

# Gunung Palung Orangutan Conservation Program



June 2018

Issue: 66

## Code RED

An e-newsletter from your friends in West Kalimantan

Dear Friends and Supporters,

As this newsletter is entering your inbox, I am on an airplane making my way to Gunung Palung National Park for my annual visit! While things were relatively quiet in Ketapang this month for the Idul Fitri holiday, we were busy here in Boston hosting a Girl Scouts Field Biology Encampment where they learned about orangutans and biodiversity.

We have sad hearts as we say goodbye to one of our long time employees. Ranti has spent the last 10 years working for GPOCP on our education team. She is such an exuberant person, full of passion and drive. She is planning to further her education and we wish her the best in her future endeavors. In our first article, Ranti shares some of her memories at GPOCP. Our second article is all about our big Girl Scout event.

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Thank You Janet Lane

*Person of the*

This month, we also participated in World Rainforest Day on June 22nd. Be sure to follow our social media and #WorldRainforestDay to see the amazing photos and videos!

On our sidebar you will find a link to a video to the documentary about orangutans in Gunung Palung National Park called *Person of the Forest*. We also would like to give our friend Janet Lane a sincere thanks. She has spent the last few months constructing hand-made helmeted hornbill puppets that we will use for our educational activities.

Sincerely,



Cheryl Knott, PhD  
Executive Director

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

Did you know orangutan translates to person of the forest? The award winning documentary about Gunung Palung Orangutans, made by National Geographic photographer, [Tim Laman](#), and Emerging Films producer, [Melissa Lesh](#), can now be watched on Vimeo. Be sure to check it out [here!](#)



## From Puppets to Environmental Education

By Ranti Naruri, GPOCP Environmental Education Officer

My name is Ranti Naruri, and I come from a family of five children here in Ketapang, West Kalimantan. For the past 10 years, I have worked at GPOCP and dedicated myself to the conservation of orangutans and their rainforest habitat in Ketapang and Kayong Utara. My career in conservation started when I was still in high school. Part of my curriculum was to intern for an institution, and learn how to improve the capacity for tourism in our area. I ended up interning at GPOCP for four months back in 2005. During this time, I learned about each of GPOCP's programs, especially the Environmental Education Program. Throughout my internship I helped out doing school visits and taking children on field trips to introduce them to the biodiversity found in Gunung Palung National Park. I learned so much about conservation, education, and I really enjoyed working with the kids. After my internship, I joined the GPOCP youth group, TAJAM, so I could stay active in conservation activities.

## Thank You Janet

This month, GPOCP friend and supporter, Janet Lane, constructed hand-made helmeted hornbill puppets that will be used in our education program! Helmeted hornbills are critically endangered and form part of the amazing biodiversity of Gunung Palung National Park. The kids will love learning more about this species with these interactive puppets! Thank you so much Janet!



*Ranti giving a lecture about orangutans and their rainforest habitat to local youth.*

In 2008, during Orangutan Caring Week, I was given the opportunity to participate in a puppet show to share knowledge about the plight of orangutans here in Borneo. This event opened the door as we were soon invited to schools throughout the region to host our puppet show. The team at GPOCP recognized my hard work and interest in continuing these educational events and I was hired as an Environmental Education Assistant Field Officer!



*Ranti (center) working with youth group member, Wawan (left), and GPOCP staff, Hajeral (right), giving a puppet show to elementary school students.*

I have many great memories of my adventures from my time at GPOCP. One of my favorite, yet tiring activities, is our expeditions. During these expeditions we travel to difficult to reach locations to educate the more rural villages about orangutans, their habitat, and what they can do to help save this species. We host puppet shows for the little kids, school lectures for high school students, and community discussions for the adults. We also host a movie night where we show



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*"If you can't be in awe of mother nature, there's something wrong with you"*

*-Alex Trebek-*



environmentally themed films. Oftentimes the whole village will show up! The roads to these villages are often non-existent which makes travel tiring and difficult. Sometimes we have to use 4WD vehicles and even they have a tough time in the mud. We get to meet so many different people who are often truly interested in learning about our message as they rarely get visitors.



*The team working to get a non-4WD vehicle out of the mud during an expedition to one of the more remote reaches of Gunung Palung National Park.*

I have always wanted to obtain a higher education. It was difficult for me to divide my time between family, work, and school, but I took classes' part time and eventually earned my bachelor's degree in education. I am now ready to go even higher and get my master's degree in environmental science. I have mixed emotions as I take this next step in my career, but I will forever be grateful for the opportunities that GPOCP has given me. I will use everything that I have learned to continue advocating for conservation and the protection of orangutans and their habitat.

## **Bringing Field Biology to the Girl Scouts**

*By Cheryl Knott, GPOCP Executive Director*

What do you call doing science outdoors? Field biology! On May 25-27 my team here in the US ran a Field Biology Encampment for Girl Scouts in Massachusetts, including girls of all ages from Kindergartners to 12th graders! Much of my orangutan fieldwork in Indonesia is currently supported by a grant from the National Science Foundation (NSF). As a part of all NSF grants, scientists look for ways to reach out to the broader community with our particular expertise.



*Girls practiced the techniques we use to observe orangutans. Photo © Photo Christianne Mager.*

As girls move from childhood into adolescence in the US, they show a dramatic drop in both their involvement in the outdoors and their interest in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) subjects. I thought that getting girls involved in field biology - outdoor science - would be a great way to address both of these issues. And, I naturally thought of the Girl Scouts because of my role as a Girl Scout leader for the past 9 years.





*Girls set up tree plots and measured and identified trees.  
Photo © Valerie Clausen.*

My team of undergraduates, graduate students, post-docs and recent PhD graduates from Boston University spent the past year designing a curriculum that would teach girls, through hands-on outdoor activities, about Animal Observation, Wilderness Navigation, Habitat Assessment and Wildlife Conservation. Each of the subjects involved age-specific activities for Daisy (K-1st grade), Brownie (2nd-3rd grade), Junior (4th-5th grade) and Cadette/Senior/Ambassador (Middle and High school) Girl Scouts. The program was also structured around the 3 leadership steps in Girl Scout programs: Discover, Connect and Take action.



*Girls learned how to clean up the water and sea birds after ocean oil spills. Photo © Christianne Mager.*

The 2 night, 3 day event was held at Camp Cedar Hill in Waltham, MA and included 80 girls and 30 adults. The first night, the girls met their team of young female scientists/facilitators and heard their stories. Having the program led by these young women also let the girls meet role models and envision themselves pursuing this type of work in the future. We capped the evening with a screening of our film *Person of the Forest* to show girls about our orangutan research in Indonesia and

the connection between studying animals and conserving them.



*Girls of all ages camped together and learned about field biology.*

The next day the girls rotated between each of the 4 stations - spread across the wooded areas in the Cedar Hill Camp. Activities included leaf and tree identification, measuring tree diameters, using a compass and binoculars, establishing forest plots to map mature trees, games involving primate foraging, examining primate teeth and skulls to learn about dietary adaptations, mapping home ranges, making terrariums, cleaning up oil spills, and observation of "wildlife" in trees. Adults also had a chance to participate, as I led the leaders through some of the same activities during separate morning and afternoon sessions. Saturday night brought a grand campfire for all participants, a communal meal based on Indonesian cuisine, and the songs, skits and s'mores traditional to Girl Scout camping.



*Facilitators included Ariel Hyre, Andrea DiGiorgio, Lara Durgavich, Lexi Lang, Erin Kane, Andrea Blackburn, Faye Harwell, Cheryl Knott. Not pictured: Caitlin O'Connell, Amy Scott, Ishrat Chowdhury and Alora Rando.*

The girls told us they had a fabulous time! Our pre- and post assessment also showed a significant increase in the girls' knowledge of primates, understanding of conservation issues, and the ability to study, quantify, navigate, and map their environment. Our next step will be to revise our curriculum and make the program available to Girl Scouts, and others, everywhere. We hope that the girls left with new knowledge that will increase their enjoyment of both science and the natural world around us. Maybe some of them will even grow up to join me studying wild orangutans in Borneo!

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