



Dear Friends and Supporters,

In just three short days I will depart for Indonesia to spend a month and a half in Gunung Palung National Park. This will be the first time I've been able to return since the summer of 2019, due to COVID-related travel restrictions. I'm excited to return after what feels like such a long time, and meet with all the conservation and research staff who have continued to work tirelessly to keep our programs running throughout the duration of the pandemic. It will also be a lovely escape to nature in one of my favorite places in the world.

Our first article this month features a profile on each new West Bornean Orangutan Caring Scholarship (WBOCS) student. The article, written by Communications Officer Petrus Kanisius (Pit), also details the recent award ceremony to officially recognize these new scholarship recipients. We have been proud to partner with the Orang Utan Republik Foundation for this program since 2012, in order to sponsor local, well-deserving, under-privileged students to attend Tanjungpura University with complete financial aid. The program continues to develop a generation of university-trained young adults with a commitment to, and concern for, orangutans and their habitat.

Our second article comes from recent Boston University graduate, Victoria Zdanowicz. Victoria, who has volunteered in my lab since her freshman year, writes about the various projects she has taken part in throughout her time at BU. She also shares some results from her senior honors thesis, which she defended in May. Victoria will now stay at BU another year to earn her master's degree – but first, she'll join us in Indonesia this summer!

I wish you all a happy and healthy July!

Sincerely,

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Cheryl Knott

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

## West Bornean Orangutan Caring Scholarship 2022 Award Night and Student Profiles

*By Petrus Kanisius, Environmental Education and Communications Officer*

On Monday June 6, an award night was held at the Hotel Nevada Ketapang for the 6 recipients of the 2022 [West Bornean Orangutan Caring Scholarship](#) (WBOCS). During the award night, the 6 WBOCS recipients signed a scholarship agreement with Yayasan Palung/GPOCP and the [Orang Utan Republik Foundation](#). In addition to signing the agreement, there was also a presentation on progress related to the scholarship that has now been carried out since 2012. Over the last 10 years, Yayasan Palung/GPOCP has helped to award a total of 54 university scholarships.



*The 6 WBOCS recipients, seated in the front row, with OURF's Gary Shapiro, YP's Edi Rahman (center back), and other guests at the award night.*

In his remarks, the Field Director of Yayasan Palung, Edi Rahman, congratulated the WBOCS recipients. Edi further advised WBOCS recipients to always focus on studying to meet the four-year college target and to make a contribution to caring for the environment and protecting orangutans. He emphasized that it is important to safeguard the good name of their parents, Yayasan Palung, the Orang Utan Republik Foundation and their respective alma maters.

Gary Shapiro, the president of the Orang Utan Republik Foundation (OURF), who had the opportunity to attend the WBOCS award night, expressed his appreciation to Yayasan Palung (YP) who have worked together and collaborated in carrying out the WBOCS program very well. He also hopes that the WBOCS

program can continue to create scholars who are committed to caring for the environment and orangutans. Pak Gary, as he is known in Indonesia, hopes that the recipients of the 2022 WBOCS will complete their responsibilities during college. Furthermore, Gary added that he hoped that more people would support and help the WBOCS program and he also hoped that the recipients of this program could continue to grow from year-to-year.

Widiya Octa Selfiany, Manager of the Environmental Education and Conservation Awareness Program, also spoke and reminded the WBOCS recipients that they can become agents of change in society. Sumihadi, a 2014 WBOCS alumnus who currently works as a Laboratory Assistant at the Cabang Panti Research Station, had the opportunity to share a bit about her college experience with the new WBOCS students.

Parents and guardians of the scholarship recipients also joined us at the award night, along with Yayasan Palung staff, Yudo Sudarto and Adi Mulia (members of the Yayasan Palung Board), staff from the National Park Bureau, staff from Tropenbos Indonesia (another local organization), the head of the Ketapang District Education Office, and staff from the Fauna & Flora International Indonesia Program.

Below, read about each new WBOCS recipient!

*If you would like to help support this important program please consider making a charitable, tax deductible donation to our program [here](#).*



**Iqbal Aryanto**

Hello! My name is Iqbal Aryanto. I come from Negeri 3 Ketapang High School. I am currently 18 years old. I come from Ketapang Regency. The reason I joined the WBOCS program was not only because I needed money for my studies, but also, I have an interest in the field of conservation. This is reflected in the conservation organizations and social groups that I follow. The study program that I will enter is Law at the Faculty of Law, Tanjungpura University. The reason I chose this study program was because it matched my passion, so I wanted to continue it. Why should we care about orangutans? Because orangutans are 'forest farmers' who play an important role in the survival of other living things. Remember, we may get bored with the same things, but the young ones also have to see clear and real evidence to make change. The small steps we take now will have a big impact on the future. Thank you!



**Maria Angela Chantika Putri**

Hello everyone. My name is Maria Angela Chantika Putri. I'm usually called Chika. I am currently 17 years old. I am an alumna of Negeri 1 Ketapang High School. I currently live in Ketapang. The reason I took this scholarship is because I want to give new value to the conservation of forests and orangutans. I also want to help my parents pay for college. I want to continue my education at the University of Tanjungpura, to be precise, at the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences in the International Relations Study Program. I hope that in the future, with the knowledge I gain, I will benefit the conservation of orangutans and their habitats. From all aspects, we must support not only from a place of conservation, but we need support from all parties. We know that orangutans are currently in danger of extinction, therefore they need all of our support. Let's together preserve the forest. They need nature as a place to live, we also need nature as a place to live and make a home. Because both animals and humans need nature as a place to live, let's work together to preserve nature for a better future. Salam Lestari!



**Noni**

My name is Noni. I am 19 years old. I live in Penjataan Village, Simpang Hilir District, Kayong Utara Regency. I am an alumnus of Negeri 3 Simpang Hilir High School. The reason why I joined the WBOCS scholarship program was first, I wanted to continue my education to a higher level. Second, I was very interested in this program because this program is a place for me to gain knowledge about orangutan conservation and nature conservation so that I can provide understanding and awareness to the wider community about the importance of preserving forests and conserving orangutans. I will be a student at Tanjungpura University and the major I have chosen is the Department of Forestry. I chose to major in forestry because studying forest science is my passion. My goal is become a forest conservation expert. Why do we care about orangutans? First, orangutans are an umbrella species that are expected to help and protect other species. Second, to preserve tropical forests, and third, orangutans are endangered animals. For that, let us together preserve nature and orangutan habitat. Salam Lestari! Salam Conservation!



**Elin Saputri**

Salam Lestari. My name is Elin Saputri. I am currently 19 years old. I come from Negeri 1 Sungai Laur High School and live in Riam Bunut Village. The reason I joined WBOCS was because I wanted to continue my education to a higher level. I really love nature, and I want to contribute to Yayasan Palung both physically and mentally. I will study at the University of Tanjungpura, in the forestry study program. Why should we care about orangutans? Because orangutans are endemic animals that only exist in Borneo and Sumatra, and help in forest growth. Currently, humans are destroying nature and their habitats. Therefore, let's work together to conserve and preserve nature. Salam Lestari!



**Galih Triyoga Putra**

My name is Galih Triyoga Putra. I am 18 years old. I come from Sandai District, Ketapang Regency. I am an alumnus of Negeri 1 Sandai High School. I joined WBOCS because I wanted to continue my education to a higher level and wanted to know about life in forestry. I chose the Department of Forestry at Tanjungpura University, Pontianak. The reason I chose it was that I wanted to study forestry sciences that would be useful for the future. The population of orangutans is decreasing, therefore orangutans should be protected so that the population of living things is balanced. My only message is to take care of the environment. Salam Lestari!



**Rianti Sandriani**

My name is Rianti Sandriani. I am originally from Sejahtera Village, Sukadana District, Kayong Utara Regency. I am 17 years old and I am an alumnus of 2 Sukadana High School. The reason I joined WBOCS is because I want to continue my education to a higher level and through this WBOCS scholarship I can become a person who has a high dedication to the world of conservation and environmental preservation.

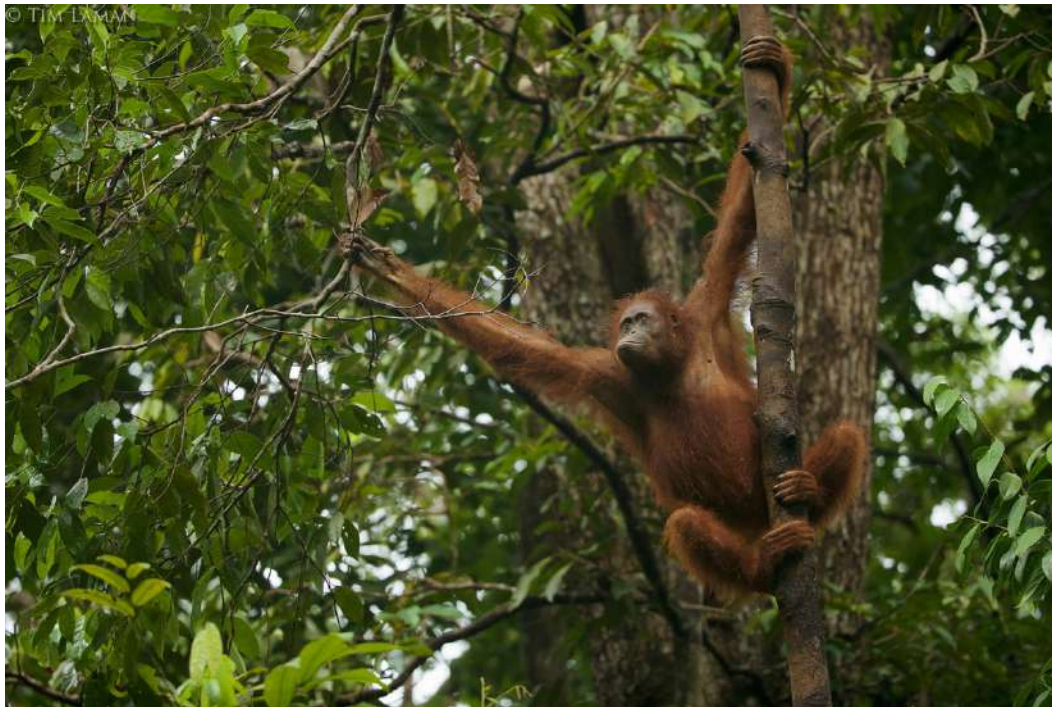
I chose the Department of Forestry, Faculty of Forestry at Tanjungpura University. The reason I chose the forestry major is because of my interest and talent in environmental preservation and conservation. In addition, I want to learn the sciences and practices that exist in forestry. Why should we care about orangutans? Orangutans are forest farmers and have an important role in dispersing seeds in the forest. Orangutans are also endemic animals protected by law whose existence is threatened with extinction, and we must protect and preserve them. A message from me, as a member of the young generation: let's protect the forest and orangutans for the sake of survival in the future. Salam Lestari! Salam Conservation!

## From Reading to Research, My Path to Borneo

*By Victoria Zdanowicz, Student Researcher*

I have always been drawn to nature and its change over time, but it was not until I stumbled into Dr. Cheryl Knott's office at Boston University in search of a job, that I learned about the wonders of wild orangutans and the forests they call home. I remember sitting there, wide-eyed at the details of novel research and endless stories of life in the field. That afternoon set in motion a series of challenges, changes, and moments of self-discovery that led to where I am today – just days away from a summer of field work in Borneo.

My work in Dr. Knott's Primate Ecology and Conservation Lab began with an immediate immersion into the daily lives of wild Bornean orangutans. During that first year, I spent countless hours summarizing data collected by the GPOCP team in Gunung Palung National Park. From *istirahat* (resting) to *makan* (eating). I learned to read and prepare activity data from orangutan focal follows so that the database could properly calculate the minutes spent in each behavior and position. As my knowledge of the project database grew, so did my familiarity with orangutan names and an assortment of Indonesian terms used in the field. I began to trace the stories and life histories of orangutans with an abundance of data like *Walimah* and *Bibi*, marveling at descriptions of cultural displays and celebrating their babies!



*A female orangutan 'Walimah' perched in a tree near Cabang Panti.*

My early experience with data management in our computer lab prepared me to later pursue independent research projects. For my first project, I worked closely with [Dr. Andrea Blackburn](#) to explore female orangutan ranging behavior, uncovering the importance of habitat type and food availability on range overlap. I was eager to connect my Boston-based analyses to the field and hoped to spend the following summer at Gunung Palung to collect data for my senior research thesis. Unfortunately, like most things over the past few years, the pandemic forced me to rethink that plan.

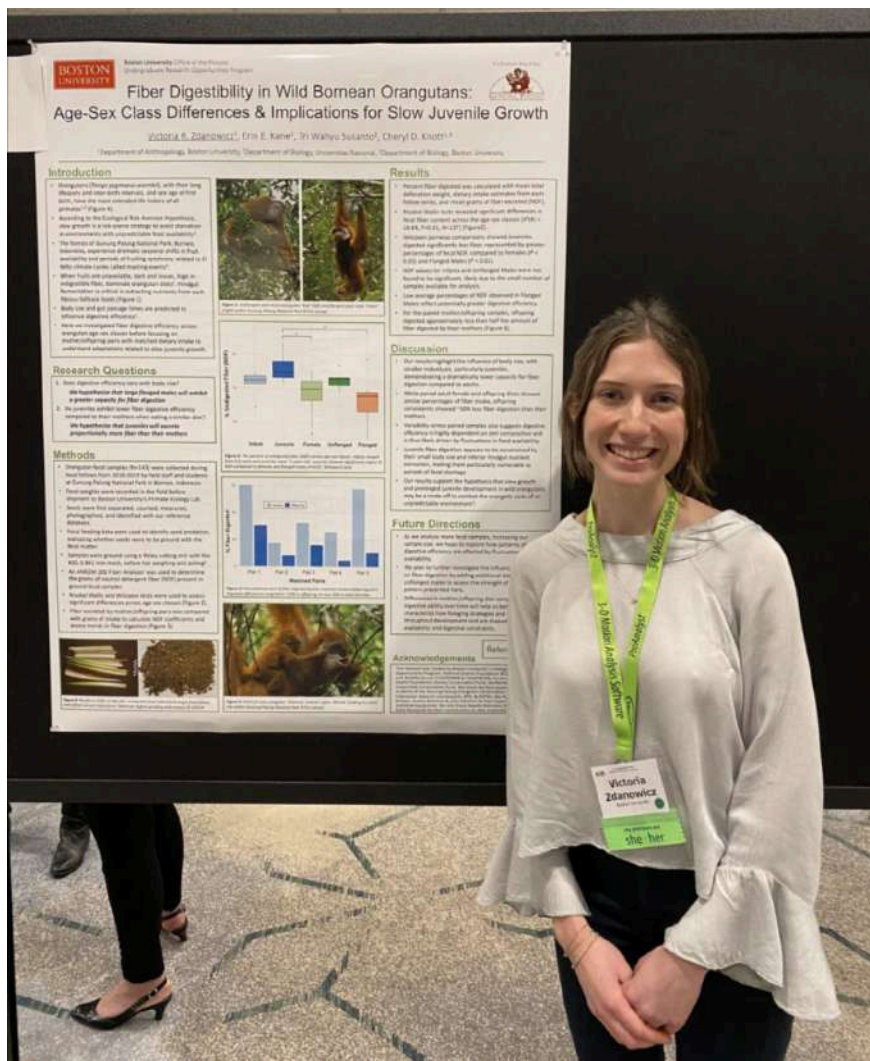
I ended up spending last summer at the lab bench grinding orangutan fecal samples for fiber analysis. The goal of the project was to investigate fiber digestion between different age-sex classes. Orangutans live in very unpredictable forests, often heavily relying on the consumption of bark and leaves for months at a time. Therefore, it's extremely important for these animals to be able to get as many nutrients as possible out of such a high-fiber diet. Our analyses showed that juvenile orangutans digested around half the amount of fiber that their mothers could, highlighting the potential role of body size in the ability to digest fiber!



*Victoria hard at work grinding orangutan fecal samples for fiber analysis in summer 2021.*

Although I enjoyed learning about digestive efficiency and new lab techniques, I wanted to explore an entirely different aspect of the work at GPOCP for my senior research, more focused on conservation. I was specifically interested in comparing the intact primary forest surrounding Cabang Panti and the selectively logged forest of the *Rangkong*. With the establishment of new plots in this area, I had the opportunity to dig into the first full year of data from the *Rangkong*!



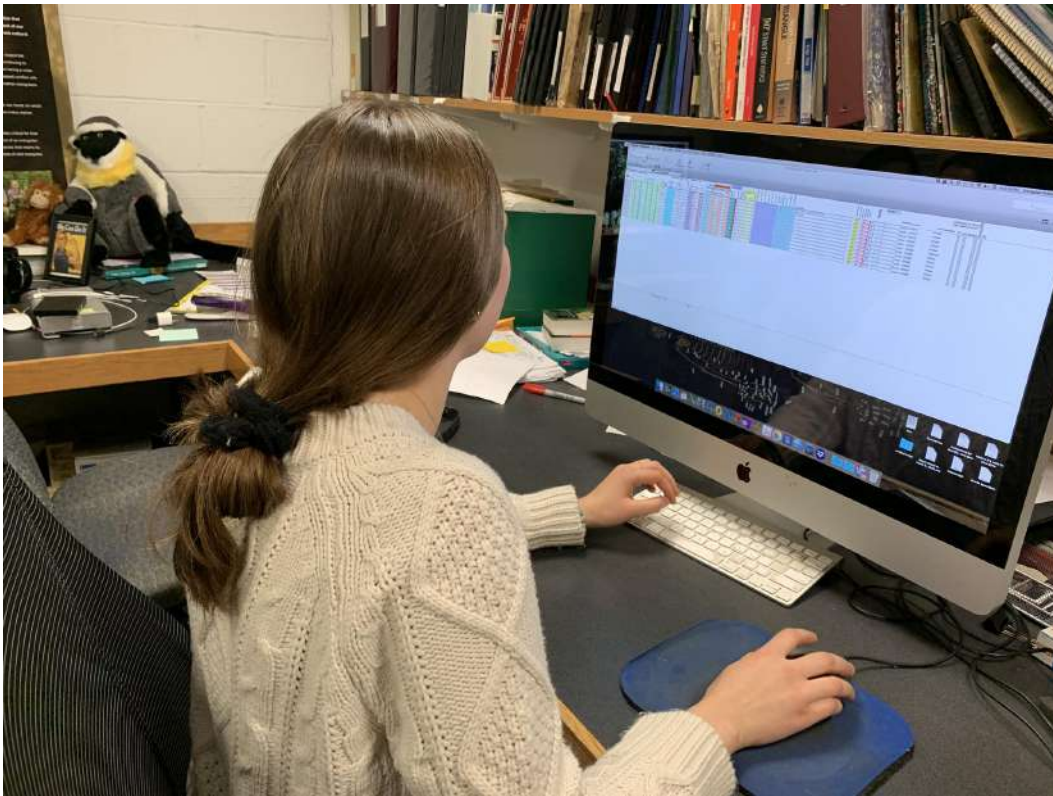


Victoria at her poster presentation on fiber project results at the Denver meeting of the American Association of Biological Anthropologists in March 2022.

My project investigated orangutan habitat quality in these two areas by comparing forest structure and composition. I did this by estimating the diversity, abundance, and size of key orangutan feeding trees, as well as comparing measures of fruit availability. In terms of forest composition, species diversity was not significantly different between sites. However, there was dramatic variation in forest structure!

The density of small trees (DBH > 10 and < 20) was significantly higher in the *Rangkong* secondary forest, while the Cabang Panti primary forest showed higher densities of large trees (DBH > 30). Large trees also made up a significantly greater proportion of the total basal area (a measure of forest stand area) in the primary forest compared to the *Rangkong*. This lower abundance of large trees in the *Rangkong* reflects its history of selective logging.

I also found significant variation in the abundance and density of the main stem forms: figs, lianas, and trees. There were significantly more lianas and figs in the Cabang Panti primary forest, with nearly twice the figs and triple the number of lianas compared to the data from the *Rangkong* secondary forest.



*Victoria works in our research database in the lab at Boston University.*

The strangler figs found in Gunung Palung National Park are an important food source for orangutans. They are hemi-epiphytes, meaning they grow on large host trees before sending roots down to the ground. In almost the opposite manner, lianas are vines that start as shrubs on the forest floor before climbing up to the canopy with the support of surrounding trees. With a lower abundance of large host trees, the *Rangkong* seems to be unable to support the levels of lianas and figs found at Cabang Panti. However, fruit availability in the secondary forest might be buffered by invasive species like *Bellucia pentamera*, which orangutans have been observed eating.

We already know that orangutans within GPNP utilize a wide range of habitats to meet their energetic requirements and buffer periods of fruit scarcity. Therefore, regardless of differences in forest structure, my analyses highlight the conservation value of the *Rangkong* forest. If protected from future disturbance, secondary forests like this one could provide key population support for orangutans during periods of food stress in nearby habitats.



*Victoria and Dr. Cheryl Knott after Victoria successfully defended her thesis!*

I hope to dig deeper into the potential role invasive species play in driving orangutan habitat use and how orangutans at GPNP may incorporate resources from the *Rangkong* secondary forest into their overall movement ecology. As research in the *Rangkong* area continues to grow, and orangutans are habituated for behavioral follows, there will be even more data to incorporate into these analyses.

The last four years would not have been the same, and my thesis would not have been possible, without the knowledge and passion I uncovered while studying orangutans and learning about GPOCP's incredible work. And while my time as an undergraduate research assistant has ended, I am grateful to be continuing my research as a graduate student at BU this fall! Even more exciting is that in just a few days I will be traveling to Borneo, ready to take on a whole new side of data collection and research. I cannot wait to get there and experience the places, the people, and the orangutans I have spent all this time with on paper and in pictures.

Stay tuned and sampai ketemu Gunung Palung!

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*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.*

*"There is simply no issue more important. Conservation is the preservation of human life on earth, and that, above all else, is worth fighting for."*

*– Rob Stewart*