

Gunung Palung Orangutan Conservation Program



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An e-newsletter from your friends in West Kalimantan

Dear Friends and Supporters,

With summer behind us and Fall arriving, I have been busy with a new semester of lectures, lab work and advising students. It is exciting to share some of GPOCP's success stories with my Boston University students and motivate them to better understand orangutans, the threats they face, and the ways they can contribute to orangutan and rainforest conservation.

This past month we have also been busy spreading awareness to students and villages throughout West Kalimantan about our conservation and research programs. The leadership staff at GPOCP and the research station all traveled to Pontianak, the capital of West Kalimantan, to give presentations to students and faculty at Tanjungpura University (UNTAN). That was followed by our Research Director and Program Director giving presentations in the local villages surrounding Gunung Palung National Park about the work we do. With all of this news being shared in Indonesia, we thought we would also share it with our friends all over the world in this month's articles!

On our side bar we would like to congratulate our Operations

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Eid Adha

Coordinator on his recent marriage and give our best wishes to everyone who celebrated a wonderful Eid Al-Adha.

Sincerely,



Cheryl Knott, PhD
Executive Director

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

GPOCP Family is Growing

Recently our Operations Coordinator tied the knot! We would like to congratulate Reno Suryandi and his wife Ety on their matrimony.



UNTAN learns about Gunung Palung Opportunities

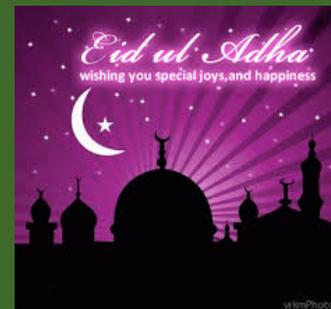
By Terri Breeden, GPOCP Program Director

Last Tuesday, I traveled with Brodie Philp, the Project OH Research Manager, and Beth Barrow, the KKL Research Manager, to Pontianak. On Wednesday, we were scheduled to give presentations to students and faculty about our conservation and research activities at Tanjungpura University (UNTAN). This university acts as our research sponsor, ensuring collaboration between researchers, university students and professors. UNTAN supports our researchers by giving the proper letters and permits needed for foreigners to do research in Indonesia. GPOCP and KKL assist UNTAN students and professors by providing guidance and support to gain their permits to enter the park, transportation, equipment, and scientific advice on project development and methodology. Our presentations were designed to inform the faculty and students about our programs and to facilitate future collaborations.

Wednesday morning we all awoke early and had breakfast with our Research Director, Wahyu. After breakfast, we headed to UNTAN. I must admit, I was nervous about giving a presentation to so many people and in a foreign language. As we walked into the room I felt overwhelmed. It was packed with nearly 100 people, but my nerves started to cool as I recognized so many faces. I was greeted by Dedy and Mita, two of our BOCS (Bornean Orangutan Caring Scholars). We were given a wonderful introduction by Pak Riyandi, a lecturer, and Pak Muliadi, the Assistant Dean of Mathematics and Natural Sciences.

Eid Al-Adha

September 1st marked Eid Al-Adha, a muslim holiday celebrating remembrance and sacrifice. We wish all celebrating a wonderful holiday.



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Beth Barrow and Terri Breeden listening to the opening remarks before the presentations. Photo © GPOCP

I was up first to present. I went into detail about Gunung Palung National Park (GPNP), why it is such a special place, and the major threats to orangutans and the habitat in and around GPNP, including logging, mining, fires, and people killing mother orangutans to steal their babies to keep as pets. But the photos with the most impact, where I heard lots of wows and ahhs, were of the scale of oil palm plantations in the area. I then explained how we have been working in this landscape for nearly 20 years. Our Environmental Education and Conservation Awareness team hosts week long expeditions to remote villages four times per year, we host weekly radio shows, publish countless conservation articles in print and social media, visit local schools, host field trips, youth group activities, and of course, our BOCS program supported by Orang Utan Republik Foundation. Our Sustainable Livelihoods team works with local community groups to promote alternative, yet sustainable, career paths. We have artisan groups making handicrafts, organic farming, and aquaculture. This program targets the most vulnerable and works with them one-on-one to develop their skills to deter them from environmentally destructive livelihoods. I also discussed our Customary Forest and Wildlife Investigation Team. We recently secured nearly 7,500 hectares in five villages as Customary Forest and are routinely working with the Management Boards to develop their capacity to sustainably manage these forests and maintain their incredible biodiversity (as mentioned in last month's article!) Our investigation team spends a lot of time in the field searching for people who have illegally held animals. The participants were also quite shocked

 Forward to a Friend

"To say nothing, to do nothing, stops nothing"

-Roni McCall-

seeing such magnificent wildlife locked up in cages.



An orangutan kept illegally as a pet and rescued because of investigation work by GPOCP. Photo © GPOCP

Next to present was Brodie. He talked about the research occurring at Cabang Panti for Project OH (short for Orang (H)utan). He started with an introduction about orangutans and their current status as critically endangered, and how Cabang Panti Research Station was established in 1983 and has eight distinct habitat types with 60 kilometers of trails through those habitats. He described some of the difficulties in studying wild orangutans, such as their elusive behavior hiding in the tree tops, and went into more detail about how and why we take the samples that we do. These samples include urine for hormone analysis, feces for parasites, fruit and plant samples to determine nutrient consumption, as well as behaviors, such as their location in the tree and body position. He also spoke about the many UNTAN students who have come to do their own research at Cabang Panti.



A young orangutan trying to be elusive in the tree tops of Gunung Palung National Park. Photo © GPOCP

Beth Barrow followed Brodie to present about the KKL Project. We are often asked what is KKL, it stands for *Kelasi* and *Kelempiau*, which is the Red Leaf Monkey and the Bornean Agile Gibbon in Bahasa Indonesia. This project focuses on ecological systems including distribution and populations of both plants and animals. The KKL Project also records temperature and rainfall at 12 weather stations positioned strategically over the two ridges of Mount Palung and Mount Panti. It is very interesting to see the differences in rainfall and other variables between each station considering their relative close proximity! Beth explained their five different methods used in the field (phenology, camera traps, census routes, behavioral follows and weather stations), all aimed at collecting data on factors limiting vertebrate population dynamics in GPNP. One of the most interesting aspects of the KKL Project, and their most recent addition as of 2015, is their camera trap program. She included some interesting footage of elusive species that had never been recorded at Cabang Panti before. Beth then went on to outline some results from their research into gibbon and leaf monkey population dynamics and the factors limiting them. Specifically, those habitats over 800 meters in elevation are of extremely low quality for these two primate species. Populations there would likely cease to exist if it weren't for immigration

from the lowland habitats.



A mother pangolin carrying her baby on her tail recorded at Cabang Panti Research Station in Gunung Palung National Park, West Kalimantan, Indonesia. Video courtesy of Project KKL.

We ended the presentation with a quick review of how the students can work with us and conduct research at Cabang Panti. We also held a question and answer session with some intriguing inquiries about each program that we were all happy to answer. It was exciting to see such enthusiastic students and we hope everyone went away better informed about our conservation and research projects. We look forward to continuing our work with our current students and hope these presentations inspired a new generation of students to study conservation and to conduct wildlife research.



Bringing Research to the Village

By Wahyu Susanto, GPOCP Research Director

Cabang Panti Research Station is often thought of as this mystical place. The research station is not open to tourists, so even though many people have heard of it, few have actually been to Cabang Panti. So this month we decided to bring the research station to the villages! We wanted to let the local communities know about the research that is being conducted and how it is being used to make conservation decisions for orangutans and their habitat. We focused on three of the villages surrounding Gunung Palung National Park with which we interact the most - Tanjung Gunung, Sedahan Jaya, and Teluk Melano. We gave presentations about the research activities, showed short films about orangutans, and held question and answer sessions to clarify any confusion about what actually occurs at Cabang Panti Research Station (CPRS).



Cabang Panti Research Station located in the heart of Gunung Palung National Park. Photo © Tim Laman.

Although researchers have been working at CPRS for over 30 years, very few villagers around the Park have actually been there, and fewer know about the activities we are doing. This has led to many questions from local residents. They often see a flux of strangers coming through their village to get to the National Park. On the other hand, there are some residents who are somewhat

familiar with our activities, but they did not understand why we do behavioral follows and data collection on wild orangutans. To address these issues, we held these community discussions in the three villages that we primarily work with. It was also a great opportunity to spread awareness and knowledge about orangutans and their current plight on the IUCN Critically Endangered List.



*Critically endangered orangutans of Gunung Palung National Park.
Photo © GPOCP*

The first presentation took place in the village of Tanjung Gunung and was held at the home of Pak Bahrul, the head of the village. Access to Cabang Panti starts with a two kilometer walk through this village and the residents often wonder why foreigners and other strangers are so interested in this forest. We were pleased to explain why GPNP is so special and why people travel from all over the world to experience this amazing forest. This activity had over 30 participants who were all eager to learn about GPOCP, Project OH, and about orangutans. They were particularly interested in one of our new short films, *Person of the Forest*, where we highlight how culture, much like human culture, exists in orangutans too.



Wahyu holding a community discussion in Tanjung Gunung about the research activities at Cabang Panti. Photo © GPOCP

The second night we held the socialization in Sedahan Jaya. This village is actually quite close to the CPRS, only eight kilometers if you draw a straight line. However, there is no cut trail and most of those eight kilometers is peat swamp, one of the more difficult terrains to try and hike through. This presentation was held at the village community center and was also well attended. Many people from Sedahan Jaya have worked with Project OH either as research assistants, camp staff, or as our logistics coordinator who sends all food and supplies to camp. They were all excited to see their friends and family in the presentation.

The third presentation was in Teluk Melano. Before there was an airport in Ketapang, researchers would take a ferry from Pontianak to Teluk Melano and then a long boat, similar to a canoe, from Teluk Melano to Cabang Panti. Many of the original research assistants from when Mark Leighton started CPRS in 1983 resided in Teluk Melano. Pak Margono, the village head, opened the event. There was an interactive discussion afterwards and we heard many stories about orangutans. Some said that, in the past, they had kept orangutans as pets, but have since turned them over to local authorities. Others told about how often they used to find orangutans and their nests along the Perawas River, but now that forest has been converted to an oil palm plantation and they rarely see orangutans anymore.



Wahyu presenting the research activities to residents of Teluk Melano. Photo © GPOCP.

Overall, this event was a great success. We interacted with about 100 residents between the three villages giving them valuable information about the importance of orangutans and why we are researching them and their habitat at CPRS. If you have any questions about any of our research or conservation programs, please feel free to email us at SaveGPOrangutans@gmail.com.

Gunung Palung Orangutan Conservation Program (GPOCP)

<http://saveGPorangutans.org>

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