



# Gunung Palung Orangutan Conservation Program



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## Code RED

An e-newsletter from your friends in Borneo

Dear Friends and Supporters,

We are thrilled to tell you about the events of these past months. Amidst a slew of violent incidents against orangutans, the Gunung Palung Orangutan Conservation Program was heartened to find such widespread community support during a very successful Orangutan Caring Week. The public outcry for an end to illegal logging and cruelty against orangutans was heartwarming and encouraging, propelling us further in our quest for the conservation of this marvelous species and the Bornean rainforest. We were so happy to help provide another way for local citizens to learn about and connect with the natural wonders that surround them.

We are also happy to introduce, Rusda, one of the fantastic members of our research team. He has been with our organization throughout several phases of his life and has offered to share his story about how the Gunung Palung Orangutan Project has inspired his journey into the field of environmental conservation. We think you'll appreciate hearing directly from his perspective.

There are so many people we rely on to make our efforts successful and worthwhile. We are proud to share the stories of community outreach and individual growth that make our research and conservation efforts possible.

Thank you so very much to everyone for your continued support of our work. Happy reading!

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### Strategic Planning Retreat

During the weekend of January 11th, all of our conservation staff participated in a two-day retreat at our Environmental Education

Sincerely,



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

## Community Support: Orangutan Caring Week 2013

By Mona Pasaribu, Operations Manager

Early in the morning on November 24th, dozens of beautifully decorated bicycles gathered in Tanjungpura Square. As residents of Ketapang milled about in their morning routines, many members of the community were donning their helmets and riding in the "Bike for Orangutans" day held by



*A young participant in the "Bike For Orangutans" event*

GPOCP, Yayasan Inisiasi Alam Rehabilitasi Indonesia (YIARI), Fauna and Flora International (FFI) and West Kalimantan Natural Resources Conservation Agency (BKSDA) as part of Orangutan Caring Week 2013. The participants rode their bicycles through several main streets of Ketapang city, heralding the message of orangutan conservation to the public and proving themselves to be a great asset to an already expansive effort to protect the endangered orangutans.

This event helped drive home the theme for Orangutan Caring Week - to "Unite to Fight the Extinction of the Orangutan". This message is especially serious and has been brought to public awareness by the recent cases of orangutan killings in the West Kalimantan Province. In October, a male orangutan was killed in Peniraman, Pontianak by villagers that considered it a threat to their crops. In November, residents shot and killed another adult male orangutan, cooking and eating him in one of the more gruesome incidents of the past year. These occurrences make it clear to us, and to our supporters, that we cannot stand idly by and let such killings continue.

We are fortunate that the result of such atrocities is not limited to blind outrage or mere passivity. "Orangutans are increasingly under threat, and it is our hope that we can work together to protect them from extinction," imparted YIARI program director, Adi Irawan. Public outcry and the rallying of multiple conservation organizations in the area has led to the rescue of 22 orangutans in Ketapang Regency, West Kalimantan in 2013. All of these rescued animals are now being treated at the YIARI rehabilitation center. This latest figure brings the total number of orangutans rescued in Ketapang since 2010 to 81. "Most of the orangutans rescued were being kept as pets or were being held in captivity by companies seeking to clear land," GPOCP's assistant officer for environment education and media campaign,

Center. With the help of the Penabulu Foundation, we had many discussions to create our new three year strategic plan. We are very excited to implement these plans and look forward to the upcoming years of continued progress in conserving the orangutans and habitat of Gunung Palung.

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Orangutans!

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

~Edmund Burke~

Petrus Kanisius, reported.

Without raising awareness through these demonstrations, incidences of illegal captivity, outright killing, and pervasive illegal logging will be on the rise. We are glad to have the support of the Kalimantan community and hope that events such as Orangutan Caring Week will become both more frequent and less necessary.



*A group of supporters gathered together for Orangutan Caring Week*

## Assistant Spotlight: Rusda

By Muhamed Rusda Yakin, Botanical Research Assistant



*Muhamed Rusda Yakin*

My story begins when I was finishing up my 6th semester in the biology program at Jakarta State Islamic University. It was an important moment for me, when I needed to make the big decision. What to do after I finish this exam? What is next for me? Normally, I would simply continue on with my studies in the next semester, but I decided to take advantage of the opportunity to take a semester off conducting research in the field. I knew that this would prolong my time spent attending university, but I also knew that this was going to be an extraordinary opportunity for me.

With a little prior experience involving primate research, I started to design my own project. I began my preparation at KPP (Kelompok Pengamat Primata) Tarsius, the only organization in my university that focuses on primate conservation study, the place where I learned another side of primate conservation and wildlife conservation in general. While there, I heard many stories about orangutan research from my seniors. It sparked my interest in orangutan conservation, and left me wanting to know more. That was when I decided to choose

orangutans as the topic for my undergraduate thesis.

When I arranged the plans for my research, I felt so lucky to get the opportunity to do research about orangutan nesting behavior at Cabang Panti Research Site. I was very thankful to Professor Cheryl Knott for the opportunity to conduct my research there, and also for the opportunities she afforded me by funding my research through the Gunung Palung Orangutan Project. It wasn't only about research opportunity, though. I had many other exciting experiences during this time in my life. This was my first trip to Kalimantan, and it was like I had found a new world within Indonesia. I stayed in West Kalimantan for five months and made many new friends, while at the same time experiencing a new culture. I feel so fortunate to have had these experiences, and to have been able to spend as much time as I did doing research in Gunung Palung.

After I finished my research, I left West Kalimantan, went back to university, and found a very different situation from before. While I still needed to pursue my degree, most of my friends had finished their studies. I worked as a private teacher during this time, but also continued to help out the Gunung Palung Orangutan Project if they needed research equipment or help with permits in Jakarta. During this time, I also was given the opportunity to go to Medan and Aceh to collect the research samples from Ketambe Research Site and bring them to Jakarta. This was also my first trip to Sumatra, so it was very exciting to be asked to do this and given this opportunity by Dr. Knott.



*The research station at Cabang Panti*

Almost a year after I finished my research, I finally graduated from university. Then, as a fresh graduate looking for a new job, I was fortunate enough to get the opportunity to go back to Cabang Panti Research Site a week after graduation. I was very enthusiastic to hear this news. It meant cutting short the job search, which no recent graduate relishes.

Now, I work for the project as a Botanical Research Assistant and find the work I do in camp fascinating and rewarding. I can apply what I had previously learned in university to this job position, but also have the opportunity to increase my knowledge and understanding of botany. Working

in this position, I process fruit and leaf samples, take photographs of the samples, and work with the GPS data, giving me the chance to develop my understanding of many different areas of research. Sometimes, I also process urine and fecal samples within the laboratory, which I really enjoy because of my interest in microbiology and because it reminds me fondly of my undergraduate days working in the lab.

In the past seven months, there have been so many wonderful things that have transpired in my work, which I am extremely thankful for. Sometimes I miss my family and friends in Jakarta, but overall, I feel very happy to work here and enjoy my job. My younger brother and sister live at home and still need me, but since I also need to support my family, I really appreciate the opportunity Dr. Knott has given me in allowing me to return to Cabang Panti. I continue to feel that I have much more to learn here, and I must develop my skills and grow as a person. I hope I can continue my studies in order to further pursue work in the field of conservation, but I am still unsure of exactly where that will take me. So, I will wait until I am ready, and when the time arrives, I know that my experience at Cabang Panti will help me realize my dreams.

Gunung Palung Orangutan Conservation Program  
(GPOCP)



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