



Gunung Palung Orangutan Conservation Program



October 2014

Issue: 22

Code RED

An e-newsletter from your friends in Borneo

Dear Friends and Supporters,

Welcome to the latest edition of our Code RED newsletter. This month, our issue includes a feature on one of GPOCP's fastest growing conservation efforts: our Non-Timber Forest Products. Two of our talented associates, Ibu Ina and Pak Darwani, recently made the trip to neighboring villages with members of the SAMPAN program, to share their knowledge of artisanal crafts such as bracelet and basket weaving. With the amount of information learned and taught, the trip was an enormous success, and we would like to thank both Ibu Ina and Pak Darwani for their enthusiastic participation.

Additionally, our new Field Manager, Katherine Scott, brings us her first impressions of life at Cabang Panti, as well as some exciting stories from her previous work with Bornean orangutans. It is quite the asset to have her on board our team, and we are thrilled to bring you her perspective.

Last, but certainly not least, we are proud to announce that this month our wildlife crime investigation and monitoring team managed to rescue four abused orangutans from households where they were being kept as pets. It is always upsetting to see wildlife treated disrespectfully, but we are happy to be part of the effort to relieve these orangutans' suffering and hope to continue putting an end to this sort of abuse.

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Help us
Protect Orangutans!

Orangutan Rescue

Our wildlife crime investigation and monitoring team was incredibly productive this month, and their hard work led to the rescue of four

We hope that you enjoy the articles below, and as always, we thank you for reading and for your continued support of our work.

Sincerely,



Cheryl Knott, Executive Director

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

Community Learning and Conservation

By Wendy Tamariska and Cassie Freund

The greatest of GPOCP's strengths is our connection with our community and the way that bond forges new conservation efforts. We partner with many local NGOs to advance our mission to conserve the orangutans of Gunung Palung. One of our Indonesian partners is Friends of the Coastal Communities, known locally as SAMPAN, who, like us, have a Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFP) program that promotes forest conservation through traditional artisanal crafting. This partnership boosts local conservation motivation while also improving local livelihoods and preserving cultural practices in Kalimantan. SAMPAN focuses on mangrove forests, which are a vital life source to the communities living in and around them but are quickly disappearing due to development and pollution. However, these forests still have an abundant supply of *Pandanus* and *Nipa* palm, which are a great renewable resource for crafting traditional mats and baskets.



A sampling of the kinds of products these two artisanal craft groups produce

With the shared goals of conservation and artisanal growth in mind, SAMPAN recently invited two of our crafters, Ibu Ida and Pak Darwani, to train members of their community groups in two local

orangutans that were being illegally held as pets. We would like to extend our thanks to the local conservation authority (BKSDA) and International Animal Rescue - Ketapang for their collaboration on these cases! These orangutans can now begin to live peacefully in rehabilitation, while we work to release them back into the wild.

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"We should not forget that it will be just as important to our descendants to be prosperous in their time as it is to us to be prosperous in our time."

~Theodore Roosevelt~

villages. For the past two years GPOCP and our crafters' groups have been working to improve product quality and develop a business model so that the artisans can earn money by selling their wares to local and national markets, but this invitation was an unforeseen (and welcome!) surprise. Ibu Ida and Pak Darwani each earned about a typical month's wages over just five days of work, a testament to the fact that traditional crafting and forest conservation can truly improve local livelihoods. This experience was valuable to both of them for many reasons outside of being a financial boon, and we've invited them to share their stories here.



Pak Darwani instructs a craftswoman on a new technique for basket weaving

Pak Darwani: From the first time we began meeting people in Senduruhan and Manyumbung [the training villages], I felt like we were among friends. We immediately began gathering information on the types of crafts being made so that we could get advice on which designs and products will be good for the local, national and international markets. The participants were very eager to learn about new techniques and perfect their crafts, and Ibu Ida and I worked together with them to deepen the experience for all of us. We're so proud and happy that we could share our skills with them and at the same time get new ideas for our own crafts!



Ibu Ina gives a lesson to a group of local craftswomen

Ibu Ida: I feel really proud that, although I'm not an expert about crafting and weaving, I am capable of sharing my knowledge with others. Not only that, but I also gained new knowledge from them! Aside from just making new friends, I feel that I was able to get them excited about weaving and crafting, especially the young people. I was able to show them new modifications to modernize their crafts and to suggest designs that they had never tried before. Because of this experience I am newly motivated to preserve our tradition as crafters and weavers from natural materials. This is why engaging youth is so important, because otherwise the skills would go extinct. We should seek knowledge from those who know about these things while they still exist, and distribute more of this knowledge to those in need.

Over the five days of training, Ibu Ida and Pak Darwani were able to work with over 100 people from two villages, including everyone from the village heads to young children, with the sole mission of learning and practicing traditional crafting. This experience is incredibly motivating to all of us. By supporting traditional NTFP crafting, we are also conserving vital forest ecosystems, so that we can all continue to enjoy the beauty of Gunung Palung and the sight of orangutans moving from tree to tree in their natural habitat.

On Primatology and "Real Jobs"

By Katherine Scott

Waking up to the sound of duetting gibbons, incessant cicadas and a gently flowing river, I often have to pinch myself to check I'm in the right place.

When I was younger I had my heart set on becoming a forensic pathologist (too much CSI I think!) but somewhere along the way everything changed and I now find myself waking up in a jungle instead. Swapping a dark dingy lab for the rainforest makes quite the difference, and I can't really say I know how it happened. I have always had an interest in nature. My first trip to Borneo when I was 16 really seemed to ignite this passion further; however these trips still

remained just a 'holiday' initially, a brief intermission from the reality of a 'proper' job. I spent a few weeks traveling in Sabah and Sarawak with school friends, trekking and sleeping in the jungle and exploring the island's beauty. I guess this is the starting point when I really decided I liked the idea of carving a career in this field- but in typical-teenager style I couldn't make my mind up about exactly which path to go down, ever-influenced by my parents desire for me to become a doctor or lawyer.

Eight years later I find myself back on that same island, although this time on the other side of the border in Kalimantan, having defied my parents and taken the ride with mother nature. I absolutely love my job in Gunung Palung, as every day has the potential to bring something new and exciting. I live in one of the last primary rainforests left in the world, which also happens to be full of my favorite great apes.



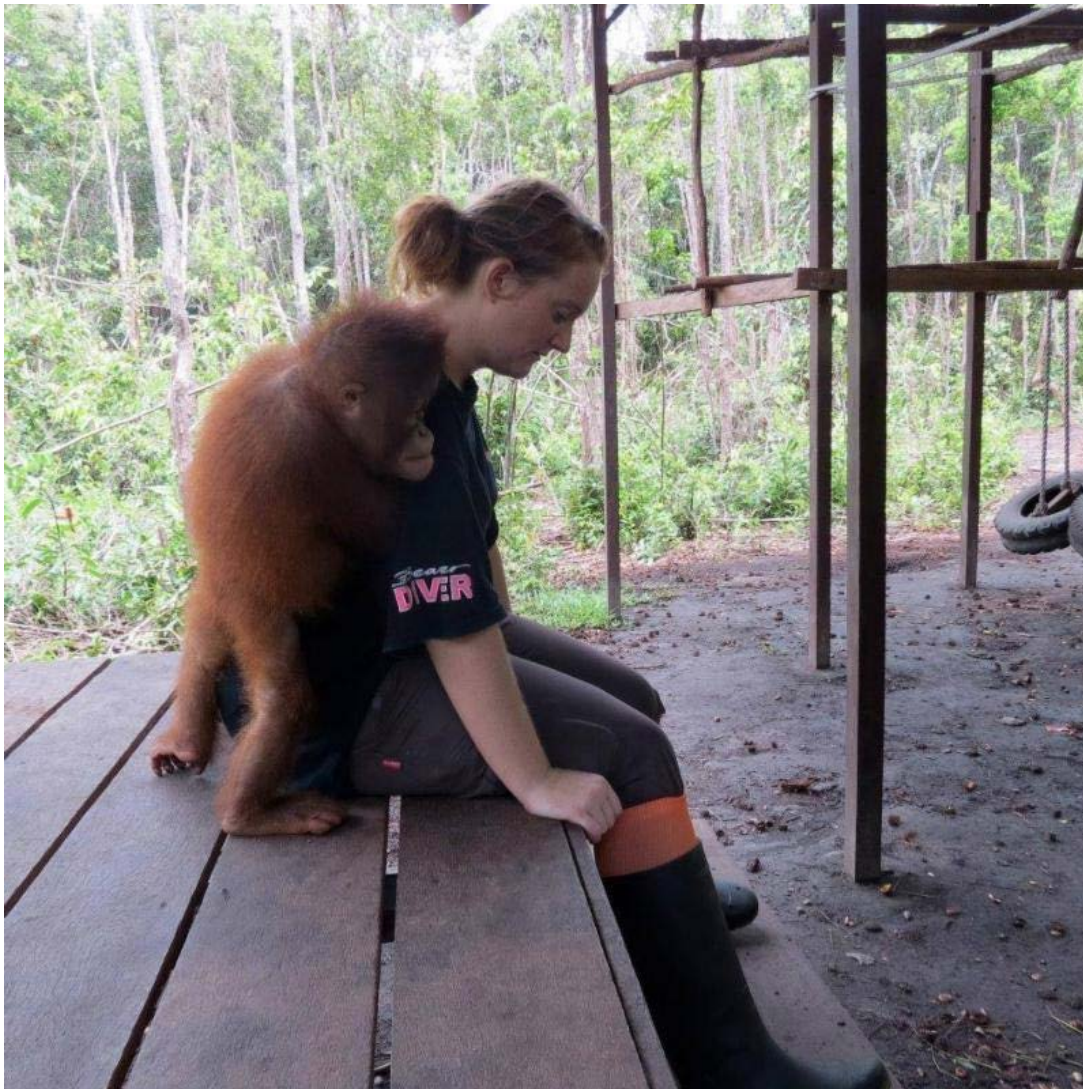
Kat searches for orangutans on one of her previous excursions to Borneo

My job, first and foremost, is as Research Manager of the Gunung Palung Orangutan Research Project. As Manager, my day can consist of anything from sorting fruit or hormone samples, to managing camp, to chasing orangutans through the forest, or sometimes to desk-related work. I have to admit, I don't tend to enjoy the latter quite as much as the other perks (getting peed on at 4am by a sleepy orangutan is also a contender for least exciting). My workdays can be long but I definitely enjoy them, as you can't really complain when you live in such an idyllic setting. Honestly, some days I feel like the most spoilt person on the planet- rather than spend my life in a stressful concrete jungle, I have traded it for the real thing.

With approximately 2500 orangutans in Gunung Palung, you would be forgiven for thinking that finding an orangutan was easy! I had visions of literally walking into orangutans left right and centre. However these guys don't make it so simple! Swimming through rivers, fighting clingy rattan plants and trying not to get swarmed by ants is all part and parcel of trying to find the animals. Then comes the job of following them each day; sometimes it's a nice easy jaunt, others days it's a sprint to keep up with them. My first orangutans consisted of a rather amorous young male chasing a not-so-receptive young female, so we spent the day chasing this courtship as they went further and further afield. Great for data collection, but I realized pretty quickly that my body needed some acclimatization before I found my forest legs - I was absolutely exhausted after my first day.

I guess I should probably mention the previous experiences I have which enabled me to get this

job. I started looking for work-experience in the UK and volunteered at several zoos and the Monkey Sanctuary as well. I've been lucky with my primate-based experience, having worked extensively in Borneo, the UK, and South Africa. In terms of Indonesian primate experience, I spent a few months in Balikpapan Bay studying proboscis monkeys and their behavior. Although this species can be seen really easily along the waterways across Borneo, they still remain pretty elusive in terms of their behavior, and little is actually known of what they spend their days doing. I was then lucky enough to work at Orangutan Foundation International (OFI) in Central Kalimantan, where I worked with orangutans in the rehabilitation centre, mainly dealing with enrichment and nursery day-releases. It definitely opened my eyes to the issues with the pet trade in Indonesia, but also enabled me to learn a considerable amount about the much-publicized 'palm oil'. Nothing hit home harder than driving for 4 straight hours on the way to an orangutan release-site and seeing nothing but palm after palm after palm. However my experience was not all doom-and-gloom! I was given the rare experience of working hands-on with orangutans and I learnt a lot about the complexities of their needs and behaviors, plus I was able to witness an orangutan release first-hand.



Kat shares a tender moment with a young orangutan at her previous job with Orangutan Foundation International

My most recent stint in Indonesia was when I lived in a palm oil/acacia plantation in East Kalimantan for several months last year. Coincidentally, OFI had been doing a lot of training with workers about orangutans in this plantation, so everything tied in nicely. My job was to locate and follow orangutans, recording behavior and nutritional information. I was really surprised that

so many orangutans seem to live and thrive in an area that, from the outside, looks to have been decimated by industry, but in fact seems to still provide a decent environment for the orangutans to live in.

After the plantation, I spent a year in the UK, which was the longest I had been in one place for at least 6 years. I told myself I would try a 'normal person' job for a while to see if there was any truth in the mantra my parents repeated daily: "When will you be getting a proper job?" Alas my career in car insurance was not meant to be. The call of the jungle was too great and here (again!) I find myself eight thousand miles from home. I feel like I have been doing this job for a few minutes, but my watch tells me I have been here a month now. Over the next few years I am looking forward to learning more about orangutans and also working with my team. I have so much to learn, and I know I will see some pretty incredible things over time.

I think my parents are getting used to this 'primate lark'. Maybe.

Gunung Palung Orangutan Conservation Program
(GPOCP)



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