



# Gunung Palung Orangutan Conservation Program

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an e-newsletter from your friends in West Kalimantan

Dear Friends and Supporters,

As we begin 2021, we've taken some time to reflect on our accomplishments in 2020 and our efforts to overcome the challenges that we, and the rest of the world, faced and continue to face, because of the global pandemic. In our first article, GPOCP Field Director, Edi Rahman, writes about the recent 2021 Annual Meeting, when all conservation and research staff came together to evaluate the past year and strategically plan for this year's upcoming programming.

Our second article, written by GPOCP Communications Officer, Petrus Kanisius, is about the latest series of activities undertaken by the West Bornean Orangutan Caring Scholarship (WBOCS) recipients as part of the *Balek Kampong* ("back to the village") project. It is heartening to see the enthusiasm of these young people as they spread the word about conservation in their local communities.

We also started 2021 with some very sad news. We were deeply shocked and saddened by the death of Gunung Palung National Park Forest Technician, Rizki Wahyudi, and his family who were amongst those who perished in a plane crash on January 9<sup>th</sup>. Our hearts go out to Rizki and all of his family, friends and colleagues. He will be deeply missed.

It is thus with both sadness, as we remember those who lost their lives during this past year, and the hopefulness that comes with the new year, that we wish you a safe, successful and happy 2021.

Sincerely,



Cheryl Knott, PhD  
Executive Director

[Gunung Palung Orangutan Conservation Program \(GPOCP\)](#)

# Our 2021 Annual Meeting

*By Edi Rahman, Field Director*

Each year, GPOCP (known as *Yayasan Palung* in Indonesian) holds an Annual Meeting. This past month, from January 8<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup>, we held the 2021 Annual Meeting at Pasir Putih-Sungai, Gantang, Mekar Utama Village, Kendawangan. The meeting was attended by all GPOCP conservation and research staff. During the meeting, we evaluated the activities that were carried out in the previous year, and coordinated and planned activities for the next year.

During the 2020 activity evaluation, our teams shared that many of the activities that had been planned could not be carried out, or were carried out in a limited capacity, due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Environmental Education program was the most affected by COVID-19, as programming typically occurs directly in schools. In March 2020, all schools were closed and many conducted schooling online. As a result, many of the Environmental Education activities were altered so that they could be carried out virtually.



*GPOCP conservation and research staff pose together on the beach at Pasir Putih.*

Next, after evaluations, managers from each program (Environmental Education and Conservation Awareness, Sustainable Livelihoods, Wildlife Crime and Investigations, Customary Forests, and Research) shared their plans for 2021.

During the two-day meeting we also carried out service activities and campaigning activities around the village where the meeting was held. Specifically, we focused our efforts towards tourist locations in Kendawangan District. This area is visited by many people, especially on holidays. We conducted *Operasi Semut* ('Ant Operations' – a term used locally to refer to group activities to clean up nature), cleaning garbage and other plastic waste in the area.





*GPOCP Research Director, Wahyu Susanto, Environmental Education Field Officer, Haning Pertiwi, and Sustainable Livelihoods Field Assistant, Salmah Sos, work together to clean up trash along the beach during an Operasi Semut.*

We also worked together on a campaign to install multi-media posters explaining how long it takes for different types of waste to break down. Our goal was to raise awareness among the public, especially the tourists to the Pasir Putih beach, so that visitors will properly dispose of trash in the spaces provided.

It is known that the forests in the Kendawangan subdistrict are also a habitat for a small remaining population of orangutans and other protected species. Our investigations team, which has been working in the area since 2002, has discovered several cases of hunting and trafficking of various animals, including orangutans. There have also been cases of such animals being kept as pets. Thus, we decided to also carry out a campaign to install two billboards containing information about protected animals, such as orangutans, and distribute MlaS, our Indonesian language newsletter, to the visitors we met at the various tourist attractions.





*Field Research Assistant, Yogi Saputra, installs an informational billboard at a local eatery. The headline reads, "Save Protected Animals and their Habitats!"*



*Staff pose to spell out "YP", short for Yayasan Palung, GPOCP's Indonesian name.*

I consider this Annual Meeting to have been a great success, as we were able to create plans with measurable impact, and will output activities based on our shared goal of conserving orangutans and their habitat. Through this meeting, we also continue to build a strong connection between all the GPOCP staff from the different programs. This connection is essential for us to achieve both our vision and mission.





*GPOCP staff enjoy a beautiful sunset on Pasir Putih Beach.*



*GPOCP conservation and research staff pose for one last drone photo on the beach.*

# The West Bornean Orangutan Caring Scholarship *Balek Kampong* Project

By Petrus Kanisius, Communications Officer

Each year, GPOCP hosts the WBOCS (West Bornean Orangutan Caring Scholarship) *Balek Kampong* (or, 'back to the village') Project, in which WBOCS participants carry out a series of activities throughout the Ketapang and Kayong Utara regencies. This year, events were held in Sandai and Sungai Laur districts, as well as Pasir Mayang Beach.

In Ketapang, on January 20<sup>th</sup>, WBOCS recipients held a film screening and discussion about the documentary "[Our Mothers' Land](#)" which tells the story of Indonesian women resisting companies that seek control over their natural resources. This discussion was moderated by WBOCS students Muhammad Syainullah, Ilham Pratama, Mita Anggreini, Mega OG, Ari Marlina and Surianto. Also in attendance were members of our Ketapang-based youth volunteer group, RK-TAJAM. The money raised during this event was donated to victims of recent floods in South Kalimantan.



The audience at the screening and discussion of "Our Mothers' Land" at a local cafe, Kekili Kopi.



Participants were also given copies of our Indonesian language newsletter, *MiaS*, at the end of the documentary.



Also in Ketapang, on January 24<sup>th</sup>, students participated in a training about creative environmental campaigns on social media. Special guest speaker, Nurdianti, who is the co-founder of the West Kalimantan-based [Pongo Ranger Community](#), emphasized the importance of sharing information. Social media now gives young people the power to spread awareness and voice change, and participants of this workshop gained practical skills to do this on their own.

In Kayong Utara, WBOCS *Balek Kampong* hosted a series of activities, nicknamed SHALAM (*Sharing di Alam*, or, Sharing in Nature) at Pasir Mayang Beach. Participants learned about the WBOCS program, and took part in a lesson on local flora and fauna. They also installed a series of informational signposts on the beach, with messages like “The beach is not a trash can”, “If we protect the forest, the forest protects us” and “Preserve the forest for the future”. These activities were led by WBOCS recipients Rafikah, Gilang Pratama, Sonia Utami, Fitri Melyana, Rizal and Ahmad Albab.

In Sandai District, lectures were held at SMPN 3 Sandai Junior High School. A total of 35 students, from grades 7-9, learned about forests and conservation. After the lecture, the WBOCS *Balek Kampong* team distributed our Indonesian language newsletter, [MlaS](#). This event was run by Gusti Irawan, Reni Riasari, Winda Lasari and Fransiska Suhaimi.



*Junior high school students in Sandai attended lectures about forests and conservation.*

Lastly, in Sungai Laur Subdistrict, students went camping and created signs about proper waste management. Participants then had discussions about nature and the environment. Students came from throughout the community, and many of them are also involved in the Sungai Laur Nature Lovers Community (Kopal), Sandai Nature Lovers (Kompas), Sungai Laur Backpackers, and the Bebek Butak Tulik (BBT) club. These events were run by Siti Nurbaiti, Peri Auri, Monica and WBOCS alumnus, Junardi.



*Participants from the Sungai Laur camping expedition pose with handmade signs about proper waste management.*

These events are very special to WBOCS students and important to the longevity of the WBOCS program. Students find great joy in giving back to the communities from which they come, spreading both information about the program, as well as knowledge about the environment and conservation efforts. Younger student participants look up to these university students, and often find themselves passionate about similar issues and interested in one day applying to the scholarship program. We look forward to holding more events in the future!

*"Not everything that is faced can be changed, but nothing can be changed until it is faced."*

*- James Baldwin*



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