

Gunung Palung Orangutan Conservation Program



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Code RED

An e-newsletter from your friends in West Borneo

Dear Friends and Supporters,

Greetings from Ketapang! I have just arrived here this week and have enjoyed catching up with the conservation and research staff. We're gearing up for a busy August and preparing for the upcoming GP30+ conference. I can hardly wait to meet up with old friends and colleagues and to share our research and conservation results with a broader audience.

Below we would like to update you on what's been happening over here with our programs, starting with the first article about a very productive trip our Environmental Education team took in June. These expeditions are a

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GP30+ is Almost Here!

new strategy that we're taking to educate the communities living around Gunung Palung National Park about orangutan conservation, and thus far it's proven a fun and successful approach!

Our second article this month is about an experience Research Manager, Kat Scott, had earlier this year. Large fruiting trees attract so many types of wildlife, and make it easy for the team to locate orangutans when little else in the forest is fruiting. These situations also allow us to observe social behavior, a rarity for these great apes. So, what happens when 7-8 orangutans crowd around the same tree? Scroll down to find out!

Sincerely,



Cheryl Knott, Executive Director

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

Expedition: Nanga Tayap

By Mariamah Achmad, GPOCP Environmental Education Manager

One exciting new development in our conservation program this year is the addition of "Environmental Education Expeditions" to our repertoire of activities. These expeditions are designed to target remote communities around Gunung Palung National Park that also have relatively high rates of wildlife crime, and are part of our efforts to target audiences that we have never before reached through our Environmental Education program. Last month, GPOCP's Environmental Education team went on an expedition to Nanga Tayap county in Ketapang regency, more specifically two villages called Batu Mas and Kayong Utara. These villages lie on the south-eastern side of GPNP. The expedition lasted for about five days, during which time our team held eight activities: two orangutan-themed puppet shows in elementary schools, two in-class lectures about orangutan behavior and ecology in junior high schools, two community discussions with local adults, and two evenings of mobile cinema, during which we showed conservation-themed films. Our main goal was to encourage people to care about the biodiversity of Gunung Palung, especially orangutans, and to teach them about the importance of intact rainforests.

GPOCP & ASRI Team Up for Orangutans

Early this month our Environmental Education team went to Pangkalan Jihing, a small, remote village on the east side of Gunung Palung National Park, in conjunction with Alam Sehat Lestari's mobile health clinic. This is the first time our two organizations have ever collaborated on these particular activities, and it was a great hit. We showed documentary movies about the jungle, gave an orangutan-themed puppet show for school kids, and got to know the local community. We'll definitely be doing it again soon!

Final Registration Call for GP30+!

We're just a few days away from GP30+! If you're planning to come but haven't registered yet, the link to the



Elementary school students in Batu Mas village pose with endangered species coloring books published by GPOCP, with support from Orangutan Outreach.

The experiences in each village were very different from each other. Batu Mas village used to be close to the forest, but now is quite far away because there are two oil palm plantation companies in the vicinity, P.T. BGA and P.T. LHP. The students who attended our activities in this village do not know much about wildlife and none of them had ever seen an orangutan. The adults in the communities also said that nowadays they rarely see orangutans in the surrounding area. They told us that they really missed the forest, because they no longer have a natural source of fruits and vegetables and the weather in the village feels much hotter and drier.

registration page is available [here](#). We're looking forward to reuniting with everyone.

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"Society is defined not only by what it creates, but what it refuses to destroy."

-John Sawhill -



A smallholder oil palm farm near Batu Mas. This is likely owned by a local community member, but the landscape in the area is dominated by two large plantations, so oil palm is a common sight here.

Kayong Utara village, on the other hand, is located in the middle of intact forest. This Dyak village is one of the more isolated villages in Ketapang district, and they are too remote to be on the region's electric grid, so every night from 6-10 pm the entire community gets their electricity from the village's generator. This power system is largely independently financed by residents, with donations of diesel fuel from a nearby logging company (P.T. SJM). The village also borders P.T. BGA, the same palm oil company from Batu Mas. All things considered, the forest in this village is still in good condition. One local livelihood is harvesting honey from the hives of honey bees that inhabit the forest, which is a sustainable source of income that doesn't harm the environment. Here we found that the students' knowledge about orangutans was better than in Batu Mas.

However, we also discovered that about 20% of the students had eaten orangutan in the past, which indicates that there has been orangutan hunting in the past 10 years. I was glad that we came to this village, because we were able to discuss with these students why orangutans should not be eaten and how important they are to the rainforest ecosystem.



Mariamah gives a classroom lecture about orangutan behavior and ecology to junior high school students as part of the Environmental Education expedition.

During this activity, our Environmental Education team was able to reach over 400 people. We were very impressed by the local village leaders, who were both very engaged with our work and even attended our school visits! Hopefully by building relationships with them, we will be able to influence orangutan conservation in Nanga Tayap. The expedition was very tiring - the condition of the roads was quite poor in many places, with enormous potholes from oil palm trucks that made the drive uncomfortable. However, we had a great time, meeting new friends and interacting with the students to teach them about orangutans. One of the recent Bornean Orangutan Caring Scholarship recipients, Deri Irawan, joined us on the expedition, and we were very thankful for his assistance. He hasn't even entered university yet, but is well on his way to becoming a community conservation leader! Although the expedition was challenging, we are already looking forward to the next one in August, and to continuing to use this educational strategy in the future.

The Great Battle of the Artocarpus

By Kat Scott, Research Manager

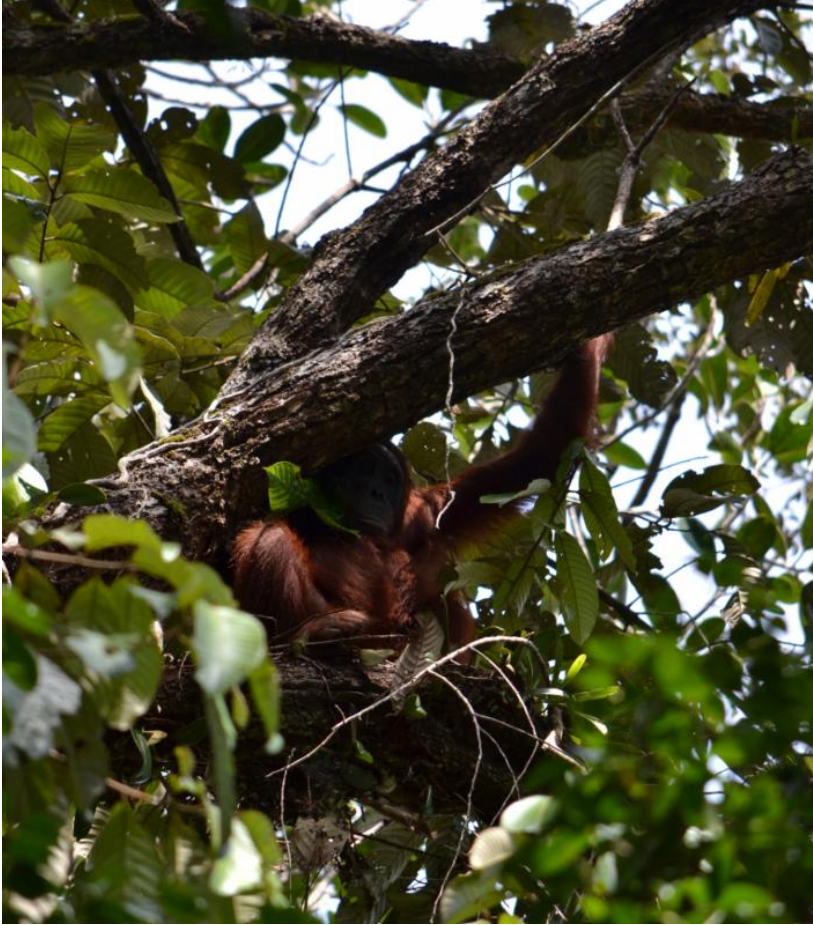
This story begins with Codet (as so many of my field stories do). April had brought rain showers and little else. Nothing in the forest was fruiting, so it seemed that most of the orangutans were resting somewhere out of our reach. We had only been following Bilbo, an unflanged male, whom we could keep hold of for just a few days. Bilbo's presence, however, had coaxed Codet out of hiding, as he was in the same area and long-calling like crazy, presumably in order to get this 'intruder' to move on. Bilbo hastily left the boundaries of Cabang Panti research site, and I located Codet from his incessant calling and loud crashing through the trees. It

had been a long day and I decided to let Codet go, knowing that, as long as he kept long-calling, he could be easily relocated the next day. How wrong was !! Codet went silent and disappeared, and our team was unable to locate him again.



Artocarpus fruits, or jackfruit, vary in size, shape and texture and are a preferred fruit of orangutans. Some species are commonly eaten by humans as well.

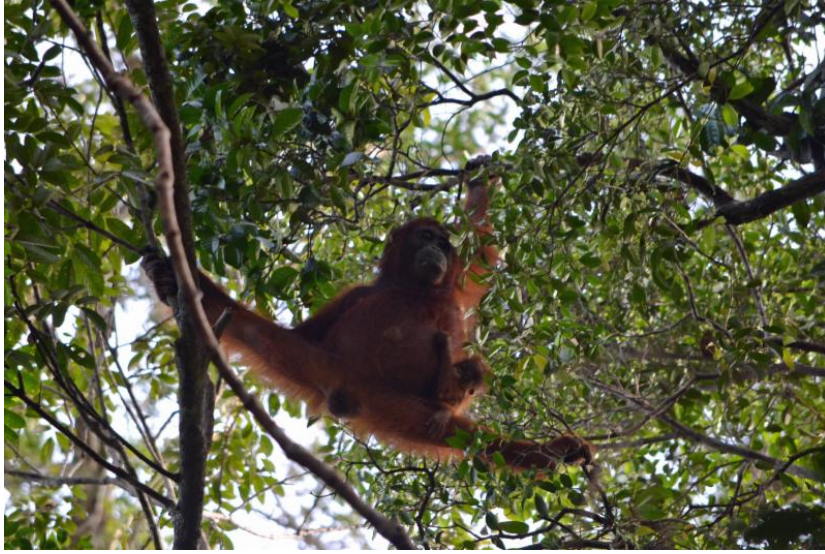
A few weeks later, we found Codet in exactly the same area, eating in a large *Artocarpus* tree. Jumi, an adult female, was in sight but reluctantly hanging out on the side lines until Codet finished and she could make a move. This tree appeared to be the only one fruiting in the vicinity and over the next few days we realized it was a magnet for orangutans in the surrounding area. During our first day of following Codet, he moved away from the tree to make a nest and take a nap, with Jumi immediately moving in after him to take her position in the *Artocarpus*. The afternoon was rather low-key, until we heard a noise close by. Codet jumped straight out of his nest and kiss-squeaked, indicating he was about to long call (this is one of his stranger traits!). Then he came low to the ground and grumbled right in the direction of a new intruder. Several of us chased after the running animal to find out who or what it was. A kiss-squeaking in the trees directly above stopped us in our tracks and we realized that the newcomers were an adult female orangutan and her infant. She was obviously very shaken by Codet's threatening behavior and hid from him in the trees. Codet, who was clearly perturbed by someone trying to invade his food source, stayed near the ground before swinging upwards and moving back into the *Artocarpus*, displacing Jumi, who skulked off to a nearby tree and made herself a leaf pillow while she waited.



*Jumi rests her head on a leaf pillow while waiting for Codet to finish eating from the *Artocarpus* tree. Photo: Kat Scott*

The new female and her infant made their way back to the *Artocarpus* and managed to sneak into the fruiting tree right under Codet's nose. Jumi quickly followed suit. For the next hour, everyone tolerated each other's presence and all that could be heard above was the chomping of three (and a half) relatively satiated orangutans. Soon, the sky began to darken, and everyone took off in different directions to make their nests for the night. Suddenly, Codet swung around and long-called at the mother-infant pair again. She quickly fled the scene, nesting near the *Artocarpus* tree but out-of-reach of Codet. Jumi sat and watched this play out before bundling branches and leaves to construct her bed for the night.

What followed for the next few days was more of the same. Each morning before light, Jumi and Codet were in the *Artocarpus* eating and generally tolerating one another's presence. They have often been seen in consort before, but this was my first time meeting them together. On one of the following days, Jumi displaced another mother-infant, displaying a lot of aggression, and eventually Codet left. Once Codet had gone, this opened the gates for two unflanged males, Bilbo and Bosman, who ate in the tree under the watchful eye of Jumi, who apparently had appointed herself gatekeeper to the only fruit source around. The original mother-newborn pair turned out to be Bibi, an orangutan who has been followed in Cabang Panti for many years, with her new baby. Bibi's adolescent daughter, Berani, arrived a few days later to join in the fight for *Artocarpus* fruits.



Bibi, and her new infant, join in the Artocarpus feeding frenzy.

After several days in the same area, our focal animals moved from the tree, but we know it was frequented by gibbons, red langurs and many more orangutans after we left. The behavior we witnessed over these few days is interesting for two reasons. For a start, multiple orangutans co-feeding is something that we have witnessed to varying degrees over the years, but we rarely see so many orangutans fighting over a single food source. The other interesting thing was that, when they were intolerant toward each other, these orangutans were really not that aggressive, as opposed to behavior one might observe in some other primate species. The reappearance of some orangutans we have not seen for a while, such as Jumi and Bibi was also very exciting, as we still don't know where they go when not inside the boundaries of the research site. The story of the battle of the *Artocarpus* just goes to show how you never know when a normal day in the forest will turn extraordinary - that's part of the magic of Gunung Palung!

Gunung Palung Orangutan Conservation Program (GPOCP)

<http://saveGPorangutans.org>

savegporangutans@gmail.com



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