

# Gunung Palung Orangutan Conservation Program



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Issue: 73

## Code RED

An e-newsletter from your friends in West Kalimantan

Dear Friends and Supporters,

2019 is already off to an excellent start and we hope yours is too! Our conservation team has been busy with climate awards, Sustainable Livelihood annual meetings, establishing new collaborations, and working with our government partners.

In this issue of *Code Red*, our Sustainable Livelihoods Manager, Wendy Tamariska, shares with us a great profile article based on the success of the Organic Farming Group (self-named *Meteor Garden* after a movie about a love story between two teenagers!). Andrea Blackburn, PhD candidate from Boston University, also tells us about her research investigating the important role orangutans play in the ecology of the rainforest. Through dispersing seeds from the fruits

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Climate Award!

they eat they help maintain this rich ecosystem.

On our side bar we have some exciting news about an Improving Climate Initiative Award presented to the Chair of our Organic Farming Group by the Governor of West Kalimantan! We also let you know about a new initiative from our Environmental Education Team that incorporates waste management into their teaching materials. Our Education Team works tirelessly and travels far and wide in order to provide the workshops, puppet shows and education to children across the regency. To support this important work, we have just started a campaign to purchase two new laptops for them to use in the field for educating and engaging the communities as well as analyzing social survey data. Anything and everything helps and we are very grateful for your support!

We hope your year has gotten off to a great start as well. Stay tuned for our updates throughout the year!

Sincerely,



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

## From Loggers to Community Champions through Organic Farming

*By Wendy Tamariska, GPOCP Sustainable Livelihoods Manager*

With the success and expansion of the organic farming group, Meteor Garden, we wish to introduce some of our proud farmers to our readers and supporters! The group was recently awarded an Improving Climate Initiative award from the Bupati of Kayong Utara and we celebrate this outstanding achievement.

## Want to aid Environmental Education?

Please help us raise funds to purchase the two laptops our Environmental Education team need for the field (visiting remote villages!)

Every little bit helps and is tax deductible. You can donate on our [website](#) or through our [campaign!](#)

## Waste Management and Plastic Re-Use

Our Environmental Education team have upped their game and added the importance of waste management and plastic reduction to their education material when visiting local schools and youth groups for conservation!



Our creative educators hold workshops with the kids to teach them how to make pencil cases out of old plastic bottles!

## Climate Awards!

Pak Erfan, The Chair of



*Pak Ishak (above) is 34 years old and is one of the farmers supported by GPOCP. He lives in Pampang Harapan Village with his wife and two daughters.*

the Farmer's group in one of our Customary Forest villages received an Improving Climate Initiative award for the excellent work they have done within the Green Climate Villages Program! Well done Pak Erfan and congratulations!



*Pak Erfan (right) presented with the award from the Bupati of Kayong Utara (left)*



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*"I am only one,*



*Pak Zakaria is one of the younger members of the Meteor Garden farming group. He is 29 years old and comes from the same village as Pak Ishak. Pak Zakaria is married and has two children, one boy and one girl.*

Both Pak Ishak and Pak Zakaria started out as loggers in order to provide for their families. They had few other alternative sources of income at the time. The demand for the wood came from the community around the village and was used for local needs such as building houses and developing village infrastructure. Usually logs collected were those that have fallen naturally, but the loggers would also specifically target certain trees including, *Octomeles sumatrana*, for furniture making, and, *Artocarpus odoratissimus*, for building material.

In 2017, Pak Ishak was arrested twice by forest security officers. He was let off with a warning as he was only cutting wood to meet the basic needs of his village. He was worried that if caught a third time he would not be let off so easy. So, Pak Ishak decided to talk to GPOCP's Sustainable Livelihood team and helped form a group of farmers, now called Meteor Garden (where he is currently the Chair!). His alternative livelihood

*but I am one.  
I cannot do  
everything,  
but I can do  
something.  
And I will not let  
what I cannot do  
interfere with what  
I can do."*

*Edward Everett  
Hale*

project is now cultivating organic vegetables on the 0.5 hectare plot behind his house. Here he grows eggplant, green beans and other delicious vegetables.



*Meteor Garden members working together as an organic farming cooperative. Photos © GPOCP.*

Pak Zakaria used logging to finance his studies as well as provide for his family. In 2010, Zakaria decided to stop logging due to the increased Forest Police patrols in the area. He decided to become a vegetable farmer using his family's land in Pampang village. Pak Zakaria used his savings from his previous work to start his vegetable garden. However, over the years, Pak Zakaria grew more and more frustrated by the increasing price of fertilizers every year. In October 2017, Pak Zakaria joined *Meteor Garden* with the hope of finding a solution. Pak Zakaria felt that *Meteor Garden* was the best opportunity for him to gain experience, develop agricultural techniques alongside fellow peers and find viable solutions to the agricultural problems he faced. Therefore, when GPOCP made a Compost House and trained farmers how to make compost from cow dung, Pak Zakaria was thrilled that his frustrations with fertilizer prices were already being addressed! Now, Pak Zakaria uses organic compost to cultivate his land and no longer buys expensive chemical fertilizers at the market.

Pak Ishak and Pak Zakaria are only two of our many success stories of how community capacity building and developing alternative (and sustainable) livelihoods best serves conservation. Pak Ishak and Pak Zakaria have become valuable members of the community and are consistently striving to develop not only the organic farming group but the community and conservation efforts across the region through new ideas workshops, and collaborations. Since joining

Meteor Garden, each of our farmers has made a personal commitment to never log again! We are proud and grateful for their hard work and to all of our supporters who helped enable these programs!

## How Orangutans and Plants Interact

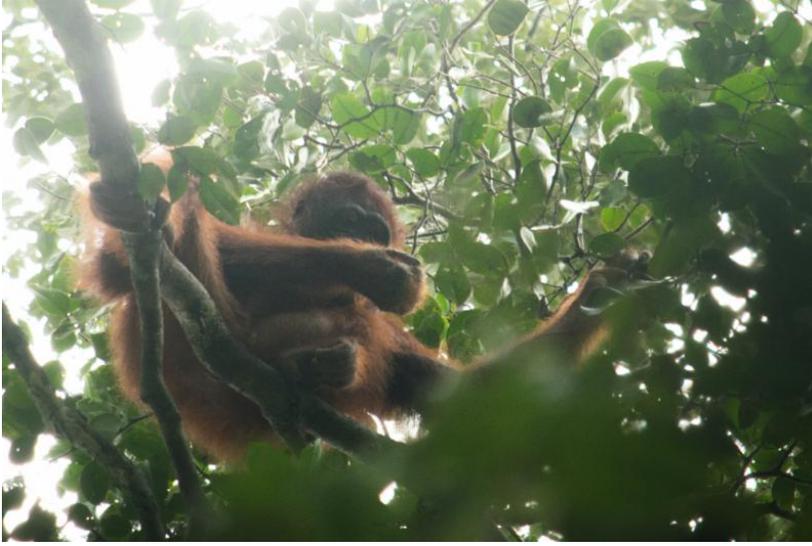
*By Andrea Blackburn, PhD Candidate at Boston University, GPOCP Graduate Student Researcher*

I've recently arrived at the Cabang Panti Research Station to pursue my dissertation research on orangutan seed dispersal. Seed dispersal is the movement of seeds away from the original plant to a new location. Plants have different strategies for dispersing their seeds, including wind, gravity, water, and animals. Animals act as vectors for seed dispersal in several ways: seeds can catch on the animal's fur, animals may move seeds when attempting to move other substrates (e.g. a bird building a nest), or animals may eat a fruit, swallow the seeds, and later defecate the seeds in a new location. Animals that consume fruit, such as orangutans, may swallow and defecate many different species of seeds and consequently they shape the forest through seed dispersal.



*Graduate student Andrea Blackburn at the Cabang Panti Research Station. Photo by Alys Granados.*

Orangutans love to eat fruit, and how orangutans eat different fruits is one of my main research questions. Orangutans do not eat all fruits in the same way. Sometimes the orangutan chews the seeds and destroys them, other times the orangutan removes the pulp and spits out the seed, and finally sometimes the orangutan swallows the seed intact and the seed passes through the orangutan unharmed. I am interested in which seeds orangutans destroy, which seeds pass through unharmed, and if the unharmed seeds germinate and grow into new seedlings.



*Rosa eating a fruit and spitting out the seeds below.*

In order to answer my research questions, I get up very early in the morning so that I can arrive at the orangutan's nest before they wake up. I then follow the orangutan throughout the day. When the orangutan decides to eat in a fruit tree, I use my binoculars to carefully watch how the orangutan eats the fruit. During the day, when the orangutan defecates I help collect the feces for analysis in the lab. I am interested in knowing which types of seeds, and how many, are intact in the feces. I then collect the seeds from the feces and try to grow them in a controlled environment. Right now in the forest a lot more trees than normal are fruiting for a few months, which is called a mini-mast, so it's a very exciting time to be studying how orangutans interact with fruit!



*A juvenile bearded pig (*Sus barbatus*) caught on a camera trap consuming *Willughbeia* sp. seeds discarded by a flanged male orangutan.*



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