

# Gunung Palung Orangutan Conservation Program

YAYASAN PALUNG

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**Code RED**

*an e-newsletter from your friends in West Kalimantan*

Dear Friends and Supporters,

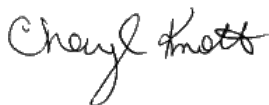
Our thoughts are with our friends and colleagues in Indonesia as COVID-19 cases continue to spike. Fortunately, vaccines are now becoming more available in the area, and the safety of our staff and community continue to be our top priority.

On July 14<sup>th</sup>, devastating floods hit the region, most severely in the Sukadana sub-district of Kayong Utara Regency. Communications Officer Petrus Kanisius writes more on this in the first article. Tragically, a member of our staff lost two family members during this extreme weather event. We've also experienced damage at our Bentangor Environmental Education Center, and many members of our Sustainable Livelihoods groups have suffered losses at their homes and on farmland. In response, we've started a flood recovery fund, in hopes of raising money to support the community at this time. If you are able, please consider making a contribution [here](#).

In our second article, student researcher and [West Bornean Orangutan Caring Scholarship \(WBOCS\) recipient](#), Erina Safitri, writes about the time she's spent at the Cabang Panti Research Station over the last two months. Through this program, Erina has been awarded a scholarship to attend Tanjungpura University. Erina is studying insects that orangutans eat. Read on to learn more about her research.

I hope you all have a safe and happy August.

Sincerely,



Cheryl Knott, PhD  
Executive Director

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

## **IN THIS ISSUE:**

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The first 2021 edition of our Indonesian language newsletter, MlaS, is out now! If you can read Indonesian, check it out [here!](#)

[Donate to our Flood Recovery Fund](#)

## Devastating Floods and Landslides in Kayong Utara Regency, West Kalimantan

*By Petrus Kanisius, Communications Officer*

With every rainy season that arrives, we are very vulnerable to the potential for flooding and landslides, especially in several areas of the Kayong Utara Regency. This possibility keeps us all vigilant, particularly those who live around the region's large hills. Though heavy rainfall can be a natural phenomenon, flooding in the region is exacerbated due to deforestation, which reduces the ability of the land to absorb large quantities of water when it rains. When intense rainfall occurs for 1-2 days, it is certain there will be flooding. Many parts of Kayong Utara are located in a valley, below large hills. These hills now have reduced forest cover, which would typically help to absorb rainfall. This reduction in forest cover has been caused by human activity such as illegal logging, mining and forest fires. Other factors, such as the soft contours of the soil during high rainfall, make for increased vulnerability to landslides.

On July 14<sup>th</sup>, intense flooding occurred throughout Kayong Utara, including in the Sukadana sub-district. The flooding in Sukadana not only brought material losses, but also resulted in two fatalities. Floods and landslides submerged most of the community's houses, places of worship, offices, and other facilities, and paralyzed people's daily activities. The impact of this incident hit close to home for us at Yayasan Palung. We suffered damage to several buildings at our Bentangor Environmental Education Center located in Pampang Harapan Village. More tragically, this incident resulted in the death of two family members of a Yayasan Palung staff member.



*Floods submerged Bentangor Environmental Education Center in Pampang Harapan Village. The building sits atop wooden stilts. Pictured here is the elevated front porch of the building. The dirt road and wooden floorboards have been covered by water.*



*Inside the main building at Bentangor, a submerged couch demonstrates the height of the flood water.*

In addition, floods and landslides damaged several facilities of our Sustainable Livelihoods groups. The organic fertilizer production house has been damaged, and agricultural plants and seeds were washed away from the land used by our Meteor Garden organic farming group. The Mina Segua aquaculture group also suffered losses, losing a large number of fish species in their above-ground ponds, due to the flood waters.

Flooding and landslides also impacted other members of our staff, some experiencing damage at their own homes. This tragic incident serves as an opportunity for the community to reflect upon and pay more attention to the importance of preserving the environment, especially on a very local scale. There is a need for vigilance from each of us who reside in these vulnerable areas. We must take steps to anticipate flooding and landslides, and be alert, considering that flash floods can occur at any time.



*Mud covers the floor inside Bentangor the day after the building flooded.*

On a larger scale, we must put effort into mitigating these disastrous effects, including 1) choosing to use and cultivate natural resources sustainably, 2) reducing the massive exploitation of natural resources so that they do not become completely damaged or extinct, 3) increasing efforts to renew natural resources via reforestation, and 4) using technological advances to preserve the remaining natural resources. This is of utmost concern for all of us – the government, the private sector, and the community.



*A team gathers to search for missing victims among remnants of flooding and landslides in Pamapang Harapan Village.*

We have started a [fundraiser](#) to support the rebuilding of our Bentangor Environmental Education Center and Sustainable Livelihood group lands, as well as donate funds to our long-term staff member who lost his wife and daughter in this tragic incident. Please consider making a charitable contribution to help support the community. Click [here](#) for more information about the flood recovery fund.

## Studying Orangutan Insect Consumption at Cabang Panti Research Station

*By Erina Safitri, Student Researcher*

Hello. I am Erina Safitri, a senior student at the Faculty of Forestry, Tanjungpura University (UNTAN), Pontianak. I am also a West Bornean Orangutan Caring Scholarship (WBOCS) recipient. I really like the forest. At university I've learned many things about forests and their components. As part of WBOCS we are taught about loving the environment and building a spirit of conservation within us. For me, the forest is a pleasant, quiet place.



*Author Erina Safitri collects a termite sample during an orangutan follow in Gunung Palung National Park.*

Now, I'm conducting research at the Cabang Panti Research Station (CPRS) in Gunung Palung National Park. My research is on the identification and nutritional analysis of insects eaten by Bornean orangutans. As WBOCS students, we are required to take on research topics related to orangutans. From the results of my discussions with Wahyu

Susanto (Research Director) and Mariamah Achmad (former Environmental Education Manager), I was interested in conducting research on the insects eaten by orangutans in Gunung Palung, as this has been studied less than orangutan plant consumption. This research is being conducted for 3 months, from June to September.



*Orangutan Walimah eats termites from a piece of rotting wood, while her infant reaches to try a bite. Photo © Tim Laman.*

The first time I set foot in CPRS, I felt it was very extraordinary. It's a research station in the middle of the forest, with a simple but very elegant building style. There is clear and cold river water, lots of beautiful fish, cool air, and people who are very kind. It's so peaceful. I love Cabang Panti!

Starting to adapt to a new environment is not something that is easy for me. I worried about introducing myself and remembering the names and faces of new people. Everyone at CPRS turned out to be very pleasant, open, and like family. We often share stories, eat together, sing happily, and joke around. I feel lucky to be able to learn many things here.

Now entering the second month of my research, I have obtained 7 samples of insects eaten by orangutans, and all of them are termites. When orangutans begin to eat termites, I spread out a plastic sheet below the tree to catch fallen material and collect any insects in small containers. These samples will first be identified and nutritional analysis will be carried out after successfully collecting samples weighing at least 20 grams. Nutritional analysis will be carried out at the Food Technology and Agricultural Products Laboratory of the Pontianak State Polytechnic.



*Erina collects and preserves samples, like the termite seen here, so that nutritional analysis can later be carried out in Pontianak.*

At CPRS, the Field Assistants are always kind and help me in the process of collecting data and samples. I also like to help collect samples of orangutan feces. Everyone here is great. I am very motivated by the people around me who always want to learn. I am very grateful! I would also like to thank the Gunung Palung National Park Office for assisting in my SIMAKSI permit process, and for accompanying me while I'm at Cabang Panti. I'd also like to thank all of my professors and mentors at UNTAN and the staff at Yayasan Palung who have helped me throughout this process.

Management of Cabang Panti Research Station is conducted by the Gunung Palung National Park Office (BTN-GP) in collaboration with GPOCP/YP. Scientific research is carried out in conjunction with the Universitas Nasional (UNAS) and Boston University.

*"Climate change is no longer some far-off problem; it is happening here, it is happening now."*

*- Barack Obama*



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