

Gunung Palung Orangutan Conservation Program

YAYASAN PALUNG

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an e-newsletter from your friends in West Kalimantan

Dear Friends and Supporters,

As I hope you have all heard by now, we are hosting a special [Save Wild Orangutans](#) sign-up promotion this month. Today, the final day of September, is your **LAST CHANCE** to sign up with this offer! 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 then also become a part of our online community initiative to help fund our research and conservation work.

As a small NGO, we feel the impact of your support immensely. Every dollar helps to directly fund our work to conserve the Bornean orangutan, happening on the ground each day. It is with deep gratitude that I thank you in advance for considering joining our team. More information is on the sidebar.

Our first article this month is co-authored by Animal Protection and Rescue Manager, Erik Sulidra, and Communications Officer, Petrus (Pit) Kanisius. Erik and his team recently began this year's biodiversity surveys, starting in the Padu Banjar Customary Forest. Erik and Pit write about the experience of the first 8-day survey stint.

The second article is written by Field Research Assistant, Suharto (Toto). Toto shares an exciting and unique story about an interaction between an orangutan and a slow loris that he observed this past month at Cabang Panti Research Station.

I hope you all have a safe and happy October.

Sincerely,



Cheryl Knott, PhD
Executive Director

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

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FREE PRINT FOR SUPPORTERS



To receive one of these 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).

Encounters with Biodiversity in the Padu Banjar Customary Forest

By Erik Sulidra, Animal Protection and Rescue Manager, and Petrus Kanisius, Communications Officer

Every year, Yayasan Palung and Customary Forest Management Boards (LPHD) conduct biodiversity surveys in each Customary Forest. In 2021, the team began first with the Customary Forest of Padu Banjar in Simpang Hillir District, Kayong Utara Regency. This forest alone is about 2,883 hectares large. This first survey expedition was carried out for 8 days. Apart from surveying biodiversity in Customary Forests, this activity also increases the capacity of LPHD members as Customary Forest managers. In addition to the regular identification of trees and animals, this year we also created permanent survey plots that will continue to be used each year.

We carry out several activities during these surveys, including identifying trees and animals. This year we made permanent plots that we will visit every year with the goal of making year-to-year biodiversity comparisons from our survey results.



The 2021 Padu Banjar Customary Forest survey team, comprised of GPOCP/Yayasan Palung staff and Customary Forest Management Board (LPHD) members.

During the survey, the team encountered a vast array of animals in the Customary Forest including hornbills, red leaf monkeys, flat shelled turtles, pit vipers, moonrats, cobras and ground squirrels. They also heard the sounds of gibbons, observed orangutan nests, and saw signs of the presence of pigs and deer. In total, they observed 25 orangutan nests during the survey, which helps us to estimate the total orangutan population within the Customary Forest.

There are also various kinds of plants that inhabit the secondary peat swap forest where the team surveyed, like the pioneer trees of the genera *Macaranga* and *Syzygium*. There are also tree stumps that remain from past logging activity in this secondary forest. Additionally, we found meranti (genus *Shorea*), jelutung (*Dyera costulata*) and ramin (*Gonystylus bancanus*) trees, which are now protected.



A venomous pit viper (*Trimeresurus albolabris*), encountered by the survey team, perches on a log.

The last few months, the Kayong Utara Regency has experienced very heavy rainfall. Because of this, the Customary Forest of Padu Banjar has been inundated with rain. Most of the forest here is peat swamp, and is prone to flooding. This added obstacles to the survey, such as flooded campsites, difficult walking conditions and increased encounters with certain wildlife.



The survey team take a break to relax in the forest.

The next set of biodiversity surveys has just begun in the Customary Forests of Pulau Kumbang and Pemangkat, also in the Sungai Paduan Customary Forest area of Kayong Utara Regency. The team is back in the field again and their hard work is underway!

A Rare Interaction Between an Orangutan and Kalimantan Slow Loris

By Suharto, Field Research Assistant

Hello my name is Suharto, but people call me Toto for short. I come from Matan Jaya Village, in the upper reaches of West Kalimantan. I work for the Gunung Palung Orangutan Conservation Program (GPOCP/Yayasan Palung). My job is as a field research assistant, where I work in collaboration with the Gunung Palung National Park Bureau (BTN-GP) to conduct orangutan research at the Cabang Panti Research Station (CPRS). I have been in this position for 9 years now, and am so happy to work at CPRS because I can learn about orangutan conservation, recognize orangutan behaviors, and know about different types of orangutan foods.



The author, Toto (left), collects data on wild orangutans in Gunung Palung National Park.

On September 2, 2021, my fellow research assistant friends and I carried out our usual work following orangutans. On this day, we were also accompanied by two Gunung Palung National Park Rangers and one visiting student researcher. We were following a mother orangutan named Bibi and her offspring named Bayas. I am very familiar with these two orangutans as we follow them frequently. Bayas is now 6 years old so travels away from his mother.

We followed Bibi and Bayas from the morning when they woke up in their nest until they went to sleep in the late afternoon. For most of the day our data collection went on as usual, observing the orangutans and recording their daily activities of eating, resting and travel. At 11:55am Bibi and Bayas traveled to a very large, tall tree to rest. Because the tree was so big, it was difficult for me to see the orangutans, even when I walked around to find a better vantage point. Next, I walked directly under the tree to look up for the orangutans and suddenly a slow loris fell to the ground right in front of me!

I watched as the slow loris walked away from me and back up a small tree. Suddenly Bibi started to descend from the tree she was in and approached the slow loris, making a kiss squeak vocalization with her mouth. Immediately I thought that Bibi might try to harm the slow loris. Bibi continued to move towards the slow loris as it continued up the tree. We were so surprised when Bibi quickly grabbed the slow loris with her left hand. She brought it towards her chest, grasping it in her arm, and continued to climb the tree.



Orangutans Bibi and Bayas (left) and the slow loris (right).

We continued to observe this social interaction between the two species, watching closely with binoculars. I was so happy since this was unlike anything I've ever seen at CPRS. Bibi continued holding the slow loris as she sat down on a tree branch, almost as though it was her own baby orangutan that she was hugging closely. Next Bibi started feeding on some leaves while the animal was still in her grasp.

After a few minutes, we realized the slow loris began to bite Bibi's hand that she was using to keep it in her grip. This shocked and hurt Bibi, who then reflexively flung her hand away from the slow loris, who was then thrown back to the ground. The slow loris immediately raced up a different tree to take shelter. Bibi then went back over to Bayas who had been a few meters away, and the two orangutans went back to their usual activities. My fellow assistants and I then continued following the orangutans for the rest of the day until they made their night nests and went to sleep.



Check out a video of the encounter taken by Ujang, from the National Park Bureau (BTN-GP). The full video can also be seen on the BTN-GP Instagram page, [here](#).

I still feel very lucky to have experienced this interaction between an orangutan and slow loris – something which is very rarely encountered, and the first case observed by researchers in CPRS. I always hope to continue learning new things in my work as a field research assistant, understanding new things about orangutans, their habitat and other fauna of the forest.

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.

"Fight for the things that you care about, but do it in a way that will lead others to join you."

- Ruth Bader Ginsburg



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