

# Gunung Palung Orangutan Conservation Program



December 2018

Issue: 72

## Code RED

An e-newsletter from your friends in West Kalimantan

Dear Friends and Supporters,

It is hard to believe that we are at the end of 2018! We have had a truly successful year with all of our research and conservation activities in West Kalimantan.

In this issue of *Code Red*, our program director, Terri Breeden, shares a story about a recent training we held for our Bornean Orangutan Caring Scholarship students. The education team just hosted a 3-day capacity building training for these young adults who are making great strides for orangutan and rainforest conservation. Dania Magaly Abizaid has spent the last year with us at Cabang Panti following orangutans and working on our research project and she shares some of her experiences. Dania's enthusiasm all year has been infectious and her hard work and dedication have made a substantial contribution to the project. The GPOCP family wants to wish her all the best with her future

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Please help us raise

career!

On our side bar we have a link to our End of Year Giving Campaign. All donations go directly towards conserving the wild orangutan populations of Gunung Palung National Park. And to wrap up the year we want to wish everyone Happy Holidays. We are honored by all the support we have received in 2018 and are looking forward to a prosperous New Year in 2019.

Sincerely,



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

## The Future of Conservation

*By Terri Breeden, GPOCP Program Director*

Each year in December we host a 3-day training course for our Bornean Orangutan Caring Scholarship (BOCS) recipients and this year was no exception. This program gives a 4-year scholarship to deserving, yet under-privileged, youth hailing from the regencies of Ketapang and Kayong Utara in West Kalimantan, with support from the Orang Utan Republik Foundation. The scholarship allows these students to attend Tangjungpura University in the city of Pontianak with some requirements such as maintaining a high GPA, conducting their undergraduate research on orangutans or their rainforest habitat, and interning every year for 1-month. GPOCP also holds a 3-day capacity building workshop to even further develop their skills and prepare them for a future career in conservation!

We hosted our event at Canopy Center, a café, restaurant, and hostel. It was a great location for us to all be together and share delicious meals and learning experiences! We started the weekend off by welcoming our new BOCS recipients. We have been so busy that I wasn't able to give a proper introduction earlier this year, but we have 6 new students: Fitri Melyana, Ari Marlina, Mega Oktavia Gunawan, Gracia Ifri Sandy, Surianto, and Reni Riasari.

funds to purchase the new computers and cameras we need to complete our conservation and research projects for 2019! Every little bit helps and is tax deductible. You can donate on our [website](#) or through our [campaign](#)!

## Happy Holidays

All of us here at GPOCP would like to wish everyone a happy and prosperous New Year! We are grateful for what we were able to accomplish in 2018 and are looking forward to sharing our conservation and research activities with you in 2019!



Donate



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 Forward to a Friend



*New BOCS students from left to right, Ari Marlina, Gracia Ifri, Suriyanto, Environmental Education Manager Mariamah Achamd, Program Director Terri Breedon, Fitri Melyana, Reni Riasari, and Mega Oktavia.*

This year we focused our workshop on the future. I wanted the students to think about goals and how to obtain those goals. We did activities such as mind mapping for future goals, interview practice, making a professional CV, and public speaking practice. We also had two special guests give informative talks to our students. First was Sri Ranti, from Planet Indonesia, who discussed Climate Finance and second, we had Sulhani, from Titian, who discussed Advocacy Campaigns for Wild Animals.



*Sulhani, from Titian, giving a presentation about the importance of advocacy campaigns and how the students can implement these activities into their everyday lives.*

I truly love working with these students. Each of them has their own story that we don't always get to share. Victor Samudera started out as a class comedian, and is now top of his class and class president! Dedi Januari was very shy but absorbed information like a sponge and now doesn't hesitate to speak up. BOCS alumnus Hendri Gunawan initially wasn't accepted into his program, but eventually graduated Cum Laude! And Muchlis Saptura, a recent grad, is now manager at an orangutan rehabilitation center! These are just a few of the stories from our 31 students. With the opportunity

*"A society is defined not only by what it creates, but by what it refuses to destroy"*

*-John Sawhill-*

to go to university and the guidance provided by GPOCP, these young adults are shining brighter than expected. These were all kids who could not afford to go to college, but have accepted the challenge and then excelled at it!



*The BOCS students presenting their conservation campaign messages to the group using their public speaking skills.*

While these students say I am an inspiration to them, they are truly an inspiration to me. They give me hope for the future of conservation, not only in Indonesia, but around the world. These young adults are going places and I am happy to say that they are not only my friends, but more like family! I whole-heartedly believe in the power of education and the impact this program will have on the conservation of wild orangutan populations through supporting these emerging leaders.



*The group of BOCS students together for their annual 3-day capacity building training.*

Let's keep the momentum up! Can you help [support](#) our efforts to build the next generation of conservationists?

**My Year with the Orangutans and Other Creatures in the Forest**

"Halo, kalau ada orang yang bisa dengar, ada OH di rintis SF10," (Hello, if a person can hear, there is an orangutan on trail SF10), I call out through the radio for the 30th time. Any response is highly unlikely since I'm far from camp and the signal is poor. I look up into the tree in front of me to see a 90 kg orange ball of fur throwing kisses at me. And these are not love kisses, as they are being thrown along with tree branches! I sneak a peek and look up into those bright brown eyes which are fixed intently upon me. I can almost read what they're trying to say, and it goes along the lines of "Why is this bald ape so obsessed with me?" But how can we not be? Orangutans are such interesting creatures. And though we have to travel through a forest infested with leeches, mosquitoes, poisonous plants and snakes for more than 12 hours each day to study them, we find them fascinating.



*A young orangutan exploring the forest canopy not too far from his mother.*

Even after 30 plus years of research in this station alone, we still know so little about them. It's now been a year since I walked up to camp for the first time, shaking and trying not to look down over the hanging bridge which I now walk over with my eyes half closed with sleep. It's been a year filled with more learning than leech and mosquito bites, which is quite considerable. Though I must admit I will not miss waking up at 3am and walking out into the cold rain, I feel privileged for what I've been able to experience in this forest. Falling into the cold river, tripping over buttress roots, finding leeches in inconvenient places and getting pooped on by an orangutan, all seem like nothing when compared to being looked at by a curious baby orangutan, the awe of seeing a fully flanged male

long calling right in front of me, or that feeling of pure happiness when you hear the familiar cracking of branches of an orangutan making its nest after a long day in the peat swamp.



*Dania playing with a large millipede found on the forest floor while searching for orangutans at Cabang Panti Research Station in Gunung Palung National Park.*

Orangutans aren't even the only creatures I got to know during my time here; I also had the honor of becoming part of the crazy family at Cabang Panti, all of whom taught me invaluable lessons, such as there is no such thing as too much rice and that the limit on generosity and patience does not exist. They did this by example, by not once complaining when I asked, 20 times in one day, which genus a leaf sample belonged to or by listening to my unintelligible Indonesian.



*Dania and some of the team members at Cabang Panti Research Station enjoying a refreshing swim at the big waterfall.*

Thank you falls short for everything I am so grateful for. Family, friends and exciting new opportunities await me back home in Mexico! I am happy to be going home, but a part of me will stay in this forest and I will cherish it forever for all the experiences it has given me.



*Dania enjoying the view at the top of Mount Gunung Palung during her year as a Research Assistant for the Gunung Palung Orangutan Project. All Photos by Dania Magaly Abizaid.*

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