



Gunung Palung Orangutan Conservation Program



February 2015

Code RED

An e-newsletter from your friends in West Borneo

Dear Friends and Supporters,

In the spirit of February and Valentine's Day, this month we bring you two stories about how GPOCP has benefited from strong partnerships with other individuals and organizations. The first article is about a new collaboration between our non-timber forest product artisans and Zeke's Tree, a small fair trade shop in Iowa. This is our first foray into the international market and we are lucky that international customers have shown such interest in our products! In the second article, Assistant Research Manager Rusda tells us about a Wilderness Medical Training that was recently held at the Cabang Panti Research Station in conjunction with our local partner, Clinic ASRI.

As the month comes to a close, so does research volunteer Becki Ingram's year at Cabang Panti. In the next few months we will share her reflections on her experiences following the wild orangutans at Gunung Palung, but for now we want to recognize her contributions to the project - we are very grateful!

Sincerely,



Cheryl Knott, Executive Director

[Gunung Palung Orangutan Conservation Program \(GPOCP\)](#)

Heart of the Forest, Starring GP Artisans

By Niki Faller

Our NTFP artisan groups have recently gained a new business partner in Sioux City, Iowa, fair-trade shop, Zeke's Tree. In a couple of months several large tikar mats made by our artisans will decorate the walls of Zeke's tree. This month Niki Faller, owner of the shop, held a special Valentine's Day event called "Heart of the Forest" to introduce her customers to GPOCP's conservation work, especially the hand-crafted products made by our dedicated non-timber forest product artisans. Here, Niki shares with us a summary of the event and her excitement about this new collaboration!

The idea for 'Heart of the Forest' was born of my desire to link our new partnership with GPOCP and Valentine's Day. I loved how the color red would be a link between 'red ape' and the love and affection associated with this day. Moreover, as GPOCP Program Manager, Cassie, and I emailed about my order for large panels of *tikar* mats for the shop walls, I thought about the implications for the mood and aesthetic they would create in Zeke's Tree. My goal was to celebrate the crafters in Gunung Palung, and create an inclusive opportunity here, over 9,000 miles away in Iowa, to learn about the landscape and explain the importance of the *tikar*. I thought that making valentines for all the crafters' families would be a tangible way to connect my customers here at the shop with both the space on the wall and the artisans of Gunung Palung. Cassie sent a list of each of the crafting families, including the names of all of their children - 78 in total! Just seeing the names of our friends in Gunung Palung helped us here feel more connected to the forest.

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The poster advertising "Heart of the Forest"

'Heart of the Forest' at Zeke's Tree on Valentine's Day featured a series of additional activities including sampling Cajun Rice made using Red Ape Cinnamon Mardi Gras shake (from Sumatra), and viewing media about Gunung Palung, including videos from the GPOCP YouTube channel. I filled the shop with tropical plants and brought five (very real looking) rubber poison dart frogs and hid them in plain sight around the shop for a game where kids could find them for a finger puppet prize. It was a hit! I'll admit that the frogs are a South American species but the idea was to engage! We also had a packet on hand composed of a document about Non-Timber Forest Products, maps, and copies of GPOCP newsletters. One of our committed supporters even took the packet home to continue to learn.



A young girl shows off her valentine. The valentines will be mailed to West Kalimantan and distributed to the artisans and their families.

In the end, 14 families participated in the event, three of whom were new to Zeke's Tree. It was a great success. At the end of the day there was certainly evidence on the wall of the connection with Gunung Palung. The videos were an important part of the experience and several adults watched intently. One of the most magical moments happened when a Spanish speaking man brought his two young daughters in and they ended up spending about 20 minutes mixing with us. At first he was extremely hesitant, but with some encouragement and conversation in Spanish, he was able to relax and let his daughters enjoy the experience and learn a little bit about Indonesia. I think we made a new friend and I hope he brings the girls back.



Valentines decorate the walls of Zeke's tree. In a couple of months these walls will be covered by tikar mats, a product of our NTFP crafters. This will be their first international order!

The following Monday I was prepared to dive in and make all remaining valentines myself, but another magical thing happened. We are new to the building and have only just begun to get to know our neighbors. The Ho-Chunk Centre is owned by Ho Chunk Inc., a tribally owned economic development corporation. Several tribal offices are in the building, including a Step Up program office just down the hall from Zeke's Tree. Several of the women who work there came in to the shop, and when they found out about the valentines for Gunung Palung, they stepped right up and spent the rest of the day making cards. It was a beautiful, voluntary gesture. We are now all knit a little tighter into the community fabric at the Ho-Chunk Centre and with the crafting community

around Gunung Palung.

Wilderness Medical Training for Cabang Panti Staff

By M. Rusda Yakin

In early December the researchers and staff at Cabang Panti Field Station received a course in wilderness medicine from the ASRI (Alam Sehat LestaRI) team. ASRI, known in the U.S. as Health in Harmony, is an NGO that works with local communities to offer medical treatment in exchange for conserving their local environment. As most of the patients that visit the ASRI clinic live in conditions similar to ours, it was good training for the doctors to experience life in the field, as well as for us to receive wilderness first aid training. The course was conducted over three days, and consisted of lectures, followed by hands on activities where we got to practice what we had learned, as well as surprise real life scenarios meant to test our skills!

On the first day, the course focused on basic skills. We were taught how to assess a patient's vital signs, including checking breathing, circulation and any other obvious issues with the patient's body. Everyone was very enthusiastic to follow the course session and after the lecture we took turns testing each other's vital signs. As Cabang Panti is quite remote (a four hour walk from the nearest village, or six hours by canoe) having an evacuation and rescue plan in case of emergencies is critical, and the ASRI team helped us review our emergency plan. The second part of the day included a lesson on heat injuries and dehydration, which all of the research assistants were quite interested in because we regularly work in very hot, humid conditions. After finishing our lesson, we took a break from the course to eat lunch. When everyone walked from the main building, where the course was being held, to the lunch area, we were startled to find ASRI staff member Erica sprawled next to the building with Dr. Caroline at her side. This, a scenario related to the sudden onset of heatstroke, was our first "emergency" situation. Two of the camp assistants, Randa and Hassan, led the Cabang Panti staff in implementing the lessons they learned in the morning's lecture. Everyone remembered how to check vital signs and helped shelter the patient from the sun - our first test was successful!



*The Wilderness Medical training consisted of both lectures and hands-on activities. Here Dr. Monica, ASRI's Managing Director, gives a small group a lesson on proper dental care.
Photo credit: ASRI*

The course continued after lunch with a lesson about shock and anaphylaxis, which is important because we often encounter bees and other potentially dangerous insects in the forest. The medical crew demonstrated how to give epinephrine and the procedure for using an epipen. Just as the lecture was finishing we were shocked to find Efan (another ASRI member) running into camp, shouting he had been stung by bees. Because we had already been through one scenario, we were able to help him more efficiently than we had with Erica. The doctors were very impressed when people improvised evacuating Efan using a chair they found, and after a swift epipen injection - albeit a fake one - Efan was saved.

On the second day, Dr. Jesse taught us how to make stretchers using everyday objects available at Cabang Panti and/or in the forest. This was really important for us to discuss as a team, because we must be prepared for emergency evacuations at any time. We also received an important lesson about venomous snake bites from Dr. Caroline and Dr. Hafidz. They explained how to recognize the symptoms of bites and how to aid a patient bitten by a dangerous snake. This time, at the end of the lecture, I got to run in and act as a victim whose hand had been bitten by a pit viper. Research assistant Hassan led the team in helping me. This time everyone got involved, and they made a stretcher to bring me to a safe place. The ASRI staff were impressed with how much our teamwork in helping the patient had improved since the previous day!



Dr. Jesse and Hardi carry the "patient" using a makeshift stretcher that they made from items commonly found in camp. Photo credit: ASRI

The last day of the Course consisted of a lecture about orthopedics, a lesson about dental injuries, and one-on-one sessions between the ASRI team and each person at camp. They checked general health, such as blood-sugar levels and blood pressure, and then offered lifestyle advice to those who required it. It's important for us to stay as healthy as possible since we do so much physical activity for our jobs.

Everyone agreed that the course was an enormous success. Research manager, Kat, explains, "The course was invaluable and it was great to see the assistants working together as a team. We had a fantastic experience, shared a lot of laughs and knowledge, and learned the importance of wilderness training. Hopefully we won't need to implement these procedures in the future, but at least now we can be confident that we will be able to cope with any situation should it arise." Field assistant Hardi adds, "The course was enjoyable and I learned a lot from the scenarios. Joining in with helping an injured patient was an important way to help me remember all the information we were given. I hope they come back again soon." Thank you to ASRI for the training, and hopefully we can arrange a refresher in the future.

Gunung Palung Orangutan Conservation Program (GPOCP)

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