



Gunung Palung Orangutan Conservation Program



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An e-newsletter from your friends in Borneo

Dear Friends and Supporters,

We are excited to bring you another installation of news from GPOCP. The past two months have been filled with visits from new sponsors, exciting tidings from camp, and plenty of fresh optimism in our fight to save the orangutans and conserve the Bornean rainforest. Recently, two of our core conservation efforts received funding through the Awely Foundation, and we were thrilled to host members of their team on their visit to our project. This collaboration been a boon for our organization, and our newfound relationship with the Awely Foundation holds the possibility for future cooperation.

We are also please to revisit the stories of our volunteer, Robert Rodriguez Suro. His [blog posts](#) have given our readers insight into what it means to live at Cabang Panti, but the article we have included here delves into the day-to-day trials and tribulations of camp life. There is a new story to be told every day when it comes to living in the rainforest, and we know you'll appreciate his colorful account.

It is amazing to be supported by such incredible team members here at GPOCP, and we are proud to share their stories with you, our supporters. It is the combination of hard work in the field and your generous backing that make our conservation and research efforts possible.

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

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**Help us Protect
Orangutans!**

Wildlife Crime Rapid Response Unit

GPOCP's strategy of combating wildlife crime through law enforcement and prosecution is taking a new strategic turn in 2014 with a cooperation agreement between GPOCP and SPORC, the newly-established

Happy reading!

Sincerely,



Cheryl Knott, Executive Director

[Gunung Palung Orangutan Conservation Program \(GPOCP\)](#)

New Award and Partnership for GPOCP in Indonesia

By Samuel Hamy, Program and Development Director

The Awely Foundation is a French Organization created in 2005, whose mission it is to link wildlife conservation and local development. To achieve this mission, Awely develops strategies for human-wildlife conflict mitigation, sustainable livelihood alternatives and environmental education.

The Amneville Zoo, founded in 1986 and located in North-Eastern France is today one of the most reputable zoos in Europe and houses 2000 animals, representing 360 species. Thanks to its resounding success and ever-growing number of visitors, the Zoo has decided to set aside more than 500,000 USD each year to support conservation programs in other countries.

In addition to supporting these programs, Awely and Amneville Zoo decided in early 2013 to create the "JMV Conservation and Development Award". This prize is awarded each year to a person living and working in Africa, Latin America, Asia, or Oceania (not in Australia or New-Zealand) on a wildlife conservation project based in one of these continents. This award is designed to recognize the effort of those whose work in the field has produced a significant, positive, and remarkable impact on the conservation of endangered species, through the use of notable development programs.



Award ceremony, Ketapang, March 5, 2014: H.Santerre (Amneville Zoo), T.Indrawan (GPCOP), R.Fulconis (Awely)

Indonesian Government's "Wildlife Crime Rapid Response Unit". Following its initial successes in countering wildlife smuggling at the Bornean Indonesia-Malaysia border, the SPORC unit is now about to be deployed around Gunung Palung National Park in collaboration with GPOCP and the National Park Authorities.

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

~Edmund Burke~

In April 2013, GPOCP's Field Director, Tito Indrawan, submitted a proposal which would fund a project linking two of GPOCP's strategic programs: the Customary Forest Initiative and the NTFP Groups Initiative, both aimed at promoting sustainable livelihood alternatives which prevent deforestation in and around Gunung Palung National Park and protect prime orangutan habitat. Under this project, the Customary Forest local group will produce durian candies (a delicacy all over South-East Asia), and the NTFP groups will produce a special attractive and degradable packaging for the candies.

This project appealed to the Awely and Amneville Zoo jury, and in October 2013, GPCOP was awarded the first ever JMV prize among 35 other competing organizations from 26 different countries. In addition to the grant awarded to GPCOP, Tito Indrawan was recognized as a "conservation hero" for his 14-year contribution to conservation efforts with GPCOP and received a special prize.

In March 2014, Renaud Fulconis, the Awely Foundation Executive Director and Hervé Santerre, the Amneville Zoo Deputy Director, came to visit GPCOP in West Kalimantan and officially presented the prize to Tito. Following their one-week visit to GPOCP's project sites, Renaud and Hervé were impressed with the achievements and the strong links the GPCOP team has established with the local communities. GPOCP was delighted and proud to hear that Awely and Amneville Zoo have now proposed a long-term partnership with GPOCP, in the form of a thematic annual funding, with the first year's funding going to our environmental education and awareness program, and the second year's most likely going toward our Human-Orangutan Conflict Program. GPOCP will be the first South-East Asia-based Organization to receive such support.

A Day in the Life: Cabang Panti

By Robert Rodriguez Suro, Volunteer Research Assistant

A beeping sound interrupts my dream, and the constructs of my imagination fade away as I'm ejected back into the world. Reality sets in and I remember who I am, and where I am. I'm in a tent, and it's 3:15 AM. The beeping was my wristwatch, and it's telling me that it's time to wake up. Soon, I will be making my way through the jungle in the darkness, weaving in and out of trees as I walk on the leafy narrow path that will take me to my destination: a nice cozy spot to sit underneath the orangutan nest, built high up in the understory of the forest canopy, as I wait for its resident to wake from his slumber.

For many, this might sound like an unusual way to start the day. But for me, a volunteer at Cabang Panti Research Station, it's just a typical morning. In fact, it has now been exactly 280 mornings of me waking up here as volunteer, in a tent on the other side of the world, rather than at home in the comforts of a bed. Half of my days are spent outside, in the rainforest. From the



*Volunteer Research Assistant, Robert Rodriguez
Suro*

humid depths of the swamp to the breezy heights of the mountain, the research assistants and I hike trail after trail in search of orangutans. Some days we get lucky and find one within a couple hours of leaving our cozy encampment, or we search for days without meeting a single individual. Once we do find an orangutan, it's time to follow.

Orangutans wake up very early, so we have to rise in the wee hours of the night to make our way to the orangutan nest before 5:00 AM. Once they're up, we're in for a marathon of a day. From around 6:00 AM to 6:00 PM, we follow our quarry. Not alone of course, but accompanied by Cabang Panti's project assistants, who take the important behavioral data on follows from dawn to dusk. What the orangutans do, what they eat, where they travel, and how far...all of this, the assistants record. We volunteers help out by collecting fruit and leaf samples from the trees they eat at, and also tracking the orangutans on our GPS unit, to record their range and movements. The other half of our days, when we are not searching or following, we spend at camp. Here, we identify and weigh fruits and other botanical specimens that get collected during follows, and help to enter the behavioral data into the computer database.

Those are the basics for a volunteer at GPOP. But since starting, I've found my job to be a whole lot more than that. I've learned that your job as a volunteer at GPOP can be whatever you want it to be, if you have the initiative to carve out a niche here with the strengths you possess. Even the volunteer contract alludes to this idea: "You may be given new tasks as your particular skills, interests, and talents become known." Since starting all those months ago back in August of 2013, I've learned a lot about myself, what I'm good at, and how I can best contribute to this project.

For years, I have carried a camera with me wherever I go, honing my skills in observation and photography. Here at GPOP, I've used that experience to work as a field photographer. Most mornings, whenever we have a new follow, I go out with the team and photograph the orangutans. It's not an easy job most of the time. The rainforest is just about the harshest environment a photographer can be faced with: there is not much light, it's a claustrophobic environment with branches, leaves, and vines blocking your view everywhere, and your target is high up in the trees most of the time. But I get the job done and come back to camp with photos of the orangutans, which are used to ensure that we properly ID each individual. The hope is that in the future, whenever there is any doubt about who a particular

orangutan is, others can go take a look at the photo database and confirm their identity. It's a fun job, and one that I enjoy very much.



Robert climbing a tree to obtain fruit samples.

Back in my old life, another hobby of mine was rock climbing. Here in the rainforest, there are not many rocks to climb, but there are a lot of trees. I've taken it upon myself to transition my rock climbing skills to the trees and collect important data for the project. Since I've started, I've climbed dozens of trees and have brought back botanical samples that will be analyzed at camp to learn more about orangutan nutrition.

It's true, life here is very different from my old one back in the US. I miss my friends and my family. I miss a whole lot of good food like pizza. I miss my bed. I miss the fall colors, and I miss the snow. Sometimes I feel I miss out on going out and having a regular social life. But a friend of mine told me I shouldn't miss all those things

back home. I'm having an awesome life here, and getting to live through an amazing and unique experience. Really, how many people gets to live in the rainforests of Borneo for a year, and follow orangutans, take photos and climb trees, every day? As a friend said, I shouldn't miss home, because it's home that misses me. This rainforest is a magical place, and I feel like the luckiest guy ever to wake up here day after day.

Gunung Palung Orangutan Conservation Program (GPOCP)



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