



Conservation project launches new consumer-focused campaign

7 December 2011 – Last week an alarming report confirmed that Bornean orangutans are being hunted at levels that could bring the species to the brink of extinction. Today an innovative conservation project launches a new consumer-focused campaign to protect the habitat of this threatened primate

The sad reality is that rainforest destruction and brutal orangutan killings are rarely far from the headlines. With time running out to preserve the natural ecosystems that endangered wildlife depend upon for survival, the focus needs to turn to viable, commercial solutions.

The Malua BioBank in Malaysian Borneo is a 34,000 hectare reserve that acts as a critical buffer zone protecting the virgin rainforest from bordering palm oil plantations. The project is pioneering a new approach to conservation which recognises that deforestation is driven by the profitability of alternative land uses.

The Biodiversity Conservation Certificates (BCCs) allocated to the project serve as a market mechanism to make conservation a commercially viable alternative to exploiting the land for logging, agricultural expansion and palm oil plantations.

“Agriculture, logging and alternative crops like palm oil are huge and profitable industries. We cannot expect to keep the rainforest standing unless there are financial drivers to do so. The Malua BioBank project works by putting a price on the region’s ecosystems,” explained Project Manager, Merrill Halley.

Today the Malua BioBank is launching a new campaign aimed at encouraging consumers to make the connection between their daily activities and the impact their lifestyles have on the world’s ecosystems. Using a new online tool, visitors will be able to protect areas of the conservation project that equate to familiar spaces such as their garage, local swimming pool or even the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, creating a connection between users’ lives and the Malua forest reserve.

With palm oil in everything from shampoo to chocolate, there is a growing recognition that the demand for preserving rich habitats must come from consumers in developed countries. Purchasing credits to fund conservation projects ensures that the value of natural ecosystems outweighs the value offered by the destructive palm oil industry.

If consumers can be encouraged to use their buying power to ensure the success of commercial conservation models, there may just be hope for this fragile area of the natural world and the orangutans who call it home.