

# Gunung Palung Orangutan Conservation Program



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## Code RED

An e-newsletter from your friends in West Borneo

Dear Friends and Supporters,

I've just returned to the US from a very busy summer in Indonesia! This issue of our newsletter focuses on our very successful GP30+ Symposium in Sukadana and post-conference trip to the study site. First, we present some of the highlights of the Symposium and the talks and special events that were held. Then, learn about some of the activities that were enjoyed during the week-long trip to Cabang Panti.

Thank you to everyone who attended and who made these events possible! For those who couldn't come this time - we'll see you at GP35!

Sincerely,

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## **GP30+ Symposium: Sharing Over 30 Years of Research and Conservation**

*By Cassie Freund, GPOCP Program Director*

As all of our loyal readers and supporters may know, earlier this month we hosted the GP30+ Conference, celebrating over 30 years of research and conservation work at the Cabang Panti Research Station in Gunung Palung National Park. Over the past three decades, over 150 foreign and Indonesian researchers have done field work at Cabang Panti, and these researchers have been supported by many Indonesian academic institutions and government agencies. GP30+ was the perfect way to bring all of these people together to share research results, as well as to relive great memories and make new connections! The main event was a two-day Symposium, held on August 6-7th at the Mahkota Kayong Hotel in Sukadana, featuring presentations from 15 invited speakers. The Symposium, was attended by over 100 people, including current and former researchers and field assistants, local government officials, and area conservation organizations.

The Symposium opened with welcome speeches from both the Bupati (district head) of Kayong Utara regency and Pak Dadang Wardhana, the head of the Gunung Palung National Park Bureau. These opening remarks were followed by a keynote presentation by Dr. Mark Leighton, the founder of the Cabang Panti Research Site. He shared the history of the station, from the very first research trip, before Gunung Palung was an official National Park, to what it has become today. Everyone, even our Indonesian guests who aren't fluent in English, had a great time looking at his old photos and listening to the stories about the early days of research at Cabang Panti. It was amazing to hear his speech and see how much progress has been made over the past 30 years! The morning session on August 6th closed with a series of presentations about orangutan research in GPNP, with talks by Dr. Cheryl Knott (primatologist and founder of the Gunung Palung Orangutan Project and Yayasan Palung), Wahyu Susanto (Research Director of Yayasan Palung), Andrea DiGiorgio (Ph.D. student, Boston University), and Taufiq Purnama (Indonesian Institute of Sciences). Dr. Knott discussed the history and major research achievements of the Gunung Palung Orangutan Project and the other speakers presented their more specific research findings.



A few months ago, we were disappointed to see that the landowner next door to our Bentangor Environmental Education Center had cleared and burned his land, which also destroyed some of the forest on our land. We recently learned that his property is for sale, and we want to purchase it to expand Bentangor. This land will make the perfect natural laboratory for students to learn about the negative impacts of land clearing, and to observe natural forest regeneration. However, we need at least \$2,500 in emergency funding to make it happen! We've started a crowdfunding campaign to raise money. Please read



*Dr. Mark Leighton, founder of the Cabang Panti Research Station, gave the keynote address. Photo by Dessy Rasel Ratnasari.*

The second session of the day focused on ecological research. Presenters included Dr. Andrew Marshall (founder of the Gibbon and Red Leaf Monkey Project, University of Michigan), Dr. Campbell Webb (Yayasan ASRI), Pak Riyandi (Tanjungpura University), Pak Kobayashi (Indonesia/Japan-REDD+ Project), and Edward Tang (former research assistant and Environmental Education Coordinator of Yayasan Palung). The presentations were highly varied, touching on topics including the ecology of mangrove forests, sink and source animal habitats, the phenology and productivity of the Gunung Palung rainforest, and the avian diversity of the National Park. Together these presentations highlighted the importance of the entire suite of research topics that have been addressed at Cabang Panti over the past 30 years.

the full story, check out the rewards for backers, and consider donating to our efforts [HERE](#).

## Chasing Orangutans Into an Unknown Frontier



This month, former GP volunteer and current National Geographic Young Explorer, Robert Rodriguez Suro's, first blog post on his orangutan research project was published as part of the NatGeo Voices series. [Click here](#) to read all about his plans to follow wild male orangutans outside of the boundaries of Cabang Panti Research Site and follow the series for future updates.

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*Speakers and conference attendees Dan Gavin, Cam Webb, Mark Leighton, Tim Laman, Dadang Wardhana, Andrew Marshall, Cheryl Knott, and Andrea Johnson. Photo by Dessy Rasal Ratnasari.*

To share the GP30+ celebration with the local community, on the evening of August 6th we hosted a gathering, open to the public, at Datok Beach in Sukadana. The event opened with performances by two traditional, musical groups from Tanjung Gunung, which is the village that anyone hiking into Cabang Panti passes through. The first group was all adult women and the second all girls. This was their first public performance, and the crowd very much enjoyed the music. After the entertainment, the audience was treated to a slideshow presentation by National Geographic photographer, Dr. Tim Laman. For nearly an hour, Tim shared photos and stories about the biodiversity of Gunung Palung with the crowd. His photos highlighted the beauty of this rainforest ecosystem, allowing people to see the National Park through fresh eyes, and - hopefully - inspiring them to protect and conserve the area.

The second day of the Symposium, August 7th, focused on the conservation work being done in and around Gunung Palung National Park. Presentations were given by Cassie Freund (Program Director of GPOCP), Ety Rahmawati (Yayasan ASRI), Budi Sempurna (Gunung Palung National Park Bureau), Yoshikura (Indonesia/Japan-REDD+ Project), and Juanisa Andiani (International Animal Rescue). These talks showcased the range of conservation work being done in the GP landscape, including environmental education, promoting sustainable livelihoods, and mitigating human-orangutan conflict. After a break for lunch, all of the Symposium participants were invited to GPOCP's Bentangor Environmental Education Center in Pampang Harapan village for a tour of our field trip facilities and to watch a demonstration by our Non-Timber Forest Product artisans. We had a huge crowd, and it was great to host people at Bentangor, because many had never been there before. GPOCP staff led field trips, the artisans taught participants how to make baskets and jewelry, and our guests even had a chance to support rainforest conservation by purchasing some traditional handicrafts!

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"As knowledge increases, wonder deepens."

-Charles Morgan -



*Jito Sugardjito, Kobayashi Hiroshi, Dessy Rasel Ratnasari, Dadan Kusnandar, Edward Tang and Wuryantari Setiadi visit our Bentangor Environmental Education Center. Those on the right are sporting the conference t-shirt, based on a design painted by Mark Leighton's sister, Kimberly Boulon, back in 1988. Photo by Dessy Rasel Ratnasari.*

Thank you everyone for making GP30+ a huge success. We're grateful to all of the participants, including our partners from Tanjungpura University, the Indonesian National University, UNAS, the Indonesian Institute of Sciences, and the Eijkman Institute in Jakarta, who traveled to West Kalimantan to attend the Symposium. We'd also like to thank the Gunung Palung National Park Bureau for their ongoing support of our research, and the Wenner-Gren Foundation, JICA, and our individual sponsors for their generous donations to GP30+.

## **Cabang Panti Discovered (and Re-Discovered)**

*By Cheryl Knott, GPOCP Executive Director*

Following the two day Symposium, we were thrilled to have many of the conference participants come visit the research station - some for the first time and some after more than 20 years away. The hike to the station is at least 13km and can be quite challenging - thus, kudos to all for making this extra effort. Among our special guests were Yayasan Palung Board Members, Dr. Barita Manullang and Pak Darmawan Liswanto (FFI). We also were very honored to have Dr. Dadan Kusnandar, Dean of the Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences at UNTAN, and UNTAN Docent, Pak Riyandi, join us, along with Dr. Wendy Erb from Rutgers University. It was a homecoming for many former researchers, including study site founder, Dr. Mark Leighton (Harvard University), Dr. Lisa Curran (Stanford University) and her Indonesian

counterpart, Dessy Rasel Ratnasari (Simpur Hutan), Dr. Dan Gavin (University of Oregon) and Andrea Johnson (EIA). Dr. Andrew Marshall (University of Michigan, Director of the KKL Project and YP Board member), Dr. Campbell Webb (Yayasan ASRI), Dr. Tim Laman (National Geographic), Endro Setiawan (BTNGP), Wayhu Susanto and Sofyan Embik (Yayasan Palung) as well as additional BTN staff members, current graduate students, researchers, Indonesian counterparts, assistants, managers, Yayasan Palung and camp staff were also in attendance. That first night we counted a record 57 people for dinner!



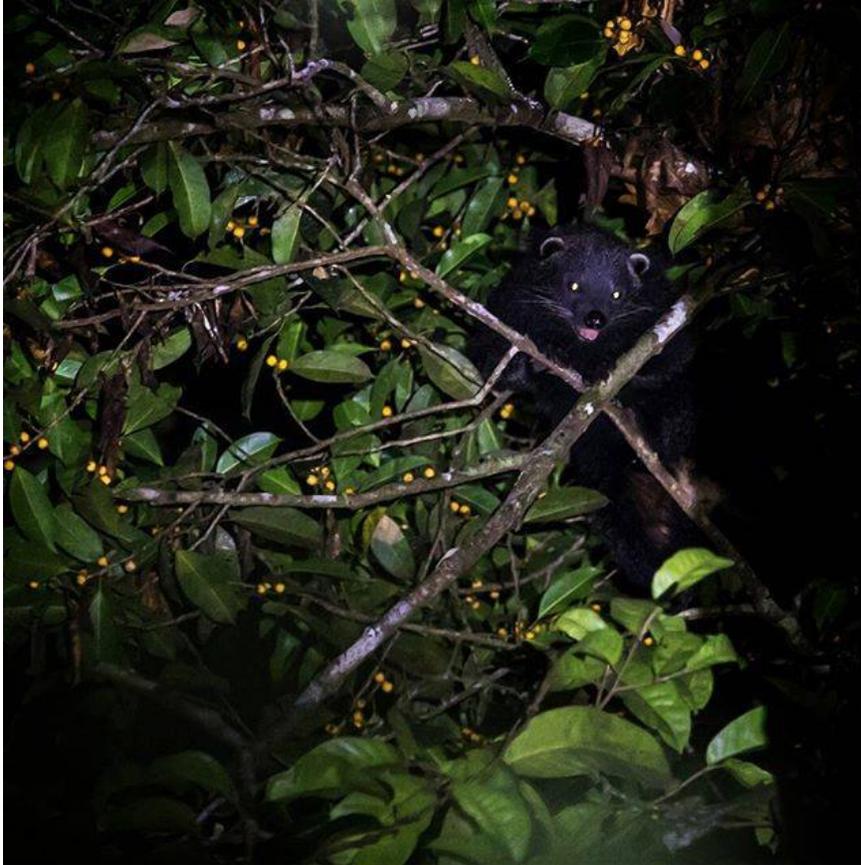
*Post-Conference field trip participants celebrate in front of the research station and a copy of the GP30+ banner.*

One of the highlights of the week was a "Habitat Walk" by Dr. Mark Leighton. As Mark explained during his keynote address at the symposium, he chose this location to establish the research site because of its incredible habitat diversity. In just a few hours one can traverse peat swamp, freshwater swamp, alluvial bench, lowland sandstone, lowland granite, upland granite and montane habitats. This means that from this one location researchers can study the unique animal and plant diversity that each habitat contains and do comparative studies. The importance of Cabang Panti's habitat diversity to advancing our knowledge of tropical rainforest ecology was a theme picked up by many of the symposium speakers, and was thus of particular interest to the post-conference field trip participants. Through in-field demonstrations, Mark explained how each habitat was formed, what made it unique, how to identify it and which animals and plants were found there. Many of these habitats, such as the alluvial bench forest, are endangered in Southeast Asia because they have been turned into areas of human settlement.



*Habitat Walk with Wendy Erb, Cheryl Knott, Robert Rodriguez Suro, Sofyan Embik, Mark Leighton, Amy Scott, Sarah Jaffe, Jessica Laman, Russell Laman, and Andrea DiGiorgio. Photo by Robert Rodriguez Suro.*

The week was filled with incredibly lucky animal sightings by our visitors. With everyone down for the Symposium, we had to start fresh looking for orangutans, and wouldn't you know it but Dr. Wendy Erb, orangutan researcher at Tuanan Research station in Central Kalimantan, went searching alone on her first day at the station, found and nested an orangutan and saw a sun bear on the walk home in the dark! Dan Gavin, who came to Cabang Panti as a Dartmouth undergrad 22 years ago, had a great view of our dominant male orangutan, Codet, the only sighting of him all month. To top it off, on the last night of the week-long visit, many of us went on a short night walk close to camp, and were lucky enough to see a binturong, the first one I've ever seen!



*A rarely seen binturong (Arctictis binturong), spotted feeding high up in a fig tree on our rainforest night walk. Photo by Roberto Suro Rodriguez.*

Other special events included an evening bonfire on the beach with stories from Cabang Panti lore told all around, long hikes through the forest, catching up with old friends, and, of course, jumping into our glorious river and waterfalls. Some of us had a bit of an epic hike to the top of Gunung Palung, at the GP 90 trail marker (see <https://www.facebook.com/rrsuro.photo/posts/1122567117772971> for a full account). For additional stories and pictures check out our facebook page. It was a week full of many happy smiles, sweaty hugs and the creation of new memories. Thank you to the Gunung Palung National Park office (BTNGP) for making this special visit possible!

Gunung Palung Orangutan Conservation Program (GPOCP)

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