

# Gunung Palung Orangutan Conservation Program



February 2019

Issue: 74

## Code RED

An e-newsletter from your friends in West Kalimantan

Dear Friends and Supporters,

February came and went way too quickly and we have been focusing on solidifying new action plans, collaborations and partnerships for the coming year.

In this issue of *Code Red*, Petrus Kanisius, our Communications & Media Officer, shares with us a narrative of visiting the jungle paradise that is Cabang Panti, where we held our Annual Meeting at the start of the month. Then, Dr. Alys Granados, our Research Manager, tells us about the mast fruiting event that is occurring in Gunung Palung right now.

On our side bar we have some fun news about the Head of Gunung Palung National Park visiting GPOCP's office, highlights from some of our female scientists

### In This Issue:

Jungle paradise for  
GPOCP's Annual Meeting

-

Mast in Gunung Palung

-

National Park visits  
GPOCP!

-

Inter-species  
Conservation Support

-

International Day of  
Women and Girls in  
Science

**National Park  
Visits GPOCP!**

for International Day for Women and Girls in Science, as well as Inter-species Conservation Support from SlothGrip for the Gunung Palung Orangutans.

We hope you enjoy this month's newsletter and share it with those who may be interested. Be sure to check our social media and website to interact with our upcoming campaigns!

Sincerely,



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

We were honored to have Pak Ari, the Head of Gunung Palung National Park, visit our office to discuss future collaborations together!



## Inter-species Conservation Support!

We are excited to partner with [Slothgrip](#) to support our orangutan conservation efforts! They specifically designed these beautiful patches with the proceeds going to a selected charity (us!)



The purchase of these patches will enable us to acquire Fire Prevention Kits for combating forest fires in our Customary Forest villages and at our research station in the heart of Gunung Palung National Park!

You can find the patches and more information about

## Jungle Paradise for GPOCP's Annual Meeting

*By Petrus Kanisius, GPOCP Communications & Media Officer*

At the start of February, the whole GPOCP conservation team hiked the 5 hour trek into the forest and joined our research team at Cabang Panti Research Station in the heart of Gunung Palung National Park for our Annual Meeting. For some of them, despite working for GPOCP for years, this was their first time at the research station!



*GPOCP staff at Cabang Panti Annual Meeting. Photo by Rizal Al Qadri.*

Excitement and a sense of comradery filled the air as we got deeper into the forest and were surrounded by the sheer variety of plants, animals and enormous trees. The hike itself became a team-building exercise

with frequent words of encouragement given, and the joy of being able to freely joke and intermingle with staff from different ethnic groups, religions, cultures and countries. Just minutes before arriving at Cabang Panti Research Station we were greeted first by a blessing of rain (literally)! We were soaked but thrilled to have arrived and made our way through the jungle and deluge.

After dinner, on our first night at Cabang Panti, our fellow research colleagues invited us to sing along with them to soothe away all thoughts of the hustle and bustle of the city. Some people also played card games, ate dried cassava and some choose to go to bed early because of the long hike in.



*GPOCP and National Park staff at one of the waterfalls within Cabang Panti's trail system. Photo By Simon Tampubolon.*

Our Annual Meeting filled two whole days, followed by movies and sing-alongs at night. After which we had the opportunity to visit two of the big waterfalls in the park together with National Park staff. The waterfalls were not only beautiful and offered refreshing swims after the tough hikes to find them, but were also framed in greenery that really amplified the feeling of a jungle spa. Relaxation wasn't the only effect the waterfalls had though, some of the staff started having a jumping contest from the 10 meter high cliff! Our Environmental Education Field Officer, Hendri Gunawan, commented after jumping "Maybe one second of life was lost when jumping into the waterfall."

Slothgrip and the fundraising campaign [HERE](#). Get yours today!



## International Day of Women and Girls in Science

In honor of International Day of Women and Girls in Science we highlighted some of our inspiring female scientists on our social media sites!



Some of our ladies in the scientific spotlight included Rinta Islami who is our Field Lab Manager (and previous Bornean Orangutan Caring Scholarship graduate!)



Beth Barrow, our Survey



*Enjoying another waterfall in Cabang Panti's trail system in Gunung Palung National Park. Photo by Haning Pertiwi.*

The gorgeous variety of biodiversity in the form of flora and fauna in Gunung Palung National Park provided not only beauty but fruit snacks for us during our stay. New shoots of *Shorea* spp (meranti) plants appeared without hesitation and orchids decorated the trees. We swam and relaxed in the cool waters of the river - surrounded by macaques, hornbills, and accompanied by fish.



*Shorea spp. shoot germinating at Cabang Panti. Photo by Petrus Kanisius.*

At Cabang Panti Research Station there is a main building which contains the kitchen, labs, storage and common areas, offices and volunteer accommodations. There are also two houses for the camp managers, a lodging area for foreign researchers, as well as two structures for the full-time research assistants and the National Park staff, which doubles as an education display and an enlightening photo gallery.

Manager, has been researching Indonesian biodiversity for more than 7 years!



Natalie Robinson, Research Assistant and recent Boston University graduate, is currently studying the relationship between orangutans and parasites.



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



*"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's*



*Cabang Panti Research Station nestled into the jungle.  
Photo © Tim Laman.*

The experience brought many new insights for us all. We shared and discussed our organization's plans for the upcoming year, as well as benefited from everyone's knowledge and comradery as we made new friends and shared in the excitement! Jungle settings, with the humidity, biting insects and tough conditions, offer excellent team building opportunities! There is always a hand to pull you out of the mud, a keen eye that points out gorgeous birds, or kind laughter as you pull off your fifth leech that afternoon.

Thank you to the researchers at Cabang Panti, friends of GPOCP, and colleagues from Gunung Palung National Park Office for hosting us with a warm welcome! We can't wait to visit this hidden paradise again!

## **Mast in Gunung Palung**

*By Dr. Alys Granados, PhD, GPOCP Research Manager*

A massive fruiting event is currently underway at Gunung Palung National Park. Gunung Palung is dominated by *dipterocarp* trees which only produce fruit every 2-10 years. At Cabang Panti, flowering began in August with peak fruiting through November and December. These massive fruiting episodes are known as *masting* events and are characterized as being short in duration (peak fruiting is around 6 weeks), irregular and unpredictable in occurrence, and by the hyper-abundance of fruit produced. In other words, trees make a LOT of fruit over a short period of time every few years. *Dipterocarp* fruits may not look very appetizing as they lack any real pulp, but they are packed with nutrients sought after by a range of animals.

*the only thing that  
ever does."*

*-Margaret Mead-*



*Dipterocarp* fruits have wings that aid in seed dispersal. Photo by Dr. Alys Granados

The unpredictable nature of these *masting* events makes them difficult to study and there is a lot we still don't know about how animals in the rainforest are affected. Research suggests that *masting* is important to many animals and that for some, the increased quantity of food may facilitate increased reproduction.

Much of what we know comes from previous work in Gunung Palung by Dr. Lisa Curran and Dr. Mark Leighton. They found that a number of animals shifted their movement patterns to track *dipterocarp* fruiting trees. Some species, like bearded pigs (a species of conservation concern) also seem to time their reproduction to coincide with the peak in *dipterocarp* fruiting. Dr. Curran and Dr. Leighton's work highlights the importance of these trees for a number of threatened species that live in the rainforests of Southeast Asia. However, forests in Borneo are under threat from human activity such as selective logging, where reproductive *dipterocarp* trees are targeted for removal, leading to reduced *masting* intensity. My own research in Malaysian Borneo suggests that animals like bearded pigs show weaker responses to *masting* in logged forests compared to those in unlogged forest, even at sites where fruit production is comparable. In unlogged forests, the number of bearded piglets detected by our camera traps showed

a sharp increase, whereas there was little difference in the occurrence of piglets seen between mast and non-mast years in logged forest.



*Walimah eating Tetramistera fruit. Photo by Erin Kane.*

Mast fruiting also gives us insights into the special adaptations orangutans have. Our project director, Dr. Cheryl Knott, has shown that orangutans take advantage of these periods of fruit abundance by eating huge amounts of fruit, including *dipterocarp* seeds, leading to a massive increase in their calorie intake. They are then able to put on significant fat stores that sustain them through the periods of low food availability that often follow the mast fruiting. Dr. Knott has also shown that during the masts female orangutan hormonal levels increase and they are more likely to get pregnant.

I feel incredibly lucky to be here during a mast fruiting and to witness first-hand how the orangutans, and other wildlife, respond to this fruit bonanza. We still have so much more to learn about this fabulous, but threatened, ecosystem.

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