

Gunung Palung Orangutan Conservation Program



August 2018

Issue: 68

Code RED

An e-newsletter from your friends in West Kalimantan

Dear Friends and Supporters,

August has been a busy month, both in West Kalimantan and for myself. Our office has been full of student interns working hard and celebrating International Orangutan Day. After returning from Indonesia, I headed off to Africa where I attended the International Primatological Society Congress (IPS) in Nairobi, Kenya!

In this issue of *Code Red*, Hendri starts us off with a description of his first time visiting Cabang Panti Research Station and joining in the Field Course offered by Dr. Andy Marshall, from the University of Michigan, and Pak Endro Setiawan, from the Gunung Palung National Park office. Our second article details some of the orangutan behaviors I witnessed this summer.

In This Issue:

Green Paradise

Party in the Mango Trees

Soundscapes of the
Rainforest

Ian Redmond Award for
Conservation

Soundscapes of the
Rainforest

Our sidebar has a link to a special recording of the sounds of the rainforest, made by Hendri during the field course. At the IPS Congress I was so pleased to accept on behalf of our Habitat Protection Manager, Edi Rahman, the Ian Redmond Award for Great ape Conservation. He is extremely honored to receive this award and we have shared his thank you video. Congratulations Edi!

The IPS Congress was a great opportunity to connect with other primatologists and share both our research and conservation work. My post doc, Erin Kane, and graduate student, Andrea DiGiorigo, gave presentations on their work on orangutan feeding behavior and nutrition. I gave one talk on sexual coercion in orangutans and how it may impact female foraging behavior. I also was an invited speaker in a symposium on the value of long term research stations, sponsored by the National Geographic Society. Additionally, I spoke about our efforts to combat the illegal pet trade as a panelist in a special roundtable forum on this topic. I learned a lot as well and returned with many new ideas to help advance both the study and conservation of wild orangutans in Indonesia.

Sincerely,



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

Green Paradise

By Hendri Gunawan, GPOCP Environmental Education Field Officer

I was born and raised in Kalimantan on the island of Borneo. This region is also known as the lungs of the world because of our healthy forests! As a native, I am very proud of these beautiful landscapes, one of which is Gunung Palung National Park (GPNP), which is considered one of the most biologically diverse national parks in Indonesia. Although GPNP is not huge (at 108,000 hectares), we can find eight types of ecosystems ranging from mountain forests to coastal mangroves and the Park is home to hundreds of species of animals and thousands of species of plants. This diversity provides quite a surprise for newcomers who first set foot in this National Park. Gunung Palung

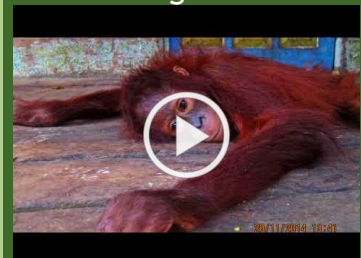
While visiting CPRS, Hendri woke up early to capture the sounds of the rainforest. Sit back, relax, and enjoy this special sound byte!



Soundscapes from Gunung Palung National Park

Ian Redmond Award for Conservation

Our Habitat Protection Manager, Edi Rahman, was recently awarded the Ian Redmond Award for Conservation at the International Primatological Society meeting. While he could not make the event, he was able to send a thank you video! Congratulations Edi and thanks for your hard work and dedication to orangutans!



GPOCP for Ian Redmond Award



Donate

National Park contains the Cabang Panti Research Station (CPRS), one of the oldest research stations in Indonesia, which is still very active today. Many students from within Indonesia and around the world have conducted research for their bachelors, masters, and PhD degrees. Cabang Panti is known for hosting some of the worlds most renowned primatologists and scientists. It never occurred to me that I might get to visit this special place, but then I was invited to attend the Field Course offered by One Forest Project and the National Park office.

During my 12 days at CPRS I joined a series of lectures and activities learning about tropical forest ecology and vertebrate survey techniques led by Dr. Andy Marshall from the University of Michigan. We learned about the ecology of plants and vertebrates of tropical rain forests, how to install camera traps and different plant characteristics. We also had an introduction to scientific research methods, including how to follow wild orangutans and how to preform accurate statistical analyses. There were about 15 participants involved in this field course, each with varying degrees of expertise. At first, we did not know each other very well, but we soon became close friends.



Field Course participants at Cabang Panti Research Station. Photo credit One Forest Project.

At the beginning of the course I heard Dr. Marshall, who we were now calling Pak Andy, make a comment before we started the long hike. He said "I feel like I am home when I am here." At the time I was curious about what he was referring to and why he said it, but I let it go. During the 14 km (8.7 miles) hike in we passed through several types of ecosystems, ranging from peat swamp forest, freshwater swamp forest, then lowland forest, and eventually to highland forest.



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



"Never believe that a few caring people can't change the world. For, indeed, that's all who ever have"

-Margaret Mead-

On our journey, we found many large plants with very tight canopies! It was so hard for sunlight to penetrate to the forest floor. We also saw some orangutan nests and enjoyed the melodious sounds of bird and crickets. They seemed to accompany us the entire way to CPRS! Upon arrival, I was amazed by the atmosphere of the camp, in the thick jungle, there were 3 simple but spacious buildings set up to accommodate the researchers and their laboratories. The camp is surrounded by giant trees and a clear pristine river flows by out front.



Hendri marveling at the size of the trees found within Gunung Palung National Park. Photo credit Hendri Gunawan.

In the field course, we were divided into four teams, my team was called "fungi." Of the various activities conducted, my favorite was the wildlife survey. I specifically enjoyed this because I could wander around the forest, enjoy the fresh air, and encounter various animals. We started the surveys early in the morning, when many animals are most active. I was able to hear the beautiful sounds of birds, crickets, and a hornbill making a call! I also heard a red leaf monkey making his presence known in the jungle. My team was captivated

by these sounds as we followed them throughout the trail system. But before we knew it, we were lost! The day wore on and we had not found our way back to camp, but then we found some of the researchers observing wild orangutans. I am happy we stumbled upon the researchers as we were able to witness a rare event. The famous orangutan, Walimah, was copulating with Bosman, one of the resident males! And not far away, in another tree was Berani, an adolescent female orangutan. For about 15 minutes I was able to observe this intimate behavior and enjoy my first sighting of wild orangutans!



Hendri taking survey data during the Field Course. Photo credit One Forest Project.

I also gained a lot of other useful knowledge and experiences from my two weeks at CPRS. Our team installed a camera trap on a small tree by the river, and as a result we recorded a mouse deer passing by at night to take a drink from the river during our short time there. The following day, Pak Andy invited us to hike to the summit of Mount Gunung. We started early in the morning because the trip is quite far and difficult. During the hike I learned that there are more than 90 types of Dipterocarpaceae trees, known in our

local language as *meranti-merantian*, in GPNP, and some of these trees can reach 30 meters in height. As we hiked up we also encountered *Pouteria* trees and some varieties of mountain pine. Hiking higher and higher, I noticed the trees got smaller and smaller, and they were also covered in more moss. In the middle of my hike, I found a plant that is very unique, it has stems, internodes and leaves like bamboo but grows like a creeper, somewhat like *rattan*. I also discovered some sun bear claw marks on tree trunks! Wow, these experiences made me extremely intrigued and curious to learn more!



One Forest Project Research Assistant, Landah, showing the Field Course participants how to set up a camera trap. Photo credit One Forest Project.

By the end of my trip to the beautiful Gunung Palung National Park, with all of its charm and biodiversity, I understood why Pak Andy calls this place home. The tropical rainforests of GPNP are just a piece of the 'Green Paradise' Borneo has to offer and I can truly say this is my home.

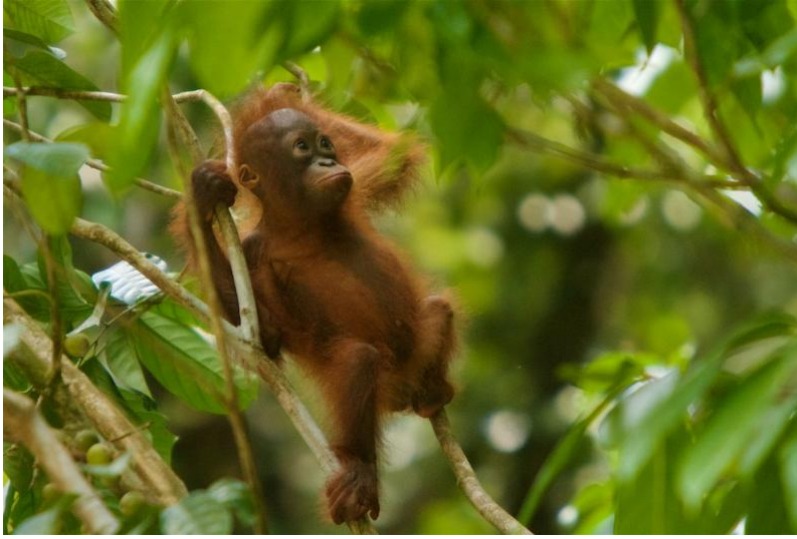


Views near the summit of Mount Gunung. Photo credit Hendri Gunawan.

Party in the Mango Trees

By Cheryl Knott, GPOCP Executive Director

Every once in awhile instead of searching for orangutans, they come to you! To our surprise and delight, this summer one of our older females, Bibi, and her baby, Bayas, included our camp in their circuit of fruiting trees they were visiting. Imagine being able to watch orangutans while sitting on the ping pong table having your morning coffee! Bibi discovered (or probably she already knew!) that in the clearing between our camp buildings we have a selection of tasty forest fruit trees - a mango, a breadfruit and a langsat. All happened to be fruiting in July. Bibi and Bayas spent many hours feeding in these trees seemingly oblivious to our camp full of people. What a treat for the Field Course participants (led by Professor Andy Marshall and Pak Endro Setiawan from the Gunung Palung National Park office) to be able to see a mother and baby up close on their visit to Cabang Panti. We had to convince them that it's usually not this easy!



Three-year-old male Bayas. Photo © Russell Laman

I knew Bibi was very habituated, but I've never seen an orangutan so comfortable with that many people. She even made her nest a few meters away - right above the trail between the camp and the bathroom! No 3 am wake up time would be needed the next morning! It's taken many, many years of following wild orangutans at Cabang Panti to reach the point where they will allow us to observe them at such close quarters. Orangutans are very wary of people and unhabituated individuals run away, vocalize and even throw the occasional branch at us. This doesn't teach us much about their natural behaviors. So, we put in the many hours needed to allow them to become accustomed to our presence and to realize we are not a threat. This is one of the great values of long term research, we can follow the lives of individual animals who allow us the privilege to observe their world.



Dr. Cheryl Knott watches and orangutan with field assistant Toto. Photo © Tim Laman.

Bibi's world often includes her older daughter, Berani. We spent many days this summer also following

Berani, and her seemingly constant companion, the unflanged male Bosman. One of the other favorite spots of the orangutans was a cluster of huge mango trees - two different species - a bit further afield from camp. Most rainforest fruits do not have domesticated varieties - but mangos are one of the exceptions. These huge, tasty fruits provided a feast for the orangutans, many times feeding on them well past dark. Although orangutans are often thought of as solitary, they do spend time together when they can, and it's actually not unusual to see several together in a big fruit tree. They also have their own social drama - as we saw repeatedly when Walimah joined the group. Although intent on following Berani, Bosman also mated with Walimah when she'd come into the mango tree. But, Berani, wanted nothing to do with her, and would flee whenever Walimah approached, giving up her choice spot.



A view into the big mango tree! Photo © Tim Laman.

These interactions teach us much about the relative status of the individuals in the population, with Walimah being dominant to Berani. Although the rainforest is huge, fruit trees with these big crops are not common, and may become a contested resource. This summer, however, I also witnessed an example of turn taking that I'd never seen before. One of the days when I was following Berani and Bosman, Berani spotted a small tree with ripe fruit. Climbing to the top of it, her weight nearly pulled the tree over. Bosman just sat on an adjacent tree watching her. When Berani left the tree, she swayed it back towards Bosman, climbed out over his head, and they switched places. It was his turn to feed and hers to patiently watch. They did this several times. I don't think I've ever seen this kind of cooperation between unrelated adults. These great red apes teach me something new every time!



Gunung Palung Orangutan Project Research Team -
Summer, 2018. Photo © Tim Laman.

Gunung Palung Orangutan Conservation Program (GPOCP)

<http://saveGPorangutans.org>
savegporangutans@gmail.com



Orangutan Photographs © Tim Laman
All other photographs © GPOCP