

Orangutan TIMES

Gunung Palung Orangutan Conservation Program

February 2011



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Building Character Through Environmental Education

Training teachers to integrate environmental education into their classroom curriculum every day

More than forty teachers and one principal from junior high and high schools located throughout the Ketapang urban area recently attended GPOCP's three-day teacher training workshop entitled, *Building the People's Character through the Integration of Environmental Education in the School*.

Designed to expand professional capacity directly within the region's schools, the trainings provide teachers with specialized knowledge and skills needed to effectively integrate environmental education into their classroom curriculum every day and across a wide variety of educational activities—including reading, writing, arithmetic, science and social studies.

The workshop was organized by GPOCP's Environmental Education Manager Mariamah Achmad with the help of local teachers. It was facilitated, in part, by Koen Setyawan, the coordinator of the Indonesian Environmental Education Network, of which GPOCP is a member. While in Ketapang Koen also participated in GPOCP's conservation puppet show at an elementary school near the Lubuk Baji education and ecotourism site built by GPOCP and the park office.





‘CODE RED’

A Special Message from Dr. Cheryl Knott,
GPOCP Co-Founder and Executive Director

The gold-speckled rays of the late afternoon sun sliced through the rainforest canopy, illuminating a small clearing on a sloping hillside deep within the Bornean rainforest. This was 1992 and my first trip to Gunung Palung National Park. This magical light that had reached the dark forest floor revealed the true brilliance of the reddish orange fur of a mother orangutan, her baby and older juvenile offspring, and the male who shadowed them from a few trees behind. As I lay on my back, pressed down amongst the slightly damp leaf litter, I watched them through my binoculars as they gradually traversed the trees encircling this small open space within the forest. Ignoring me, I recorded their movements and thought, ‘this is it.’ These are the animals I want to study and this is the place.

The female, Kristen, was one I would come to know well. Over the next 18 years we watched and recorded as she raised this infant and juvenile into adulthood and went on to have two more offspring—a perfect example of the long birth spacing and commitment female orangutans make as they raise these wiry little balls of fur to

maturity. Judging by the age of her offspring I estimated her to be at least 28 years old, just a year younger than me.

Skip ahead to 2010 and I am back in Gunung Palung National Park. This time with my children, Russell, age 10, and Jessica, age 6. Along with my husband, Tim, we have brought them for a second time to our forest home.

We are soon greeted with the news that a female has been found by Kim, a young Dutch master’s student, studying orangutan vocalizations. The female hasn’t eaten for several days and is slowly moving through a small area of peat swamp forest. We investigate and Tim takes close-up pictures of her. She looks familiar to me—with chiseled cheekbones that are so prominent they can only be one orangutan—Kristen. Comparing photos and notes over the past 18 years we confirm her identity as the detailed descriptions I made so many years ago exactly match this old female.

Days pass and we continue to follow her as she becomes weaker and weaker. She seems driven to keep moving, and yet her movements are aimless. Food is not abundant, but there is edible vegetation that she passes, making no attempt to consume it. As her grip on the branches fails, she slips

“The female, Kristen, was one I had come to know well. Over the next 18 years we watched and recorded as she raised this infant and juvenile into adulthood...”

down from her forest home, traversing a domain that is almost foreign to her. We have never before seen her on the ground. This spot is unique—a small patch of peat swamp forest—festooned with the largest patches of rare pitcher plants I’ve ever seen in this mosaic of habitats we call Gunung Palung. As her strength diminishes she tries to keep moving. Dragging herself a few steps forward she falls over on her side, only to rise again 10 minutes later and drag herself forward again. She stops to rest on her back with her



Kristen and baby Karla

Continued from page 2

hand on her forehead, shielding her eyes from bugs—a human-like look of misery and pain. How long can this go on? Every day we keep someone posted by her, at a comfortable distance so as not to distress her further. Every day we expect to be her last.

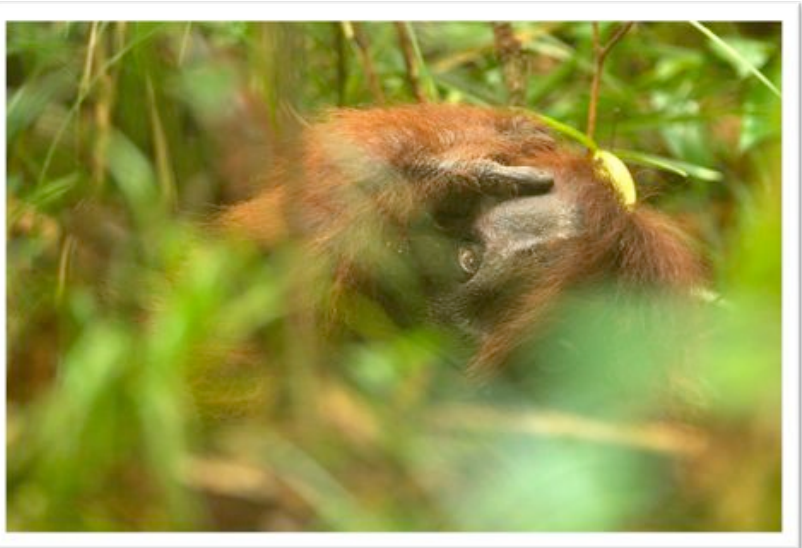
I think of Kristen’s life: by orangutan standards it’s been quite a success with at least four known offspring and at least 47 years to her credit. It’s as long as one could hope for in the wild. Her daughters have long moved on to set up their own ranges and raise their own offspring, leaving her to spend her last few days alone again, only accompanied by this closely related and curious species of human. We are moved by her plight. This fate of dragging oneself off alone to die on the forest floor is, thankfully, one that few of us can expect. As I realize my own good fortune in being here with my family, blessed with good health despite being her age, I reflect on the differences between orangutans and humans that have brought me here to this far corner of the globe. Humans in all populations are imbedded within family groups of various configurations. We provision our more closely spaced young, keep warm with fire and cooked food, and, if lucky, can expect to live far beyond the maximum 50 years that characterize wild apes.

Finally, on the 12th day of her ordeal Kristen lays down for the last time. It’s a startling sight, not for the stillness of death, but for her final resting position—flat on her back, with her arms perfectly crossed upon her chest and the soles of her feet pressed against each other in perfect symmetry.

“I think of Kristen’s life: by orangutan standards it’s been quite a success with at least four known offspring and at least 47 years to her credit.”



Dr. Cheryl Knott and her children scanning the forest canopy



August 2010: Kristen in her final days



Orangutans Rescued by GPOCP Investigation Team

But others are not so fortunate

Through extensive field investigation, GPOCP's Animal and Habitat Protection Team recently discovered two baby orangutans being illegally held in the field headquarters of PT Harita, a bauxite mine in Kendawangan, Ketapang. Telltale signs of other illegally-held wildlife, including a macaque, an eagle, a deer skin, and empty cages, were also found nearby. GPOCP learned that the orangutans were 'owned' by the mine's manager who kept them for hobby purposes or possibly for gifts. Despite the on-site presence of a military police unit, no action had been taken to address the violation, so GPOCP pushed the Ketapang Natural Resources Conservation Department (KSDA) for several weeks until permission was granted to rescue the animals.

On December 2, 2010 GPOCP along with KSDA and International Animal Rescue (IAR) seized the two baby orangutans—as well as a third orangutan found in a nearby village after its mother had been killed for orangutan meat. A film crew from National Geographic Adventure's "Don't Tell My Mother" program accompanied the rescue, as well as the Ketapang Police.

Sadly, GPOCP's field investigations also brought reports in recent months of three orangutans (one mother and her baby, and one male) killed at the Limpah Sejahtera palm oil concession. Based on GPOCP's work, it appears the plantation is paying local villagers 300,000-500,000 rupiah (US\$33-\$55) per orangutan to capture and transport

them to forests outside of the concession with specific orders not to kill. But capture methods are crude and aggressive, making them extremely dangerous and often deadly. More than a dozen at-risk orangutans still live in the remaining pockets of uncleared forest within the palm oil concession. GPOCP will continue its field investigations and expand its outreach and education work, including village discussions, mobile cinemas, mass media, T-shirts and other conservation awareness raising methods, to help ensure their survival and the survival of all orangutans throughout the region.



Palm Oil-Free Valentine's Day (because sweet isn't always so nice)

On Valentine's Day nothing says *I love you* more than a box of sweet, sumptuous chocolates. But what's really inside that box?

Unless you read the label and check the ingredients for palm oil, you may be getting more than you bargained for—*rainforest destruction!*

Palm oil is used in many consumer products, including chocolate, ice cream, crackers, chips, margarine, fruit juice, batters, soap, toothpaste, laundry powders, detergents, cosmetics and pet food to name but a few. The increased demand for palm oil, which is grown only in tropical environments, is fuelling destruction

of the rainforest habitat of Sumatran and Bornean orangutans, pushing these endangered species even closer to extinction.

So this Valentine's Day, show how much you care by shopping wisely, reading labels and choosing palm oil-free chocolates—sweet *and* nice!

“Orangutan Caring Week”

November 2010

GPOCP Events Attract Big Crowds!

As part of *Orangutan Caring Week*, GPOCP organized a day-long event at Pulau Maya Beach in Sukadana, beginning with a beach clean-up ‘health walk’ organized in partnership with the Kayong Utara Department of Health. The event included a mini-parade from Siduk Elementary School with students dressed as an orangutan, illegal loggers, and logging mafia boss, among others.

More than four hours of theatre, live music and puppet shows—all with conservation themes and set up by GPOCP on a small beach-side stage—followed. All told, an estimated 800 to 1,000 residents enjoyed the day’s fun-filled activities that were designed to raise the community’s collective conservation conscience.





Curbing Orangutan Hunting in Kalimantan

New demand for bush meat a growing threat

opportunistic, whereby people encounter orangutans while in pursuit of something else (illegal logging, clearing forest for palm oil plantations, or hunting of other species).

However, in 2010 we received

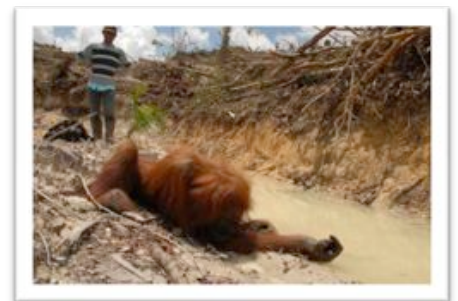
reports of people traveling to the region from other parts of Borneo specifically to purchase orangutan meat. A male orangutan was recently killed near Gunung Palung National Park's research zone for one such buyer.

GPOCP has no legal authority to enforce wildlife protections, but we investigate reports of illegal hunting and share the information we gather with relevant authorities, pressing them to take further action. We are also responding by increasing our conservation awareness efforts in select villages, and by reaching out to local hunters, stressing the importance of respecting protected areas and educating them about the critical role orangutans play in maintaining the overall health of the forest ecosystem, including populations of legal game.

Any sustainable solution to orangutan hunting will require the participation and support of local communities, and our initial response has been very positive. GPOCP's Animal and Habitat Protection Program Manager Tito Indrawan was a featured speaker at Ketapang's first sharpshooting competition in November, and several GPOCP staff attended the event to talk with hunters and local police about the importance of wildlife protections. We look forward to continuing our cooperation with such groups as we continue to look for new ways to build local conservation coalitions and protect Asia's last great ape.

For centuries, local people in Kalimantan have hunted wild orangutans for meat. While the 'bushmeat problem' in Borneo isn't as menacing as that facing other great apes in Africa, the rapid destruction and deterioration of orangutan habitat in Kalimantan makes any additional human activity that kills wild orangutans a significant threat to the survival of this endangered species. Recent scientific research indicates that even a small amount of hunting can seriously threaten the long-term viability of an orangutan population.

We have been particularly concerned with recent events around Gunung Palung that indicate hunting could be a growing problem in our region. The vast majority of orangutan hunting in recent years has been



Many Thanks to Our Recent Funders & Donors

Recent Funders: Oregon Zoo • Phoenix Zoo • Leakey Foundation (Research) • Tides Foundation • Woodland Park Zoo

Recent Donors: Richard Bribiescas • Barbara Moffet



Mission:

The Gunung Palung Orangutan Conservation Program's mission is to develop a human community that is aware and motivated to conserve and protect the orangutan, its habitat, and biodiversity



Visit our website at www.SaveGPorangutans.org to learn more about ways you can help protect the endangered orangutan

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Please forward this newsletter to your friends. To subscribe, send an email to hollisgpcocp@gmail.com



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We're Growing...Again!

The final touches were put on the new wing of our Bentangor Environmental Education Center in Pampang, including cabinets, bunk beds, a plaque for the Delores Mason Multimedia Room (dedicated by Orangutan Conservancy). Local Dayak artist Anes added a beautiful flanged male orangutan mural on our front porch. We also purchased much-needed equipment for the center and the environmental education program in general, including new tents, backpacks and other related field supplies.

Future plans include building a storage space for our sustainable farming supplies and an improved wastewater management system with a series of small tanks to naturally filter wastewater before releasing it into our fishpond and canal system.

Activities continue at the Center, with our conservation youth volunteers helping to develop and maintain bird watching stations and an education trail for visiting elementary school students. We also continue to build our bamboo artisan cooperative that was formed in 2010; additional trainings are planned for 2011 to promote other non-timber forest products in the communities surrounding Gunung Palung National Park.

We'll keep you posted...



ORANGUTANS NEED YOU!

Interested in supporting our work with a tax deductible gift?

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Donate by Credit Card:

Visit our website at www.SaveGPorangutans.org, which will take you to a secure PayPal page.

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