

Gunung Palung Orangutan Conservation Program



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An e-newsletter from your friends in West Kalimantan

Dear Friends and Supporters,

Happy New Year! It is hard to believe that another year is over and we are welcoming in 2018!

Yet again, we had another busy month here in West Kalimantan. Our first article is by our Program Director, Terri Breeden. She tells us about a workshop that GPOCP ran for our scholarship students in Pontianak. This program, training the next generation of Indonesian conservationists, gives us hope for the future.

Our second article is about one special tree in Cabang Panti Research Station. This large *Artocarpus* tree is right behind the field station and

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when it fruits it draws orangutans in, making for some unusual orangutan follows. Research Manager, Brodie Philp, describes what it's like to collect data on orangutans so close to camp and how it differs from our more typical days in the field.

On our side bar you can find more information about GPOCP participating in the upcoming ZACC Conference. Finally, we want to wish everyone a happy and prosperous New Year!

Sincerely,



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

Be sure to keep an eye out for us at the ZACC Conference (Zoos & Aquariums Committing to Conservation) January 22-26 in Jacksonville, FL. We will be presenting a poster, participating in the marketplace, and joining a discussion panel.



Conservationists of the Future

By Terri Breeden, GPOCP Program Director

With the year coming to an end, it also signifies the end of a semester for school children. This month, our Education team spent three days in Pontianak, the capital of West Kalimantan and the home of Tanjungpura University, known locally as UNTAN. We hosted a workshop for our Bornean Orangutan Caring Scholarship (BOCS) recipients. This program, supported by the Orangutan Republik Foundation, sends deserving youth from Ketapang and Kayong Utara regencies to study forestry, conservation and related subjects at UNTAN. Every year we host a capacity building workshop for these students to mold their skills and give them inspiration for their undergraduate research projects. Out of all of our programs, working with the BOCS students is by far one of my favorites. I also feel this program is making a real difference in regards to conservation by creating a cohort of local students that are highly educated and motivated to conserve their natural resources.

As you may recall from previous articles, GPOCP has hired two BOCS graduates, another is working as an assistant for UNTAN, and we are assisting the

Happy New Year

The staff of GPOCP would like to wish everyone a Happy New Year. We have a lot planned for 2018 and look forward to sharing the events of the year as they unfold.



fourth in landing his first professional job. This year our workshop was more exciting because two of our BOCS alumni were able to attend and share their experiences with over 20 other students! Each student shared stories about their experiences at university, how the BOCS program works, including internships, and gave advice on how to stay motivated and push through to keep their grades up.



Adam Miller, Executive Director of Planet Indonesia, educating students about the wildlife bird trade.

We kicked off the event on Friday evening eating dinner together and sharing personal stories about the BOCS program. Students discussed the required bi-annual reports they must write about their progress as well as some of the stresses of studying, developing a research project, and maintaining a social life!

Saturday morning we started bright and early with a presentation by Adam Miller from Planet Indonesia. He spoke about the wildlife bird trade that often deals with threatened, or even critically endangered, species and how to combat the ever growing 'silent forests.' GPOCP works very closely with each of our students so this was a great opportunity for them to learn about another conservation organization.



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"No one has ever become poor by giving"

-Anne Frank-



Program Director, Terri Breeden, gives a presentation about how to make a professional PowerPoint.

Next on the agenda was a presentation by Mariamah Achmad, the Environmental Education Manager, on techniques to use for good public speaking. Following that, I gave a presentation on how to make a professional PowerPoint presentation. We then spent the afternoon working on some of their upcoming presentations for school and each student gave a five minute speech about their proposed research projects. That evening was spent going over formalities of the BOCS program, including reporting and how the internships work. This was especially important for our new students to hear, so they understand how and why their reports are so important, and what is expected from them during their respective internships.

On Sunday, we practiced how to spread conservation awareness through social media. Each student posted conservation stories on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. We also went over social media etiquette and how to keep profiles professional because potential employers are looking at it! After lunch we reviewed the scientific method and discussed ideas and techniques the students could implement for their field research projects. We followed that up with how to make a professional CV or resume, something everyone needs to land that perfect job! We wrapped up the weekend with a delicious dinner and a discussion of ways the students can be more involved in conservation activities throughout the semester. Overall, the weekend was a great success and the students learned a lot.



BOCS students with GPOCP staff.

Satu Pohon (One Tree)

By Brodie Philp, GPOCP Research Manager

With over 60 kilometers of trails surrounding Cabang Panti Research Station, the search for orangutans can range far and wide. Often, individual trees of a particular species are fruiting at the same time or fruiting may be concentrated in a particular habitat. So a lot of our energy can focus on one area if fruit is abundant there.

Getting to that spot can often be arduous. When following orangutans we need to arrive at the nest before they wake up. If the location is far from camp, this may mean leaving camp at 3:00 am to make it to the nest before the orangutans awake from their slumber. Closer locations mean a departure around 4:15. A lot of this can also depend on the individual being followed. Some are early birds and are notorious among the field assistants for venturing out in the dark. Others like to sleep in and to take their time in the morning. Then there is the weather and terrain to consider. Heavy rainfalls can significantly slow you down when walking through the swamp. During a downpour everyone jumps, shuffles and manoeuvres their way through puddles or rivers, desperately trying to avoid water exceeding that critical point where it tips over the top of your boots. No one likes to spend a 14 hour day with wet feet if it can be avoided! The mountain terrain is drier and generally easier to navigate, however it can be quite steep. Arriving at the nest for a mountain follow normally brings relief as you can rest your burning calves, wipe the sweat from your face and stop regretting your early breakfast.

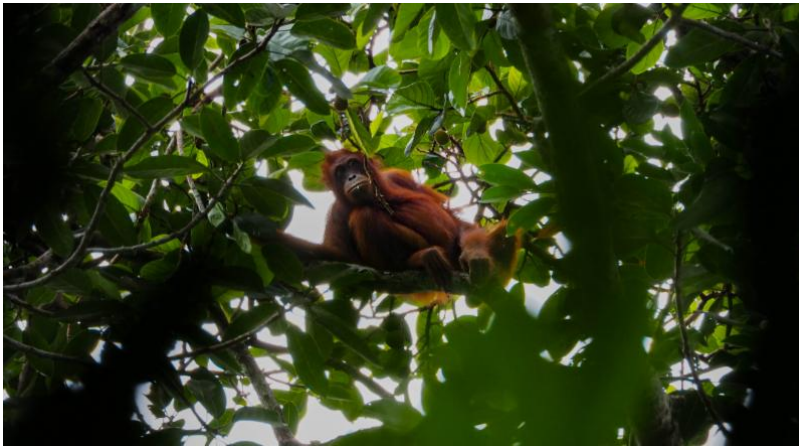


Research assistants, Hassan (front) and Dong (back) collecting data and trying to keep their feet dry while following an orangutan. Photo by Brodie Philp.

Recently, though, we got to avoid these early morning treks to the orangutan nest, as we had orangutans nesting within 50 meters of camp! Walking around camp this month I was amused to see tagged feeding trees right above the assistants' bedroom, the camp toilets or above the outside dining table. This time around a large fruiting *Artocarpus* was the major attraction bringing everyone so close to the research station.

One afternoon, while sitting in the lab upstairs, I saw movement in the trees. I rushed out the back with binoculars to find two orangutans, one of whom was munching on an *Artocarpus* fruit. These fruits are about the size of an orange and are in the same genus as the cultivated breadfruit and jackfruit. Little did we know just how much time we would be spending around that single tree. The original orangutan to discover it was an adolescent

female named Berani. Although fully independent, Berani frequently spends time with her mother, Bibi, and infant brother, Bayas, as they occupy overlapping home ranges. It was not long before Bibi and Bayas joined Berani in this tree and the feasting began. Falling fruit crashing against leaves and thumping into the mud below became our daily forest soundtrack. Berani would spend several hours in this tree each day, whereas Bibi very rarely left. After completing our 5 days of following, we saw another three orangutans come and visit this one tree. One of them was Bosman, who I assumed was Berani at first. They look nothing alike, but Bibi was completely calm with him feeding next to her, which is unusual for Bibi. Bayas enjoyed the male company stretching out to try and grab ahold of this new companion. Bilbo and Walimah also made brief appearances towards the end of the tree's fruiting cycle.



Berani hanging out in the Artocarpus tree. Photo by Brodie Philp.

Overall, there was a very different feel about this follow period. Aside from the obvious extra sleep that comes from following so close to camp, there was the bonuses that bathroom breaks could happen in an actual bathroom and that coffee could be consumed with ease. There were even a few orders of *mie goreng* (fried noodles) delivered by the camp cook. The small string that we normally run from the nest to the nearest trail each night was briefly tied onto the ping pong table at the back of camp, more for novelty rather than practicality. However, all the extra antics associated with these follows, brings up a very important message - despite this rainforest being vast in both size and biodiversity, sometimes an orangutan will highly depend on a single tree. All trees are important, but large ones like these are

critical for a fully functioning ecosystem. This one tree's fruit crop managed to not only feed several orangutans for an entire week but also numerous macaques, as well as the Bearded Pigs that cleaned up the scraps below. Soon the vine that entangles its trunk will fruit with figs that will also welcome in numerous bird and squirrel species and its hollows will house occupants and new rainforest arrivals for generations to come.



The resident Bornean Bearded Pig cleaning up fruit scraps from the Artocarpus tree. Photo by Brodie Philp.

For the time being, the *Artocarpus* has stopped fruiting and we are back to expanding our orangutan searches far and wide. From the perspective of the research team, each day we have people on the ground within the national park, searching for and following orangutans, helps deter poachers and loggers. Meanwhile our conservation and education teams work to educate nearby communities about the importance of conserving this habitat and how to seek alternative sources of income. This allows all trees and creatures, big and small, to keep existing exactly as they are, in their wild, natural state.

Gunung Palung Orangutan Conservation Program (GPOCP)

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