



Dear Friends and Supporters,

Greetings from West Kalimantan, Indonesia! This month I made my annual journey back to Gunung Palung. I've been busy meeting with staff and community members, reconnecting with board members, and visiting our counterpart university in Jakarta.

Our first article this month was written by Samsidar, the head of the Padu Banjar Village Forest Management Board. Samsidar writes about a recent occurrence of human-orangutan interaction in his village, and the community's successful efforts to mitigate any potential conflict.

The second article was written by Dobi Sinaga, one of our newest staff members! Dobi joined our team in May as a Botanical Assistant at Cabang Panti. Here, he writes about his journey to get to the research station and some of what he's learned so far.

It's great to be back in Borneo again and I am filled with pride to see the hard work that everyone here is carrying out each day to work towards our mission of saving wild orangutans. Stay tuned for more updates from the field in the coming weeks.

I wish you all a happy and healthy August!

Sincerely,

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Cheryl Knott, PhD
Executive Director

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

Mitigating Human-Orangutan Conflict in Padu Banjar Village

By Samsidar, Head of the Padu Banjar Village Forest Management Board

Yayasan Palung (GPOCP) assists *Hutan Desa* (Village Forests) in two different landscapes near Gunung Palung National Park. One of these is the Sungai Paduan region, which contains the Village Forests of Padu Banjar, Pualu Kumbang, Pemangkat and Nipah Kuning. This region is home to lots of biodiversity and is important orangutan habitat. Results from last year's biodiversity surveys estimated the Sungai Paduan landscape to contain more than 60 individual orangutans. I, Samsidar, come from Padu Banjar Village and now serve as the head of the Padu Banjar Village Forest Management Board (LPHD).



Samsidar, head of the Padu Banjar LPHD, collects a data point during a recent forest patrol.

People in my community have many gardens/small farms where we practice traditional cultivation. People grow *rambutan* and *cempedak* fruits, harvest the sap from rubber trees, and grow a variety of other perennials and secondary crops. Many of these gardens are close to the Village Forest boundary – where human settlements end and the Village Forest officially begins.

Because the location of human settlements and community gardens are relatively close to the Village Forest, there is opportunity for the interaction between humans and orangutans to occur. Human-orangutan interaction (HOI) is therefore a common occurrence in my village. On average, an incidence of HOI happens at least once per year. This can sometimes be the same individual orangutan continuing to come to the village, or a new one who's discovered there are crops to be eaten.

One instance of this occurred in Padu Banjar at the end of June and into July of this year. An orangutan was discovered on the land of my fellow community member named Pak Ulik. Most likely, the orangutans came to Pak Ulik's Garden because many of the plants were fruiting. At the same time, there was little fruit inside of the Village Forest. It is common for orangutans to travel to villages in search of better food.



A map of the Padu Banjar region, displaying the distance between the village (and community gardens) and the Village Forest. The red dot indicates where the orangutan was first found.

When interactions like this occur between orangutans and humans, the LPHD plays an active role in conducting monitoring to dispel or block orangutans from entering community plantations. Even though our LPHD is small, we are always able to carry out monitoring. The aim is to prevent orangutans from entering and destroying community gardens, while also avoiding any negative impacts on the orangutans themselves.

My community wanted the orangutan to be rescued immediately and then moved to another location, because we were afraid to move around the garden where the orangutan was located. Additionally, many of the fruits were being eaten and trees destroyed. Fortunately, our LPHD had the knowledge to handle the situation from previous conflict mitigation trainings held by YP/GPOCP, and the Standard Operating Procedure for monitoring and surveying which we have all pledged to follow. We knew that this human-orangutan interaction needed to be addressed wisely. After 5 days of monitoring, we were able to successfully coax the orangutan back to the Village Forest.



The orangutan found in the garden in Padu Banjar village travels between trees (top) and grabs a cempedak fruit with his foot (bottom).

It's thanks to the cooperation of all stakeholders, with our respective roles, that the negative impact of this interaction was able to be minimized. In addition to YP/GPOCP, we are also always grateful for the assistance from the West Kalimantan Natural Resources Conservation Department (BKSDA) and International Animal Rescue (YIARI).

A Letter From Kalimantan: My First Experience Working in Gunung Palung National Park, West Kalimantan, Indonesia

By Dobi Sinaga, Botanical Assistant

Hi, I am Dobi Sinaga. People call me Dobi. I am very happy to share about my time in Gunung Palung National Park (GPNP) with you all. I come from Medan, North Sumatra, a different island from the one where I currently live. Now, it has been 3 months that I have lived here, at the Cabang Panti Research Station (CPRS). At first, I was a little worried about living in the rainforest, but this has been so awesome!



Dobi poses with a tree during a phenological monitoring route in GPNP.

Here's the story about when I started my new job as an Assistant Botanist at CPRS in GPNP. On Friday, May 12, I made my initial departure from the town of Ketapang to Tanjung Gunung village, the last village accessible by vehicle before starting the walk to the research station. We arrived at about 12pm to Tanjung Gunung and took a short break to drink coffee at Pak Adi's house (the head porter). Then, at 2pm, we began our hiking journey to CPRS. At first, I thought it would just take about 1-2 hours to walk, but it turned out to be around 4 hours! But I was so excited about going on an adventure in the Kalimantan forest.

Along the way, I enjoyed all the views of the dense, tropical rainforest of Gunung Palung National Park. As a graduate of a university forestry program, this was not the first time I had been to the forest, but this experience was very different from what I had seen before. GPNP has an ecosystem that can be said to be the most complete among all the national parks in Indonesia, and has such a high diversity of flora and fauna.

A long time went by as we spent about 4 hours walking. It was 6pm in the evening. From a distance, between gaps in the thick tree trunks, I saw a speck of light. As it turned out, it was our final destination! Finally, we arrived at Cabang Panti Research Station. I was welcomed warmly and with open arms by the people living here, who I now call family. I was surprised to see CPRS, this place far from the village, in the middle of the rainforest. It's almost like a little housing complex. The people who work here are so far from the hustle and bustle of the city. It's so amazing to see people staying there to help protect this beautiful forest.



The view of Cabang Panti Research Station from the Air Putih River.

On the second day, I started my first activity of observing tree phenology. Phenology is the study of cycles of biological life cycles, in this instance, the flowering and fruiting of various tree species. I learned a lot to understand the stages and phases of plants, namely the fruiting, flowering and young leaf phases. These phenological observations can be used as a reference for the availability of orangutan foods in specific observation plots, and also help other field assistants who are looking for new orangutans to follow.

Since that first journey to CPRS, time has passed quickly, and I've already been working for 3 months! To me, being here is like a place to study. I have learned so much already. It's also the first place I ever saw a wild orangutan! One day, while working on a phenology observation route, I came across a mother and juvenile orangutan. I was so happy and immediately took out my cellphone to take a picture. At first, I thought for sure the adult orangutan would run away when she saw me. But the orangutans gave such a seemingly casual response, which gave me plenty of time to observe what they were doing there up in the trees. I think they must have been used to human observers already, due to a process called habituation. Over time, they had already adjusted to human presence.

Here in GPNP, people are really working so hard to preserve the forest and its wildlife. I have learned so much so quickly. I have also been consistently reminded that saving orangutans means saving forests and saving lives. I am looking forward to what the future brings and excited to continue my learning journey at CPRS.



Dobi (left) and GPOCP/YP Botanist, Gunawan (right), identify a tree species in 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.

“Together we can preserve the forest, securing this immense treasure for the future of all these children.”

– Chico Mendes





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