



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,

At the start of each new year we hold our Annual Meeting in West Kalimantan, Borneo. This is a time for the conservation and research teams to come together to reinforce the bonds that have grown out of our shared purpose and mission to conserve, protect and study the wild orangutans of Gunung Palung National Park and the surrounding landscape. We share our successes of the past year and each team presents their plans for the coming year to the rest of the staff for thoughtful discussion and feedback. In our first article, Communications Officer, Petrus Kanisius talks about the 2022 Annual Meeting and shares some photos from this year's scenic local destination. I am proud to be part of the Yayasan Palung/GPOCP family.

The second article was written by Randha, our longest serving field assistant at the Cabang Panti Research Station. I hired Randha as part of my first team of orangutan research assistants back in 1994. Over the past 25+ years, Randha has dedicated his life to conducting research in Gunung Palung, and has served as a role model and mentor to the many assistants, students, and researchers that have passed through Cabang Panti. Randha has become the sage of Gunung Palung, the one that everyone turns to for insight and guidance. His dedication to his work, his sense of responsibility, and his ever-present helpfulness have been the keystone of Cabang Panti research for these many years. I'm so grateful to have had his support throughout my time studying the wild orangutans of Gunung Palung! Here, Randha shares his Cabang Panti story, from 1994 to now.

I wish you all a happy February!

Sincerely,



Cheryl Knott, PhD
Executive Director

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

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The Yayasan Palung 2022 Annual Meeting on Pulau Juante

By Petrus Kanisius, Communications Officer

From January 17th to 19th Yayasan Palung/GPOCP held our 2022 Annual Meeting on Pulau (Island) Juante in Sukadana, Kayong Utara Regency. Each year, the conservation and research teams come together for this two-day event.



The entire Yayasan Palung "family" poses together on a dock at the 2022 Annual Meeting.

It takes an hour to travel by motorboat from the port of Sukadana to get to Pulau Juante. Once there, all the staff stayed at an inn with a beautiful view. You can see the expanse of forest visible in the distance. Everyone took lots of pictures!



The view from the boat as staff approach the meeting venue.

In the afternoon of January 17th, we officially began the annual meeting. First, the research team gave a presentation about the achievements related to the research program throughout 2021. Next, the Sustainable Livelihoods team gave a presentation, followed by presentations from the Customary Forest team, Wildlife Crime and Investigations team, and

the Environmental Education and Conservation Awareness team. These presentations about the many achievements from 2021 lasted until that evening.

The next day, all the Yayasan Palung teams gave presentations on their planned activities to be carried out in 2022. Following each presentation, the teams gave each other input on their planned activities and objectives. As usual, after the annual meeting was over, we took many pictures with both the conservation and research teams.



Each program team presented to the others about the accomplishments from 2021 and the goals for 2022.

We also had the opportunity to say hello to Dr. Cheryl Knott (GPOCP/Yayasan Palung Executive Director) and her family via Zoom. We all discussed how the Knott/Laman family was doing in Lexington, Massachusetts, USA.

Overall, there have been many incredible achievements from all of our programs, even despite the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. All the programs' activities have still run well. We all hope that in 2022 Yayasan Palung will achieve even more successes, and reach all of our targets and beyond.

We all had a great experience at this year's annual meeting, especially thanks to the beautiful scenery all around us. Each year it is so fun to spend time together with the big Yayasan Palung family. Everyone at YP works with a family-like spirit, and that has been a big strength of Yayasan Palung to date. We share a strong feeling of togetherness and shared purpose which makes for a wonderful work environment.



The research team (top) and conservation team (bottom) pose at the scenic beach destination.

The Story of Randha, Cabang Panti's Most Senior Research Assistant

By Randha, Field Research Assistant

Over more than three decades, Cabang Panti Research Station (CPRS), in Gunung Palung National Park, has become a gathering place for researchers, both from Indonesia and abroad, to conduct research for undergraduate theses, master's theses, doctoral dissertations and even postdoctoral/professor's research. Research has been conducted on a lot of habitats and biodiversity in CPRS, ranging from plants, primates and more. One of the biggest projects to have taken place at CPRS is research on Bornean orangutans, which has been running since 1994 when Dr Cheryl Knott founded the project.

The Gunung Palung Orangutan Project at CPRS created jobs for the surrounding community and has always prioritized working with and hiring people from the local villages around Gunung Palung National Park. Since the start, the Orangutan Project employed people as field research assistants, and one of them is myself! My formal name is Randha

by my friends call me “Uteh Lande” or “Landa”. My friends and I were the first to work on the Orangutan Project starting in September 1994.



The original “Proyek OH” team in 1994. Randha is on the far left, followed by Karya, Dr Cheryl Knott, Asfandi, Rudi, and Surdarwin.

As research assistants, my friends and I would work to collect data on the wild Bornean orangutans of Gunung Palung. Our tasks included searching for orangutans, observing orangutan behavior, and censusing orangutan nests. We also took phenology data on the trees in the research site. When taking orangutan behavioral data, we would start by recording when the orangutans woke up, and then collected data on their travel, eating, resting, and nest building throughout the day, as well as any other interesting activities.

When we first started collecting data in 1994, we wrote all the behavioral data on paper datasheets. We would then also draw a track of where the orangutans traveled on top of a printed map. (This is very different from today! Now assistants record behavioral data on iPads and use GPS units to digitally record tracks and take waypoint coordinates.) In the early years of the project, assistants worked by following orangutans alone, starting from the morning nest, then swapping out with another assistant at 11am. The next assistant would then follow the orangutan until its night nest. (Now, two or more assistants will go on a follow for the entire day, from nest to nest.)



Randha and Cheryl review paper datasheets and the day's collection of plant samples, 1995.

In 1994 we also all learned to take data on tree phenology. We took data to find out what types of trees were flowering and fruiting each month. We focused on the types of trees that orangutans (and other animals) feed on, in particular. The other assistants and I also used to conduct censuses of orangutan nests each month to observe any changes over time. We recorded the different classes of nest which corresponded to how much they had decayed/fallen apart. I learned so much about orangutans and the types of trees in the CPRS forest. I started to learn, recognize and remember all the types of trees.



Randha looks for nests in the rainforest canopy as part of the 2001 nest survey team that censused orangutans throughout Gunung Palung National Park (see [Code Red article](#) from December 2021).

In 2002, I decided to end my work with the Orangutan Project. By then I had a family, and wanted to try to find work in my village so I could be closer to them. But destiny brought me back to CPRS in 2007, when I joined the KKL Project (later known as the One Forest Project/OFP), to study red leaf monkeys, gibbons and langurs. I came back to CPRS and was reunited with my friends at the Orangutan Project. I continued my work with KKL/OFP until 2020, when the project halted field research.

I couldn't believe it when I finished my job at OFP, and said goodbye to all my friends staying at CPRS, that I was asked to come back to join the Orangutan Project again, and lead the phenology data collection. I worried that I was now too old to work in the forest, or needed to take a break, but my love for the forest and CPRS encouraged me to stay and continue my work here. I probably won't stop until my body feels too tired to walk in the CPRS jungle any more.



Randha now, as he continues his phenology work at Cabang Panti Research Station.

So now, for over a year, I've been back with the Orangutan Project. I no longer take data on the orangutans, but instead I focus solely on phenology. I take phenology data on plots that were established when researchers first came to the site in the 1980s, and have since been monitored continuously. Every month we collect data from 30 plots and 30 belts all around CPRS. There are approximately 5,646 trees, figs and lianas that we check every single month. I pay close attention to which trees are fruiting to help out the other assistants that are searching for new orangutans to follow. Since I know where the trees are fruiting, I can help them search in areas that orangutans are likely to be found.

I am so happy to be back as part of the Orangutan Project and the Cabang Panti family. Each day I am excited to be able to continue learning with my fellow field assistants.

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.

*"All life is interrelated...
Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly."*

– Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.



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