

# Gunung Palung Orangutan Conservation Program



March 2018

Issue: 63

## Code RED

An e-newsletter from your friends in West Kalimantan

Dear Friends and Supporters,

Welcome to our latest edition of *Code RED*. We have had many activities going on in West Kalimantan this month. Terri writes about our big move to a new office, and some of our recent conservation activities. Our new address is:

Yayasan Palung  
Jl. Kol. Sugiono Gg. Ikram No. 1  
Sampit, Delta Pawan  
Ketapang, Kalimantan Barat, 78815

Our second article is by Dr. Erin Kane. Erin spent the last month at Cabang Panti and she writes about the trials and tribulations of finding elusive

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orangutans.

On our side bar, you can find information about our organic farming group and about our Earth Day plans this April.

Sincerely,



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

## We Moved... And Other Exciting Activities

*By Terri Breeden, GPOCP Program Director*

Once again, we have had a busy month full of energy and excitement here in West Kalimantan. Our biggest news is that we moved offices! After six years at our previous location it was deemed time to move. I am happy to report that while I was somewhat dreading the stress of moving (as we all do!) it actually went very smoothly. Our team worked together to get everything done. In less than a week, we have already moved everything, cleaned, set up and organized our working space, connected the internet and city water, and upgraded our electricity!



*GPOCP staff setting up our sign at our new office in Ketapang.*

## Meteor Garden

One of our local organic farming groups, who go by the name Meteor Garden, were recently recognized as a legal entity within their local village. GPOCP assisted the farmers in attaining this legal status which will allow them to receive government funding to support their agricultural practices. Congratulations Meteor Garden!



*Meteor Garden with GPOCP staff.*

## Earth Day

Earth Day is just around the corner - on April 22nd! This year GPOCP will celebrate by planting trees, hosting a trash pick up around the city, and campaigning for more Earth friendly practices to implement everyday. We hope you will celebrate with an activity that benefits the planet too!



This week we also held our Bornean Orangutan Caring Scholarship competition. This program, supported by the Orang Utan Republik Foundation, provides a four year scholarship to attend Tanjungpura University (UNTAN) in Pontianak, to study orangutans and their habitat. The mission of this foundation is to create a generation of university trained youth who are prepared to pursue careers in the conservation field. This year we had 27 applicants. Fourteen of those applicants made the first round. Each student had to give a short presentation and then participate in a question and answer session with our panel of judges. The judges included Ir. Evy Wardenaar, from the Forestry Department at UNTAN, Dr. Wahyono, from a local community college, Bapak Akhdiyatul from the local trade school, and GPOCP's Environmental Education Manager, Mariamah Achmad. GPOCP and Orang Utan Republik Foundation are proud to present the next class of scholarship recipients and the next generation of conservationists in Indonesia. Be sure to read our June newsletter where we highlight each scholarship recipient.



*The judges for the BOCS selection, Akhidiyatul, Mariamah, Evy, and Wahyono. GPOCP appreciates their hard work making this difficult decision.*

This month we also spent a week on an Environmental Expedition to the villages of Natai Kuini and Air Hitam in West Kalimantan. These villages are over 12 hours away from our office and rarely receive information about the significance of conservation. During this five day event our education team reached nearly 400 people educating them on orangutans and the importance of forests and habitat conservation. In Air Hitam, this was the first time an NGO has visited them.



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Forward to a Friend

*"We cannot tire or give up. We owe it to the present and future generations of all species to rise up and walk"*

*-Wangari Maathai-*

They were very excited to learn about GPOCP and discussed some of their problems. Over the last few years, Air Hitam has experienced many landscape changes. Most of the surrounding area has now been converted to oil palm plantations. The nearby processing plant has turned the river into a toxic mess. Due to the decline in water quality, this village now has an influx of black flies which are quite a nuisance. But in Natai Kuini, our team experienced a different story. This area was severely burned during the 2015 fire season and to this day very few trees remain. The peat land has already been drained and now farmers are opening the land to create large fish ponds. These changes are creating conflicts with the orangutans because those few remaining trees are now located in small isolated islands.



*The landscape in Natai Kuini was burned in 2015 and is now being opened by farmers to create fish ponds.*

Our investigation team has also been very busy monitoring the orangutan conflicts throughout the region. We have received complaints from farmers saying orangutans are raiding their gardens every day. Unfortunately, this presents a real problem as these gardens provide the livelihoods for farmers to support their families. We have sent teams out to survey the land and we are using our drone to see if the orangutans can get back to larger forested areas. We also want to make sure the farmers understand that even though this orangutan may be considered a pest, it will soon make its way back into the forest and be out of their way. After one particular survey, we realized that the orangutan had nowhere to go. We coordinated with local authorities and the local rehabilitation organization, IAR, to translocate this individual to a larger, healthier forest.



*This flanged male orangutan was found in a local farmer's fruit tree. He was successfully translocated to Gunung Palung National Park.*

While we have been extremely busy this month, we are happy to be spreading awareness, creating educated youth, and protecting our critically endangered wildlife.

## **Orangutans and Their Games**

*By Dr. Erin Kane, Post-Doctoral Researcher, Boston University and GPOCP*

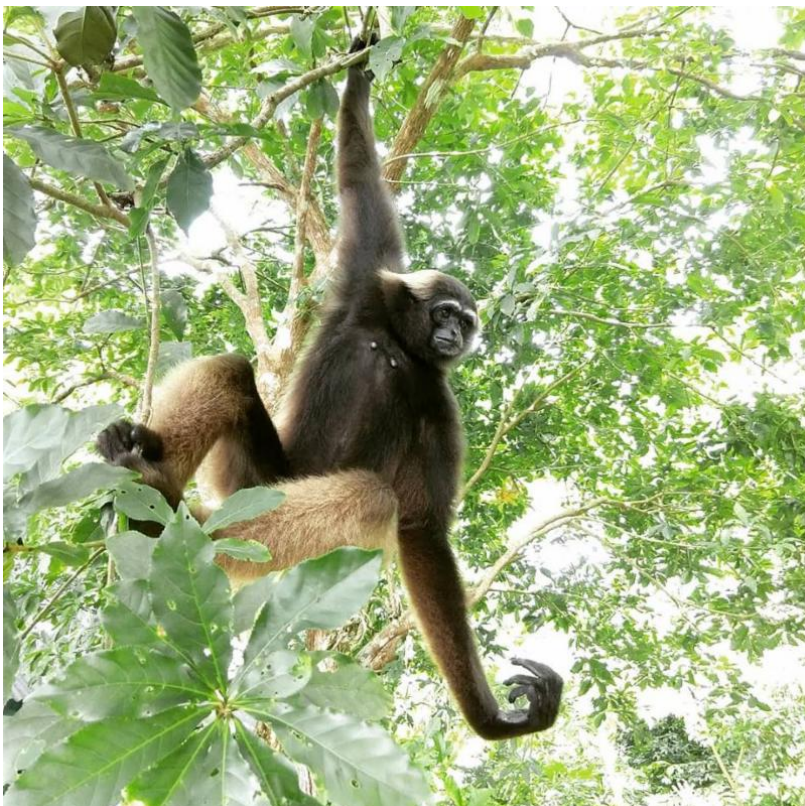
Imagine, if you will, that you have traveled halfway around the world with the intention of studying a large, mostly solitary, primate. You have prepared for this moment for years, and there you are, finally, in the Bornean rainforest. You plot out your path each morning with the intention of happening upon an orangutan, catching them shaking branches or noisily eating food, and spending the whole day watching them. You will collect their urine. You will collect their fecal samples. You will count exactly how many times they put food in their mouths, and how many times they process that food with their incisors or their molars. You will sit below them while they rest, you will watch them use leafy branches as umbrellas or sun shades, you will watch them carry their babies and swing between trees in the canopy.





*This long tailed macaque was happy to show himself, while orangutans took a bit more time to find.*

Unfortunately, as it turns out, orangutans don't necessarily share my same grand visions. Maybe there's a tree fruiting outside the study area and they are all happily hanging out there. Maybe they're napping quietly and I'm walking right under them without even noticing. Maybe there's some vast pongidae conspiracy and they're laughing and hiding, watching me pick leech after leech off of my trousers while I tromp around the difficult terrain of the peat swamps and mountains. Sometimes orangutans are just not that easy to find!



*Erin encountered many gibbons while searching for orangutans. This one she photographed in the local*

*forest in Ketapang.*

It's not like the forests are empty. On the contrary - I have become an expert at hearing a faint rustling of branches a hundred meters off the trail and running to it in joyful anticipation, only to find a long tailed macaque. I will see orange fluff overhead, train my binoculars on it, and find a tail. Congratulations: I've just discovered a red leaf monkey. Fruit falling from a tree? It's actually a pair of gibbons. Faced with such frustration, I start rewriting the lyrics to *Les Misérables*: "On my own, pretending they're above me ... all alone, I walk them to their night nests. In the sunlight, I find their fecal samples - and all I see is them and me; I'm publishing this research!"



*Erin and new Research Assistant, Yogi, excited to meet orangutans Bibi and Bayas for the first time.*

Dejected after a solid week of fruitless orangutan searching, I return to camp one afternoon to learn that our newest field assistant (less than two weeks on the job), Yogi, has found a mother-infant pair! And tomorrow, I am going to go follow them! Everyone's awake at 3:00 AM to get to the nest before the pair wakes up. Walking out to the nest, my path is lit by the faint glow of bio-luminescent mushrooms. The sun comes up slowly, the forest brightens, the gibbons start singing their morning duets, and I see movement in the nest. I train my binoculars on the woven branches, and there it is! A tiny baby orangutan peers down. The orangutans are real - and I have finally met them!





*Erin was also able to meet the famous Walimah while at Cabang Panti. Photo credits Dr. Erin Kane.*

Gunung Palung Orangutan Conservation Program (GPOCP)

<http://saveGPorangutans.org>

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