

Gunung Palung Orangutan Conservation Program



February 2018

Issue: 62

Code RED

An e-newsletter from your friends in West Kalimantan

Dear Friends and Supporters,

Welcome to our latest edition of *Code RED*. This issue begins with some of our latest sustainable livelihood and environmental education activities, generously supported by the Adventure Travel Conservation Fund.

Our second article is by Dr. Erin Kane. Erin has recently started her post-doctoral research with me at Boston University and she has just made her way to Cabang Panti to study the orangutans of Gunung Palung National Park. In this article, she shares with us what first sparked her interest in primates and the journey that brought her here to study wild orangutans.

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Festival

On our side bar, you can find a video link made by one of our BOCS interns and news about our film, *Person of the Forest*, that was featured at the New York WILD Film Festival this month.

Sincerely,



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

Preserving Travel and Culture for Future Generations

By Terri Breeden, GPOCP Program Director

We are excited to announce that GPOCP is one of the recipients to receive funds from the Adventure Travel Conservation Fund (ATCF) whose mission is to conserve resources for the future of travel. This organization supports sustainable adventure tourism which aligns with our mission of creating sustainable communities and preserving the rainforests in and around Gunung Palung National Park. We have a lot planned for the next two years with this grant! Here is an update of what we have done in the last two months.

Our Sustainable Livelihoods team works with local communities to develop their skills to maintain a sustainable way of life instead of illegal logging or other destructive ways to earn a living. We work with our artisans to make Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFP), and we work with local farmers to implement organic farming and aquaculture practices. We have been working hard with one particular group of farmers. They like to call themselves, Meteor Garden. We have trained this group in composting methods and they work together to plant, maintain, and harvest their land. Meteor Garden is in the process of becoming a legally recognized group in their community. Our plans include training this group to become leaders and a resource to answer agriculture questions. We are working to build their capacity to give

BOCS

One of our Bornean Orangutan Caring Scholars, Junardi, recently interned with GPOCP and made a video of his experiences so far. Check it out on our [youtube](#) channel.



The BOCS program is supported by our friends at [Orang Utan Republik Foundation](#)

New York WILD Film Festival

February 22-25 was the New York WILD Film Festival held in New York. Dr. Cheryl Knott and National Geographic Explorer, Robert Rodriguez Suro were interviewed about the film by [Mongabay!](#) Check out the article [here](#).

lessons and workshops to local schools and community members wanting to learn about organic farming.



Organic farming group, Meteor Garden, checking on their crops. This group has created a cooperative alliance helping each other plant, maintain, and harvest their crops, with support from GPOCP.

Our artisans have also been hard at work. One of our plans is to start a youth artisan group to pass down handicraft traditions to the younger generations. We have recently identified our first class of youth artisans. These girls plan to work one-on-one with our adult artisans to learn the weaving techniques to make *pandanus* products such as handbags and *tikars* (mats).



GPOCP artisan, Susie (left), teaching a student traditional weaving techniques using pandanus leaves.



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"If people were superior to animals, they would take better care of the world"

-Winnie the Pooh-

Another aspect of this grant is to provide high quality environmental education and conservation awareness throughout the region. We held a five day expedition to the villages of Seponti and Wonorejo. While there, we visited four local schools and gave presentations and puppet shows to over 300 students. We hosted two community discussions, with nearly 50 participants, and carried out two mobile cinema events with 300 participants. Our education team also held a field trip for 65 students to study the animals found in the hilly regions bordering the National Park. They also hosted a 3-day event, bringing our two youth groups together to discuss and promote conservation ideas, and make crafts from recyclable products.



GPOCP staff, Petrus Kanisius (top left) and BOCS recipient, Junardi, giving a lesson on leaf morphology to local high school students.

We also are quite busy at our main office in Ketapang with prepping for our weekly radio broadcasts, gathering ideas for our latest Indonesian newsletter, and writing articles for the local newspapers about the latest happenings in regards to conservation and orangutans throughout Ketapang and Kayong Utara. It has already been a busy couple of months and we are looking forward to seeing the impact of our programs for the rest of this year and this project period.

Again, thank you ATCF for your generous support to protect orangutans, rainforest habitat, and local culture throughout Ketapang and Kayong Utara regencies of West Kalimantan!

From Diana Monkeys to Orangutans

By Dr. Erin Kane, GPOCP Post-Doc Researcher

When I sat down on the third of five planes taking me from Boston to the Bornean rainforest, the lady sitting next to me smiled and started making small talk. "I'm visiting family in Jakarta! And what brings you to Indonesia?" I gave her the short and easy answer - "Orangutans!" - but took a moment to reflect on the path that got me to this window seat.

I was in seventh grade pouring over the shelves at the public library, when my dad handed me a well-worn hardback copy of Jane Goodall's book, *In the Shadow of Man*. In that, Jane Goodall writes about her journey from mild-mannered English schoolgirl to groundbreaking chimpanzee researcher working in Tanzania. I decided that *that* was what I was going to be when I grew up! Enthusiastic science teachers in middle school and high school supported my goals, thrilled to know that there was a 13-year-old girl who saw herself as a professional scientist. My parents didn't balk either when I went off to college in St. Louis with a plan to study primates.



Sunset over the Los Amigos River in Peru, where Erin

first studied wild primates.

As soon as I completed my BA, I volunteered as a research assistant on a project examining the genetics and behavior of saddle-back tamarins in the rainforest of southeastern Peru. Waking up every morning to follow small groups of 300 gram monkeys and recording exactly how they cared for their twins was amazing. The forest was literally teeming with monkeys - every day, I'd see five or six different species - and an occasional tapir, ocelot, and armadillo sighting more than made up for bullet ants and botflies. Satisfied that the rainforest really was where I wanted to be, I accepted a position in The Ohio State University's anthropology graduate program.



Veronique, an adult female Diana monkey, shows off the species' beautiful coloration in Taï National Park.

As a graduate student, my research focused on the primate community of Côte d'Ivoire's Taï National Park. This forest - the largest intact chunk of a rainforest belt that once stretched from Guinea to Benin - became my home for nearly two years while I conducted research for my MA and PhD. Like most forests where primates are found, the Taï Forest experiences relatively predictable shifts in fruit availability during different seasons. This has all sorts of interesting implications for the primates that live there, but I was particularly interested in the ways that adult female Diana monkeys coped with these changes. Diana monkeys are not only highly attractive monkeys, they are also among the most frugivorous and most territorial monkeys in the Taï Forest. Examinations of fecal hormones suggested that Diana monkeys really aren't ever particularly stressed, despite maintaining a fruit-

rich diet year-round. This is possible in part because Diana monkeys are dominant to other monkey species in the forest: they are able to monopolize resources by preventing other monkeys from eating the available food. In addition, they either feed in trees large enough for the whole group to eat in at once, or they forage in small, but very abundant, trees. They buffer themselves against negative consequences of low fruit availability by timing energetically expensive periods of reproduction (like nursing) to occur when fruit is most abundant in their forests.



*Erin and Frederic Gnepa, her primary research assistant
in Taï National Park, Côte d'Ivoire
Photo credits Erin Kane.*

My dissertation work showed some of the ways primates can adapt to predictable fluctuations in food availability, but I was curious about how other primates cope with these challenges. Orangutans live in forests that fruit unpredictably, which offers yet another wrinkle in their quest to grow, develop, reproduce, and persist. As a post-doctoral researcher, I hope to understand the ways that ecological uncertainty has shaped orangutans' long juvenile periods and slow reproduction. I'm thrilled to finally be on my way to Cabang Panti Research Station in Gunung Palung National Park!



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