



Gunung Palung Orangutan Conservation Program



January 2015

Code RED

An e-newsletter from your friends in West Borneo

Dear Friends and Supporters,

I hope that this first month of 2015 has found you happy and healthy. We are pleased to bring you the January edition of our Code RED newsletter. This month's first article focuses on our Customary Forest conservation program, known in Indonesia as *Hutan Desa*, with the second article highlighting some of our recent Memoranda of Understanding with local governmental and academic institutions.

GPOCP believes in a community-based conservation approach, because improving the livelihoods and education of people living in and around the forest has direct, positive impact on orangutans and their habitat. The Customary Forest program is a perfect opportunity for us to support sustainable forest management by local communities, which in turn empowers them to protect the orangutans and thousands of other species living in the forests around Gunung Palung National Park.

Of course, this and all of our other conservation and research programs would not be successful without cooperation and support from other groups. With that in mind, we have recently signed collaborative agreements with the Gunung Palung National Park Office (BTN-GP) and Universitas Tanjungpura (UNTAN) to strengthen our ties to both the Indonesian government and academic communities.

We are also eagerly awaiting the birth of long-followed orangutan Walimah's first offspring. The research

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team is keeping a close eye on her as she should give birth in the next month. This is truly an exciting time for us!

As always, we thank you for reading and for your continued support. 2015 is shaping up to be a great year and we're glad that you are a part of it.

Sincerely,



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

Forest Conservation By Communities, for Communities

By Desi Kurniawati and Cassie Freund

GPOCP is currently in the process of establishing three Customary Forests, or "Hutan Desa" as they are known in Indonesia, in the buffer zone of Gunung Palung National Park. The first, in the village of Laman Satong, is currently awaiting final approval from the Governor of West Kalimantan. The other two, in the villages of Padu Banjar and Penjalaan in Kayong Utara Regency, are still being developed, but both have sustainable management plans in place. The following article by GPOCP Customary Forest Coordinator, Desi Kurniawati, explains why this program is so important and how it advances orangutan conservation while also protecting the rights of local people.

In 2008, when the notion of *Hutan Desa*, a form of community-based forest management, was introduced in Indonesia, it felt like a breath of fresh air for the local people who live on the edges of the forest. The government first introduced the concept with the release of Forestry Law 49, stating that the intent and purpose of *Hutan Desa* is to provide forest access to the local community through the establishment of village forest management groups, who are charged with ensuring the sustainable utilization of forest resources in order to protect and improve the welfare of the community. *Hutan Desa* also represents an opportunity for organizations committed to the conservation of orangutans and their forest habitat, such as GPOCP, to promote the protection of key orangutan habitat. Entrusting forest management to the communities that live and work in those forests each and every day means that these areas will remain valuable habitat for endemic wildlife, especially orangutans. This is growing increasingly important as more and more forest is being turned over to oil palm and mining companies. At one time almost all of Borneo was viable orangutan habitat, but constant development for human settlements, retail and now large-scale agriculture has left this once pristine swath of rainforest highly fragmented, and the pleas of local people to maintain remaining forests are often pushed aside in favor of financial gain. *Hutan Desa* is one solution to legally protect these important forest areas while simultaneously supporting sustainable development. Providing local communities with the management rights to forests can even improve forest health, as many village management boards are dedicated to reforesting their community land.

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GPOCP Customary Forest Coordinator, Desi Kurniawati (right), verifying the boundaries of the Hutan Desa with the community management board in Laman Satong

In reality, however, the process to secure *Hutan Desa* status is long, fraught with bureaucracy and nearly impossible for a village to do on their own, meaning that GPOCP and other organizations play a critical supporting role. First, we must assist the communities in obtaining all of the necessary permits and permissions set by the Ministry of Forestry, a task which includes forming the village management board, drafting and submitting the local sustainable management plan and mapping the proposed *Hutan Desa* area. Then the proposal must be approved by the Bupati (Regency head) and the Minister of Forestry, after which it is sent to the Governor of West Kalimantan to be officially signed into law. From start to finish, establishing a *Hutan Desa* can take up to two years of steady effort. Despite all of this, the communities that we support remain eternally enthusiastic, dreaming of the day that they have full legal rights to manage the forests that they so closely depend on. We at GPOCP greatly value our role in helping them in their efforts to conserve valuable orangutan habitat.

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GPOCP staff member, Edward Tang (second from the right), works with the community in Penjajaan to map and survey the proposed Customary Forest area

Over the past several years GPOCP's *Hutan Desa* program has seen many successes. We collaborate with Flora and Fauna International in Laman Satong, a village on the southern border of Gunung Palung National Park. The Village Forest Management Council there is strong and there is already a system in place to ensure that any monetary benefits gained from the *Hutan Desa* through the sale of non-timber forest products are shared fairly. This bit of forest is a very important orangutan refuge as it directly borders an oil palm plantation. We are also in the process of establishing two more *Hutan Desa* in the villages of Padu Banjar and Penjajaan, both of which are in the northern buffer zones of the Park. If approved as planned, these two sites will protect 8,000 hectares of orangutan habitat. Although the process can be long and challenging, the benefits to communities and biodiversity conservation are significant. If orangutan conservation is to succeed, it must be supported by local people, and thus we remain committed to this program and eagerly await the day when these *Hutan Desa* are officially recognized as belonging to the dedicated communities of Laman Satong, Padu Banjar and Penjajaan.

Strengthening Institutional Ties in Indonesia: Gunung Palung and Beyond

By Wahyu Susanto and Cassie Freund

Teamwork and partnerships with other organizations are key to Yayasan Palung's success, and thus we continually strive to strengthen cooperation with other institutions. These include government agencies, most importantly the Gunung Palung National Park Authority (Balai Taman Nasional-Gunung Palung), and academic institutions, including our sponsor, Tanjungpura University in Pontianak, West Kalimantan.

The Gunung Palung National Park office (BTN-GP) is one of our most critical program partners, and thus having clear and mutually beneficial working agreements with them is a priority. On December 19th, 2014, we signed a new Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) supporting all of our orangutan research activities. BTN-GP plays an important role in our research, as they manage the Cabang Panti Research Station, supply our research team with all of the necessary research and sample collecting permits and ensure the safety

and security of all staff living and working in Cabang Panti. This agreement represents our ongoing partnership to maintain and improve research inside of GPNP, develop local scientific knowledge and support the conservation of this magnificent National Park. Aside from that, it also fulfills the Ministry of Forestry regulations that all long-term researchers working inside of National Parks in Indonesia must have a cooperative agreement with their local National Park office. We are excited about this new MoU and look forward to the future of the orangutan research program in Cabang Panti Research Station. According to research manager Kat Scott, "Currently our research station serves not only as a place in which to study orangutans and their ecology, but also as a way to ensure their continued survival in these uncertain times. This MoU is extremely important as it allows many organizations to collaborate and share their knowledge and experience in order to protect Gunung Palung. It's signing is a testament to BTN-GP and GPOCP's commitment to save Indonesia's native wildlife."



GPOCP Research Director, Wahyu Susanto, and Pak Dadang Wardhana, the Head of BTN-GP, sign the MoU agreement on December 19th, 2014

Since we began our research and conservation work in Gunung Palung we have always worked in cooperation with Indonesian academic institutions, particularly Tanjungpura University (UNTAN), in the regional capital of Pontianak. The agreement with the Faculty of Forestry, which focuses on the Bornean Orangutan Caring Scholarship program, was signed by GPOCP Program Director, Cassie Freund, and the Dean of the Faculty of Forestry, Dr.Ir. Gusti Hardiansyah, on November 5th, 2014. The Bornean Orangutan Caring Scholarship is a joint program between GPOCP, Orang Utan Republik Foundation and Orangutan Outreach to provide highly motivated, conservation-minded students from Ketapang and Kayong Utara with the opportunity to attend university. In exchange, the recipients are required to write a thesis about some aspect of orangutan ecology or conservation as well as intern with GPOCP or other environmental organizations for at least one month per year. Many of the scholarship recipients choose to major in Forestry, thus we developed an agreement to reflect our mutual desire to support these students, who are the future conservation leaders of their generation.

On November 10th, GPOCP Research Director, Wahyu Susanto, and research volunteer, Becki Ingram, traveled to Pontianak to sign another MoU with the Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences (MIPA) at UNTAN. The signing ceremony was conducted in conjunction with a seminar marking MIPA's anniversary. As

part of the celebration, Becki gave a presentation about our wild orangutan research in Gunung Palung National Park. The event was quite lively and well attended by both students and faculty from UNTAN. After the presentation, Wahyu and Dr. Dadan Kusanandar, the Dean of MIPA, officially signed our collaborative agreement. This agreement focuses exclusively on the research program, as MIPA has agreed to be one of our main sponsors for foreign researchers. In exchange, we will provide support and opportunities for MIPA students who wish to conduct research at Cabang Panti Research Station. This aspect of the MoU is very important to us, as we want to encourage Indonesian students to become more involved in the conservation of orangutans and other biodiversity in Indonesia.



GPOCP Research Director, Wahyu Susanto, and the Dean of MIPA, Dr. Dadan Kusanandar, finalize our MoU. Along with the MoU signing, reasearch volunteer Becki Ingram (seated in background) gave a talk on orangutan behavior in Gunung Palung National Park.

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