

Gunung Palung Orangutan Conservation Program



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An e-newsletter from your friends in West Kalimantan

Dear Friends and Supporters,

I hope you all had a safe Halloween, full of orangutan friendly candy! I spent the beginning of the month in New Orleans where I was the keynote speaker at the Orangutan Husbandry Conference. This is a meeting sponsored by the Orangutan SSP (Species Survival Plan) of keepers, veterinarians, nutritionists and others who care for captive orangutans. I was thrilled to speak to this group of committed orangutan professionals.

We also had a busy month in West Kalimantan. Our artisans participated in a national festival (as featured in our first article), two staff members attended a drone workshop, we held a two week field school for local farmers, and we are back in the field conducting orangutan nest surveys!

The second article marks the 25th anniversary of the Gunung Palung Orangutan project. Here I reflect on some of my most memorable experiences past and present and all the people who make the project possible. Look for both historic and recent photos and a video record of the final days of a wild orangutan.

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and Caring for the Earth

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Palung Orangutan Project

Award Winning Photo

Amazon Smile

Award Winning

On our side bar I would like to congratulate my son, Russell Laman, on his wining photo in the Wildlife Photographer of the Year contest. I love his photo of Alfred - from a day when we had an amazingly close view of him. We also would like to remind everyone that the shopping season is upon us and it is easy to donate by shopping through smile.amazon.com and supporting GPOCP.

Sincerlely,



Cheryl Knott, PhD
Executive Director

[Gunung Palung Orangutan Conservation Program \(GPOCP\)](http://GunungPalungOrangutanConservationProgram.org)

Keeping with Tradition and Caring for the Earth

By Wendy Tamariska, GPOCP Sustainable Livelihoods Manager

This month GPOCP and our artisans were invited to participate in the Harvest Festival of Raya Nusantara, or PARARA, held in Jakarta. This event occurs every two years with the aim to promote locally made products by indigenous tribes and communities from all over Indonesia. There were 27 NGOs and craftsmen represented from throughout Indonesia including Java, Bali, Borneo, and even Papua at the three day event. The theme this year was "Keeping with Tradition and Caring for the Earth". The festival acted as a common space for producers, consumers, and stakeholders to interact and collaborate on promoting sustainable production and consumption of traditional handicrafts. The festival was a huge success, with nearly 5,000 visitors.

GPOCP was able to support six of our artisans to attend this festival. During the event they gave demonstrations to visitors, news media, and government officials, including the head of creative economic enterprises, and local mayors. Our artisans hail from two of our five artisan groups from the villages of Pangkalan Buton and Sejahtera. We have been working with these groups for the last five years to build their capacity and increase the quality of their products and it is truly paying off. You may recall a previous article highlighting their recent successes, including being able to send their children to university and paying

Photo

Congratulations to Russell Laman, one of five finalists in the Wildlife Photographer of the Year competition 15-17 Year Old category. His photo titled *Alfred in Contemplation* was taken at Gunung Palung National Park, Summer 2016. The award was announced at the Wildlife Photographer of the Year banquet at London's Natural History Museum



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off loans ahead of schedule, all through the sale of their handicrafts.



Pak Triawan Mhunaf, the head of Creative Economic Enterprises, stops by to meet our artisans and learn how they make their handicrafts.

The artisans brought 37 different types of handicrafts, including handbags, bracelets, earrings, and *Pandanus (tikar)* mats to sell. Over the three day festival they had nearly \$300 in sales, a significant amount of money for them.

This trip to Jakarta, the capital of Indonesia, was a first for all of our artisans and even members of our Sustainable Livelihoods team who accompanied the artisans. Our artisans come from small villages with few modern luxuries and had never seen horizons filled with skyscrapers and highways full of traffic. Ibu Hatimah had never walked on an escalator before. She had a small mishap and fell, but was able to recover without injury and kept her spirits up to explore the big city.

Towards the end of their visit, the group took a day to visit Monas, the National Monument of Indonesia. Both Indonesians and foreign tourists alike flock to this attraction every day. Monas is a source of pride and is a "bucket list" item for Indonesians, especially for people from rural villages.



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"Nature never goes out of style"

-Unknown-



GPOCP staff and artisans visiting the National Monument, Monas, in Jakarta. Photo credits GPOCP.

Overall this trip to the PARARA Festival was a huge success. Our artisans promoted and sold their handicrafts, received national attention for their sustainable work, and were able to make lasting memories. GPOCP is enthusiastic about this prosperous event and hopes this will motivate and inspire new artisans to work with GPOCP and make sustainable products, helping to create a sustainable livelihood movement in Indonesia!

Celebrating Twenty-Five Years of the Gunung Palung Orangutan Project

By Cheryl Knott, PhD, GPOCP Executive Director

On October 7th I was honored to receive a 2017 Pongo Environmental Award for "*significant field work furthering our understanding of the Bornean orangutan as well as dedicated efforts to conserve the species and educate the public over the past quarter century.*" The award was presented at a gala benefit event in Pasadena, California, by Dr. Gary Shapiro on behalf of The Orang Utan Republic Foundation - our partner in the Orangutan Caring Scholarship.



Executive Director, Dr. Cheryl Knott, at the Pongo Award's Ceremony, sponsored by Orang Utan Republic Foundation on October 7, 2017.

Has it really been 25 years since I took my first "boat trip" upriver to the Cabang Panti Research Station and fell in love with wild orangutans? I remember the moment that I knew I had found my life's work. Since dawn I had been following the adult female orangutan, Kristen, who had both a small baby and an older juvenile in tow. I was on the MT hill, a short distance from our camp, and was lying on my poncho, to get a steady view, as I watched this little family through my binoculars. As they deftly maneuvered from tree to tree, along the edge of a rainforest gap, rare afternoon sunbeams penetrated through the foliage, highlighting their brilliant orange fur. This magical place had it all for me - magnificent creatures I wanted to protect, research questions that were begging to be answered, the most beautiful rainforest I'd ever seen, and the friendship and bond I felt with the people of Indonesia.

I've had the privilege to witness the most jubilant and the most tragic moments in the lives of wild orangutans. One of my most poignant experiences was being with Kristen during her final days in 2010. The video below tells this story.



Dr. Cheryl Knott talks about the death, from old age, of wild orangutan, Kristen, in Gunung Paling National Park.

On my last day at camp this summer I had another amazing moment with a wild female orangutan. I was with my daughter, Jessica, and we hiked out to meet up with my research team and the BBC film crew that was spending the month with us filming orangutans. Bibi, and her baby, Bayas, were on the ground, eating termites. I was amazed at how totally habituated they were - I counted 9 people just a feet away from them, separated by only a few bushes. What a far cry from my first days at Cabang Panti, chasing after orangutans who had no interest in being followed. We'd come to the point where a mother and baby would tolerate our presence, and not even look in our direction. I'd never been so close to a wild orangutan before! Bibi spent almost an hour in that spot, seemingly oblivious to our presence, as her baby played on mom and grabbed some termites for himself. What a way to celebrate my 25th year milestone.



Dr. Cheryl Knott and the original research team in 1994-1995.

But, this project is so much more than just my own journey. I'm so thankful to the dozens, perhaps hundreds, of people who have also devoted significant chunks of their lives to studying and protecting wild orangutans with me in Gunung Palung. There are the research managers who spend a year or more managing a thousand details of the project - everything from collecting fecal temperatures to sorting out the latest logistical supply run. They are the backbone that keeps the project running. There are the volunteers, who chip in wherever they are needed - providing that extra set of hands to make sure nothing falls through the cracks. There are the students who come to learn about wild orangutans, and make their own contribution to unlocking their secrets. And, of course there are the field and lab assistants who are there day in and day out, rain or shine, and have spent more hours following and observing these magnificent apes than I can ever hope to spend. Everyone from our Research Director, Wahyu Susanto, to our camp staff, keeps the project humming.



The Research Team, August 2017.

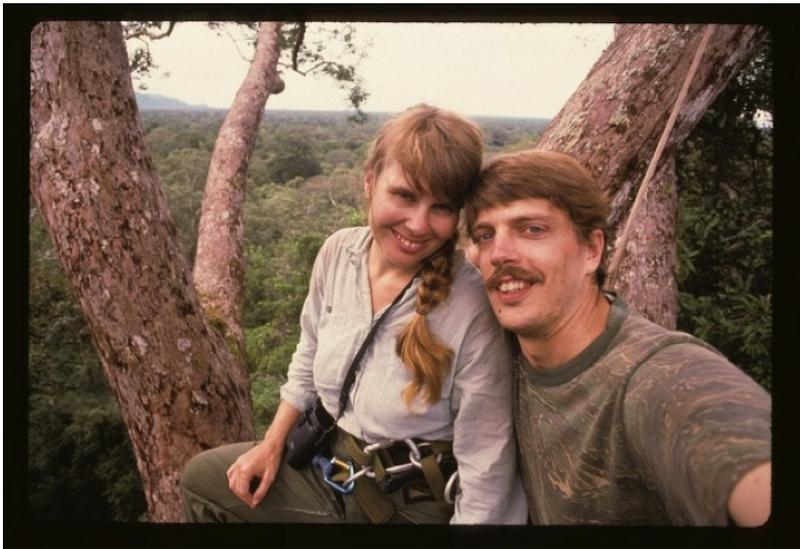
On the conservation side, the Program Managers and Field Directors provide the day-to-day direction and guidance that have helped us make a difference for orangutan conservation. Our dedicated conservation staff have spent years devoted to the task of safeguarding wild orangutans and their habitat. They never give up and are always finding new ways to inspire and work with the local people and government to protect one of Indonesia's rarest wildlife treasures.



GPOCP Conservation Staff (and friends) July 2017.

Our sponsors - UNTAN, RISTEKDIKTI, LIPI, the Eijkman Institute and the National Park Directors and staff - have made this work possible. And, it never would have happened if my husband, Tim Laman, hadn't first brought me to Gunung Palung in 1992 so he could measure his fig tree seedlings, high up in the canopy, as our first stop en route to Africa.

Russell and Jessica -seeing your love for this magical place makes it even more special. Thank you all! I'm looking forward to what the next 25 years will have in store!



Dr. Cheryl Knott and Dr. Tim Laman, in the top of a Dipterocarp tree, Gunung Palung National Park, 1992.

Gunung Palung Orangutan Conservation Program (GPOCP)

<http://saveGPorangutans.org>

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