

Gunung Palung Orangutan Conservation Program



May 2018

Issue: 65

Code RED

An e-newsletter from your friends in West Kalimantan

Dear Friends and Supporters,

Welcome to our latest edition of *Code RED*. This last month we were busy in the field conducting our annual biodiversity surveys in our Customary Forests. Bani writes about the rationale for these surveys and some of our findings!

Our second article is by Sahril Ramadani, one of our research assistants at Cabang Panti. He has been working with us for nearly three years and he shares some of his experiences and what following orangutans and life at camp is like. Our local field assistants are highly trained and collect the core data for the research project. Thank you, Sahril, for your dedication!

We have a few items highlighted on our side bar. The

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GDPR Compliance

first is about GDPR compliance. We also have a special thank you message for our board member, Ibu Hilde. With the upcoming regional elections she will no longer be the head of the National Handicraft Association for Kayong Utara. She has given us 10 years of service and we look forward to working with the new leader in the coming months. And lastly, we have a warm message for all of our friends around the world fasting and celebrating Ramadan this month.

Sincerely,



Cheryl Knott, PhD
Executive Director

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

Biodiversity Flourishes in Customary Forests

By Syahik 'Bani' Nurbani, GPOCP Survey Coordinator

As you may recall, a few years ago we began conducting biodiversity surveys in our Customary Forests. This area represents nearly 7,500 hectares made up of five villages that are now legally protected from palm oil, mining and other destructive acts. GPOCP helped secure this land from encroachment and helped local communities obtain the legal right to manage the lands. These surveys provide baseline data so that over time we can monitor changes in the plants and animals that call this area home. These data will provide valuable information to compare with the past year and the years to come. In late April, we started our journey into this peat swamp to see how this region was doing.

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Thank You Ibu
Hilde

GPOCP would like to give a heartfelt thank you to Ibu Hilde, head of the Kayong Utara National Handicrafts Association and Yayasan Palung board member. She has worked with GPOCP and our local artisans for 10 years helping to develop their skills and abilities. As she steps down as the Head of the Kayong Utara National Handicrafts Association, we wish her the best of luck in your future endeavors Ibu Hilde!



*Ibu Hilde (center),
with Terri Breeden*



*Map of GPOCP Customary Forest in West Kalimantan.
The purple lines signify our survey transects.*

To conduct the surveys, we first randomly and systematically choose our survey areas using the line-transect method. Once at the location, we took a one-kilometer measuring tape and stretched it from end to end, this made up our transect line. Our survey team then collected information about whatever plants or animals touched the line. Of course, we are interested in orangutans too, so we were also looking for nests in the transect area as well. We conducted a total of 14 transect surveys over 20 days across the village Forest.



Bani, of GPOCP, and Samsidar, from the Padu Banjar Customary Forest Management Board, collecting vegetation data during the biodiversity surveys.

The density of orangutan nests we found ranged from

(left) and Wendy Tamariska (right) of GPOCP.

Ramadan Celebrations

GPOCP would like to send warm wishes out to all of our friends celebrating Ramadan. Our conservation team in Ketapang recently came together to break the fast.



GPOCP Conservation Team breaking the fast.



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"All good things

0.72 to 0.78 nests per square kilometer. This equates to approximately 54 individual orangutans calling this small area home, with many more passing through. These results differ from the orangutan population surveys from last year. Previously, in 2017, our survey results ranged from 0.22 to 0.6 nests per square kilometer, or approximately 16 orangutans. This discrepancy is most likely because some of our 2017 transects occurred in areas damaged by fires in 2015. The large brown area in the map above shows the fire damaged area. Our habitat protection team has been working with the local community to replant this area with native trees. While on the surveys, we found many fruit trees that orangutans like to snack on, a good indication that this is a healthy forest again for orangutans!



One of the 76 orangutan nests found throughout the five GPOCP Customary Forests during the biodiversity surveys.

We were also fortunate to see many other signs of wildlife thriving in this forest. Our Customary Forest Management Board has been practicing harvesting honey from wild bees. Unfortunately, we ran into one of their hives without the proper protective equipment and we were stung. But do not worry, we healed quickly and were right back to the surveys!

are wild and free"

*-Henry David
Thoreau -*



Our survey team received a few stings from this colony of bees they encountered during the biodiversity surveys. Photos and map credits GPOCP.

In two of the Customary Forests, we found evidence of the Sun Bear (*Helarctos malayanus*). This bear likes to look for honey and other tasty treats found in tree trunks. They also make nests in the canopy that look similar to an orangutan nest, but an experienced eye can tell the difference. We found many trees with claw marks where the bears were busy investigating. Overall, our biodiversity surveys were a success and the forests seem to be thriving and maintaining a suitable habitat for orangutans, sun bears, and other wildlife.

My Three Years at Cabang Panti

By Sahril Ramadani, GPOCP Research Assistant

My name is Sahril Ramadani, I am 20 years old, and currently working as a Research Assistant at Cabang Panti Research Station in Gunung Palung National Park. About three years ago I started working here as the camp assistant, taking care of basic camp needs such as cleaning and maintenance. I was then appointed to work as a research assistant to help out with Dr. Cheryl Knott's long term orangutan research project.



Sahril, at one of the waterfalls found within the Cabang Panti trail system in Gunung Palung National Park.

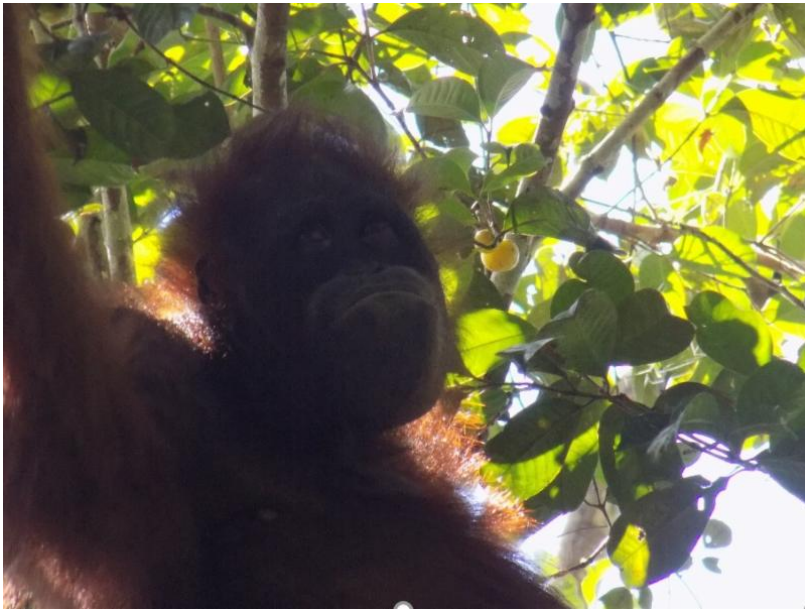
I have enjoyed many aspects of my job and time here at Cabang Panti. One of my favorite things is meeting the new researchers from different countries and learning their language. I also like to teach the researchers the Indonesian language.

I really enjoy finding some of the more rare and interesting animals of the rainforest in their natural habitat. I was lucky enough to find a tarsier, but I even like the more common animals, such as insects.



Sahril was able to capture this image of the elusive tarsier while searching for orangutans at Cabang Panti.

Although I have never been to other research stations, I know Cabang Panti Branch is a very special place. It has eight different habitat types spanning from freshwater swamp, and peat swamp to montane and riverine environments. The Cabang Panti trail system encompasses each of these habitats, covering an area of 2,100 hectares. The diversity here makes it prime forest for orangutans, as well as gibbons, slow lorises, and the hornbill, among many other species.



Walimah, the most famous orangutan at Cabang Panti, is Sahril's favorite!

For shortened slang we call orangutans, "O-ha" as the letter H in Indonesian is pronounced "Ha." One of my favorite orangutans to follow is Walimah. I normally wake up around 4:00 in the morning to make it to her nest before she wakes up. Our team usually works in pairs, one to collect behavioral data on the Ipad and one to collect fruit samples that she may have eaten that day. We also tag trees, giving each a special code, take GPS waypoints, and try to capture any interesting behavior on camera. Once the orangutan makes a nest and goes to sleep for the night, we can head back to camp. Usually, I enjoy a fresh cup of coffee, give my data to the manager, and clean up after my time in the forest. During the evenings I enjoy a good game of ping pong, playing guitar, and weaving bracelets. I truly love my job and look forward to my future with this project.



Sahril gathering orangutan behavioral data at Cabang Panti. All photos credit Sahril Ramadani.

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