

Gunung Palung Orangutan Conservation Program

YAYASAN PALUNG

August 2021

Issue 104

Code RED

an e-newsletter from your friends in West Kalimantan

Dear Friends and Supporters,

As we kick off a very busy September, I have lots of updates that I'm excited to share with you all. This past month, we celebrated [Indonesian Independence Day](#) and World Orangutan Day. Our RK-TAJAM youth group volunteers created a [new video](#) of the song "Si Pongo" (inspired by the genus of orangutans – *Pongo*) which has been sung throughout schools and gatherings since the early days of our conservation program. Another young person, GPOCP high school intern, Alejandro Merritt, directed, animated and edited [this video](#) "10 Facts About Orangutans."

I also want to congratulate Endro Setiawan who successfully defended his [master's thesis research](#) on the invasive species *Bellucia pentamera*, conducted in Gunung Palung National Park. GPOCP/Yayasan Palung was proud to help support Endro's master's thesis research and I was honored to be on his committee at the National University, Indonesia (UNAS). Stay tuned for a future issue of *Code Red* to hear about Endro's fascinating results.

This week we are beginning a [Save Wild Orangutans](#) sign-up promotion. As many of you may know, we began this membership initiative in early 2020. Team Wild Orangutans is an online community initiative to help fund our conservation and research work at GPOCP/Yayasan Palung. **This month (September 1st – 30th) if you join and commit to a donation of \$10 or more each month, you will automatically receive a FREE orangutan print of your choice in December!** You will have your pick of 3 photographs by Tim Laman, valued at up to \$300 each! Check out the photos and learn more over on the sidebar.

Our first article this month was written by Communications Officer, Petrus Kanisius, and Environmental Education Field Officer, Riduwan. The two share the many activities that took place this past month to commemorate World Orangutan Day and explain why orangutans' survival is so important.

The second article is co-authored by GPOCP/Yayasan Palung Botanist Andre Ronaldo, student researcher Rani Ferdianty, and Research Director Wahyu Susanto. They explain our newest research that has been implemented in the degraded *Rangkong* forest, near the edge of the National Park, and share some findings from initial vegetation surveys.

I hope you all have a safe and happy September.

Sincerely,

Cheryl Knott

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

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IN OTHER NEWS

FREE PRINT FOR SUPPORTERS



To receive one of these free prints, entitled "Entwined Lives", "The Wild Ride" and "Live Streaming - Borneo 2020" sign up to make a minimum donation of \$10 per month and [become a member](#) of Save Wild Orangutans (SWO).

[Join SWO Today](#)

[Donate to our Flood Recovery Fund](#)

Celebrating World Orangutan Day 2021

By Petrus Kanisius and Riduwan

Every year on August 19th we commemorate World Orangutan Day. This day is a reminder for all citizens of the world to save the fate of orangutans and their habitat. This year, World Orangutan Day took the theme "Habitat Restoration, Conserving Orangutans, Care of Civilization".

This year, Yayasan Palung (GPOCP), along with RK-TAJAM and REBONK youth group volunteers and West Bornean Orangutan Caring Scholarship (WBOCS) recipients, joined OUFest 2021, which was held by the Indonesian Orangutan Forum (FORINA), made up of 57 different institutions and organizations.



In Collaboration:



The many organizations that work together as part of the Indonesian Orangutan Forum (FORINA).

Despite the current COVID-19 conditions, GPOCP/Yayasan Palung staff and volunteers remained enthusiastic to take part in commemorating World Orangutan Day. We held a series of activities including a virtual interactive dialog, with the theme BEGALOR (which is an Indonesian acronym for *Berbicara Seputar Gagasan Lingkungan dan Orangutan*, or Talking about Environmental and Orangutan Ideas).

Virtual Interactive Dialog

The Begalor Interactive Dialog hosted speakers including Ibrahim Sumardi (Gunung Palung National Park Bureau, Head of Cabang Panti Research Station), Samsidar (Chairman of Banjar Lestari Customary Forest Management Board), Desi Kurniawati (Yayasan Palung Customary Forests and Animal Protection Coordinator), and Mariamah Achmad (Conservation Practitioner and former Yayasan Palung Education Manager). The event was moderated by Mita Anggraini (2017 West Bornean Orangutan Caring Scholarship recipient). The goal of this interactive dialog was for conservation activists to help strengthen community involvement in conserving orangutans and their habitat. The speakers emphasized the role of the community in orangutan conservation, some of the obstacles faced, and the efforts that must be made towards orangutan conservation.

Additionally, on August 20th, Research Director Wahyu Susanto was a speaker for a webinar organized by the Primate Research Center at Universitas Nasional, on Getting to Know Orangutans Through Research Stations in Indonesia, where he presented on the work at Cabang Panti.



Research Director, Wahyu Susanto (top left), speaks during a webinar hosted by Universitas Nasional in Jakarta.

Orangutan Campaigns

RK-TAJAM youth group volunteers from Ketapang also created campaigns through YouTube and TikTok, and organized an art competition. In Kayong Utara, RK-REBONK volunteers held several activities to spread messages about orangutans. Twenty REBONK volunteers carried signs about orangutans and the environment throughout Pasir Mayang Beach, Sukadana District.

Some of the World Orangutan Day activities can be seen here:

[BEGALOR podcast about orangutans](#)

[Si Pongo Song](#)

[RK-TAJAM Orangutan TikToks](#)



Members of the REBONK volunteer youth group hold handmade signs at the Pasir Mayang Beach. Signs include phrases like "save the forest for the future", "this is my action, where is yours", "stop cutting down our forest" and "humans need the forest, the forest needs orangutans".

Why do we need to save orangutans?

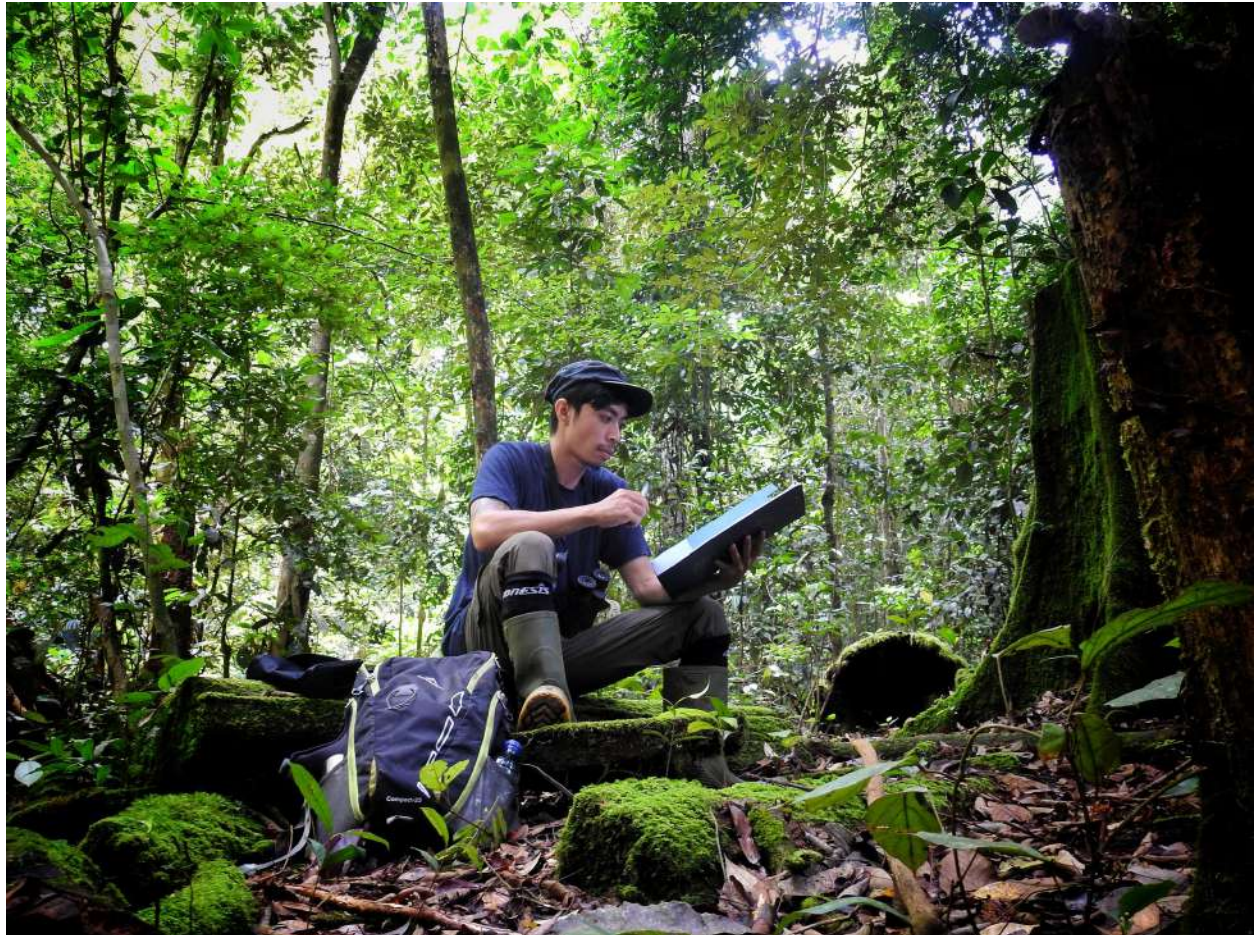
Orangutans are the only Asian great ape, and live only on the islands of Sumatra and Kalimantan (Borneo). In the Indonesian language, "orang-utan" means person of the forest. These animals, with which we share 96.4% of our DNA, are the true guardians of the forest. Unfortunately, the orangutan, which is an endemic animal, is now critically endangered. The existence of orangutans in Borneo (*Pongo pygmaeus*) and in Sumatra (*Pongo abelii* and *Pongo tapanuliensis*) is a matter of pride for Indonesia. To us, the orangutan is a symbol of the uniqueness of our forests and the abundance of biodiversity.

Beginning Research in the Rangkong Area, Gunung Palung National Park

By Andre Ronaldo, Rani Ferdianty & Tri Wahyu Susanto

This year we have expanded our research to the *Rangkong* area which is about 2 km south of Cabang Panti Research Station, towards the western edge of Gunung Palung National Park. In general, our goal in conducting research in the Rangkong is to study the differences between orangutans living in two different forest types – the primary rainforest of Cabang Panti and the recovering, selectively logged forest of the Rangkong.

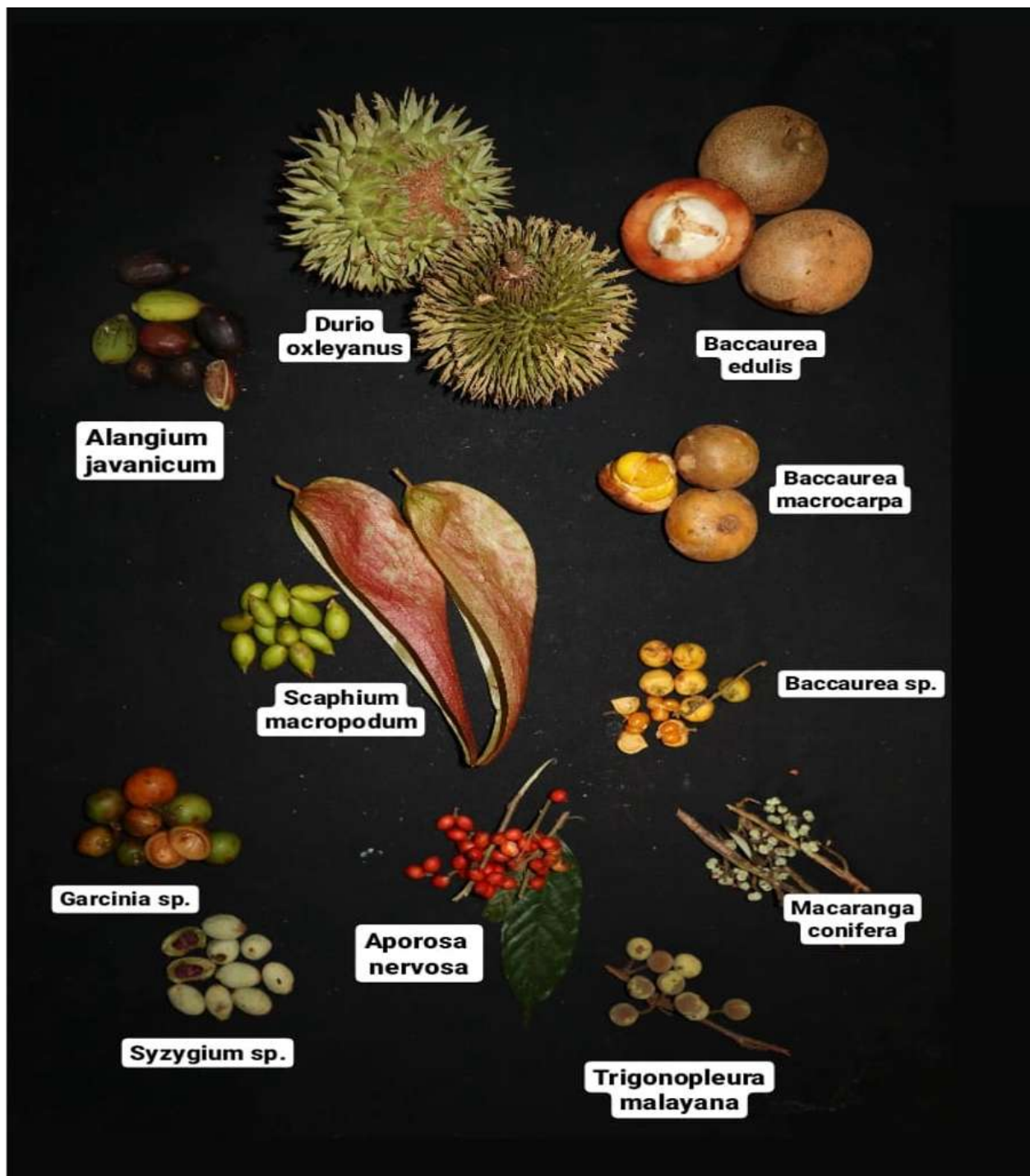
The Rangkong area has 3 different habitat types, namely peat swamp, alluvial and heath (kerangas). To collect initial data to determine forest ecology in this area, we carried out a vegetation analysis. We set up 16 plots that contain $\pm 1,803$ trees that we now continue to take phenology data on each month. Phenology is the study of cycles/seasons in relation to the climate. We collect data on trees and their flowering and fruiting patterns. Checking each of these trees takes 4-6 days to complete each month.



Co-author Andre Ronaldo (Staff Botanist and Survey Coordinator) takes phenology data at the Rangkong area.

Based on the results of our initial analysis, there are 202 tree species from 66 different families in the Rangkong area. The five tree species that have the highest Importance Value Index (IVI) are *Palaquium leiocarpum* (known locally as “Jungkang”) at 14.59% of trees; *Syzygium cerinum* (“Ubah Merah”) at 11.60%; *Stemonurus secundiflorus* (“Mempasir”) at 10.27%; *Syzygium sp.* (“Ubah”) at 7.28%; and *Xanthophyllum amoenum* (“Menjalin”) at 5.96%. These dominant species are generally tree species which are also eaten by orangutans.

In addition, the Dominance Index at this location is 0.01, indicating no single species dominance. The Species Diversity Index is 2.07, meaning there is a moderate level of species diversity; the Species Abundance Index is 0.9 (the abundance of all species is evenly distributed); and the Species Richness Index is 27.15 (high species richness). This shows that although the forest in the Rangkong was selectively logged, it now shows significant recovery, with areas that have gone through succession stages, and it maintains high species diversity.



An example of just some of the fruits that orangutans eat in Gunung Palung National Park.

In general, the condition of the habitat in the Rangkong is still good for orangutans. The presence of orangutan food tree species is 71% (143 species out of 202 tree species total). These species include both tree types that always bear fruit and those that have different fruiting seasons. Vegetation density is also quite good, namely 533 trees per hectare of land, and orangutan feeding tree density reaches 466 trees/ha. In addition, species of *Ficus* and liana were found, which serve as reserve food for orangutans during low fruit periods. So overall, the land meets the needs of the orangutans that are living in it.

In addition to vegetation data, we also calculated the number of nests in the Rangkong using the line transect method, where observers survey transects on the ground and look for orangutan nests in trees. This helps us to estimate the total population. We also took inventory of wildlife using camera traps. Several students from Universitas Nasional (UNAS) helped with this data collection. Since early 2021, we have identified 314 orangutan nests, but have only conducted partial focal follows on 4 individual orangutans.

Meanwhile, from the observations of one of the UNAS students, Rani Ferdianty, who studied [the diversity of mammals using camera traps](#), 30 species from 6 orders of mammal were recorded: Carnivora, Primata, Artiodactyla, Rodentia, Scandentia and Chiroptera.



Left to right: Rani Ferdianty (UNAS student), Andre Ronaldo (Project Botanist), Muhmmad Al-Fikri (UNAS student) and Herman (camp and survey assistant).

Even though the Rangkong area is classified as a disturbed forest, our findings show that the biodiversity there is still quite high. This provides further incentive for us to continue developing our research in this area and to set up long-term research projects. We are excited to share that we have plans, together with the GPNP Bureau (BTN-GP) and UNAS, to build a new research facility in the Rangkong, that will attract researchers from within and outside the country to conduct further studies.

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.

"In the end, we will conserve only what we love; we will love only what we understand; and we will understand only what we are taught."

- Baba Dioum



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