

Gunung Palung Orangutan Conservation Program



June 2016

Issue: 42

Code RED

An e-newsletter from your friends in West Kalimantan

Dear Friends and Supporters,

Welcome to another edition of *Code RED*. As I get ready to head to Indonesia, our conservation and research staff have been hard at work before the Idul Fitri holiday. This month we bring you an update on the Bornean Orangutan Caring Scholarship program. As of this month, we have given out 19 scholarships to students from Ketapang and Kayong Utara! The BOCS is funded by our partners Orang Utan Republik Foundation and Orangutan Outreach and is an extremely worthy cause. If you are interested in donating to the scholarship fund, we urge you to contact Dr. Gary Shapiro through the OURF Facebook page.

Our second article this month was written by my newest graduate student, Andrea Blackburn. She is currently in Indonesia for her first field season and intends to collect data on orangutan-mediated seed dispersal. I can't wait to see what she learns! Finally, as we approach the Idul Fitri holiday, I would like to extend my best wishes to our friends who are celebrating. Read the sidebar article to learn about GPOCP's special conservation activity during the month of Ramadan.

Sincerely,

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Happy Idul Fitri

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Welcome New Yayasan
Palung Board Members
and Advisors

Happy Idul Fitri!

We would like to wish all of

Cheryl Knott

Cheryl Knott, PhD
Executive Director

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

Shaping a New Conservation Generation

By Cassie Freund, GPOCP Program Director

On June 26th, GPOCP awarded six new Bornean Orangutan Caring Scholarships, bringing the total number of young conservationists that we support to an impressive 19 students. This program, known in Indonesia as the BOCS, is a university scholarship program funded by the Orang Utan Republik Foundation and Orangutan Outreach. GPOCP is the only organization in Kalimantan that awards these scholarships, making this a unique opportunity for young people from Ketapang and Kayong Utara regencies to obtain the education and experience that they need to make a difference in the world of orangutan conservation.



2016 BOCS recipient, Victor Samudra (2nd from right), poses with GPOCP Program Director, Cassie Freund, high school teacher Pak Hadi, and OURF founder, Dr. Gary Shapiro.

Through the BOCS, we provide students from the Gunung Palung landscape with funding to attend Tanjungpura University (UNTAN) in the provincial capital of Pontianak. This year, 23 graduating high schoolers from across the region applied for the scholarship competition, from which we selected six highly deserving recipients. They are Sari Ulandari (sub-district Simpang Hilir), Ervan Wahyudi and Victor Samudra (Sungai Laur), Nur Sholihin (Sungai Melayu Rayak), Dedi Januri (Seponti Jaya), and Supriadi (Sandai). During their time at UNTAN, four of these recipients will major in Forestry, and two in Biology. These six will join our 11 other BOCS recipients at UNTAN beginning this fall! We are also happy to announce that the BOCS recipients from 2012 have recently finished their coursework and graduated, pending the results of their thesis work. We are especially proud of Risa Aprillia, who majored in Elementary Education and will graduate *cum laude*. Risa finished among the top in her class and her thesis project integrating orangutan conservation into classroom

our supporters in Indonesia and abroad who will celebrate the upcoming Islamic holiday a wonderful Idul Fitri. Because Islam, and religion in general, is such an important part of life in Indonesia, this month's conservation radio broadcasts centered around the theme of religion and conservation. This was an informative and rewarding way to mark the holy month of Ramadan, and we thank all of our special guests, radio staff, and local partners who participated.



Welcome New Yayasan Palung Board Members and Advisors

GPOCP and our Indonesian foundation, Yayasan Palung, would not be able to carry out our work without support and assistance from our Indonesian colleagues. Thus, we are excited to announce that we have recently expanded the Yayasan Palung Board of Directors, with the addition of Dr. Dadan Kusnandar, the Dean of the Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences at Tanjungpura University in Pontianak. We have recently also recruited three new Advisory Council members: community leader and author, Pak Yohanes

education was lauded by her professors.



Scholarship recipients (sitting) and ceremony attendees at the June 26th BOCS award ceremony in Ketapang.

The 2016 BOCS award ceremony was held at Mutiarra Laut restaurant in Ketapang and attended by over 40 people, including representatives from the Ketapang Department of Education, the Gunung Palung National Park Office, International Animal Rescue and other local conservation organizations, and the family and teachers of the scholarship recipients. Our special guest was scholarship founder and funder, Dr. Gary Shapiro, from Orang Utan Republik Foundation. Gary gave an excellent talk explaining the history of the scholarship and its sister program, the Sumatran Orangutan Caring Scholarship. Since the beginning of this project in 2006, OURF and Orangutan Outreach have awarded over 110 university scholarships to Indonesian students. GPOCP has been a project partner since 2012, and we are honored to be the scholarship facilitator for Kalimantan. We are looking forward to awarding many more scholarships in the years to come!

Studying the Gardeners of the Forest

By Andrea Blackburn, Boston University Ph.D. student

After my first year at Boston University, I have just arrived in Indonesia for my first field season as a Ph.D. student, and I am excited to finally be returning to Borneo to follow orangutans! I previously worked as volunteer for nine months studying orangutans at the Tuanan Research Station in Central Kalimantan for Rutgers University. Now, as a graduate student, I am returning to Borneo to study seed dispersal, this time at the Cabang Panti Research Station in West Kalimantan. I've never been to this part of Kalimantan before, and I'm excited to finally see Gunung Palung National Park and its amazing biodiversity. After having just spent a year in classes reading about primates it will be great to finally be out in the forest again with some orangutans, and I'm really interested in comparing the Gunung Palung population with the orangutans I followed at Tuanan.

Terang; Ketapang Forestry Department head, Bapak Ir. Adi Mulia; and head of the Kayong Utara Handicrafts Association, Ibu Permata Hildi. Ibu Hildi is also the wife of the head of Kayong Utara regency. We would like to warmly welcome them to the Yayasan Palung family, and share our gratitude for their support.



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"A mind, when stretched by a new idea, never regains its original dimensions."

-Anonymous-



Andrea in the field at Tuanan Research Station, Central Kalimantan.

For my research project this summer I will be studying orangutan seed dispersal. Researching seed dispersal is important for our understanding of how orangutans influence forest structure. Researchers believe that orangutans play an important ecological role in the forest as the main seed dispersers for many tropical forest plants, especially the larger-seeded species that are not eaten by other primates or hornbills. Often when orangutans eat fruit, they swallow the fruit seeds whole and defecate the intact seeds later on, far away from the original fruit tree. These seeds may germinate and grow into seedlings and eventually trees. Where and how orangutans move, which seeds they disperse, the germination rates of defecated seeds, and gut passage rates are all parameters that I plan to study in order to better understand how orangutan-mediated seed dispersal shapes the rainforest.



Young orangutan, Joya, feeds on fruits in Tuanan Research Station. Orangutans are known as the gardeners of the forest

because of their role as seed dispersers, so Andrea aims to investigate how orangutans influence the forest structure.

In order to answer my research questions, I plan to collect orangutan fecal samples and analyze the numbers and types of seeds they contain. This involves counting and identifying all of the seeds in each of the samples. I will then plant these seeds and measure how many seeds germinate and how long the germination process takes. I will also compare the defecated seeds to controls, or undigested seeds, collected directly from the trees and plants in the forest. I believe that the orangutan digestive system may be treating the seeds in such a way that it increases the chance of germination. Another question I will be researching this summer is orangutan gut passage rates. This means I am trying to understand how long it takes food to pass through an orangutan's digestive tract. I can measure this by recording when an orangutan eats a fruit and then record when I see the fruit seeds in the feces. This is an important question to study as I expect there to be differences in gut passage rates between adults and juveniles. Differences in gut passage rates can relate to differences in an orangutan's ability to digest nutrients, meaning that the amount of calories an orangutan can extract from its food may change as the animal ages.



Seedlings emerge from the rainforest floor, the product of seeds that have been "planted" by traveling orangutans.

I am excited to get back into the forest and apply the field skills and techniques that I learned during my time at Tuanan Research Station. As a research volunteer there, I assisted graduate student Shauhin Alavi with his work on orangutan cognitive foraging, meaning how orangutans know where to go to locate food in the rainforest. He was also interested in learning what aspects of their food and the forest they are remembering. Young orangutans learn all of these skills from their mothers, who have extensive mind maps of the forest that we humans have yet to understand. As part of Shauhin's project we measured thousands of trees in large 50 x 50m plots, tagging them and recording their diameter, height, and fruiting state. My time at Cabang Panti this summer will hopefully allow me to build on this experience, and I am hoping to get new ideas and understand the feasibility for my own dissertation research. I am also looking forward to meeting the GP orangutans and my fellow researchers. Here's to a productive summer!



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