

Gunung Palung Orangutan Conservation Program



July 2013

Issue: 12

Code RED

An e-newsletter from your friends in Borneo

Dear Friends and Supporters,

Our orangutan conservation work occurs on multiple fronts, and just as progress is being made in one area, new threats often emerge. Such was the case several months ago with our discovery of alarming plans to de-gazette parts of Gunung Palung National Park and thousands of hectares of orangutan habitat. Our first article describes our quick response to combating this threat and our initial successes. This is one of the benefits of having an organization that is on the ground and connected to government decision makers - we are able to respond immediately to new challenges as they arise.



Another conservation front is our work with local communities to help them find sustainable alternative livelihoods that don't destroy forested lands. Our second article highlights our public outreach work at the recent Kayong Utara Expo, and the successful showcasing and promotion of sustainable Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFP) created by our artisan groups.

In This Issue:

**Conservation Through
Spatial Planning**

~

**Kayong Utara Expo:
Celebrating the
Regency's 6th
Anniversary &
Expanding NTFP Artisan
Markets**

~

**Welcome To Our New
Research Coordinator**

~

**Help us Protect
Orangutans!**

**Welcome To Our
New
Research
Coordinator**

We'd like to extend a warm
welcome to our new
Research Coordinator,
Jennifer Brousseau!

Thank you to all of our supporters and especially to those organizations who are providing us with the quick resources we need as we continue to battle these threatening land use changes.

Sincerely,



Cheryl Knott, Executive Director
[Gunung Palung Orangutan Conservation Program \(GPOCP\)](#)

Conservation Through Spatial Planning

Crucial Efforts to Keep Orangutan Habitat Protected

In February of this year, a legislative representative from Ketapang came to our office with a map of the most recent spatial plans for the Ketapang and Kayong Utara regencies where our work takes place. The map showed plans to de-gazette substantial areas of Gunung Palung National Park as well as large tracts of surrounding areas of currently protected orangutan habitat. Approximately 2,000 hectares of the national park, and tens of thousands of hectares of protected forest outside the park, were planned for conversion to palm oil concessions under this new plan.



Destruction of rain forest for illegal logging

In Indonesia, land conversion has become an ever-increasing government enterprise, with many regions taking on infrastructure development, housing expansion projects and agriculture extension. Such plans often compete with conservation priorities, as land for such projects is in limited supply. Many development projects resort to converting forested land into these other uses, leaving biodiversity and humans at risk. The ecological and conservation perspective is often lacking from these development plans. GPOCP believes that effective spatial plans must balance the priorities of both development and conservation, accommodating the interests of the multiple stakeholders involved.

In response to this threat, GPOCP is playing a crucial role in trying to protect the conservation status of key orangutan habitat areas throughout these two regencies, including Gunung Palung National Park. As one of the only organizations in the area invited to provide a voice at meetings where land use planning is discussed, we quickly worked to provide the essential arguments and data as to why these lands should not be allocated for conversion.



Jenn was a former Boston University undergraduate student of our Executive Director, Dr. Cheryl Knott, who has been volunteering with our orangutan research project for the last year. Jenn's dedication to her studies and deep interest in orangutan research and conservation, combined with her experience working as a project volunteer over the last year, made her the ideal candidate to take over as our Research Coordinator. Based at our research site, Cabang Panti, inside Gunung Palung National Park, Jenn will be leading the research program's operations on the ground, continuing the vital research we have been conducting on this population of orangutans over the last 20 years.

~~~~~  
**Help us Protect  
Orangutans!**

[Make A Donation](#)

[Like us on Facebook](#) 

 [Join our  
Mailing List](#)

~~~~~



Agricultural expansion around Gunung Palung National Park

In Ketapang, we held discussions with members of the legislative council, and sent a letter to the local government office requesting a face-to-face meeting with an integrated team of spatial planning stakeholders. While waiting to hear back from parliament, we continued to have discussions with several local NGOs to develop a cohesive action plan to fight against these spatial plans. We were fortunate to meet the lead person planning the spatial maps for Ketapang through our networking efforts at a workshop conducted by USAID-IFACS. This workshop discussed the Strategic Environmental Assessment, which is a study that should be used in the development of spatial plans. During our time there, we had the opportunity to speak with the lead spatial planner, and reviewed with him the current maps and plans for the area. The plans he shared were different from the ones we were presented with in February. In these new plans, no national park area will be converted for other uses; it will remain intact and maintain its current protection status. The fact that these plans differ from the ones developed earlier in the year gives us an indication that the input and discussions we had with government officials turned out to have a positive effect on the decision makers, who ended up recognizing the importance of these protected areas and changing the original spatial plan.

In Kayong Utara, the amount of area marked for removal from the National Park was very large, at close to 30,000 acres. Conversion on this scale would have drastic consequences for both wildlife and the local people, affecting all facets of life. Since we learned of these plans, we have conducted intensive discussions with all parties who are concerned about the development and conservation of this area. One of the major problems revealed through these discussions was the fact that the local government and parliament did not know the management plans of the National Park. This indicated an attempt to push these land use changes through without proper dialogue with, and consent of, the relevant government bodies. Based on this knowledge, all parties in these discussions agreed on a few actions, including asking the National Park to disseminate their management plan to the local government and parliament. The most recent information we have received from the Division of Spatial Planning in Kayong Utara is that they have removed all plans that intended to de-gazette areas of the National Park, thereby maintaining the Park's protected status. However, the final spatial maps for the entire West Kalimantan Province, which include the spatial plans for Kayong Utara, are still with the Department of Forestry in Jakarta, and have

"Nobody makes a greater mistake than he who does nothing because he could only do a little."

~Edmund Burke~

not yet been approved. We are hopeful the Department of Forestry will approve these revised plans in the coming months, solidifying the park's continued protection.

Now that the threat of de-gazetting Gunung Palung National Park lands seems to be averted, we are concentrating our efforts on maintaining the other conservation areas that sit outside of the Park. Part of this effort involves assessing the conservation value and orangutan densities in these adjoining regions so that we can present informed and persuasive arguments to the spatial planning government bodies.

Kayong Utara Expo: Celebrating the Regency's 6th Anniversary & Expanding NTFP Artisan Markets

By F. Wendy Tamariska, Environmental Education Center Coordinator, Yayasan Palung (GPOCP)



Head of Kayong Utara Regency discussing our NTFP products and work with us

The regency of Kabupaten Kayong Utara, one of the two regencies in which we work, recently celebrated its 6th anniversary. Every year the local government holds an Expo to commemorate the day, and this year it was a 9-day celebration from June 16th to the 24th.

GPOCP participates in this event by collaborating with

Forum Rumah Ide, which is a multi-stakeholder forum in Kabupaten Kayong Utara where Yayasan Palung (GPOCP) is one of its members. This year our booth was visited by approximately 450 visitors who stopped to view our photo displays on orangutans and of past GPOCP activities, and to purchase orangutan T-Shirts and Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFP) made by the artisan groups we support as part of our alternative livelihoods work. The constant stream of enthusiastic visitors asked many questions about orangutans, and the NTFP products displayed, and engaged in lively discussions with our staff on orangutans' current endangered status in the wild. People left our booth having learned about some of the things they can do to help protect orangutans and their forest habitat.

This Expo was the first of three where we are highlighting our NTFP Artisan Groups, allowing them a public forum where they can show and sell their wares in an effort to expand the market potential for their products, and increase the amount of income they receive from this enterprise. Visitors of all age levels, from children to adults, especially women, were very curious to learn more about our NTFP products, and many purchased some of the beautiful woven baskets and mats these artisans produced. Even staff from a palm oil company that had their booth next to ours ordered several T-Shirts and NTFP products. We were struck with the irony that they see the value in products that come from the forest systems that they are destroying through their work.



GPOCP's booth at the expo

We were also fortunate to be visited by the Head of Kayong Utara Regency, Bapak Hildy Hamid, who was also interested in our NTFP products and learning more about our project. Bapak Hildy asked where the *lekar* (nipa palm spine) used to produce some of the items displayed comes from, and we explained that it came from Sejahtera village, one of the villages in the Sukadana District. Holding a *lekar* basket in his hands, he said, "this is one of the best *lekar* baskets I've ever seen." This was wonderful encouragement to the many talented artisans from this group, and a statement we were all truly honored to receive!

What we, and the artisan groups learned from this valuable experience is that the *lekar* woven baskets, and the tissue holders and pencil boxes made from *Pandanus* leaves, were by far the most popular products, and sold very well. This is a good sign for GPOCP's NTFP projects and artisans that there is a market for these items, and that consumers in general appreciate their products. Additionally, by learning which products were preferred by the local market, they can now incorporate this information into their business models and adjust the quantities of each of the items they produce to better match the market demand.

This Expo was a good strategy for us to introduce and publicize information about the livelihood potential that is available in the area, and helped us to gain attention and support from the local government. We hope similar events will continue in the future and we'd like to say: "Happy 6th Anniversary, Kayong Utara Regency!"

Gunung Palung Orangutan Conservation Program
(GPOCP)



Orangutan Photographs © Tim Laman
All other photographs © GPOCP staff

