

Gunung Palung Orangutan Conservation Program



August 2019

Issue: 80

Code RED

An e-newsletter from your friends in West Kalimantan

Dear Friends and Supporters,

I have just returned from a particularly rewarding trip to Indonesia. It was wonderful to be with my team again, both in Ketapang and in the forest, and to be part of the fantastic work that everyone is doing.

I was thrilled to see Walimah's new baby! We gave National Park Director, Pak Ari Wibawanto, the honor of naming her and he selected "Winnie" because this is a 'win' for Walimah and orangutan conservation in Gunung Palung National Park. You can read all about her and what we are learning from infant and juvenile orangutans in my article below.

August has also been an empowering month for our

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conservation team members! There have been festivals for both our Customary Forests and Sustainable Livelihoods artisans, as well as workshops and trainings. This issue of *Code Red* features an article by Petrus Kanisius about the recent workshop our artisans and farmers participated in where they learned how to assess natural resources for community development.

On our sidebar we have some fun news regarding GPOCP merchandise for supporting our conservation projects and learning about the unique fauna of West Kalimantan! We also have exciting news about how our community leaders are influencing landscape conservation, as well as a note on the recent fires.

We hope you enjoy catching up on what we've been doing and tag us wearing your new GPOCP apparel using [#saveGPorangutans!](#)

Sincerely,



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

From Farmers to Facilitators - Natural Resource Assessment

By Petrus Kanisius, GPOCP Communications & Media Officer

One of our most successful working models for fulfilling long-term conservation goals is our grassroots-to-government approach where we work closely with communities to understand their situation, adapt our approach and involve them as much as possible in all steps of the process. This largely involves capacity building with our community members and recruiting locally for any field surveys. This, in turn, fosters a sense of stewardship and respect for the wildlife surrounding them.

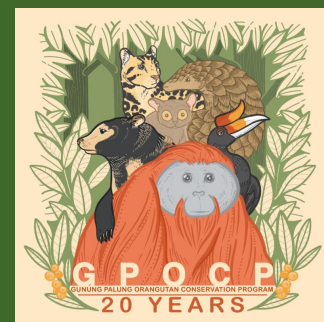
This month, the Regional Government of Kayong Utara held an extensive training workshop with GPOCP and the Non-Timber Forest Products Exchange Program Indonesia (NTFP-EP Indonesia) for selected community members. The purpose of the workshop was to explore the potential of NTFPs in 12 villages

T-Shirts now available!

To raise awareness about the project and the amazing wildlife that exists in Gunung Palung National Park, we have launched a [t-shirt website!](#)



Thanks to [Natelle Quek](#), we have a series of beautiful images to help raise some funds and awareness for the project & wildlife!



Help us celebrate GPOCP's 20th year as an in-situ conservation organization. Design by Natelle Quek.

Fires in West Kalimantan

This last week there has been a lot of

surrounding Gunung Palung National Park using the CLAPS (Community Livelihood Assessment and Product Scanning) approach. CLAPS is the first step in assessing local natural resources for community based NTFP enterprise development. In other words, it teaches participants how to identify and assess what kind of non-timber forest products are available locally, and then how to evaluate and create a market for their products to develop a viable, and environmentally sustainable, business.

The training took place in GPOCP's Education Center - Bentangor" - with over 26 participants, including some of our organic farmers, our handicraft artisans, and even members of the regional Artisans Guild. The two engaging and knowledgeable trainers were both from NTFP-EP Indonesia.



Field exercise for Pandanus product assessment, looking at how it is managed for product development.

During the four day workshop, one of the activities included visiting local bamboo craftsmen who demonstrated the process of collecting and managing the raw material and then explained how they market their product locally. Participants were also invited to see the mapping system and distribution management of the *pandanus* plant, famously used by the Ida Craft collective in Pampang Harapan Village.



attention drawn to the uncontrolled fires in the tropical rainforests, including the Amazon and Borneo. Dry seasons and natural fires in West Kalimantan are not an unnatural phenomenon in and of themselves, but the continuous exploitation and alternation of forest and peatland means the removal of water catchment areas and micro-climate change (affecting the native water cycle). This results in areas being drier for longer and the natural barrier against the fire, before it reaches the forests, is removed.

Using the [Global Forest Watch for Fires](#) you can track and follow the global wildfire situation.



Dead pangolin found trying to escape the flames of a large fire in Pelang (a village 25 minutes south of Ketapang). Photo by Natural Resource Department-Indonesia.

Fires around the National Park are reportedly started by local farmers for clearing their farmland (slash-and-burn

Visiting local bamboo craftsmen demonstrating what kinds of products can be adapted for local markets.

GPOCP Program Director, Victoria Gehrke, stated "We are very grateful for the extensive CLAPS workshop hosted by NTFP-EP, and made possible with support from The Whitley Fund for Nature and regional Environmental Health Department. This survey will allow us to better understand and map out the natural resources for improved land management planning and sustainable development of the communities and the surrounding wildlife. It is through incorporating the communities in all parts of the processes, from surveys to decisions, that we will achieve long-term success in wildlife conservation."



Field exercise for mapping and assessing natural resources.

The training provided to the local community members also allows them to possess a transferable skill that can be utilized by the private, governmental and NGO sectors for natural resource management and community enterprise empowerment. The involvement through direct support by the local government also links this governmental body to trained and reliable facilitators ready to carry-out field surveys. GPOCP will start the CLAPS survey in the remote village of Matan, northwest of the National Park which has for a long time been considered a logging hotspot (both legal and illegal). Our orangutan nest survey and drone team are also scheduled to survey the national park close to this village, which will give a good indication of how orangutan populations are doing in that area to further push for strong conservation action.

technique), but during the dry season high winds often cause the fires to spread uncontrolled. We work closely with communities to guide them away from environmentally destructive activities, but changing old traditions is never easy and is a long process.



Fire in Kuala Satong, one hour from GPNP borders. Photo by Ketapang Regional Police Department

If you'd like to help our Fundraiser for Fire Fighting Equipment please see our ["GoFundMe" page!](#)

Community leaders influencing land management policy

Last month, our Sustainable Livelihoods Manager Wendi Tamariska and the artisans' groups were asked to consult in a meeting about establishing new land management strategy plans for the Gunung Palung landscape.



Core community participants group-photo! Photos by Syarif Abdul Samad (GPOCP Sustainable Livelihoods Field Officer).

We are very grateful for NTFP-EP Indonesia and their supporting partners for providing the workshop, as well as the Environmental Health Department of Kayong Utara for their collaboration and, of course, the Whitley Fund for Nature for making it all possible.

Another Chance for Walimah

By Cheryl Knott, Executive Director

I wake up early, still tired from the 13 km hike into Cabang Panti the day before, but eager to see Walimah and her new baby. It's been almost four years now since she lost her infant in [what we suspect was an infanticidal attack](#), that also left her severely injured and missing a large chunk of her foot. But, now, finally, after an earlier apparent miscarriage, she has a new baby. As I catch my first glimpse, I can't help but smile. With eyes encircled by lighter skin, and hair sticking up in a sparse halo, orangutan babies are the epitome of 'cute' to the human observer. The baby, now called Winnie, is 2-months-old and has not yet ventured off her mother's body. For now, that's her whole world. Winnie tries to grab branches as her mother moves. She plays with leaves and reaches up to her mother's face with the uncoordinated, comical movements of new baby. As I watch Walimah prepare to move to the next tree, she readjusts little Winnie securely on her side. As Walimah moves through the canopy, I notice subtle changes in the way she moves, preventing the baby from hanging down below her body. It's a long way to the ground and it's remarkable that these baby orangutans can hang on! Although even more tiny than human babies, orangutan babies are more physically capable at birth, with a grip that



Pandanus plants are Non-Timber Forest Products that provide alternative and sustainable livelihoods to communities who make crafts out of the fibers. Photo by Patrik Sköld

Local government agencies are supporting our artisans through ordering products and networking, but are also actively seeking their opinion and applying their advice for environmental planning to best serve both wildlife and communities for realistic long-term conservation success.

Our Sustainable Livelihoods program for wildlife conservation is therefore also directly conserving prime orangutan habitat through community development!

This is a big win for wildlife conservation!



allows them to cling to their mother's body as she goes about her day, traversing the rainforest canopy.



Introducing two-month-old Winnie! Photo
© Tim Laman.

This new infant gives us an incredible opportunity to document the timing of developmental milestones in wild baby orangutans. To this end, we have expanded some of our 'baby' data collection to include more fine-tuned observations of this early period of life. Infant orangutans show an intense interest in what their mother is eating. Starting as early as two months, we see Winnie start to reach out to her mother while she's eating, seeming to beg for food. Walimah ignores her, as would be expected because her baby does not have any teeth! As little Winnie grows, we will be able to see when Walimah starts sharing food with her (actively or passively allowing her to take a nibble) and whether she is handing off unchewed portions, or the part that she has already chewed. We've recently [taken a closer look at orangutan food sharing between mothers and babies](#) - something they do rarely. Collective food sharing is a significant difference between humans and other apes, representing one of the important transitions during human evolution. Studying this in orangutans thus tells us not only about how orangutans learn how and what to eat, but also gives us insights into the great expansion of this behavior in our own evolutionary history.



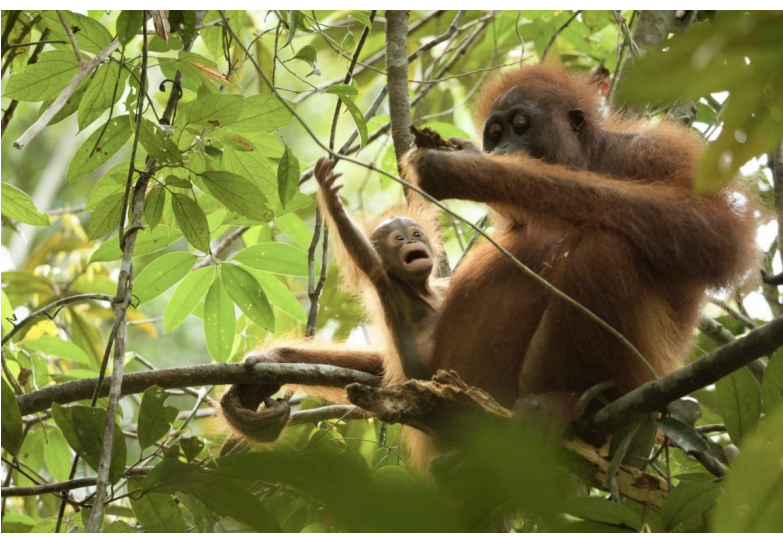
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Choose GPOCP as your Amazon Smile recipient and 0.05% of your sales will go directly to us.

Forward to a Friend

"What I see everywhere in the world are ordinary people willing to confront despair, power, and incalculable odds in order to restore some semblance of grace, justice, and beauty to this world."

Paul Hawken



Walimah's first baby, two-month old Wanda, reaches out and vocalizes at her mother as she munches on termites. Post-Doc, Erin Kane, with help from orangutan project Research Assistant, Tori Bakley, is studying orangutan oral food processing, and differences between adults and juveniles. Photo © Tim Laman.

We can expect Walimah to nurse Winnie until she has another offspring - so around 7 years! But, how much milk is she really getting from these nursing bouts? It's hard to say from just our ground-level observations. So, we're trying out a couple of new methods to get at this question. First, we are analyzing videos of nursing bouts to measure the suckles per minute which we can use to estimate milk intake and to distinguish between active suckling vs. just passive nipple attachment. With video, we can get an up-close view of nursing something that we just can't do even with powerful binoculars. Additionally, we can learn about Winnie's milk intake from her poop! Mother's milk is, of course, an animal product - containing different levels of carbon and nitrogen than do plant foods. This means that the baby's poop can be measured for carbon and nitrogen isotopes and compared to these compounds in the poop of her mother, whose diet is almost all plant material. We've done this already, with an earlier dataset, and [found some promising initial results.](#)



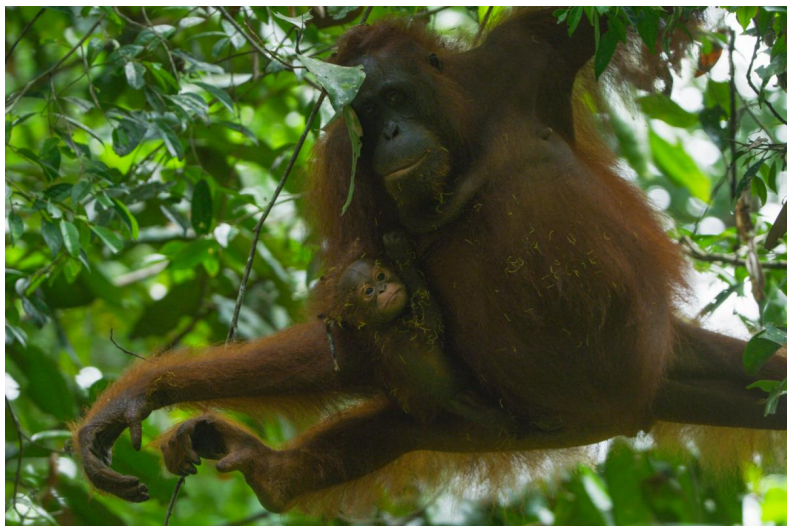
Video analysis gives us the opportunity to study nursing up-close, something that Boston University undergraduate, Xaulanda Thorpe, is helping us measure. Video of Winnie and Walimah from Gunung Palung National Park © Tim Laman.

As we study orangutan growth we can't directly weigh and measure them - so primatologists have to be inventive! One of the ways to do this is to use a laser-mounted camera to project two parallel lasers (human and animal friendly) on the animal and then take a picture. This gives us a known distance, and a digital tape measure, which we can use to measure limb lengths and other body parts. With the help of wildlife photographer Tim Laman, we've made improvements on previous laser camera designs, and now have a rugged, cost-efficient, field device. We can now document these changes in wild orangutan growth and can see whether other factors, like changes in food intake, make an impact.



Project Director, Dr. Cheryl Knott, and Research Project Manager, Ella Brown, test out our new laser camera for measuring orangutan growth and body size. Photo © Tim Laman.

Walimah and her baby are only one of the mother-offspring pairs that we follow as they travel around and through the Cabang Panti study site. We are closely watching, and collecting data, on dyads of many different ages. Together they are painting a picture of the developmental trajectory of juvenile orangutans and what adaptations enable them to (usually) survive during their first vulnerable years. The odds are in Walimah's favor that her new baby will make it through these first few years. It is OUR job to ensure that this baby - who could well live to be over 50 years old - will have the forest to live out her life's journey.



Winnie hangs on tight as Walimah moves through the rainforest canopy. Photo © Tim Laman.

Gunung Palung Orangutan Conservation Program (GPOCP)

<http://saveGPorangutans.org>

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