

Gunung Palung Orangutan Conservation Program



March 2019

Issue: 75

Code RED

An e-newsletter from your friends in West Kalimantan

Dear Friends and Supporters,

As we start to enter Spring here in the US, our program in Indonesia is already in full bloom. March has been centralized around putting ideas into action in the forms of written plans, agreements and strategies - as well as field trips and fantastic volunteer outreach efforts!

In this issue of *Code Red*, Edi Rahman, our Customary Forest Manager, tells us a bit about how the Customary Forest programs work and how honey bees are helping conserve forests and orangutans. Then, Dr. Erin Kane, a postdoctoral researcher based at Boston University, tells us about her journey to Cabang Panti Research station and how she processes the data and samples from the forest in Dr. Knott's lab in Boston. Learn

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about her participation in "Skype a Scientist" in our sidebar.

Also, on our side bar we are proud of our volunteer youth group having recruited 13 new members and hosting a field trip to the National Park. And, we were very appreciative that Pak Ari, the Head of Gunung Palung National Park, visited our Education Center in Bentangor and participated in our meeting with representatives from our Customary Forests villages.



We also want to proudly point out that this is the 75th issue of *Code Red* and to thank all our readers and supporters for their enthusiasm and help in conserving the wild orangutans and rainforest of Gunung Palung. We hope you enjoy this month's newsletter and share it with everyone! Be sure to check out our social media and website to interact with our upcoming campaigns and projects!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Cheryl Knott'.

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

Conserving Forests using Honey Bees

By Edi Rahman, GPOCP Customary Forest Manager

One of GPOCP's program areas is creating Customary Forests, also known as Community Forests. These are forest areas legally owned by local communities thus preventing monoculture crops and mining companies from encroaching on these lands. In order to ensure

Volunteer youth group field trip!

GPOCP held a Field Trip that doubled as an inauguration event for 13 new members into our volunteer youth group in Ketapang. The trip was held in tranquil Riam Berkinjil, in Gunung Palung National Park and consisted of camping, hiking, educational games, nature workshops, discussions and new plans for the group.



Riam Berkinjil, GPNP, March 2019.

Customary Forest Meeting at Bentangor!

At the start of the month, GPOCP held a meeting at our environmental education center, Bentangor, to discuss further community development strategies for the Customary Forest villages.



Edi Rahman, GPOCP Customary Forest Manager, with the

success and sustainability of these Customary Forests, GPOCP works hand-in-hand with these local communities to build their capacity to fully understand the value of their natural resources, how to protect them, and how to earn a livable wage to support their families through natural products readily available in healthy rainforests.

Currently, GPOCP has legally protected nearly 7,500 hectares throughout five villages in the Kayong Utara regency, that is made up of deep peat swamps which act as a carbon sink for the global greenhouse gas equation. This region also experiences forest fires during the dry season. The peat acts as an accelerant to maintain the fires, which can cause them to continue burning underground.



A peat swamp fire continuing to burn and spread through the peat and roots of the trees. Photo by Beth Barrow, when on previous assignment in Central Borneo.

In addition to protecting forests with the Customary Forest Initiative, GPOCP also provides assistance to the community and the Customary Forest Management Board (LPHD) in order to utilize potential Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFPs) within and outside the Customary Forest area. With training and capacity building for the villagers, GPOCP gives power and responsibility back to the people to protect and best manage their forests to ensure long term conservation and sustainability. Based on GPOCP's mapping of the area, it was found that there are several potential NTFPs as well as ecosystem services that can be established. Some of the products already in development include *pandanus* and coconut handicrafts, coffee, forest honey, vinegar, and coconut oil, among others.

Department of Village Development.

The representatives from the five villages GPOCP currently works with for the Customary Forests were present, as well as local government offices and Gunung Palung National Park head, Pak Ari.

Skype a Scientist

Our Postdoctoral researcher Dr. Erin Kane recently participated in "Skype a Scientist," an online non-profit that connects schools to scientists across the world via the internet where the researchers share their passion with the students for an hour or so via Skype.

Erin's account: Since joining GPOCP, I've spoken with students from 6 classrooms through Skype A Scientist. I've talked to kids in a tiny Texas town consisting of only 135 people, and to an auditorium full of students outside of LA.

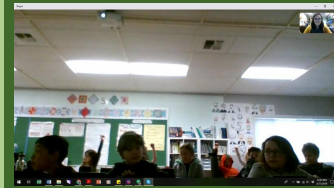
I love sharing my research and excitement about primatology with students because I want everyone to realize that science is accessible, interesting, and can be part of their future. Representation matters, and I hope



Natural hive of forest honey bee in Customary Forests around GPNP. Photo credit GPOCP.

In 2017, with the support from the ARCUS Foundation, we were able to send our LPHD to another Customary Forest in the Kapuas Hulu regency to learn a variety of sustainable livelihood practices. From this study trip, the LPHD in the village of Padu Banjar, learned how to set up and attract wild bees and sustainably harvest the delicious honey. Forest apiculture, or bee keeping, is a strategic effort to protect and preserve the rainforests, as the bees are interlinked with the natural processes of the forest and flowering plants. Consequentially, in order for the bee population to remain sustainable and produce quality honey, the community must prioritize the well-being and management of the forest. This type of bee keeping is somewhat different from traditional methods in a closed box. These bees require the construction of a 'tikung,' or a modified board coated with bees wax. This board is hung between branches of a tree near the rivers edge - the bee's preferred habitat. The wax attracts the bees and they begin to make their hive, which looks like a big 'U'. Once the hive is established, the LPHD can harvest honey every 15-20 days! They make sure not to remove the entire hive or harm the bee eggs so the bees will restore their honey comb and make more honey for future harvests.

that when, for example, an 11-year-old girl in a small town in North Carolina sees me, she sees that she could also be a real live scientist when she grows up.

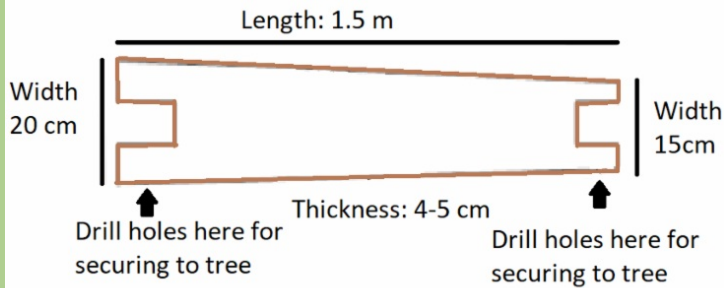


Screenshot of Dr. Kane speaking with a small classroom.

My favorite part of participating in Skype a Scientist is getting the opportunity to have my research re-framed by student questions. Students have asked me if orangutans get sad, and how I know. They've asked why I spend so much time studying poop. They've asked what the hardest part of becoming a scientist was, and if I ever get scared. GPOCP does so much great outreach and education around the communities where orangutans are found, so I appreciate that this program lets me reach kids who live far from rainforests and show them how important and exciting they really are.



Tikung Design



This sustainable apiculture has provided an alternative income for the local community of Padu Banjar. So far they have installed over 80 tikungs! With the successes proven in Padu Banjar, GPOCP is looking to expand our apiculture and agroforestry techniques to other Customary Forest areas. We are in the final stages of securing another 1,000 hectares of Customary Forest this year!



Installing two tikungs in suitable trees in a Customary Forest. Photo credit GPOCP.

Our work is successful because of you! Please consider donating to our community development efforts. Padu Banjar is looking to purchase bee protection clothing for the LPHD, about \$12 for each suit. Every little bit counts and goes directly towards orangutan and rainforest conservation!

Please [contact us](#) if you would like to donate specifically for a bee protection suit for our farmers, or click [here](#) to donate on our website!



Choose GPOCP as your Amazon Smile recipient and 0.05% of your sales will go directly to us.



*"I am only one, 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*

**Patches for a
Purpose!**

Help us acquire Fire
fighting kits for our
Customary Forests by
ordering a beautiful
[Slothgrip](#) patch!



You can find the
patches, more



First packaged batch of organic honey from the Forest Bees of the Customary Forests! Photo credit GPOCP.

Back to the Rainforest: A Fruitful Return

By Dr. Erin Kane, PhD, Postdoctoral Researcher at Boston University

Just a few weeks into the New Year, I packed my bags in New England's frozen north. I scoured outdoor stores full of ski balaclavas and high performance extra-thick wool socks to find the remnant's of last year's mosquito nets and lightweight shirts. I pulled my GPS and binoculars out from under the pile of scarves and fleecy gloves. I found my Bird Guide to West Borneo, and I made sure Google Translate's Bahasa Indonesia dictionary was downloaded on my phone. And I flew across the world to return to Gunung Palung National Park.



Dr. Erin Kane enjoying the snow in Boston before

information about Slothgrip and the fundraising campaign [HERE](#). Please order one and help us get fire fighting equipment for our forests!



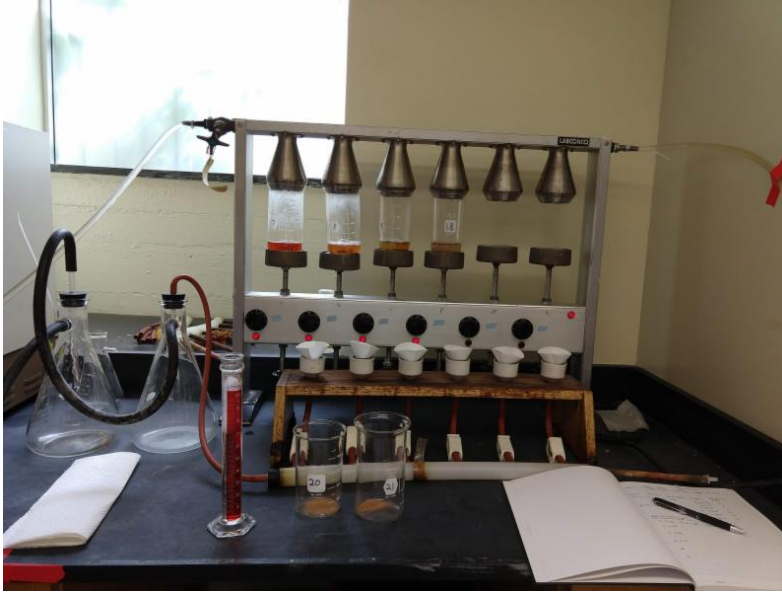
heading out to tropical Borneo!

It had been nearly a year since I left the research station at Cabang Panti. As a postdoctoral research associate working with Dr. Cheryl Knott, I spend the majority of my time managing the Orangutan Reproductive Ecology, Behavior, and Nutrition Laboratory at Boston University. I supervise undergraduate students who are developing their research skills - analyzing nutritional content of orangutan foods, examining how mother orangutans move while carrying their offspring, and learning what goes into managing and maintaining a database with 25 years of research on wild orangutans. I mentor graduate students writing their dissertations and working on papers and presentations. And I work with Dr. Knott to analyze and publish and present data coming out of Indonesia.



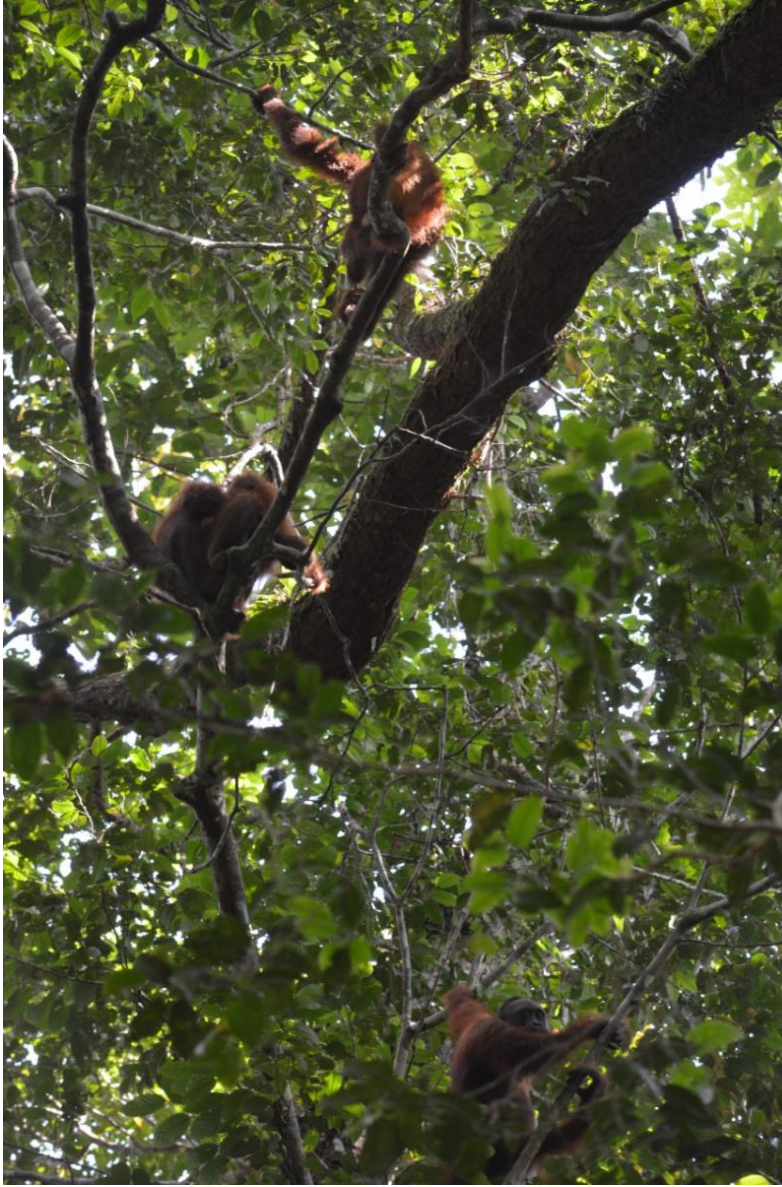
Dr. Nancy Conklin-Brittain, expert in primate nutritional ecology, teaching two Boston University undergraduates working in Dr. Knott's lab, Madeline Eori and Ishrat Chowdhury, how to analyze plant fiber content in the lab at Boston University.

In short, I spend a lot of time sitting at my computer in an interior room of a building right next to the Massachusetts Turnpike. And while I love working with students, and the concrete way that lab work comes together (follow the steps, mix things together, get a result!), there are times when I desperately miss the forest.



Plant samples from Gunung Palung National Park being boiled in sulfuric acid to digest everything but the fiber and what it is bound to.

When I was in Gunung Palung National Park in 2018, I was struck by how little fruit there was in the forest. I have worked in forests in Africa and South America where I was literally pelted with falling fruit. When I followed orangutans in 2018, in a month of research I rarely saw the orangutans eating food that looked palatable. Bark, termite nests, the occasional piece of unripe fruit ... nothing that looked or smelled particularly appealing. My arrival at the research station this year coincided with the tail end of a mast fruiting event, and the forest seemed like it was stuffed with fruit.



Multiple orangutans (a rare sight!) enjoying fruit in Gunung Palung National Park.

It was also stuffed with orangutans. In two weeks at the research station, I followed four flanged adult males, and saw two unflanged males. On my previous trip, it took me nearly two weeks to find my first orangutan! But these orangutans were living the good life. They slept in (sometimes as late as 5:45 am)! They napped multiple times a day! And they spent hours each day gorging on fruits of rambutan, *baccaurea*. And oh! The durian! Green durian! Red durian! Orange durian! The orangutans can crack open the spiky, hard casing with their teeth alone. Researchers and field assistants have to rely on machetes to open fallen durian. I'm still not sure exactly how appealing it smells, but there is no experience that exemplifies Indonesian rainforests quite like sitting 30 meters below an orangutan while you both suck the pulp off of durian seeds.



*A large male orangutan enjoying some fruit in GPNP.
Photo by Dr. Alys Granados.*

I had the honor on this trip of meeting with our research counterparts in Jakarta and Bogor to discuss next steps in our ongoing research on orangutan juvenile development. Although Jakarta is not as far removed from the rainforest geographically as Boston is, it's hard to imagine a place that is more different. Bird calls, insect vocalizations, gibbons duetting - replaced by revving motorcycles, car horns, and construction. Rivers and towering trees - replaced by highways and skyscrapers. It was exciting to be able to "return" to the forest with our colleagues as we discussed fruit biochemistry, orangutan long calls, and exactly how delicious it is to eat durian while male orangutans nap above you.

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