

PREFACE

I wrote this book to tell the story of the orangutan that emerged from the mists of a Sumatran swamp. It is a different beast from the solitary recluse we know from other places. The swamp has revealed our red cousins to be every bit as sociable, as technically adept, and as culturally capable as their African relative, the chimpanzee.

The story of the new orangutan is worth telling because it will change how we view ourselves in relation to our closest relatives and how we reconstruct human evolution. In the coming chapters, I will show how the initially independent strands of work on life history and infant development, tool use and intelligence, and culture all fit together in unsuspected ways. I argue that we can use our findings on orangutans to shed light on a major question: what are the origins of human intelligence, technology, and culture?

But there is also another reason for this book. As I write these lines, the province of Aceh continues to be engulfed in armed conflict that put an end to all field research in the region, and my best friend in the region is dead, murdered by either insurgents or government provocateurs. Elsewhere, the orangutan's forests are being cleared or degraded by logging; mothers are shot, their infants traded. The window on our past opened up by the study of these close relatives is rapidly closing again. I fervently hope that telling the orangutan's tale may help to avert the unfolding tragedy. We cannot let them go quietly.

I had a lot of help in the research and in writing this book. Finishing a book is a good time to remember the people who made it all possible. First and foremost, I want to thank Idrusman (Yus), assistant, teacher, companion, and friend for almost twenty years. Yus was by my side when we discovered the orangutans of Suaq. To his memory we dedicate this book. Among the other team members, Ibrahim, the wise, and Dolly, the practical, have been with the project or structures that support it ever since. S. Poniran, then head of the Gunung Leuser National Park, saw the need for the station at Suaq and made it happen. Sayed Mudahar had the dream of finding harmony between forest and people, and Ali Bashya Amin kept the dream alive. The station was supported by the Leuser Development Programme, the brainchild of Pak Sayed, Herman Rijksen, and Mike Griffiths. Mike's home was always open, his counsel always judicious, and his cool car available when needed most; I thank him for years of hospitality and friendship. Then there was Yarrow Robertson, whose love for Leuser is matched by his determination to save as much of it as humanely possible; and Katherine Monk, who fought to save Suaq when everyone else was giving up.

A long-term field project is impossible without a steady flow of funding, and I was extremely fortunate to have the continuous support of the Wildlife Conservation Society (formerly the New York Zoological Society), arguably the most visionary and certainly most thoroughly field-based of all international conservation organizations. John Robinson, Mary Pearl, Alan Rabinowitz, and Josh Ginsberg all believed in the project and kept it afloat over the years. In the final stages, the financial support of the L. S. B. Leakey Foundation helped to broaden our base.

The Suaq project benefited from the hard work of many assistants and students: Beth Fox, Ian Singleton, Arnold Sitompul, Azhar, Bahlias Putri Gayo, Ibrahim bin 'Mohammad, Zulkifli, Ishak, Mukadis, Asril, Syamsuar, Rudy H., Iwan, Fahrulrazi, Abdussamad, Michelle Merrill, Nuzwar, Nurwahidah, and Irma.

Mentors made me who I am: a naturalist with physics envy. At Utrecht, both Jan van Hooff and Pauline Hogeweg, each in their own way, insisted that I keep an eye out for both unique details and universal laws and taught me the value of combining solid empiricism with audacious theorizing. At Duke, John Terborgh showed me that a naturalist could also be a superb scientist. My colleagues in the Department of Biological Anthropol-

ogy and Anatomy have helped to turn my naturalist's focus onto the origin of humans. Graduate students, both those who worked at Suaq and those who did not, have kept me on my toes over the years: Filippo Aureli, Meredith Bastian, Rob Deaner, Roberto Delgado, Beth Fox, Peter Kappeler, Elissa Krakauer, Chris Kirk, Becca Lewis, Michelle Merrill, Charlie Nunn, Steph Pandolfi, Ian Singleton, Romy Steenbeek, Liesbeth Sterck, and Serge Wich. Unselfish colleagues have enriched my intellectual life: Kristen Hawkes, Peter Kappeler, Sagar Pandit, Gauri Pradhan, Signe Preuschoft, Anne Russon, Maria van Noordwijk, and David Watts. Herman Rijksen, Tatang Mitra Setia, and Suci Utami have freely shared their deep knowledge of orangutan behavior whenever we had a chance to meet. Several people have kindly commented on my confused drafts: Meredith Bastian, John Cant, Richard Klein, Anne Russon, Karen Strier, Russ Tuttle, Maria van Noordwijk, and Serge Wich. Kaye Brown gave me wise advice on the book's organization and on my writing. I thank them for their efforts, but I have to add the standard claim that, sadly, all errors are mine.

I am grateful to Michael Fisher for sharing our dream of creating a book with both pretty pictures and savvy science, to Maria van Noordwijk for making the index, and to the production team at Harvard University Press for making it all seem easy.

Many of the times when I use *we* in this book, I am referring to Perry van Duijnhoven and myself. Perry took most of the pictures in this book. He has been an amazing friend for years, by my side at the highs and the lows. On surveys, his little car-that-could got us where most others feared to go. Accounts of my adventures with Perry could fill another book.

To all I've mentioned here, as well as others too numerous to mention, I offer my sincere thanks.