

Gunung Palung Orangutan Conservation Program



October 2018

Issue: 70

Code RED

An e-newsletter from your friends in West Kalimantan

Dear Friends and Supporters,

Greetings and happy fall to everyone in the northern hemisphere!

In this issue of *Code Red*, Terri Breeden, our Program Director, tells about her recent adventurous river tubing trip in Gunung Palung National Park. Park officials are planning to open this site for eco-tourism and she was invited to participate in the activities at Riam Berkinjil and give feedback on the experience. Our second article is by Natalie Robinson, one of my recent undergraduate students. This past May, Natalie completed an award-winning Senior Honor's thesis and now she's just started a year long internship at Cabang Panti.

As you start to shop for the holiday season, don't forget GPOCP. Amazon Smile is donating 5% of sales to your

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Amazon Smile

Amazon Smile is celebrating their

favorite organization through November 2nd! Be sure to support GPOCP so you can shop with ease and save Bornean orangutans at the same time! Our sidebar also features a little video we recently made highlighting our work supported by the Adventure Travel Conservation Fund. And last but not least, here is a link to our [2017 annual report!](#)

Sincerely,



Cheryl Knott, PhD
Executive Director
[Gunung Palung Orangutan Conservation Program \(GPOCP\)](#)

Eco-Tourism in Gunung Palung

By Terri Breeden, GPOCP Program Director

Recently, I was invited along with Natalie Robinson, our new Research Assistant, and Wahyu Susanto, our Research Director, by Pak Ari, the Gunung Palung National Park head, to join a river tubing trip at Riam Berkinjil near the village of Laman Satong in Gunung Palung National Park. The day was full of excitement as I wasn't really sure what we were getting ourselves into! We started out waking up early and heading to Siduk, a small town along the border of the National Park, to meet Pak Ari and Pak Bambang, the head of the Sukadana branch. We sipped on some super sweet coffee and discussed the plans for the day and then headed to meet some of the local villagers. Soon after that we met with Panji Petualang, the Indonesian version of Steve Irwin. Panji is especially passionate about snakes, reptiles, and adventure. The National Park is working with the community of Laman Satong to implement eco-tourism and develop Riam Berkinjil as a campsite. They invited Panji along to explore the area and make a YouTube video to share and promote Gunung Palung National Park.

charitable donation program and now through November 2, 2018, they will be donating 10X the usual rate. Be sure to support the [Gunung Palung Orangutan Conservation Program](#) while you shop!

ATCF Video

We recently made a video for the Adventure Travel Conservation Fund, highlighting our work that they help support. Check out what we are doing!



amazonsmile

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





Terri at the entrance to Riam Berasap and Riam Berkinjil.

The campsite is about a 6 km hike in, but we made the trek by motorbike! It was extreme and it was muddy, but it was fun. There were many times we had to get off, push the bikes through, and cross small wooden bridge passages. Along the way, our guides pointed out different trees, described the different habitats, and told stories of how the fires in 2015 had destroyed the forest but they have been working hard to restore those areas.



The crystal clear waters flowing by the campsite.

Once we made it to the campsite, I was amazed by the beauty and serenity of the area. The water was so clean and clear, it looked like air, you couldn't tell where the water ended and the land began. We were surrounded by large trees and were even greeted by a rare hornbill. If it is your first time to visit this area, it is customary for the local people to bless you with a ritual ceremony. They say a prayer, you drink a little

"Whether we and our politicians know it or not, Nature is party to all our deals and decisions, and she has more votes, a longer memory, and a sterner sense of justice than we do"

-Wendell Berry-

bit of salty water, and then they put a smudge of dirt on your forehead and some moss in your hair. After that, we had a traditional Indonesian lunch of white rice, BBQ chicken, and curried vegetables.



Our tubing group at Riam Berkinjil.

Once we were full from lunch, we made the short hike to Riam Berkinjil, the waterfall. Here you have two options, 1) you can take the easy way and get in below the rocks or 2) you can get in a little below the waterfall and take your chances of capsizing your tube. I chose option 2 and capsized on the small drop, but so did everybody else!



*Safely back in my tube after capsizing over the rocks.
Photos credit Wahyu Susanto.*

Once we all had our fun with the waterfall, we made our way down the scenic river. We just floated along, taking in nature and enjoying the refreshing water. Our guides were there to tell us stories about their culture, the forest, and even about their families and life in their village. The journey took about an hour and once we made it back to the campsite, we changed into dry

clothes and had some fresh coffee by the campfire before making the journey home.

Overall, this was a fun, adventurous day! Panji made a YouTube video which is posted below. The video is in Bahasa Indonesia, but you can see the beauty of the forest and the fun we all had. I hope more people are able to see this majestic forest and respect Mother Nature for all that she has to offer. If you would like to find out more about visiting [Gunung Palung National Park](#) visit their website, or email the national park office at btn_gunungpalung@yahoo.co.id, or send us an email at savegporangutans@gmail.com.



Panji's video of our river tubing expedition at Riam Berkinjil in Gunung Palung National Park.

From the Lab to the Field

By Natalie Robinson, GPOCP Research Assistant

Hello *Code Red* readers! My name is Natalie Robinson and I am a recent graduate of Boston University (BU), where I studied Biological Anthropology and Mathematics. During my time at BU I had the opportunity to learn and work under the guidance of Dr. Cheryl Knott. This past year I conducted a Senior Research Thesis in which I studied the concentration of free simple sugars in orangutan foods. I worked in the Boston-based lab using plant samples collected from Gunung Palung National Park. Now, after many hours spent analyzing samples from afar, I have the privilege of spending a year at Cabang Panti where I get to experience field research first-hand.

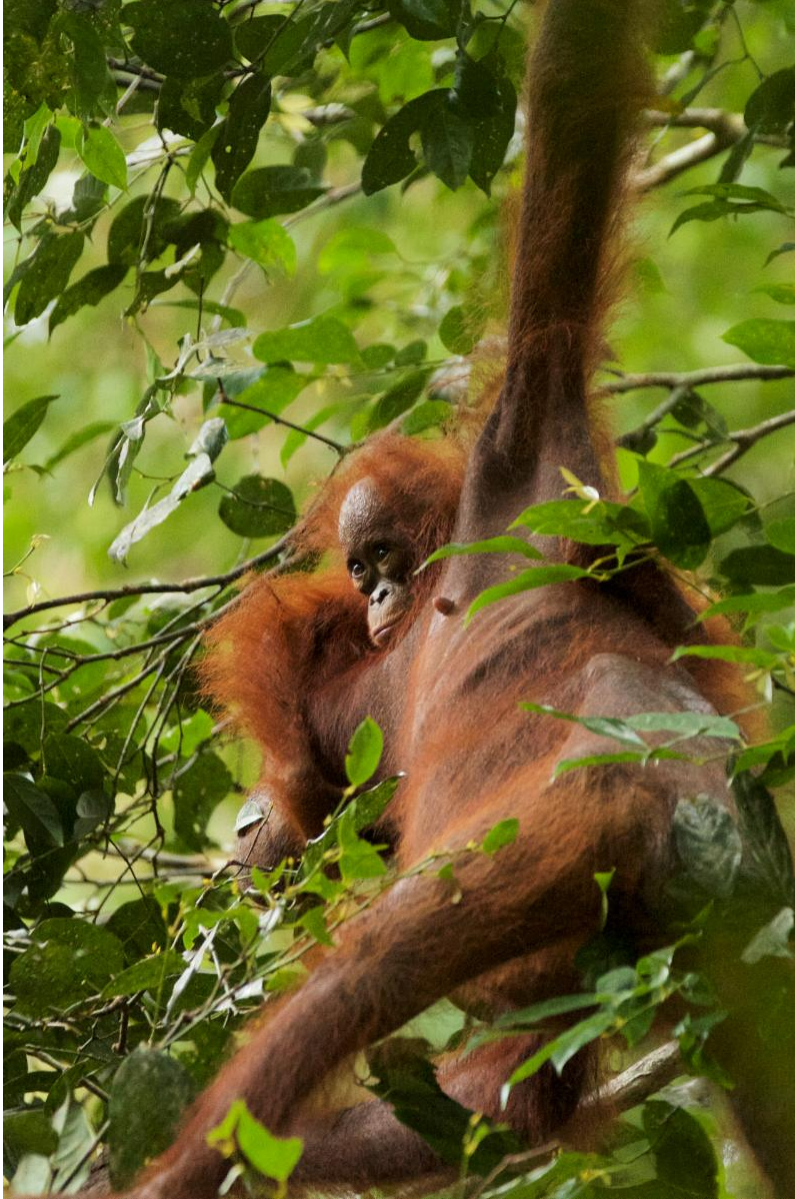
I have quickly learned that no matter how much I tried to prepare for this experience by studying orangutans

in class, analyzing samples in the lab, and reading articles about the Kalimantan rainforests, I knew next to nothing upon my arrival. During my first groggy 4 AM follow I was instantly humbled by the field assistants and their ability to navigate through scarcely-marked trails in the dark with no map, identify tree species through smell and feel, and find and follow orangutans by paying close attention to the sights and sounds. Also humbling was getting pooped on as I rushed to collect orangutan fecal samples and neatly scoop them into test tubes or measure the smelly mass with a thermometer.



Yogi, Dang, Syai, Udin and I pose for a dramatic photo-op before dinner. Photo credit Natalie Robinson.

My first few orangutan follows were spent watching Bibi and her infant Bayas. I later realized that these focal individuals were much easier to keep track of than others that I would come to know. They slept in late, stuck close together, came low in the tree canopy, and were incredibly photogenic (evidence below). Rossa and Ronnie, the next ibu-anak (mother-offspring) pair that I followed, behaved the exact opposite. They woke up when it was still dark out, separated from each other for hours (and once even nested separately), hid high up in the trees, and loudly broke branches that came crashing down on us. They also traveled through the swamp, thick with rattan plants which easily rip through clothes and skin. I quickly understood what hard work this could be.



Bayas peeks over his mother's shoulder as she feeds in the canopy. Photo © Russell Laman.

Despite bruises, blood, and lots of sweat, my biggest self-proclaimed accomplishment so far has been finding an orangutan "party" of Bibi, Bayas, and Berani (Bibi's older daughter) on a solo search. After I found the party we were able to follow and collect data on Berani for a few days.

During my time spent back at camp, I work in the lab where the collected samples are processed. Each day I'm greeted by macaques and gibbons, and immaculate spider webs though the open window. While I'm here I will be conducting research on parasite prevalence among orangutans, as parasites can be indicative of population health. Parasites, which can be transferred through the oral-fecal route or by direct contact with contaminated surfaces, can be quantified by collecting fecal samples and observing the number and variety of organisms in the sample through a microscope.



An afternoon in the lab with Syai and Rinta spent testing the accuracy of an infrared thermometer. Photo credit Natalie Robinson.

I've now spent nearly a month living at Cabang Panti and I've come to learn some essential camp hacks. These include not stirring your coffee to avoid a mouthful of grounds, tucking your pants between two layers of socks to keep out the leeches, not getting frightened by Eddie the giant bearded forest pig that lives nearby, and making sure you are at camp when the *sampan* (canoe) full of supplies comes so you can get your first pick at biscuits - I prefer the coconut flavor, but sugary orange cheese is also an option.

Time has gone by quickly, though I also feel like I've been here forever. Each day I learn more about Indonesia, orangutans, and myself. I am excited to see what the rest of my year in Indonesia holds.

Gunung Palung Orangutan Conservation Program (GPOCP)

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Orangutan Photographs © Tim Laman

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