

# Gunung Palung Orangutan Conservation Program



April 2018

Issue: 64

## Code RED

An e-newsletter from your friends in West Kalimantan

Dear Friends and Supporters,

Welcome to our April edition of *Code RED*. We were busy celebrating Earth Day, as we hope you were too! The first article, written by Program Director Terri Breeden, is about some of our special conservation and research events this month.

Our second article is by Rinta Islami. Last year, Rinta graduated from our Bornean Orangutan Caring Scholarship program and is now working at Cabang Panti. She is our new Botanical Assistant and shares with us what her work in the rainforest entails.

On our side bar, you can see the new truck we purchased through the generous support of the

### In This Issue:

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Thank You ARCUS Foundation

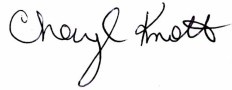
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Journalism Workshop

ARCUS Foundation. This will allow us to reach remote communities surrounding the national park where we would like to focus more of our conservation efforts.

Finally, a shout out to GPOCP staff member Petrus Kanisius who was invited to share his knowledge in a workshop with local journalists.

Sincerely,



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

## Earth Day Every Day!

*By Terri Breeden, GPOCP Program Director*

We hope everyone was able to go out and celebrate our beautiful Planet Earth on Earth Day. We were quite busy here in Indonesia celebrating as well. But this got me thinking... how did Earth Day come about? I decided to do some digging and found out that it originally started on April 22, 1970 when millions of Americans rallied to support environmental protection after the 1969 oil spill in Santa Barbara, California. This later paved the way for the United States Environmental Protection Agency and legislation such as the Clean Air, Clean Water, and Endangered Species Acts. Today, Earth Day is celebrated around the globe. This year's theme aimed to reduce plastic pollution, so GPOCP participated with our own activity here in Ketapang!

## Thank You ARCUS Foundation

GPOCP would like to give a heartfelt thank you to the ARCUS Foundation for their support to help us buy a truck! This has been a much needed tool that will help all of our programs run more efficiently.



## Journalism Workshop

GPOCP's Communications Officer, Petrus Kanisius, was recently asked to give a workshop to local journalists. Petrus is a regular contributor to print and on-line media and he was happy to share his knowledge!





*Dania presenting about orangutan research being carried out at Cabang Panti, during a conference held at the National University in Jakarta (UNAS).*

To start our Earth Day festivities, our volunteer, Dania Magaly Abizaid Herrera, gave a talk at the National University in Jakarta (UNAS). The theme of the conference was *Biodiversity for Life*. This conference covered a range of subjects, including medicinal plants, fisheries, and animal behavior. Dania gave an overview of the research taking place at the Cabang Panti Research Station involving orangutans. She focused on our current research project that is investigating why juvenile orangutans grow so slowly.

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*"What's the use of a fine house if you haven't got a tolerable planet to put it on?"*

*-Henry David Thoreau-*



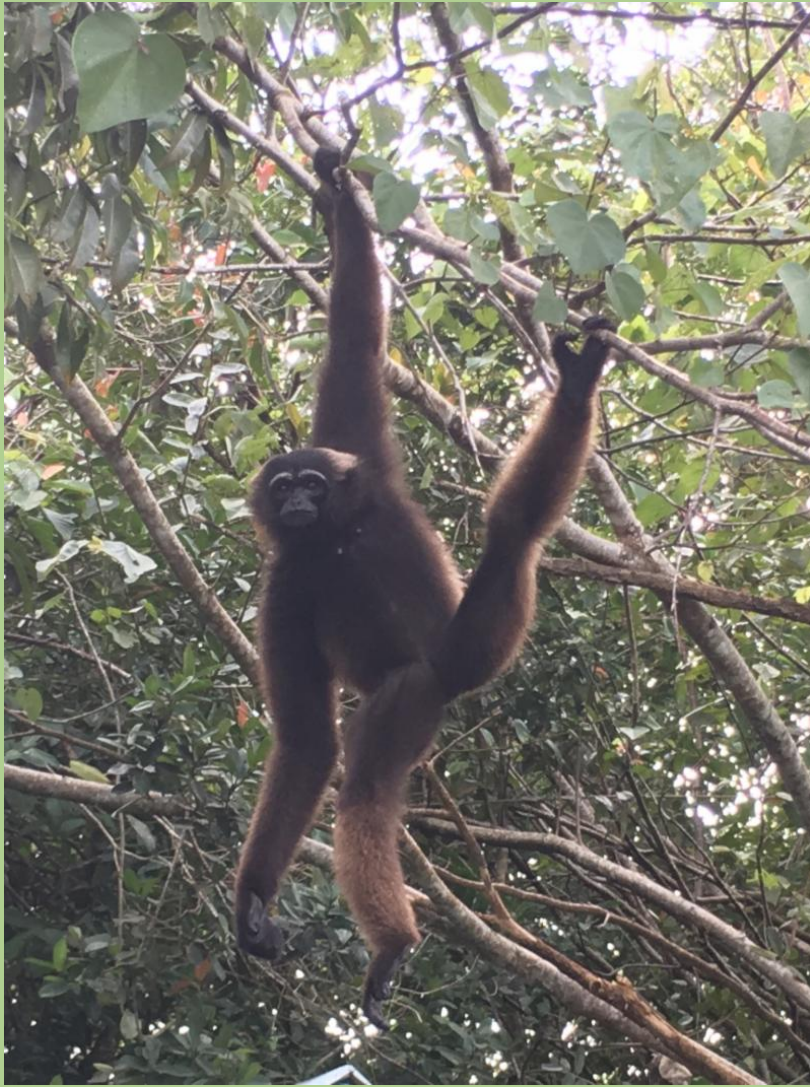


*Wahyu Susanto, GPOCP Research Director, with Pak Ari, Head of GPNP, and Karmele Llano Sanchez, International Animal Rescue, planting trees at Gunung Tarak.*

We also had many eventful activities in West Kalimantan. Our Sustainable Livelihoods team paired up with the local farming group in one of our Customary Forest villages, Pulau Kumbang. This village sent us a proposal with the goal of planting 1,000 trees for Earth Day. GPOCP was excited to see a local community take initiative and recognize the importance of healthy forests! We also helped rehabilitate forests within Gunung Palung National Park with International Animal Rescue (IAR). IAR's Earth Day activity included replanting trees at



Gunung Tarak and we were honored to participate.



*A gibbon hanging from a tree at Hutan Kota in Ketapang.*

Because we were so busy on Earth Day, we held our own clean-up event on April 29th. We invited the Forestry Management Department, the local sanitation department, and our youth groups (TAJAM, ReBONK, and Sispala Care) to clean up Hutan Kota, or the City Forest. This small forest is a local attraction to everyone in the town of Ketapang. It offers a wide variety of wildlife, not far from the city center. It is common to see macaques playing, gibbons calling, and proboscis monkeys leaping amongst the trees. Unfortunately, waste has piled up along the trails of Hutan Kota so GPOCP decided to take action. We organized the troops and had a massive cleaning of the trails and we posted new signs about the dangers of trash to wildlife. The local radio station joined in our event and conducted interviews where we were able to discuss the importance of throwing trash in its proper place and being more environmentally friendly by reducing the use of single use plastics.



*Thanks to all the volunteers who helped clean Hutan Kota! Photo credits GPOCP.*

## **Life as a Botanical Assistant**

*By Rinta Islami, GPOCP Botanical Assistant*

Maybe some of you are familiar with Gunung Palung National Park (GPNP). It is located here in West Kalimantan, in the regencies of Ketapang and Kayong Utara. GPNP is one of the last primary rainforests in the world and is home to millions of plants and animals, including the critically endangered orangutan and various types of hornbill species. These key species attract many foreign and local researchers who are interested in the diversity of plants and animals. At Cabang Panti Research Station (CPRS) we have approximately 2,100 hectares of trail systems encompassing eight habitat types.





*Rinta in Gunung Palung National Park collecting phenology data. Photo credit GPOCP.*

Last year, I finished up my bachelor's degree and wanted to learn more about orangutans so I volunteered to help the scientists at CPRS for one month. After my volunteer period, I was offered a position to join the Orangutan Research Team as a Botanical Assistant. I have been working here for almost one year and am responsible for a variety of tasks. I have learned to search for and follow orangutans and to process the various types of samples collected, such as the fruits they eat, and the feces and urine they excrete. Recently, I have started learning to collect phenology data. A normal day of phenology starts around 8:30 in the morning. During this time, I will hike to selected areas of the forest and record the amount of young leaves, fruits, and the overall condition of certain trees. Once I finish collecting data, I will search for

orangutans to follow. My days start a bit earlier, around 4:00 in the morning, when there is an orangutan to follow. These days I head out to the nest before the orangutan wakes up, collect urine, fecal, and food samples and return to camp to process the samples in the laboratory.



*Rinta weighing and recording data on fruit samples eaten by an orangutan during one follow day.  
Photo credit Faye Harwell.*

There are many methods used to process each of the samples. Part of our research involves looking at the parasites found in orangutan feces. While this is a smelly job, I still find it interesting because it relates to orangutan health. If they are sick, or have many parasites, they will not expend much energy, which ultimately affects the distribution of seeds they eat. I find it really interesting when I find a whole seed in the orangutan feces. Imagine how that benefits the regeneration of forests! One of my favorite parts of the job is following mother-infant pairs. I love to see their interactions, like when they share food. Oftentimes, I have seen a mother chew the food before giving it to the baby. This is probably because the teeth of juvenile orangutans are not yet strong enough to break down these fruits and seeds. Many of the fruits I have encountered have very hard shells and are difficult to open, especially fruits from the genus *Strychnos* and *Diospyros*.





*Diospyros, an orangutan fruit, that has a very hard skin.  
Photo credit Rinta Islami.*

Another behavior I enjoy watching is when juvenile orangutans start learning to be more independent. For instance, I have seen a young orangutan start to explore a tree a little further away from its mother, but then you hear something like a child crying because they have gotten too far away. But not to worry, mom is close by and comes back to soothe her adventurous youngster.



*Bibi and Bayas, one of the mother-infant pairs seen at  
Cabang Panti. Photo credit Becky Curtis.*

Apart from all kinds of research-related activities, daily life at CPRS is always exciting. Just imagine waking up every day, breathing the fresh forest air, hearing the river calmly going by, and the songs of various types of birds and animals singing their morning tunes. These parts of camp life I truly appreciate as it is very difficult to have these luxuries if living in the city. Despite living in the middle of the forest and being very far away from the hustle and bustle of urban life, we rarely feel lonely out here. We often play games and many of

the assistants are quite creative. We have started making woven bracelets from non-timber forest products, such as *rattan*. It is our hobby in our down-time. It is my hope that I can continue to grow my knowledge of the research activities being carried out at the Cabang Panti Research Station. We must find a way to expand our research and benefit the community so they can also play a role in protecting and maintaining the biodiversity of Gunung Palung National Park.

Gunung Palung Orangutan Conservation Program (GPOCP)

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