

# Gunung Palung Orangutan Conservation Program



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## Code RED

An e-newsletter from your friends in West Kalimantan

Dear Friends and Supporters,

October has been a productive month with the start of multiple conservation surveys and big workshops.

In our first article, Petrus Kanisius chronicles our wildly successful Teachers Training Workshop, where we worked to help teachers incorporate environmental sciences into the classroom. The second article comes from Rinta Islami, our Lab Assistant at Cabang Panti Research Station, and her experience attending her first conference! Rinta's hard work and motivation towards orangutan research and conservation has not gone unnoticed, so we were thrilled when she agreed to join the Indonesian Primate Symposium and Congress in Yogyakarta.

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On our sidebar we have a lovely update from our Sustainable Livelihoods community groups and their initiative for ecosystem restoration. Additionally, our natural resources assessment survey has finally begun in Matan, a remote village on the northern border of Gunung Palung National Park.

I also want to congratulate Dr. Caitlin O'Connell on the publication of her article on [socio-sexual behavior in adolescent female orangutans](#). Read all about it!

Finally, if you haven't read our 2018 Annual Report, it's available for viewing or downloading [here](#). We'd love to share our accomplishments with you!

We hope you enjoy catching up on what we've been doing and we look forward to hearing from you!

Sincerely,



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

## Don't Forget the Teachers

*By Petrus Kanisius, Environmental Education Media Officer*

While our Environmental Education program has developed to reach all students from elementary school to Master's students through puppet shows, lectures, field trips, mentorships, support and scholarships, we also reach out to an often overlooked target demographic for conservation education: teachers!

## Initiatives from the Communities

Support from the local communities is crucial for long-term conservation success, and even better when THEY approach US about ideas for conservation activities!



*Planting mangroves is a messy but fun task!*

This month, GPOCP and the local Environmental Health Department of Kayong Utara hosted a tree planting event that was initiated by our Sustainable Livelihoods community groups (artisans and farmers)!



*Planting mangrove trees will prevent erosion, extend forest connectivity and bring back crabs for potential harvesting.*

The artisan and farmers groups approached the local government with the idea to restore the nearby mangrove forests, whereby the local government





*Group presentation on teaching methods to convey local biodiversity to students.*

In October, we held the long-awaited Teacher Training workshop that aims to help teachers incorporate environmental sciences into the classroom. This year's event builds upon the success of last year's teacher training workshop by doubling the number of participants from 30 to 62! By collaborating with local NGO, the ASRI Foundation, and the Regional Education Department of Kayong Utara, we were able to pool our resources to provide a bigger and more interactive workshop, and reach more teachers from remote schools.



*Teachers modeling the bespoke tote bag they received upon arrival (features logos of GPOCP, ASRI and our donors for the event: Arcus Foundation, Woodland Park Zoo and Conservation, Food & Health)*

The workshop was held at ASRI's health clinic on the border of Gunung Palung National Park, providing the perfect mountainous rainforest backdrop for the event. ASRI was also able to help provide accommodation for those participants who had traveled very far (a few teachers took a 4-hour speed boat down the river to get to the workshop!)

The participants included teachers and principals from

immediately stepped up and started planning with GPOCP to make the dream come true.

Environmental Health Department Manager, Rayendra Passa, said *"As the local government, I really appreciate the commitment of the artisans and farmer group to get involved in conservation and environmental management in their village."*



Together we planted a total of 650 mangrove trees in an effort to rehabilitate the land, combat erosion and reestablish ecosystem services near our core work village of Pampang Harapan (on the border of the Gunung Palung National Park, Kayong Utara).



Natural Resource Assessment in Remote Matan

This month our

elementary schools all the way to high schools. The Head of the Kayong Utara Education Office, Mr. Muhammad Irvan, opened the event - showing the participants that bringing environmental science into the classroom is openly encouraged and supported by the local government.

The first day of the two-day workshop started with the introduction of materials related to environmental education and group sharing of what methods are currently used. The afternoon consisted of a field trip to the nearby forest near Pulau Datok Beach to investigate the teaching resource merits of the flora and fauna itself. During the field trip, the participants were split into groups and encouraged to look for various ideas, inspirational teaching materials related to the environment or the surrounding biodiversity. The groups then presented their findings and ideas, and all individuals had the opportunity to provide input to each group, followed by a discussion of what teaching methods each school has already tried-and-tested and how to enrich them.



*One of the groups during the field trip to collect inspirational teaching material from the outdoors.*

The next day was dotted with activities led by the fantastic facilitator Mr. Mas'ud Effendi from the Pasakt Baktiku Institute. Teachers were able to express ideas, plans and thoughts related to creative, interactive and fun teaching methods and how to best apply them to their respective schools.

While the goal for this workshop was to increase teacher capacities in content and material by incorporating environmental sciences and utilizing natural resources around the schools and district as a medium and teaching resource for students, the workshop also strongly developed the teaching process

Sustainable Livelihoods team, thanks to the Whitley Fund For Nature Award support, were able to get to the remote village of Matan for the Community Livelihood Assessment and Product Scanning (CLAPS) survey they attended training for a couple of months ago.



*GPOCP Sustainable Livelihoods team and Kayong Utara Environmental Health Department team in Matan for CLAPS survey*

This survey will provide a comprehensive understanding of what kind of natural (and sustainable) resources are available, where and what is used so far, along with what products are created, how to develop them and what the market potential is.



*Bamboo products made from artisans in Matan village.*

The goal is to help communities develop and guide them away



itself. The workshop created an open platform for schools in the Kayong Utara district to communicate and coordinate with each other about how they can actively participate in efforts to preserve the environment. Participant testimonials also happily reported that the teachers felt reenergized and motivated to try out new teaching methods and incorporate the course material. During the last day of the event, the teachers were also encouraged to join in creating the follow-up monitoring of participants to see if they are successful in implementing environmental education material in their schools.



*The field trip to the local forest to experience and bring the learning contents to life was a big hit!*

GPOCP Program Director, Victoria Gehrke said, "GPOCP works to educate and build awareness at all levels of the educational system to fundamentally change the understanding and behavior towards orangutans in the Gunung Palung landscape. We are very grateful that so many schools and teachers could participate this year, and thankful to ASRI for their big support. I look forward to seeing the follow-up with the teachers and how they have successfully incorporated the new material, concepts and techniques in their curriculum."

from environmental destructively activities such as land clearing and logging!



*Part of the assessment involves asking villagers to draw us a map of where and what natural resources they currently use.*

The survey is a collaboration between the Gunung Palung National Park office and the Environmental Health Department of Kayong Utara.



*The next step is to go into the field and confirm the location of non-timber, sustainable forest resources.*

Thank you for your hard work and support for making this project possible!



*Group photo of Teacher Training Workshop with participants, ASRI Executive Director, GPOCP Program Director and Head of Education Department of Kayong Utara.*

We are so grateful for the support of our followers, our funders for this activity (Arcus Foundation, Woodland Park Zoo and Conservation, Food & Health), the ASRI Foundation and our amazing staff for their hard work!

## **From Forest Lab to First Conference**

*By Rinta Islami, GPOCP Lab Assistant*

Indonesia has the third largest number of primates in the world, after Brazil and Madagascar, and it is our responsibility to protect and safeguard this huge biodiversity asset. There are many ways that we can protect the existence of our primates, but we first need to be aware of what is happening and any threats to their existence. I got a chance to learn more about Indonesia's primates at the "Indonesia Primate Symposium and Congress 2019" which is an event to spread awareness and ensure the continued existence of primates in Indonesia. This event is an outlet to share information from many places that are doing research about primates in Indonesia. It can also inform higher authorities on how to protect wildlife and keep ecosystems in balance.



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Forward to a Friend

*"The purpose of life is not to be happy. It is to be useful, to be honorable, to be compassionate, to have it make some difference that you have lived and lived well."*

*Leo Rosten  
(sometimes attributed to Ralph Waldo Emerson)*



*Indonesian Primate Symposium and Congress 2019*

I work as one of the lab assistants at the Cabang Panti Research Station, Gunung Palung National Park, collecting data on wild orangutans. We do research like taking daily behavioral data, processing samples (food, urine, and feces) and identifying parasites. It's been almost two years since I joined this orangutan research project, and I have seen a lot of wild orangutan behaviors here. But, in this conference I was able to learn a lot of interesting information about orangutans in other places, like outside the national park area, in rehabilitation centers, and even orangutans living in a mining area. One interesting observation that I learned about was from one of the participants from East Kalimantan. She talked about how orangutans in her study area sometime nest in ferns on the ground. For me, this is such an interesting fact because so far this has never happened at Cabang Panti. Probably this is because there is still a good forest here and the orangutans choose to nest on the top of the trees, which is safer and more comfortable for them.





*Rinta, Wahyu Susanto (Research Director of GPOCP), and Ella Brown (Research Manager at GPOCP).*

In addition, I learned a lot about the Tapanuli orangutan (*Pongo tapanuliensis*), the species that in 2017 was found to be different than the other orangutan in Sumatra, *Pongo abelli*. So far there is little published research on tapanuli orangutans because they are still a new species. I felt very lucky to have been able to learn more about them at this event.





*Rinta outside the University of Gadjah Mada entrance, at her first conference!*

In addition to orangutans, I also learned a lot about different primate species in Indonesia, like long-tailed macaques, gibbons, tarsiers, and some species that are not in Gunung Palung because they are endemic to other areas of Indonesia. Many of these species I have never been able to see before, so I felt lucky to be able to learn more about them. This gives me motivation to learn more about the many primates of Indonesia on my own.



*Our Research Manager, Ella Brown, presenting a talk on "Orangutan Development, Reproduction and Life History."*

I want to give a huge thank you to GPOCP for giving me the opportunity to learn at this conference. Not only was this my first conference, but it was my first trip to the city of Yogyakarta on the island of Java! This event was attended by many different Indonesian and foreign institutions, and gave me the chance to learn about many species of primates, their current status and the threats that they face. It also gave me the opportunity to meet other Indonesian researchers doing work in the field and also researchers from other countries working in Indonesia. One unexpected highlight was that I got to watch a traditional Mentawai dance performed by Mentawai children. Their culture is very in touch with nature, and I thought it was fitting that they performed at this event.

Gunung Palung Orangutan Conservation Program (GPOCP)

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