

Gunung Palung Orangutan Conservation Program



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Code RED

An e-newsletter from your friends in West Kalimantan

Dear Friends and Supporters,

Last month you may recall I was making my way to Gunung Palung National Park for my annual visit! Now I am making my way home after an exciting time in the forest. I look forward to sharing my experiences with you in the coming months.

Our first article in this issue of *Code Red* is by GPOCP's Environmental Education and Communication Officer, Petrus Kanisius. He highlights some of recent activities with our Sustainable Livelihoods team and their aquaculture workshop. Our second article is by our new Research Manager, Alys Granados. We would like to give her a warm welcome as she settles into life at the Cabang Panti Research Station.

On our sidebar you will find out about a recent

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ATBC

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ATBC

conference GPOCP attended and the field course held this month at the Cabang Panti Research Station.

Sincerely,



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

Let's Cultivate Fish!

By Petrus Kanisius, GPOCP Environmental Education Communication Officer

The goal of our Sustainable Livelihoods program is to work with individuals who may be causing harm to the environment through illegal logging or land clearing, and help them find a different way to provide for their families. With a mutual commitment, GPOCP and these local villagers work together to educate, inform, and identify sustainable livelihood opportunities. We work one-on-one with them to build their capacity to create income that does not damage the environment.



Local participants during the lecture session of the Aquaculture course offered by GPOCP.

Last year, our Sustainable Livelihoods team held discussions with individual fish farmers within the buffer zone of Gunung Palung National Park. Aquaculture, also known as fish farming, is an activity that GPOCP started with local farmers about 3 years ago. This sustainable livelihood activity enables local people to raise fish in ponds they build on their own

This month, Program Director, Terri Breeden, and Research Manager, Alys Granados, attended the Annual Meeting of the Association for Tropical Biology and Conservation, held in Kuching, Malaysia.



Alys presenting on her research at Danum Valley.

OFP Field Course

Two GPOCP Conservation staff members were able to join the annual Field Course hosted by Dr. Andy Marshall, Gunung Palung National Park, and the One Forest Project. They spent 10 days at the Cabang Panti Research Station learning survey techniques, plant phenology, and photography. Dr. Cheryl Knott and Dr. Tim Laman were also guest speakers. Stay tuned next month for a detailed report!

land. These fish provide a ready source of protein for the family as well as cash income through selling in local markets.

We have been monitoring their progress but were getting reports that they were having a tough time. We found that these villagers were interested in learning more about aquaculture, especially about breeding and the fish life cycle. They had noticed that some of their fish were breeding on their own but they didn't know what to do with the tiny baby fish. We also learned that the farmers were having a hard time finding a viable market. From these focus group discussions, GPOCP decided to host an intensive aquaculture training course where we could answer all of their questions and connect them to a routine market or buyer.



The participants learning how to tell the difference between male and female tilapia.

In early July, we invited aquaculture expert, Samson Tarigan, from the Lake Toba region of Sumatra to guide our workshop and assist our farmers. For three days the farmers received classroom lectures, hands on experience, and learned how to build and maintain their own fish ponds. Our workshop focused on two types of fish; catfish and tilapia, both very delicious and popular food items. We had participants from local villages, the local fisheries department, and our own GPOCP staff.



Some of the Field Course participants. Photo credit Balai Taman Nasional Gunung Palung.



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"Look deep into nature and you will understand everything better"

-Albert Einstein-



Participants learning about water quality and pond maintenance to grow healthy fish.

Overall, the workshop was a great success. Each participant now has the tools necessary to implement their own fish farms. We had eight farmers commit to building their own fish ponds at home. The local fisheries department agreed to help answer any questions the farmers may have in the future. GPOCP will also help answer any questions and will also assist the farmers in obtaining seedlings, or baby fish, to continue their aquaculture success. We also connected the farmers with local restaurants and markets so they will have routine buyers during harvest time. GPOCP is looking forward to the achievements these farmers will have following this workshop!

From Malaysia to Indonesia... But Still On Borneo

By Alys Granados, GPOCP Research Manager

An interest in tropical wildlife conservation first brought me to Southeast Asia in 2013, but I couldn't have guessed that five years later, I would have the privilege to continue working in Borneo. This spring, I joined the Gunung Palung Orangutan Project as Research Manager of the Cabang Panti Research Station in Gunung Palung National Park. As part of my Ph.D. program, I'd spent my summers in Malaysian Borneo, but had never been to the Indonesian side. I had heard of Gunung Palung, though, as I was familiar with the work that Dr. Lisa Curran and Dr. Cam Webb had done there; these studies were important sources of information during my Ph.D.



Research Manager, Alys, exploring the Grand Canyon.

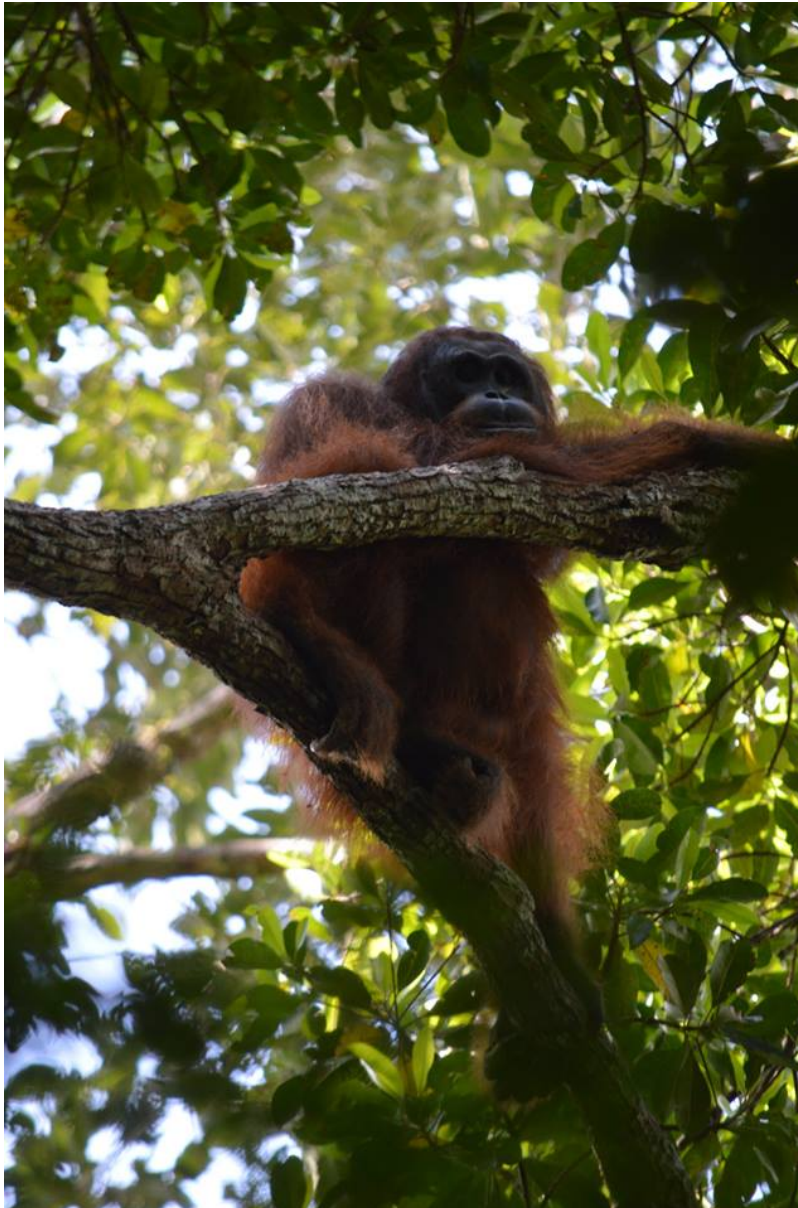
For my thesis, I worked in the Danum Valley Conservation Area in Sabah where I used camera traps and field experiments to investigate the ecological consequences of disrupting plant-animal interactions, with a focus on large mammals. Throughout Borneo, human activities pose a major threat to wildlife. Logging, for example, is widespread throughout Southeast Asia, fragmenting forests by breaking up those areas into smaller pieces, thereby shrinking animal habitat. Targeted removal of reproductive adult trees also means that long-lived, big trees are less likely to be found in those areas. Hunting is another major threat to animals in Borneo and directly reduces animal abundances. Findings from my Ph.D. showed that the direct effects of both hunting and logging on tropical forest herbivores can ripple through forest communities and alter the forest regeneration process.



A red leaf monkey caught by one of the camera traps used at Danum Valley Conservation Area.

At Gunung Palung, orangutans play similar important ecological roles. As consumers of fruit, they contribute to forest biodiversity via seed dispersal. Seed dispersal is the process of animals eating fruit and then defecating the seeds as they travel to other parts of the forest. Seeds have a greater chance of surviving to germinate farther from mother trees, thus orangutans

may be hugely important as long-distance seed dispersers. Unfortunately, orangutans face similar threats as those faced by the ground-dwelling mammals I studied in my Ph.D. Over the next year, I look forward to better understanding the role of orangutans in the forest community while also helping GPOCP with their community outreach and conservation efforts. Borneo is an incredible place that has become a second home to me and I feel extremely lucky to continue working in this region. The past three months have given me an amazing glimpse into the life of orangutans at Cabang Panti and I am very excited to see what the rest of the year brings.



Bosman, one of the first orangutans Alys met at Cabang Panti. Photos by Alys Granados.



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