghari Landscape.



Mobilized **16** ranger expeditions in the two largest tiger habitats remaining in Sumatra.



Published **4** articles, including 2 scientific papers and 2 pieces for popular press.



Finalized data collection for our Leuser Ecosystem study, which accumulated **282** photographs of **27** tigers from June 2023 – Nov 2024.¹

↑ Click the image above to read the cover story

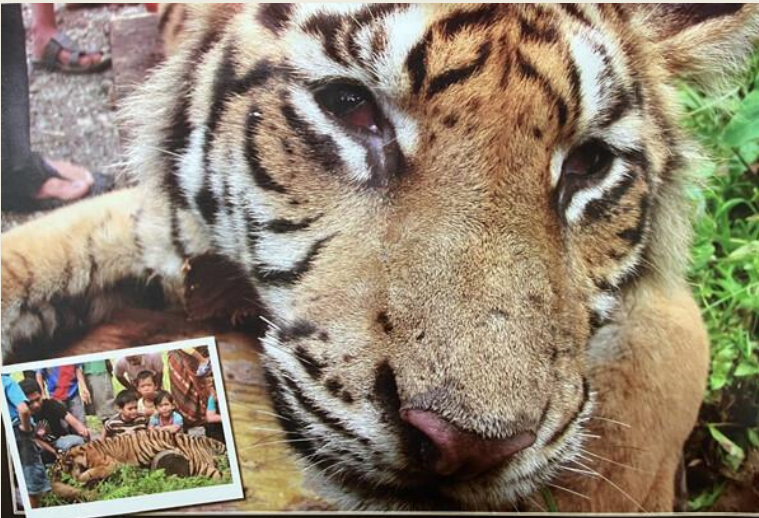
¹ This represents the most robust single-study, range-wide Sumatran tiger camera trap dataset collected to date.



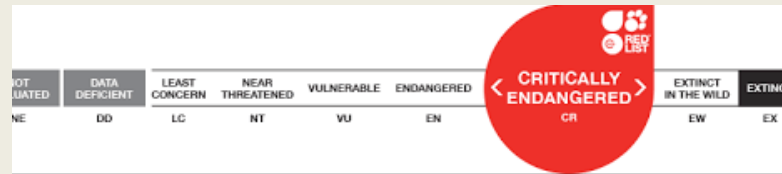
The Challenge

Despite valiant efforts from government partners and a handful of other committed organizations, Sumatran tigers remain critically endangered.

The range of the most recent Sumatran tiger population estimate* (173–883 tigers) varies by >500% and is essentially meaningless as a basis for monitoring evaluation and conservation planning. By early 2026, Hutan Harimau will begin releasing single-site population estimates.



Sumatran tigers are persecuted after intense [human-tiger conflict](#) (usually following livestock depredation)...



..and [snared](#) by hunters/poachers.

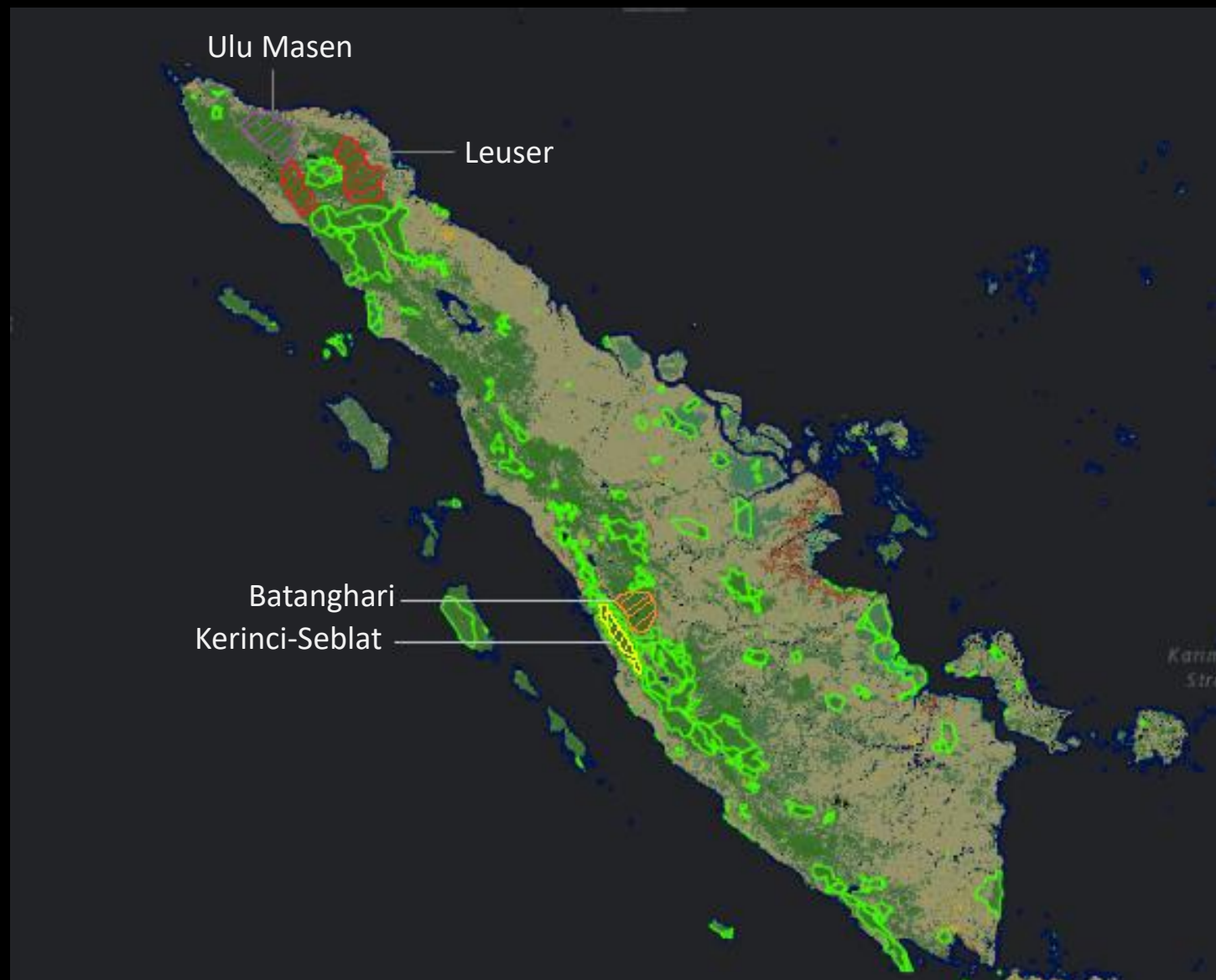
Mitigating these threats will require major boosts in attention and resources moving forward.

*Goodrich JM, Wibisono H, Miquelle D, et al. 2022. *Panthera tigris*. *The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species* 2022, e.T15955A214862019. doi: 10.2305/IUCN.UK.2022-1.RLTS.T15955A214862019.en

Focal Landscapes

The Sumatran tiger's *core* distribution spans ~98,000 km² (38,000 mi²) of forests flanking the Barisan mountain range running the length of western Sumatra.

Hutan Harimau is monitoring tigers in one key vulnerable landscape (Ulu Masen) and intensely sampling populations in two others: Leuser in Aceh and Kerinci-Batanghari in West Sumatra.





With an inventory of 300+ professional-grade camera traps, Hutan Harimau is collaborating with community rangers and government partners to lead population surveys of Sumatran tigers and patrolling of their habitats in the Leuser-Ulu Masen and Kerinci Seblat-Batanghari Ecosystems. These are the two largest tiger conservation landscapes remaining in Sumatra.



Tiger conservation is informed by scientific research that enables us to *objectively* evaluate results and planning.

Most Sumatran tiger populations are insufficiently sampled, a reflection of the challenges researchers face in rugged, roadless rainforests. And nearly all populations lack data on key demographic parameters such as survival, recruitment, tenure, and population growth rate.

Determining identification of individual tigers based on unique stripe patterns on the flank and hind leg. This male tiger was photographed during both sampling years in the Leuser Ecosystem.





Camera-trap sample of female (top row) and male (bottom row) resident tigers. Images obtained during Hutan Harimau's ongoing project in the Leuser Ecosystem. Note the larger body size and more prominent manes of the male tigers.

One of the 14 female tigers we've identified in the Leuser Ecosystem since 2023. We documented this special resident tigress 15 times during 18 months across an area of 63 km² (24 mi²). She successfully raised her 2 male cubs until their dispersal in 2024.

© JJ Figel, Leuser ranger team, DLHK-Aceh



LISTEN AND WATCH

← Click or scan the code to see this tigress caring for one of her cubs.





Tigers cannot be protected without adequate protection of their prey base.



Nearly the size of North American elk, sambar deer (*Rusa unicolor*) are the largest ungulate in Sumatra. As a preferred prey, they are critically important for healthy Sumatran tiger populations. They are also preferred by human hunters who have severely depleted sambar populations across most of Southeast Asia. Encouragingly, we recorded high rates of sambar habitat use (ψ) in Leuser ($\psi = 0.64$) and moderately high levels in Ulu Masen ($\psi = 0.42$).



Widespread prey base in the Leuser-Ulu Masen Ecosystem

An excellent platform for future tiger conservation efforts

n = 2,708 photo 'captures'
 $\psi = 0.99$, SE=0.02



n = 898 photo 'captures'
 $\psi = 0.99$, SE=0.03

n = 766
 $\psi = 0.78$, SE=0.07



n = 529
 $\psi = 0.80$, SE=0.08

n = 10
 $\psi = 0.13$, SE=0.09



n = 75
 $\psi = 0.33$, SE=0.12

Camera-trap images of muntjac and wild pig and Sumatran serow, a less common high-elevation specialist. The top numbers indicate 'photo-captures' and approximate habitat use (ψ) in the Leuser Ecosystem. Bottom numbers correspond to Ulu Masen. Our total sampling effort thus far was 15,779 trap nights (TN) in Leuser and 6,732 TN in Ulu Masen. West Sumatra data will be analyzed in 2026.

On patrol* in Leuser (northern Sumatra)...

The cost of one 10-day, 6-person ranger patrol runs \$900 - \$1,300 USD depending on factors such as terrain ruggedness, need for extra porters and/or river navigation, etc. Hutan Hariamu supported **16** patrols in our inaugural year of operations. To meet ranger metrics consistent with tiger recoveries, we need to **quadruple** this number in our current study landscapes.



(Backpack donations from Tom and Janet Jones)



*Importantly, another organization – *Forum Konservasi Leuser* – is also supporting ranger patrols in and around our study area in Leuser.

...and in Batanghari* (West Sumatra)



*Importantly, Kerinci-Seblat National Park authorities are also supporting ranger patrols in and around our study area in the Kerinci-Batanghari landscape.



Community engagement

Many of the words you'll read in our upcoming reports will represent beliefs and viewpoints of tigers as held by the villagers who live closest to them. The voices of these individuals are rarely heard in news stories about tigers and either overlooked or infrequently featured in scientific publications. Rather, in the global conservation literature, these people are often considered a threat to the species. And many certainly are. But some are not. In fact, a subset of the latter hold responsibility for the tiger's remarkable persistence in many patches of remnant Sumatran forests where they still survive.



Ranger voices

“In debt to the tiger”

“The tiger has played an important role in my life. In 2007, it was difficult for me to find a job. I needed a job because I am the breadwinner of my family. At that time my younger sister also needed to attend university so that she could have a better life. Tiger research was the only job that I could get.

At that time I was asked to join a research project on tiger. The job did not pay me much but it allowed us to have meals every day and I could support my sister to attend University.

At first, I thought the job was very risky and dangerous. But after I went for an expedition to place camera traps, I realized that the research work was actually very interesting.

I am in debt to tiger. I will do whatever I can to help the tiger.”

~Jasman, Hutan Harimau, Kerinci-Batanghari



The newly formed, government-recognized “tiger team” in West Sumatra



Images © E.C. Kartika

Landscape near the proposed national tiger corridor in West Sumatra.

© E.C. Kartika



Grants, Donations, and *In-Kind* Support (2024-2025)¹

Founder's Circle: \$50,000 - \$100,000

Foerster Bernstein Foundation

Conservation Visionaries: \$20,000 - \$49,999

Joe Figel

Director's Circle: \$10,000 - \$19,000

Erlinda C. Kartika
Badan Riset dan Inovasi – Indonesia
Jim and Mary Figel

Patrons: \$5,000 - \$9,999

Elizabeth Figel
Kathryn “Ga” Hanna
American Institute for Indonesian Studies

Benefactors: \$2,000 - \$4,999

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Ron Magill and Zoo Miami
Hoby and Lynn Douglass

Nancy Chng
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Sponsors: \$1,000 - \$1,999

Mike and Sue Brandeberry
Anonymous Donor (1)

Partners: \$500 - \$999

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Anonymous Donor (3)

Friends: \$250 - \$499

Elizabeth and Dan Baldini
Anonymous Donor (2)

Anita Lam

Supporters: \$100 - \$249

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Lucia Baratta Sessions
Ted Gaebler
Yingyang Wang
Rudy and Sandy Figel
Melissa Figel
Thomas Figel
Anonymous Donor (14)



¹ Other donors who generously supported our tiger projects before the founding of Hutan Harimau in 2024 include: American Indonesian Exchange Foundation, Wageningen University (Netherlands), Point Defiance Zoo and Aquarium, Memphis Zoological Society, Leuser International Foundation, Kathy Gerlich, Delaney Gerlich Dechant, Nick Verretto, Pam Eshelman, Michele Capeloto, and several dozen others too numerous to list here.

Ways to Give

- Contribute to our campaign on **Global Giving***: Save Sumatran Tigers and Forests. <https://www.globalgiving.org/projects/save-sumatran-tigers-and-forests/>



*Global Giving is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization that provides a global crowdfunding platform for international charitable projects such as ours – *Hutan Harimau*. Your donation through Global Giving is tax-deductible in the United States to the fullest extent of the law.



- Donate online

Please visit <https://hutanharimau.org/click-here-to-support-tiger-conservation-in-sumatra/> to make a secure online gift via PayPal.

- For Indonesian supporters, you can make a **direct transfer**:

Bank: BRI

Yayasan Konservasi Hutan Harimau

Account # 005801005822565

- Give from your **Donor-Advised Fund (DAF)** via Charities Aid Foundation (CAF). Hutan Harimau successfully registered with CAF in July 2025.



Taking Philanthropy Farther



Questions? Please contact us: info@hutanharimau.org