



Dear Friends and Supporters,

I'm very excited to share that a new baby orangutan was born at our research site! This infant, which is likely now 1 or 2 months old, was found with its mother this past month in the Cabang Panti Research Station vicinity. Orangutans only give birth once every 7-8 years, so this new birth is truly a cause for celebration. Each new baby orangutan gives us hope for the future and that this population of wild orangutans will remain stable and protected within Gunung Palung National Park. This summer, I will return to Indonesia for the first time in 3 years, and I can't wait to see this new baby, along with all the other orangutans, firsthand.

The first article this month was written by our new Environmental Education and Conservation Awareness Program Manager, Widiya Octa Selfiany. Widiya joined us in April after extensive teaching and fieldwork experience throughout West Kalimantan. Here, she writes about the first Environmental Education expedition she planned and implemented this past month with her new team.

Our second article comes from Research Manager, Ahmad Rizal. Rizal writes about the discovery of the new baby orangutan, shares some brand new photos, and explains how difficult it can be to get a clear view of such a small animal high up in the tree canopy.

I wish you all a happy and healthy June!

Sincerely,

Cheryl Knott, PhD
Executive Director

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

Environmental Education and Conservation Awareness Expedition to Two Customary Forest Villages

By Widiya Octa Selfiany, Environmental Education and Conservation Awareness Manager

Our Environmental Education and Conservation Awareness program carried out an expedition, from May 17-21, in the Padu Banjar and Pulau Kumbang Customary Forests. Padu Banjar and Pulau Kumbang are villages located in Simpang Hilir District, Kayong Utara Regency, in West Kalimantan (Borneo).

The expedition was carried out for 5 days in the 2 villages in Simpang Hilir District. The Environmental Education team conducted community discussions and outreach about protected animals to 5 schools in Simpang Hilir District.

Community discussions were held at the Padu Banjar Village Office and at the Pulau Kumbang Multipurpose Building. We received positive responses from the community during discussions about community members' concern for and knowledge about protected animals. We learned about an instance in Padu Banjar when three orangutans had entered the community garden area, where rubber crops are planted, and the Head of Padu Banjar village had hoped the orangutans could be rescued immediately. (A negative response in this scenario would be if community members had wanted to harm or kill the orangutans who were damaging their crops.)

The community also discussed the territorial boundaries between the protected forest area and the village forest area, which previously had no clear boundaries. Community members provided their input and decided that in order to best protect animals and the environment, they would install informational signs about protected animals along this boundary.



Community members participate in a group discussion.

We also visited 5 schools in Simpang Hilir District during this expedition, namely SDN 25 Padu Banjar, SMP 05 Simpang Hilir, SDN 14 Pulau Kumbang, SDN 15 Pulau Kumbang and SMAN 02 Simpang Hilir. Our goal during the school visits was to provide information about protected animals. We held educational puppet shows for elementary school students, and lectures for junior high and high school students. To quantify this learning process, we carried out pre-activity tests and post-tests to measure knowledge gain. These included questions about the material we presented on the conservation of orangutans and other protected animals.



Staff perform a puppet show for a classroom of schoolchildren.



Older students listen to a lecture.

The teachers informed me that all of the students and teachers really appreciated the environmental education program we implemented. They also asked Yayasan Palung/GPOCP to provide additional modules/lessons that could be used in classrooms, especially to supplement learning materials on topics related to environmental science.

Overall, this expedition was a great success. I am excited to continue working in my new position at Yayasan Palung!

Welcoming a New Baby Orangutan to the Cabang Panti Research Station Family

By Ahmad Rizal, Research Manager

On May 10, the research team hiked back to Cabang Panti Research Station to resume work after a two-week break for the Idul Fitri holiday. The next day, all the field research assistants started searching for new orangutans to follow and resumed phenology monitoring as well. That same day, one of the field assistants, Dang, found a flanged male orangutan in the forest and followed him until he made a nest for the night. We continued data collection as usual, following the male from morning nest to night nest, collecting behavioral data, and urine, feces and fruit samples. We followed this male for 3 full days, before losing him on the 4th.

After that follow series, we began searching for orangutans again. On May 21, Dang found another flanged male orangutan, who we identified as Alfred – a very large male that we come across fairly often within the research station vicinity.

The next day, on May 22, the field team woke up at 3AM to prepare for the day's follow. The plan was that Hassan would collect data on the iPad, Toto would collect GPS data, and Ishma would collect samples. They left camp at 4AM to hike to the location where Alfred made his nest the night before, deep in the peat swamp habitat.

After arriving, they waited for the orangutan to wake up. Alfred woke up at 5:34, then urinated and defecated. Soon after, he travelled to a *Ficus sondaicus* tree to begin eating its fruit. Suddenly, at 5:55, a female orangutan arrived at the same feeding tree and also began eating the fruits. This is what we call a 'party' – when two or more orangutans are within 50 meters or fewer of each other.



An adult female orangutan begins eating in the same tree as Alfred.

The field assistants soon noticed that this other party individual appeared to be an adult female. Toto began trying to take photos and videos, though it was still quite dark out, which made it difficult. The assistants continued to try to get a better view to see who this other orangutan was. The orangutans were also positioned very high up in the tree canopy, which made it even more difficult to take photos.

Eventually, they were able to get a better look, and based on the morphology, facial shape and other characteristics, thought that this orangutan looked like a female named Tari. But they then wondered where Tari's daughter was, because we know Tari to have a daughter in the juvenile age class (4-8 years old), who was given the name Tawni. Tawni is now estimated to be 7 years and 10 months old.

The assistants continued to try to get better photos. Suddenly, they captured a video and realized there was a baby hiding on the mother's body!! They could only see the tiny outline of a baby and its very little feet. After looking more closely at this video, and taking more, they estimated that this newborn baby is only 1 or 2 months old.



The mother-infant pair that joined Alfred for a party.

Later in the morning, the assistants called for backup to help take data for this party. Two other assistants, Sahril and Yogi, then joined the follow. Ishma, a laboratory assistant, who was out collecting samples, returned to camp where I was, and told me that there was a mother-infant pair partying with Alfred. I was very surprised and happy. When Ishma told me that the mother looked like Tari, I prepared a camera with better zoom, and went over to where the orangutans were.

By the time I arrived at the peat swamp, the party was over, and the mother and Alfred had gone separate ways. I stayed with the assistants who were following the mother and infant, who were by then resting in a large tree. They rested there for a long time, and eventually at 14:10, the mother began traveling towards a *Mezzettia leptopod* tree that bore many fruits. The mother began eating fruit from the tree, and then I could see the baby for the first time. Indeed, it was very small. So small that it was almost hard to see on the mother's body.

The assistants continued to collect data while the orangutan ate. I began trying to find a more open location to take photos and videos. The mother ate for a long time, then at 17:16 she began building a nest to sleep in. That day, we didn't get many good quality photos or videos. We were unable to tell if the baby was male or female, because it was almost always hidden by the mother's body. We could occasionally see the face of the little baby and it was so cute!

We made the decision to keep trying to follow the mother and baby orangutan for 10 full days. Normally, we follow orangutans for only 5 days, but since it is uncommon to see a baby this young, we wanted to make sure to collect as much data as possible. As of today, May 27th, when I am writing this article, we are still following these orangutans. We have not encountered any

difficulties because the weather has been quite good and the mother orangutan has been moving slowly while the baby clings to her body. It has still been quite difficult to get good photos and videos of the baby, because it is always hiding within the mother's fur. It almost seems like the mother doesn't want her baby to be on camera!

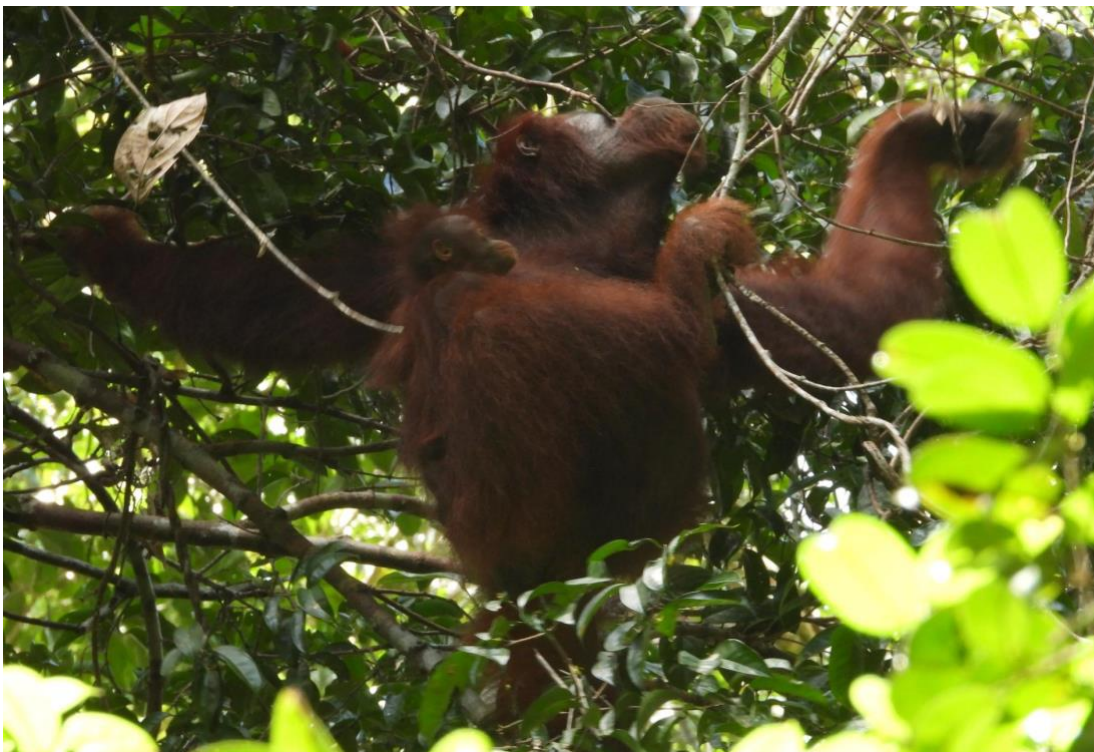


Researchers catch brief glimpses of the baby's face.

Otherwise, the follows have been going well. The mother usually wakes up around 6AM. Throughout the day she seems to be very habituated and not care about our presence. She does not make many kiss squeak vocalizations at us, which typically indicates that an orangutan is disturbed by the presence of observers. She has been spending most of her time eating (mostly *Ficus*) and resting. She is not traveling very much. We think this is because the baby is still very small, and its presence on the mother's body makes her movement more limited. She may also still be resting more/recovering after giving birth.

Today, on May 27, I returned to the field to try to take photos and videos with a higher quality camera. However, it has still been quite difficult to get clear photos of the baby. Maybe it is camera shy! We are still unsure of the gender of the baby. It can be very difficult to see the genitals when the baby is still this small.

We still have a lot to learn about this new baby (and we will have to give it a name eventually!) but it is always so exciting to have a new baby orangutan in Gunung Palung. The birth of new babies is always a promising sign that we are doing good to help the survival of wild orangutans. I am so excited to share this news with you all and I will continue to pray that this baby and mother are always healthy and continue to thrive at Cabang Panti Research Station.



The orangutan mother travels while the baby clings to her side.

"Look deep into nature, and then you will understand everything better."

– Albert Einstein



All photographs © Tim Laman or © GPOCP