

# Gunung Palung Orangutan Conservation Program



November 2018

Issue: 71

## Code RED

An e-newsletter from your friends in West Kalimantan

Dear Friends and Supporters,

I hope all of our friends who celebrated Thanksgiving had a wonderful holiday filled with good food, family, and friends.

In this issue of *Code Red*, I would like to introduce you to two of our newest employees, Simon Tambubolon and Muhammad Syainullah (Syai). Simon has shown great initiative in his work at GPOCP and even started a new youth group for the young people that live near *Bentangor Education Center*! It started out being called *Bentangor Kids*, as he catered to the younger kids in the area, but he recently changed the name to *Bentangor Club* as youth of all ages were coming to participate in Simon's after school activities! He tells us about GPOCP's recent Orangutan Caring Week Expedition and his favorite educational programs. Our second article is by Syai, one of our field laboratory

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assistants at Cabang Panti. Syai shares with us some of the details of the important and interesting work he does processing all the research samples we use to learn more about orangutan physiology and adaptations.

On our side bar we have links to our #GivingTuesday campaign. Please support our conservation efforts to conserve the wild orangutan populations of Gunung Palung National Park. We also share a link to our 2017 Annual Report in Bahasa Indonesia.

Sincerely,



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

## Orangutan Caring Week Expedition

*By Simon Tampubolon, GPOCP Environmental Education Field Officer*

I am Simon Tampubolon, and one of the GPOCP Environmental Education team members. I joined GPOCP in February 2018, but originally hail from Lake Toba in North Sumatra. While in Sumatra, I worked at an NGO leading children's educational activities, like youth groups and after school activities. I came to GPOCP with the goal to learn more about orangutans, their habitat, and to share my expertise in conservation education. Since joining GPOCP, I have participated in many activities such as puppet shows for young children, environmental lectures for middle and high school students, field trips for hands on learning, mentoring our youth groups, and our environmental education expeditions. But my favorite activity is to follow-up on school lectures with a field trip to the rainforest. I love seeing the students recognize the plants and animals they learned about in lecture - bringing hands on practice to the classroom theory.

[#GivingTuesday](#) may have already passed by, but our campaign is still happening! Help us reach our goal of \$5,000 to purchase new computers and field supplies for our hard working team to protect and conserve the critically endangered orangutan!

## 2017 Annual Report in Bahasa Indonesia

The Indonesian version of our 2017 Annual Report is hot off the press! Check it out [here!](#)



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*"We now must evolve past passive awareness and into*



Simon on top of Mount Semeru, in East Java, Indonesia, representing GPOCP/Yayasan Palung with his Save Orangutans message.

Every year GPOCP celebrates Orangutan Caring Week, an event to raise awareness around the world about the many threats orangutans face. This year's theme is 'Valuing Orangutans Over Profits to Avoid Extinction.' We decided to hold a 5-day environmental education expedition to the remote village of Jelai Hulu in the Ketapang regency. The expeditions are another favorite activity for me, and during these events we socialize and invite people in the area to be more concerned about the existence of life, especially orangutans and forest protection. Through the expeditions, I am able to see how people view wildlife and other protected animals, learn about their cultures, and try to share knowledge about how we can work together for conservation.

In Jelai Hulu, we visited 4 puppet shows featuring our orangutan, hornbill, and proboscis monkey puppets. Before getting started, we always ask the students to fill out a pre-test to find out their level of understanding of animals, especially orangutans. Initial results showed that many students did not know the difference between a monkey and an ape (the answer is look for a tail, monkeys have tails whereas apes do not!). So, in the puppet show, we explained the differences between the two. This activity is very helpful for students to better understand the animals found in their local forests, why these animals need protection, and why these animals are critically endangered.

*active caring mode.*

*We have to care enough about the species to save it while there is still time"*

*-Gary Shapiro-*



*GPOCP Education Team giving a puppet show to young students describing the differences between a monkey and an ape.*

In addition, we also held two discussions with the local community. Through these discussions we were able to find out the latest information about conservation issues in their village. In one discussion, several people mentioned that they had never participated in a socialization event such as this and did not know that some of these animals were legally protected. I like to think we did a good job of sharing relevant knowledge that personally applies to this village and the animals found in the local forests.



*The parents and adults of Jelai Hulu get together to learn about some of the laws regarding orangutans and other threatened wildlife found near their village.*

In the evenings, we host environmental film screenings. We feature a variety of films, mostly in Indonesian, that explain about forest destruction caused by palm oil plantations, environmental impacts from land clearing, and the plight of orangutans.



*The community of Jelai Hulu gathering together to watch an environmental film.*

On the last day of our expedition, we visited a local high school and hosted two workshops, "how to make a conservation campaign" and "using recyclable materials for crafts". The campaign workshop had 25 students who learned how social media can be used to increase awareness and education about orangutans. The craft workshop also had 25 students who learned how to make flower pots out of plastic water bottles. Overall, our latest expedition was a success! We inspired the local community to care more about the rainforest and orangutans, showed them ways to be more environmentally friendly, and how to advocate for conservation!



*Students from Jelai Hulu High School showing off their flower pots made from old water bottles. Photos credit Simon Tampubolon.*

## **My Daily Life at Cabang Panti**

*By Muhammad Syainullah, GPOCP Laboratory Assistant*

To begin, my name is Muhammad Syainullah, but everyone calls me Syai, pronounced Sy. I work at

GPOCP, one of the three research projects at Cabang Panti Research Station (CPRS), as a Laboratory Assistant. Gunung Palung National Park is surrounded by many small villages, but only a few know that CPRS lies at the foot of Mount Palung, in the heart of the National Park. So, when people ask me where I work, I usually have to explain, but the quick answer is Gunung Palung, and they understand that I do something inside the Park. So, I will explain exactly what it is that I do every day for work at CPRS.

I have been working here for about a year and a half collecting data on wild orangutan behavior and the foods they eat. We also collect urine and fecal samples. We use all of these data to see how orangutans live in the wild and how they use different habitats within the park.



*Syai in his lab coat and face mask ready to analyze some fecal and urine samples at Cabang Panti Research Station.*

One of my main responsibilities is to process the urine and fecal samples in the lab that are collected by the other assistants in the field. Even though we are deep in the jungle, we have a nice lab set-up. The samples are processed in different ways depending on what we will use them for. For example, if we need to collect DNA material from the feces, we will process the

samples differently than if we are interested in using the feces to see how orangutans disperse seeds throughout the forest. Aside from using fecal samples to study orangutan genetics and seed dispersal, we are also interested in looking for parasites in the feces. To do this, I use a centrifuge and microscope to see what kinds of worms are present. Sometimes it is a smelly job, but someone has to do it! Besides processing fecal and urine samples, I also join the other field assistants to search for wild orangutans, take orangutan behavioral data, and sometimes process food items the orangutans have eaten.



*Syai organizing and labeling urine and fecal samples collected from wild orangutans. Photo credit Becky Curtis.*

I also take care of sample and laboratory inventory at the GPOCP office in Ketapang. I count all the samples, make sure they are properly stored, and do any shopping that may be needed to restock our camp research supplies.

Apart from my various research assignments, my life at CPRS is very interesting. There are many exciting things happening, new researchers visiting, new Park Rangers on duty, and the forest never disappoints. Maybe because we all live in the middle of the forest and are isolated from the outside world, we feel like a family. We all look out for each other and have a close bond and I am happy to call CPRS home.



*Syai recording data in the lab at Cabang Panti Research Station. Photos credit M. Syainullah.*

Gunung Palung Orangutan Conservation Program (GPOCP)  
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