



Dear Friends and Supporters,

Happy New Year! As I cherish time with my family this holiday season, I have some exciting announcements to share with you all. From two new baby orangutans to a new research site a lot has happened in 2022!

On this last day of the year, we are looking for your help to reach our end-of-year fundraising goals! To gain more traction for our [Save Wild Orangutans](#) membership initiative, we have launched a [special sign-up promotion](#) to gift donors free orangutan prints. (Learn more on the sidebar.) We also continue to accept your gracious one-time donations through our [website](#), [PayPal](#), and via [check](#). Be sure to read last year's [Annual Report](#) and check back on [past newsletters](#) to learn about all the work going on across the Gunung Palung landscape.

Read all about our many successes from 2022 in our first article which recaps the year. It was especially exciting for me to be able to return to Indonesia for the first time since 2019 and see our conservation and research teams in action. Our program has grown and thrived over these especially challenging past few years – a testament to our amazing staff and their commitment to preserve, protect and study the wild orangutans of Gunung Palung National Park.

The second article this month was written by Taylor Tench from the [Environmental Investigation Agency](#) (EIA), a generous new funder over the past year. In the article, Taylor outlines the current state of threats to orangutan populations and some of the work EIA and GPOCP are doing to combat these threats.

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FREE ORANGUTAN PRINT FOR SUPPORTERS



[Signature]

We also have a new paper out in the International Journal of Primatology, entitled "[Famished Frugivores or Choosy Consumers](#): A Generalist Frugivore Leaves Available Fruit for Nonfruit Foods." Authors Andrea DiGiorgio (former Boston University graduate student and Cabang Panti researcher), Yaxiong Ma, Elizabeth Upton, Sucharita Gopal, Natalie Robinson (GPOCP/YP Program Coordinator), Tri Wahyu Susanto (GPOCP/YP Research Director), and myself present data that suggests orangutans select nonfruit foods, strengthening the argument that feeding choice is consumer state-dependent, leading us to argue for a revision of the use of "quality" as a descriptor of primate foods.

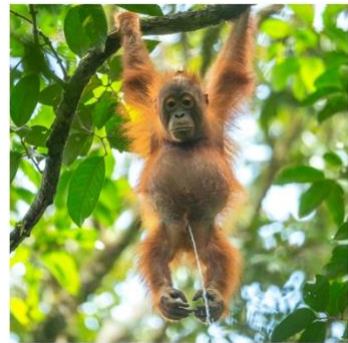
I wish you all a happy and healthy New Year!

Sincerely,



Cheryl Knott, PhD
Executive Director

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



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).

2022 - A Year of New Beginnings

By Natalie Robinson, Program Coordinator & Cheryl Knott, Executive Director

As 2022 comes to an end, we have a new beginning. "Berani", the orangutan, has had [her first baby](#)! Berani is an adolescent female orangutan that our team has known since 2008, when she was first found with her mother, Bibi. By 2013, Berani had become independent from her mother, and in 2015 Berani's younger brother, Bayas, was born. Our research team had been tracking Berani's pregnancy since the summer. We first suspected she was pregnant, in June 2022, but were unable to get definitive results. By August, when we tested her urine again, the pregnancy test came back with a clear result – positive! When the team found her again on December 11th, Berani had a tiny new infant, who we estimated to be just a few weeks old. We are excited to keep a close watch on this first member of the next generation of the Bibi family!

Milestones like these remind us how incredible and rewarding long-term research projects are. It is thanks to continued support from Indonesian counterparts and sponsors, as well as an international base of supporters and donors, that we are able to continue this important research!



Berani rests between two tree branches as her new infant clings to her chest. Photo © Tim Laman.

As we close out the year, we have been reflecting on the many accomplishments of 2022. Our team has worked tirelessly each day to study and conserve the wild orangutans across the Gunung Palung National Park landscape. Here, we highlight some of our main achievements.

We started off the year with our [2022 Annual Meeting](#) in **January**, on Pulau Juante in Sukadana. Staff from the conservation and research teams came together on this beautiful island to share the accomplishments of the previous year and discuss plans and goals for the coming year.

In **February**, we finished construction of the [new satellite camp](#) at the Rangkong River research area, where we are now able to house a full-time team of researchers who are collecting scientific data in order to understand the ways in which wild orangutans use this degraded and regenerating habitat, and how this may impact their behavior, health, diet and physiology.

Later that month we held the inauguration of the [11th cohort of REBONK](#) youth group members, who continued to help plan and organize outreach activities for the community throughout the year.

In **March**, we had a [special visit from our long-time research counterpart](#) and supporter, Dr. Sri Suci Utami Atmoko (Ibu Suci). Ibu Suci, who also serves on the Yayasan Palung Governing Board, visited Cabang Panti Research Station for the first time in nearly two decades!

We held a workshop on the [production of liquid smoke and organic fertilizer](#) for members of the Padu Banjar and Pulau Kumbang villages. The use of these methods helps to prevent forest and land fires, while also fertilizing crops and providing an alternative source of income for the community.

GPOCP/YP Executive Director, Dr. Cheryl Knott, also co-authored two publications on [measuring the effectiveness of 20 years of orangutan conservation](#) (contributing [20+ years of longitudinal data](#) from Gunung Palung) and [about sociality and orangutan vocal phenotypes](#).

We [celebrated Earth Day](#) in **April**, and then welcomed our [new Environmental Education Manager](#), Widiya.

In **May**, we were thrilled to see wild orangutan “Tari” with a [new baby](#), later given the name “Tara”. For this critically endangered species, every baby is a cause for celebration!

In **June**, we held the annual West Bornean Orangutan Caring Scholarship (WBOCS) Award Ceremony to celebrate [the new cohort of scholarship recipients](#), who have since begun their undergraduate studies at Tanjungpura University in Pontianak.



The 6 newest West Bornean Orangutan Caring Scholarship recipients.

Later that month we celebrated [World Rainforest Day](#), and were excited to provide [full sets of firefighting equipment](#) to 5 *Hutan Desa* and the village of Tanjung Gunung, which borders the National Park. We also held trainings on fighting forest and land fires, and introduced representatives from each village to all the equipment and how to properly maintain it.

Members from each of the 7 *Hutan Desa* also continued to sustainably manage their land through [annual biodiversity surveys](#) and [monthly SMART patrols](#).

July was a very busy month because foreigners were able to return to Ketapang and Gunung Palung [for the first time since 2019!](#) Dr. Cheryl Knott and her family, along with Natalie Robinson and four Boston University students, ventured to West Kalimantan, where we visited with staff who have been on the ground since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. We spent a few days in Jakarta on the way, where Dr. Knott presented at the [Women and Primatology Symposium](#) hosted by Universitas Nasional.

We then spent the rest of summer visiting the newly rebuilt Cabang Panti Research Station, the new Rangkong satellite camp, Customary Forests, the Bentangor Environmental Education Center, Sustainable Livelihoods groups throughout the Kayong Utara Regency, and more! The team carried out trainings and introduced some exciting new research tools such as thermal drones and an expanded use of bioacoustic monitors and camera traps.



GPOCP/YP staff and Customary Forest Management Board (LPHD) members learn to install bioacoustic recorders (left) and camera traps (right) in the Pemangkat and Nipah Kuning villages.



Field Research assistants practice using a thermal drone to detect orangutans in the tree canopy.

Also in July, Dr. Knott along with her former graduate student, Dr. Lara Durgavich, and current student Faye Harwell, published the [first composite menstrual cycle for orangutans](#).

In **August**, we learned that a wild orangutan, “Berani”, was [pregnant with her first baby](#) – a perfect way to further celebrate [World Orangutan Day](#), which was observed on August 19th.

In **September**, our Research Manager, Rizal, and Field Research Assistants, Dang and Dika, continued the tradition of [visiting local schools](#), in collaboration with our Environmental Education team. The Education team visits schools weekly, reaching nearly every school in the region over the course of a year. But lectures from special guests like Dang, Dika and Rizal, while they are out of the forest, are always an exciting treat. Students love to hear stories about their first-hand experiences studying wild orangutans in Gunung Palung National Park!

In **October**, we were excited to announce a new publication in the American Journal of Primatology about [using parallel laser photogrammetry to measure growth in wild orangutans](#). Former Research Manager Ella Brown was the lead author on this paper. Our preliminary results, using this method, show that male flange width and forearm length don’t reliably increase in tandem, and female growth plateaus around age 15, the mean age at first birth.

Also in October, we hosted the first [ecoprint workshop](#) for Sustainable Livelihood artisans, led by Chatarina Kusumawardhani. Ibu Chatarina taught the group of women two different methods to create these beautiful cloths and shirts, dyed with pigments from locally sourced leaves and flowers. This neat innovation has

been taught in various regions around Indonesia, and we are so excited that women from our community are now empowered to add this to their repertoire of crafts to sell as a source of forest-friendly income!

In **November**, we celebrated Orangutan Caring Week. This year we went all out, holding a multi-day festival for the community, and hosting a variety of special guests, including the Bupati (Regent) of Kayong Utara.

We were also proud to have two GPOCP/YP staff present their work at the 8th Asian Primate Symposium, held in Hanoi, Vietnam. We rounded out the month with Giving Tuesday, and felt especially grateful for all of our supporters.

That brings us back to this month, **December**, when we published another paper about orangutans leaving available fruit for non-fruit foods. GPOCP/YP research alumna, Dr. Andrea DiGiorgio, was the first author on this paper, which uses data collected from Gunung Palung during her dissertation field research.

Throughout the year, we continued to host counterpart students at Cabang Panti Research Station, where our research team spent more than 3,400 hours following wild orangutans.

We are so grateful for everyone's hard work and optimistic that the next year will bring even more successes!





The conservation (top) and research (bottom) teams at the 2022 Annual Meeting.

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.

Orangutan Conservation: Threats, Challenges, and Hope

By Taylor Tench, Senior Wildlife Policy Analyst, Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA)

It is no secret that orangutans are facing a dire conservation outlook. All three orangutan species – the Bornean orangutan, Sumatran orangutan, and Tapanuli orangutan – are Critically Endangered with habitat loss and illegal killing among the main drivers of orangutan population declines.

In October 2021 my organization, the Environmental Investigation Agency (US), launched a new campaign to protect wild orangutans. To kick off the campaign, we published a report entitled [Orangutans in Crisis](#) that explored how direct drivers of orangutan loss, certain government policies, and law enforcement challenges are closely interconnected and continue to drive orangutan population declines in Indonesia.



A flanged male orangutan in Central Borneo. Photo courtesy of Nanang Sujana/EIA/Kaoem Telapak.

Every year, orangutan habitat shrinks and becomes more fragmented because of forest conversion for agriculture, infrastructure, mining, and other human activity. According to a spatial analysis conducted by EIA together with MapHubs of government deforestation data on orangutan habitat, an estimated 797,054 hectares of orangutan habitat was deforested in Indonesia and Malaysia from 2016 through 2019. The vast majority – 739,249 hectares – occurred in Indonesia.

Illegal killing is the other major threat to orangutan survival and is often, though not always, closely linked to habitat destruction. Human-orangutan conflict, poaching for meat, and fear of wild orangutans are among the motivations for orangutan killing, which on average claim the lives of an estimated 2,200 Bornean orangutans each year. Orangutans typically give birth only once every seven to eight years, and studies have shown that the loss of just one percent of adult female orangutans from a given population can cause that population to decline.

When it comes to laws designed to protect orangutans and other threatened species from harm, Indonesia's Conservation Law of 1990 is strong. The Conservation Law prohibits anyone from catching, injuring, possessing, transporting, and trading an orangutan. Violations are punishable by a maximum prison sentence of five years and a fine of IDR 100 million (USD \$6,400). However, orangutan crimes are rarely prosecuted, and when they are, penalties are typically light. EIA is not aware of any instance in which someone received the maximum allowable penalty for killing or trafficking an orangutan.



*A female orangutan and her infant in Gunung Palung National Park, West Borneo.
Photo © Tim Laman.*

To address these and other issues facing orangutans, EIA included a suite of policy recommendations in our report that encourage Indonesia to take a comprehensive and multifaceted approach to protecting all remaining orangutans and their natural forest habitats, including the adoption of a revised Orangutan Conservation Strategy and Action Plan and expediting recognition of customary forests that comprise orangutan habitat. You can learn more about EIA's recommendations [here](#).

Thankfully, there is reason to be hopeful. Deforestation in Indonesia [declined dramatically](#) in 2017 and continued to fall through 2021. There are also a number of excellent conservation organizations working on the ground in Indonesia, together with the Indonesian government and local communities, to protect orangutans and their habitat, like the Gunung Palung Orangutan Conservation Program/Yayasan Palung. EIA is proud to support GPOCP/Yayasan Palung's successful programs in West Kalimantan that raise conservation awareness, support sustainable livelihoods, address orangutan crime, conduct scientific research, and restore orangutan habitat through the establishment of community forests.

There is still much more to be done, but thanks to the efforts of GPOCP/Yayasan Palung and countless others working around the clock to protect orangutans, Asia's only great apes stand a fighting chance to not only survive, but once again thrive, in the rainforests of Borneo and Sumatra.



*A flanged Tapanuli orangutan (Pongo tapanuliensis) in Batang Toru Forest, North Sumatra.
Photo © Tim Laman.*

"And now we welcome the new year, full of things that have never been."

– Rainer Maria Rilke