

Gunung Palung Orangutan Conservation Program



January 2018

Issue: 61

Code RED

An e-newsletter from your friends in West Kalimantan

Dear Friends and Supporters,

We've got some great news to start out the year! Walimah, who many of you remember lost her baby in 2015 (pictured above), is pregnant again! We're thrilled that she has the chance to become a mom again and look forward to welcoming the new little one this summer! Every new orangutan life is a step forward in the fight against extinction.

In This Issue:

Inspired by ZACC

-

Meet Dania

-

Primate Connections
Calendar

-

Valentine's Day Shopping

Primate



Lab Assistant, Muhammad Syainullah (Sy) holds up the pregnancy test kit with the two tell-tale red lines confirming Walimah's pregnancy.

While we still had plenty of activities happening in West Kalimantan, we also had quite a busy schedule here in the US as well! Our first article is by our Program Director, Terri Breeden. She shares her experiences at the ZACC Conference that she and I attended just last week.

Our second article is by Dania Abidzaid, our new research volunteer. She recently arrived in Ketapang and writes about why she applied for this position and what she hopes to gain from the experience of studying orangutans at Cabang Panti Research Station over the next year. GPOCP warmly welcomes Dania to the team!

On our side bar, you can learn about the 2018 Primate Conservation calendar that GPOCP is participating in and how you can help support GPOCP while shopping for that special someone this Valentine's Day!

Sincerely,

Cheryl Knott, PhD
Executive Director

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

Connections Calendar

This year GPOCP decided to participate in a calendar fundraiser hosted by Primate Connections (who we also ran into at ZACC)! We were fortunate enough to have images donated by [Tim Laman](#). If you would like to purchase a calendar please email us at savegporangutans@gmail.com and we can send one to you.



Valentine's Day Shopping

Don't forget to shop using smile.amazon.com for that special someone this Valentine's Day. A portion of every sale goes directly towards our conservation program. Shop for the one you love and save the orangutans you love at the same time!



By Terri Breedon, GPOCP Program Director

The past month has been a whirlwind of excitement. I was able to travel back to the US and spend the holidays with my family and friends and also attend the ZACC Conference (Zoos and Aquariums Committing to Conservation). This conference was initiated to better integrate the conservation efforts of zoos with field projects throughout the world.

My conference week actually started a few days early as I was invited to a conservationist retreat at Beth Armstrong's house (founder of ZACC). She invited a group of women who work in all aspects of conservation, including zoos, NGOs and field projects, to get together and talk about the ups and downs of this type of work. Oftentimes, as conservationists, we are working to 'save the world' in one aspect or another, and when you look at the overall picture it can get quite depressing. But in reality, we have all made great strides in our organizations and it is important to recognize these efforts. I met such inspiring women and it was great to have the time to sit one-on-one and just chat. I found it extremely beneficial to connect with like-minded people doing similar work in other parts of the world and share our experiences regarding funding, traveling, and culture.



Choose GPOCP as your Amazon Smile recipient and 0.05% of your sales will go directly to us.



"My job, my mission, the reason I have been put on this planet, is to save wildlife"

-Steve Irwin-

Here I am trying out virtual reality. I felt the need to hold onto the table as a Cape Horn Buffalo was trying to lick my hand!

There were a couple of pre-conference workshops held on Monday, and I was able to attend one to learn how to better measure our conservation success (a huge aspect for all field projects)! That evening was the ice breaker event held at a local brewery. I had the opportunity to try out virtual reality for the first time! I will admit I did get a little dizzy with one video, but this seems like a great new technology to bring field projects into the classroom or to people who may not be able to visit and see these majestic animals in their native habitat or their local zoo.

Tuesday was the official first day of the conference and it was jam packed! There was such an energetic feeling around the room with people networking, catching up, and exchanging stories. GPOCP was able to set up a table to sell our artisans' handicrafts, which made for a great opportunity to talk about all of our great programs here in West Kalimantan. This year's ZACC theme revolved around threats to wildlife, and in particular the wildlife trade - unfortunately, still a problem not only here in West Kalimantan, but around the world as well.



Terri Breeden at our craft table at the ZACC Conference

selling handicrafts made by GPOCP artisans as part of our sustainable livelihoods program.

Wednesday was Zoo Day and we were able to spend a little time exploring the Jacksonville Zoo. As the day turned to evening there was a poster session where Executive Director, Cheryl Knott, and I presented about the success of our Sustainable Livelihoods program. This was also a great networking opportunity as participants were able to mingle and I was able to finally put some faces with all the emails I have been sending over the past year and a half!



Bobbi Miller, Field Conservation Coordinator at the Woodland Park Zoo, and Terri Breeden at the Jacksonville Zoo with our poster highlighting GPOCP's sustainable livelihood program.

On Thursday, Cheryl participated in an interactive panel discussion about 'What do field people want and need from zoos?' She was able to discuss the successes of GPOCP because of the long-term support from zoos such as the Woodland Park Zoo, the Disney Wildlife Conservation Fund, and Sea World Busch Gardens Conservation Fund. Many zoos offer small grant support that provides crucial support as well. Our project has been fortunate to receive grants and donations from the Seneca Park Zoo, Zoo New England, Cleveland Metroparks Zoo, Riverbanks Zoo, Phoenix Zoo, Cheyenne Mountain Zoo, Oregon Zoo, Zoo Atlanta, Houston Zoo, and AZA's Ape Tag Program. Most people probably do not realize that many zoos take a portion of every ticket sale and put that money towards conservation projects around the world. Without

this support, our project would not be where it is today and for that we must give a heartfelt thank you to each of our partners.



Dr. Cheryl Knott (second from left) participates in a panel at the ZACC Conference on "What do field people want and need from zoos?"

The conference wrapped up on Friday and I feel everyone left with a renewed sense of hope and ideas to implement in their future projects. There were connections made and motivation was rejuvenated. I am now ready to get back to saving orangutans and their habitat... just after I adjust to this jetlag!



GPOCP Executive Director, Dr. Cheryl Knott, and Program Director, Terri Breeden, at the ZACC Conference in Jacksonville, FL.

Meet Dania

By Dania Abizaid, GPOCP Research Volunteer

My name is Dania Abizaid, I'm 23 years old and come from Baja California, Mexico. Ever since I was a child, I felt a strong attraction towards nature and its wonders, and was lucky enough that my parents encouraged this, even though they sometimes didn't appreciate me climbing into every place I could, or bringing every creature I found to our house. Towards the end of my high school education, it was time to decide what to do with my life. Both of my parents had studied law, and it was clear to me that this path was well traced, convenient and stable. But there was something deep inside me that knew it was not the road I was supposed to take. So, throwing everyone off guard, I made the decision to study Biology, and it has been one of the best choices of my life. In this vast new world, I've discovered numerous wonders which only seem to multiply the more I learn.



Dania exploring one of the many caves in the south side of Guadalupe Island, refuge and reproduction site for the Laysan Albatross, Northern elephant seals, Great white sharks and the endemic Guadalupe fur seal.

During my studies, I volunteered for anything I could find that involved fieldwork and animal research, traveling from the magical forests of the San Pedro Martir Sierra and the mysterious Guadalupe Island in Mexico, to the vibrant jungles of Costa Rica, getting to know not just incredible places, but also the amazing people who fight incessantly to preserve them. These would prove to be key factors in shaping me not only as a biologist, but also as a person. The fulfillment and passion I felt whilst working made me realize that I had hit the jackpot, I was doing exactly what I was meant to do. So when I discovered there was a position at

the Gunung Palung Orangutan Project doing behavioral and ecological research, my memory flashed back to the time when I was a small girl and read about the extraordinary women who studied primates in Africa and Asia. This was all at a time when women often weren't taken seriously in research, however they ended up breaking through all expectations with their astonishing work. I dreamed about them, about being in their shoes, but it still felt so far away, like a fantasy, a dream, too big to happen.



Dania freediving in the crystal waters of La Paz. Located in the south of the peninsula of Baja California, Mexico, this Sea offers dazzling fish, coral and mammal species.

Nonetheless, the job was too wondrous to ignore, and I sent my information without expecting too much. To my surprise, I received a response, and was later interviewed and accepted. It was at this moment that I understood that there was no sense in being scared or feeling unworthy, and that all my past experiences had prepared me for this. I finally grasped that most times, the only real obstacle between you and those big dreams is your own self-doubt.

So now, I could not be happier to start working at Cabang Panti Research Station, alongside remarkable women and men, learning about the vast and wonderful Indonesian culture and digging into the mysterious lives of orangutans. I believe we must strive to understand this awe-inspiring species which has so much to teach us and whose

continued existence is so seriously threatened. I am sure I will encounter enormous difficulties but will learn invaluable lessons as well, through which this opportunity will be the door to becoming a quality researcher. All this will further my abilities to contribute to noble causes in the near future whilst also serving as a small sign to other people, in any corner of the world, that reaching that "pipe dream" is not impossible.



Overlooking the north side of the Biosphere Reserve of Guadalupe Island, located in the Pacific Ocean off the coast of Baja California Mexico. (Here I worked with the National Commission for Natural Protected Areas cooperating with other researchers on their work with the endemic Guadalupe fur seal). Photos credit Dania Abizaid.

Gunung Palung Orangutan Conservation Program (GPOCP)

<http://saveGPorangutans.org>

savegporangutans@gmail.com



Orangutan Photographs © Tim Laman

All other photographs © GPOCP