

# โครงการคืนชะนีสู่ป่า Gibbon Rehabilitation Project



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## *May and June 2015 (Volume 14 Issue 5-6)*

### **Gibbon Rehabilitation Project (Phuket: GRP)** **An update on Maesa and Emily, the two sisters**

Maesa and Emily are the offspring of Nuan (mother) and Max (father). They were born just one year apart here at our Rehabilitation Site. Maesa is now five years old and Emily four.

For the past three years, Maesa and Emily have been sharing a cage with another orphan, Arya, who is also four now. For much of that time the trio also shared space with Phi Phi (who is a slightly older juvenile who was rescued from being used as a photo prop for tourists on Phi Phi island) and Lumduan (who was kept illegally as a pet before arriving at the GRP). Phi Phi and Lumduan have both since entered the gibbon dating circles at the Rehabilitation Site and are now busy meeting boys...

Meanwhile, the younger Maesa, Emily and Arya continue to share a large play-cage at the Rehabilitation Site. Like all young gibbons they are playful by nature. They also love to try and find ways to involve the volunteers in their games. They may try to grab whatever is within their reach that the volunteers are carrying. They may attempt to dig into peoples' pockets or try to groom the volunteers' hair. Being a reintroduction project, GRP has very strict rules here and our volunteers are told never to encourage such behaviours and to step away from the cage when this happens. For the sake of these young gibbons we need to help discourage these types of behaviours if we wish them to one day live wild and free. There are no benefits for these hand-reared gibbons in continuing to engage intimately with humans at this age.

One of the more innocent ways in which the two sisters and their friend like to show off their playfulness around the volunteers is by playing with the water from the hose while their cage is being cleaned. Both Maesa and Emily like to jump into the spray of water, drink from the water jet or try and grab at it just at the end of the pipe, so that it just sprays water everywhere. Often when the volunteers are finished cleaning this cage they are very wet, but rarely as wet as Maesa and Emily themselves!

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มูลนิธิช่วยชีวิตสัตว์ป่าแห่งประเทศไทย

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## Peemai

We are saddened to share with you the tragic news of Pee Mai's passing. Pee Mai was just 6 years old when she succumbed to an unknown infection that wore her down and eventually claimed her life.



Pee Mai's short life was very eventful and filled with extreme highs and lows. She was born at our Rehabilitation Site in 2009 to Kushta (mother) and Mai (father). Soon after her birth, Pee Mai's father went blind and whilst he was undergoing examinations and treatments Pee Mai and Kushta moved in with Kushta's older son from a previous

pairing and his playmate Muki. This unconventional family was given a taste of freedom in 2011. Unfortunately for the then 2, 5 year old Pee Mai, soon after the release her mother was claimed by wild-raised young male Arun, who was out looking for a mate. Arun did not appreciate Pee Mai's competition for Kushta's attentions and made it very clear she was no longer welcome around. In order to save Pee Mai's life, GRP took the difficult decision to separate her from her family and return her to our Rehabilitation Site.

At our Rehabilitation Site Pee Mai initially shared a cage with Lumduan during 2012. The following year the duo was introduced into a larger playgroup consisting of Tunda, Brittany and Jane. Pee Mai was always confident for her age and got along very well with everyone. The different juveniles in this group were moved along to meet other gibbons and find partners at various stages between 2013 and 2014 and during her last year with us Pee Mai lived alone with Tunda. The two of them were very close, playing and grooming together. When Pee Mai got ill, Tunda also showed some signs of disease but has now made a full recovery. Gibbons can be very sensitive to infections and diseases. In order to minimize the risks of disease transmissions, all vegetables and fruit are cleaned thoroughly and everyone working with the animals is taught to disinfect their hands before handing food or enrichment to the animals.

Pee Mai will remain in our memories as the confident, beautiful young gibbon she was throughout her short life.

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## Khao Phra Thaew Forest Updates

### THE RELEASE OF SEAGAME AND GEORGE

**Young couple, Seagame and George were released into Khao Phra Thaew non-hunting area on the 20<sup>th</sup> of June 2015.**



The release took place after a change of location in territory intended, and prepared, for the couple. Immediately after the couple had been moved to their first acclimatization cage they were paid a visit from Lek's family and because the wild family exhibited serious displays of aggression towards the couple in the cage, Seagame and George were hastily moved to the old training cage within Toffee's territory. Naturally, Toffee and Arun soon paid a visit, but there was no witnessed aggression

so we thought it safe to leave the couple there whilst a new territory was being prepared for them further away and a new acclimatization cage built. During the time that the couple then came to spend at the new location, no wild gibbons came to visit them and we were happy to know that Seagame and George may have enough time to gain confidence moving around the trees before being confronted with other wild gibbons.

On the 20<sup>th</sup> of June GRP volunteers and staff trekked into the Reintroduction Site to open the cage for Seagame and George and let them swing into freedom. During the previous 2 months, the couple had been fed every day around 7:30 am, so when people arrived at 10 am on the release day, the gibbons were naturally very hungry. Before the cage was opened the feeding basket was hung up in the tree right outside to encourage the gibbons to come out – and to climb up, rather than stay on the forest floor! Then all the people took a step back to give the gibbons some space and to avoid scaring them in their big moment. Interestingly George found a way to pull the dangling food basket towards the cage with his long

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arms, managing to grab hold of some food whilst still inside. Seagame was keen to share his catch, but George was not in the mood for this. It took around 30 minutes before George decided to venture out from the cage and make a real dent in his breakfast. Seagame took longer to dare entering the outside world and when she eventually made it out she climbed up very high into the tree. After this she climbed back down and joined George at breakfast.



Over the past few years George has become known by volunteers as one of the most aggressive and grabby gibbons at the Rehabilitation Site. Such behavior can start off quite innocently, but the more reactions the gibbons receive from startled volunteers the more they will enjoy and elaborate on their game. Recently volunteers were made very aware of George's tendencies and would be extra careful around his cage.

A few hours after the release George seemed to fall into his old pattern and were starting to approach the volunteers. GRP staff is always observant of these behaviors and will immediately discourage such gibbons by shooting dried peas from slingshots in their direction and chasing them off. It was not long before George found other things to do and could be observed curiously foraging for wild leaves in the forest canopy together with Seagame.

In the weeks following the release GRP staff has continued to monitor the couple throughout the whole days and are happy to report that all is going very well. We wish this couple the very best of luck in the

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wild!

## Sightings of other reintroduced families during May and June:

**Lek's family:** Lek's family was spotted a few times during this period, as they were the family who paid a visit to Seagame and George's original acclimatization cage. Lek has now been living in the forest for 12 years and she has seen her first two babies grow up and start families of their own in the wild. Today her family consists of her partner of the past nine years, Bank, and their two offspring Peanut, age four and Kai, who turned one year old on the 28<sup>th</sup> of June!



**Namthip's family:** We also have reports from Namthip, Jorn and Sherpa this month and are happy to know that they are doing well.

**Toffee and Arun:** Apart from visiting Seagame and George in the training cage earlier in May, Arun is also still occasionally paying visits to our Rehabilitation Site.

## Renewable Energy at the GRP – The Solar Panel Project



For almost 23 years, GRP has been running an Education and Visitor Center by Bang Pae waterfall, without access to electricity or any modern education tools to help us make our message more effective. This has all been transformed this June with the arrival of eight solar panels that will supply our Centre with renewable energy.

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มูลนิธิช่วยชีวิตสัตว์ป่าแห่งประเทศไทย

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Long-term GRP volunteer Helen Thompson has, via her friend Tilly Lenartowicz, been liaising with an English company, Atelier Ten, working on renewable energy. The company runs a charity program and – amazingly – chose GRP as one of their beneficiaries!

At the beginning of June Tilly arrived in Phuket with a handful of helpers, to install the solar panels in the clearing next to our Visitor Center.

Having electricity in our gibbon shop will thoroughly transform our work there. Previously, whenever it was raining, it could get so dark inside the shop that we would need to light candles and use torches to see what we were writing, never mind being able to show any visitors what merchandise was available. Now we can have lights as well as fans to keep us cooled down on a hot day.

The electricity will also benefit our gibbons as we will now be able to keep a fridge at the Centre, which will enable us to expand on enrichment ideas to include ice lollies on very hot days for example. Here, we will also be able to conveniently store medicines nearby whenever a gibbon is ill. We are also looking to install lights that switch on via a movement detector, along the path into the forest. If someone is going into the forest at night the lights will turn on and the forest rangers nearby will become alerted. This can be useful in monitoring traffic as well as act as a deterrent for potential poachers to go in this way.

And in the future, the possibilities for developing the Visitor Experience at our Education Centre are endless. We could install TV screens showing films about our work and about the photo prop trade in Thailand – more effectively educating people through a use of combined media and interactions.

Information boards explaining what the solar panels are and what is meant by renewable energy will also soon be available in both Thai and English.

*Thank you to Atelier Ten for this fantastic donation and thanks to everyone involved in making this fantastic project possible!*

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## Collection of Donation Boxes



GRP is a charity relying on public donations and volunteer help to operate. There are many local businesses on Phuket who are supportive of our work and that keep donation boxes at their facilities to encourage customers to also support our work. Approximately once a year, GRP staff and volunteers set off on a day-trip around the island to collect donation boxes from hotels, vet clinics, post offices etc. These donations provided a welcome extra income this month! We would like to thank all these institutions, as well as all donors who have supported us!