

Gunung Palung Orangutan Conservation Program



October 2016

Issue: 46

Code RED

An e-newsletter from your friends in West Kalimantan

Dear Friends and Supporters,

With Halloween upon us, we welcome you to our latest edition of *Code Red*! This month we lead off by sharing our experience spreading the word about GPOCP's orangutan conservation and research efforts to the attendees of *Sail Karimata*, one of the largest events ever held in Sukadana. While this event was not spooky, we did encounter walks of life from all over the world!

Our second article is more in spirit with the season and the creepy crawlies that inhabit the rainforest. Our research manager describes some of the bizarre insects found, and some of the dangerous obstacles the team must dodge, while searching for orangutans.

Be sure to check out our side bar information on GPOCP's participation in helmeted hornbill conservation efforts and a spotlight on an interesting animal found in the rainforests of Borneo.

Finally, I wanted to congratulate my husband, [Tim Laman](#), who was named this month as the [Wildlife Photographer of the Year](#) in the world's most prestigious wildlife photography contest sponsored by the Natural History Museum in London. He also won first place in the Wildlife Photojournalist category for his coverage of orangutan conservation issues. Please join me in congratulating him and his efforts to bring attention to the plight of orangutans through his photography.

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Did you know the



Tim's award winning photograph, taken with a hidden camera, of the orangutan "Ned" climbing a fig tree in Gunung Palung National Park.

Sincerely,

Cheryl Knott, PhD
Executive Director

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

Spreading Conservation Awareness Near and Far

By Terri Breeden, GPOCP Program Director

This October, GPOCP has been busy spreading education and awareness about orangutans and forest conservation. West Kalimantan had the pleasure of hosting part of the Wonderful Sail 2 Indonesia event. This event began with sailors leaving harbors in Australia and spending the next three months exploring some of the many islands throughout Indonesia. While in Ketapang, the sailors were treated to an array of different types of Dayak dance. But the main event was held in Sukadana and called Sail Karimata. During the event, there was an exposition fair set up with a wide range of activities and events. Of course there were the traditional fair activities with games, rides and food. There was also live music ranging from traditional Indonesian music to modern pop and dance music. The main tent held an array of local businesses, with goods and services displayed from all parts of West Kalimantan.

helmeted hornbill, a bird native to Gunung Palung, is in trouble? This species has jumped from the IUCN's list of threatened species to critically endangered in less than 3 years! GPOCP staff attended a conference in October to learn more about what we can do to protect this vulnerable species.



GPOCP staff with hosts, Planet Indonesia, at the Helmeted Hornbill Workshop.

Rainforest Review: Flat-Headed Cat

In keeping with the Halloween spirit, we are highlighting a unique nocturnal animal found in Gunung Palung National Park, the flat-headed cat, *Prionailurus planiceps*. This cat looks very similar to normal house cats, but with a few different features. Unfortunately, this feline is on the IUCN endangered species list.



Photo © Tim Laman



A school group stops by the GPOCP tent at Sail Karimata to learn more about our program.

GPOCP had the honor to set up a tent for this event near the main stage. With this prime location we were able to interact and meet guests from many parts of Indonesia and beyond. We took this opportunity to reach out to the many visitors that came to our booth and to educate them about our conservation and research programs and the impacts we are making on the local community. Many people were interested to learn more about our *Hutan Desa* (or customary forest) program. We also explained how local communities are interested in protecting their local forests and how our Sustainable Livelihoods team teaches these villages how to practice better agricultural techniques that will eliminate the need to turn more rainforest into farmland. We also work with villagers to develop Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFP) and our NTFP artisans were invited to give a demonstration of how they make their products and their bags were given out as part of the VIP gifts.



Some of the GPOCP artisans displaying their NTFP products and how they are made at the Sail Karimata event.

The main attraction of the Sail Karimata event was the appearance of the President of the Republic of Indonesia, Joko Widodo, on Saturday morning. Some of our staff and youth volunteers even had the thrilling opportunity to meet him.



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"There is something haunting in the light of the moon"

-Joseph Conrad-



GPOCP Youth Volunteer, Dwika, with Joko Widodo, the President of the Republic of Indonesia.

The Gunung Palung Orangutan Conservation Program was happy to be a part of the Sail Karimata event and to be able to educate people throughout all parts of Indonesia about the importance of conserving orangutans and local forests.



GPOCP Governing Board member, Pak Dadan Kusnandar (right), stopped by the GPOCP tent during the Sail Karimata event.

Things That Go Bump in the Forest

By Katherine Scott, Research Manager

With Halloween on the horizon and the start of the rainy season upon us, it seems only apt that we pay homage to the creepy (and frankly downright weird) creatures that come out of hiding around here. This year, as with the last, El Niño has treated us to an extreme dry period at Cabang Pant. For several months, our logistics canoes were not able to reach camp and so an alternative method for resupplying the research station had to be sought. This occurred in the form of local villagers who helped us carry large loads of food and research supplies up to camp on a weekly basis.

Apart from a few summer weeks of fruiting, the forest has remained bare. Orangutans have had to resort to their second-choice 'fallback foods' such as bark, young leaves and termites, and we haven't really encountered many animals along the trail system. The dry spell meant that researchers had

several months of sweet relief from the almost-constant barrage of leeches and mosquitos we usually find on our forays into the forest (which was nice!).



A scorpion found trying to hide under a dead log.

However, everything must come to an end, and a few thunderstorms last week heralded the start of the longed-for rainy season. Alas, this has meant that relatively pleasant orangutan follows have now become a constant battle against the creepy-crawlies that have come out of hiding.

Field-clothes now look like crime-scenes; leeches hitch a ride unnoticed and stay put until they have their fill, leading their victims to an awkward conversation with the laundry ladies. Mosquitoes are unrelenting in their quest to buzz us into insanity and then cause non-stop itching for several hours. Fire-ants are back and raring to swarm anything that happens to interrupt their night-time missions and the toilet block looks like the Bornean Encyclopedia of Every-Arachnid on This Island Ever!



A Spiny Stomach Spider (Gasteracantha) found while searching for orangutans.

Caution must be sought when hiking through the forest with an open mouth, especially if you are in the front of the group and taller than your average Indonesian. Our new volunteer, Becky Curtis, almost ate a golden orb spider as she walked right into its web on a search day. We are also not immune from the foliage right now either. *Sindora*, (a rather spiky seed-podded fruit) is being dropped from the treetops by hungry orangutans. These dangerous fruits often hit researchers on the head, or in a worse-case scenario, have been sat on by the unsuspecting follower. Think bed of nails but with the element of complete surprise. And involving your posterior. Not a pleasant experience!



Sindora, a particularly spiky fruit that we must watch out for!

Every evening after dinner, camp is treated to an aerial display from the resident bats as they swoop into our camp to eat the flying termites that have come out of their underground hiding places. When picking anything up, such as clothing items or your bag, it's wise to give it a good shake, as centipedes love these damp, dark spaces and can inject a painful neurotoxin if you accidentally touch them.

Although the forest may have some dangerous inhabitants, it has also treated us to some pretty awesome events. When searching for orangutans a few days ago, we were stopped in our tracks by a young cobra attacking a frog. The assistants told us it meant good luck. It was extremely exciting to watch, although I'm sure this opinion wasn't shared by its amphibian victim. We were also extremely lucky one morning while drinking coffee on the porch at camp to see a family of 6 otters cross the river right in front of us and go scurrying up the trail. Although not strictly in the theme of 'creepy' or 'weird', it was definitely a surprise.

At camp it feels like Halloween is surely upon us and it has been great to see so much biodiversity 'wake-up' in such a short space of time. Hopefully this also means that *musim buah* (fruit season) is almost upon us and that orangutans will come out of their hiding spaces as well!



Orangutan Photographs © Tim Laman
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