

# Gunung Palung Orangutan Conservation Program



May 2017

Issue: 53

## Code RED

An e-newsletter from your friends in West Kalimantan

Dear Friends and Supporters,

Time flies! It's almost the end of another school year and time for me to prepare for my annual trip to Indonesia! I am looking forward to working with our conservation and research teams and seeing some of my favorite orangutans.

This month's newsletter starts off with the activities of our NTFP artisans and their participation in a local festival. We had some special guests stop by our tent too! Our second story is from Sy, one of our youth volunteers. Sy has been an active member of one of our youth groups and has shown a real passion and dedication to orangutans and conservation. Be sure to read about his internship at Cabang Panti and what he is up to today!

On our sidebar you will find information about the upcoming #RainforestLive event on June 8th and our new Bornean Orangutan Caring Scholarship students.

Sincerely,

### In This Issue:

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Caring Scholarship

#RainforestLive



Cheryl Knott, PhD  
Executive Director

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

## Protecting Forests through Supporting NTFP Artisans

*By F. Wendy Tamariska, GPOCP Sustainable Livelihoods Manager*

GPOCP was invited to participate in the *Pemberdayaan Kesejahteraan Keluarga (PKK)* or Family Welfare Empowerment Exhibition in West Kalimantan this month. To begin, I would like to start with a brief history of PKK. This organization was founded in Bogor, Java in 1957. PKK's main priorities were to develop home economic initiatives, especially for women, to help with societal hunger. This organization is still in practice today, and works with local communities to develop artisan handicrafts.

From May 16-18, the PKK gave communities in West Kalimantan the opportunity to promote and display their respective handicraft and agriculture products. The exhibition, held in Sukadana, had over 100 different types of handicraft products available for purchase and GPOCP was fortunate to be invited to participate in this event. We worked with our Non-Timber Forest Product (NTFP) groups to market and sell their *pandanus* and *nipah* leaf products.

## BOCS

We awarded our new BOCS, or Bornean Orangutan Caring Scholarships, this month! We are proud and excited to work with our new recipients.

Congratulations to:

Hanna Adelia Runtu  
Ilham Pratama  
Mita Anggriani  
Siti Nurbaiti  
Rafikah  
Ratih

Stay tuned next month to learn more about each student!



## #RainforestLive

GPOCP will be participating in Rainforest Live on June 8th. This is a social media campaign that will bring the rainforest right into your home. We will be Tweeting, and posting on Facebook and Instagram from our research station in Gunung Palung National Park. Be sure to follow the hashtag [#RainforestLive](#)





*The GPOCP booth filled with visitors during the West Kalimantan Family Welfare Empowerment Exhibition.*

Currently, we have 34 active NTFP members in our groups from several villages throughout the Kayong Utara district. Our artisans are part of the indigenous community surrounding Gunung Palung National Park. Some of the products displayed and sold at the exhibition include bags, baskets, plates, mats, wallets and jewelry. These are all handmade using traditional weaving methods with natural resources sustainably harvested from the forest.

One highlight of the event was when Pak Hildi, the *Bupati*, or District Head, of Kayong Utara, visited our display. He explained to other visitors in the tent about GPOCP, "These artisans are the people who were built by GPOCP and with them, we can protect the forest!" It was an honor to know that Pak Hildi knows of our artisans and programs and supports our work!



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Forward to a Friend

*"Destroying  
rainforest for  
economic gain is like  
burning a  
Renaissance  
painting to cook a  
meal"*

*-Edward O. Wilson-*



*The Bupati of Kayong Utara paid a visit to our booth and explained to visitors about the work of our artisans and GPOCP's other programs.*

Another highlight was a visit from Ibu Frederika Comelis, the Chairwoman for PKK. She commented on the high quality and techniques of our artisans' woven products. With the attendance of such high officials throughout the area, our booth attracted many people throughout the Expo. The artisans' also used this opportunity to gain valuable feedback from the community on how to better develop their products for the local market.



*The Governor's wife also paid a visit to our booth and posed with some of our artisans' products.*

*Photos © GPOCP.*

## **Interning for a Future Career at Cabang Panti**

*By Muhammad Syainullah, GPOCP TAJAM Youth Volunteer*

Hello friends of GPOCP! My name is Syainullah, but people call me Sy, and I am a four year veteran of TAJAM. TAJAM is the youth conservation group sponsored by GPOCP in Ketapang. I recently finished high school and was exploring different career paths and decided to ask Ranti, our TAJAM coordinator, if I could visit the Cabang Panti Research Station in Gunung Palung National Park. To my surprise, I was offered a one month internship to learn about the different research projects! I have always heard about the various species of animals and plants at Cabang Panti and was looking forward to spending the next 30 days exploring the 2,100 hectares of pristine rainforests surrounding Cabang Panti.

My adventure started with a two hour bus ride from Ketapang to Tanjung Gunung, the village where the trail begins. I took my maiden voyage hike with Beth Barrow, the KKL (Gibbon and Red Leaf Monkey) Project Manager, Becky Curtis, the Orangutan Project Assistant Manager, and Terri Breeden, the GPOCP Program Director. The hike from the bus stop to camp took me about five hours! I was exhausted upon arrival, but also amazed by the beautiful scenery surrounding camp and eager to meet the local staff.

Cabang Panti is currently made up of five buildings. The main building is Cabang Panti, the staff housing is known as *Rumah Nyamuk* (or mosquito house), the guest house is known as *Rumah Litho* (named after a tree genus) and then there are two project management houses. I slept in *Rumah Nyamuk* with the rest of the staff.



*Sy collecting orangutan behavioral data on an Ipad.*

My first days began by learning about the trees, or phenology. Each morning, I would work with research assistants, Hassan and Toto. We would look at certain trees and determine if they had new leaves, or were fruiting. This helps the team determine when and where we will most likely spot orangutans. Brodie, the Orangutan Project Research Manager, taught me how to search for orangutans. We would spend a few hours walking through the forest listening for them.

Once we had an orangutan to follow, my days started very early. I would wake about 3:30 in the morning and hike to the orangutan nest with the hopes of getting there before the orangutan woke up. I learned from the assistants how and when to record the necessary behavioral data using an Ipad. I also learned some of the unpleasant tasks of the job, taking urine and fecal samples! Ideally, I would get to the nest and collect the first sample right after the orangutan had woken up. Have you ever tried to catch orangutan droppings falling from a tree? It is quite a feat! Once I had the samples, I would rush them back to the lab for processing. At first, I was shocked that Brodie was teaching me these methods and the stench did not seem to faze him. I, on the other hand, had a hard time adjusting to the smell. Fortunately, I am becoming a little more accustomed to it each day, and the mask helps.



*Sy processing orangutan fecal samples.*

Perhaps, you are curious as to why we process

these smelly samples? The answer is to determine nutritional intake of the orangutans. During the follows we are able to identify the foods they are eating, and through fecal analysis, we can determine how the orangutans process those foods. After all of the lab work, I am able to rest and prepare for the next day's activities in the rainforest.

Through following the orangutans and beginning to understand their behavior, I realized that it is very important that we work to protect this species. Orangutans play many important roles in the forest, one such role is seed disperser. We also gain valuable scientific knowledge about their physiology, diet and habitat requirements.

To end this report, I am happy to share that my internship has led me to a new career! I was recently hired as a Laboratory Assistant to help with the orangutan research activities at Cabang Panti. I am looking forward to what my future in the rainforest holds for me!



*Sy, (far left) with some of the research assistants and camp staff at Cabang Panti Research Station.*

*Photos © GPOCP.*

Gunung Palung Orangutan Conservation Program (GPOCP)

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