



Dear Friends and Supporters,

I hope this message finds your year off to a good start. I am freshly back from a wonderful trip to Indonesia where I had the chance to connect with the entire staff, visit the research station, and spend some time with the orangutans.

I was thrilled to be able to visit Gunung Palung National Park during a rare mast fruiting and experience the forest bursting with fruit. In turn, this brought many new orangutans, including several flanged males into the study area. I am usually unable to visit in January, thus another highlight was being able to attend our Annual Meeting, which took place at the Cabang Panti Research Station. Before going upriver we visited the new land that we have purchased and that will be the location of our new *in situ* laboratory as well as a new home base for our conservation activities in the region. Finally, it was also a very special trip because my family was able to accompany me.

In this first issue of *Code RED* for 2025, we hear from our Field Director, Edi Rahman, about the Annual Meeting – an extra special one this year because of the location.

Cheryl Knott, PhD
Executive Director

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

IN THIS ISSUE:

[2025 Annual Meeting](#)

[A Milestone Year at Cabang Panti](#)

[Join Save Wild Orangutans](#)

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Highlights from the 2025 Annual Meeting of Yayasan Palung/GPOCP

By Edi Rahman, Field Director

Every year, the Yayasan Palung/GPOCP team gathers to reflect, strategize, and strengthen our commitment to orangutan conservation. In 2025, our Annual Meeting took place at Cabang Panti Research Station in Gunung Palung National Park from January 13–17, 2025. This event provided an opportunity for all of our programs to come together in one place – we are so often spread far and wide throughout the region – and evaluate achievements and challenges from 2024 while planning for the year ahead.

This year's gathering was particularly special, as it was held at the research station. It was a rare opportunity for our conservation staff to enjoy Cabang Panti. As an added bonus, our Executive Director, Cheryl Knott, and her family joined us as well. Their visit began in Ketapang to celebrate New Year's Eve with all the staff—an historic first at Yayasan Palung. While Cheryl and her family visit annually, it typically occurs in the summer months. We embraced this rare occasion by celebrating together, with nearly all Yayasan Palung/GPOCP staff coming together in Ketapang on New Year's Eve. The evening began with a prayer in memory of our beloved colleague, Desi Kurniawati, who passed away on November 25, 2024. This was followed by a warm and joyful celebration, providing a chance for our team to unwind after a year of dedication to orangutan conservation and the communities throughout the region.





Excited team members starting the boat journey upriver to the research camp.

On January 13, 2025, our team set off for Cabang Panti Research Station, with some staff members traveling for hours by river, while others made the trek through the forest. Over the next five days, we engaged in meaningful discussions and activities aimed at enhancing our conservation efforts. On Day 1, each program presented its 2024 achievements and challenges, sharing key insights from fieldwork. On the second day we collaboratively developed our 2025 activity plans, ensuring each program is aligned with our mission to protect orangutans and their habitat. These plans will serve as a roadmap for the year ahead. On the third day the team enjoyed a nature retreat at one of Gunung Palung National Park's stunning waterfalls—a tradition that fosters camaraderie before returning to our work. On the fifth day, we concluded our meeting and traveled back home to Ketapang and Kayong Utara, ready to implement our plans for the coming year with a renewed sense of purpose.



Learning about the many accomplishments of 2024.

Our Annual Meeting wasn't just about evaluations and planning—it was also an opportunity for professional development and vision-setting. We spent our evenings together sharing new ideas and thinking about how to increase our impact. Beth Barrow, our Conservation Research Director, led a Strategic Planning Workshop, focusing on thinking critically about our goals and what we do to achieve them. One evening we held a documentary screening, enjoying films shot by Tim Laman showcasing the biodiversity and beauty of Gunung Palung National Park. We also held fruitful discussions on some new key initiatives, including the construction of an *in-situ* research lab and preparations for the GP40 celebration in June 2025.

The 2025 Annual Meeting was truly special—not only because of our shared commitment to orangutan conservation but also because of the involvement of Cheryl and her family. Her participation enriched our evaluations and planning, and we hope to continue this tradition in the years to come. We extend our deepest gratitude to everyone who contributed to making this event a success, particularly the Gunung Palung National Park Office (BTNGP) for their support in providing permits, time, and facilities for our gathering.



The 'keluarga besar' (big family) at Cabang Panti.

As we step into 2025, we remain steadfast in our mission to protect orangutans and their forest home. Here's to another year of dedication, collaboration, and conservation success!

A Milestone Year at Cabang Panti Research Station

By Ahmad Rizal, Research Manager

First and foremost, we want to wish you all a Happy New Year 2025! We hope 2024 was a great year for you, and we want to work together to make 2025 even better. Our orangutan research project continues to grow and improve every year, striving for the conservation of orangutans and their habitat on the island of Borneo. As we embark on this new year, we'd love to take a moment to reflect on some of our most memorable moments in the forest in 2024.

We began the year with enthusiasm and a deep commitment to our work. Conducting research in the wild is an incredibly rewarding experience, but it also demands dedication and resilience. Throughout the year, our team tracked wild orangutans, observed and recorded their behaviors, collected and processed samples in our field laboratory, monitored phenology, studied orangutan nests, and maintained passive monitoring equipment such as camera traps, audio recorders, and weather sensors. Each of these efforts contributes to our ultimate goal: protecting orangutans and preserving their natural habitats.



The research team at the 2024 Annual Meeting in Ketapang.

First Orangutan Encounter of 2024

On January 4, 2024, we recorded our first orangutan sighting of the year at Cabang Panti Research Station. Our research assistant, Jaka, encountered Bibi, a well known adult female orangutan, resting

alone in the forest. Bibi usually travels with her juvenile offspring, Bayas (approximately nine years old), but surprisingly, Bayas was not with her that day.

This was an intriguing observation because, although Bayas is at an age where young orangutans become independent, he had not yet made this separation from his mother. We followed Bibi closely for three full days, from night nest to night nest, but still found no sign of Bayas. Interestingly, a similar event occurred on December 23, 2023, when we observed Bayas alone for two days before losing track of him on the third day. This had apparently been just a brief early foray into independence.

This discovery was particularly exciting for our project, as we have been following Bibi and Bayas since Bayas was just three months old. They are an integral part of our long-term research. However, by February 7, 2024, Bibi and Bayas had reunited. I guess he's still not ready to be on his own! The fact that Bibi has not yet had another offspring is likely one of the main reasons that he is still with mom.



Bibi, one of the most well-known adult female orangutans of Cabang Panti.

Mid-Year Research Visits

In May 2024, our field team welcomed a special visit from Dr. Tatang Mitra Setia and Dr. Fachruddin M. Mangunjaya from the National University (UNAS) in Jakarta. As our scientific counterparts, sponsoring the orangutan research project, their visit was an important step in ensuring that our research is progressing effectively and in alignment with our long-term roadmap. It was also a valuable opportunity for our team to exchange knowledge and discuss professional development.



A visit from UNAS faculty.

In June 2024, we hosted a delegation from the Climate and Land Use Alliance (CLUA), who came to observe our field research firsthand. Together, we explored the forest of Cabang Panti and they observed how our team studies wild orangutans, and visited our field laboratory where we analyze fecal, urine, and dietary samples from orangutans.

Later, in November 2024, we welcomed representatives from the Conservation, Food, and Health Foundation. This visit was particularly significant as we discussed our plans to establish a dedicated research laboratory outside the national park. Alongside the CFH president, Philip Fearnside, and his family, our management team visited the proposed site for the new lab, brainstorming ideas to ensure the future sustainability of our research.



A group photo during the visit from Conservation, Food & Health.

Celebrating 30 Years of Orangutan Research

During the summer (June–August), as is tradition, our Executive Director, Dr. Cheryl Knott, visited our field site to assess our progress and provide training to the research team. Accompanying her were her daughter Jessica Laman and students from Boston University, Ritika Sibal and Jay Cogan. Ritika Sibal, a master's student, conducted a study this summer titled, *Assessing Locomotor Ontogeny in Wild Bornean Orangutans using Computer Vision*, while Jay Cogan was initiating his year-long stay as a volunteer Research Assistant, helping with behavioral data collection, sample processing and learning about all aspects of the orangutan research from our field staff.

Dr. Knott introduced updates to our field data sheets and databases and led discussions on data collection methods with our field team. This year's visit was especially meaningful as we celebrated the 30th anniversary of the Orangutan Research Project! This is a huge milestone as so much information has been gathered over the years that has helped us to better understand the ecology, behavior, and physiology of wild orangutans.



The research team in Summer 2024 celebrating 30 years of the Orangutan Project in Gunung Palung!

A New Baby Orangutan & a Heartbreaking Loss

One of the most exciting moments of 2024 was the birth of a new baby orangutan in the Gunung Palung rainforest! In December 2023, we detected the pregnancy of Sandra, a known female orangutan. On August 12, 2024, Sandra gave birth, and after close observation, we confirmed that her infant was healthy and thriving. This was a major milestone for our research, as orangutans have long reproductive cycles, making each successful birth a significant event for conservation efforts.

However, our joy was tempered by sorrow. In August 2024, we also confirmed that Bibi had suffered a miscarriage. We had detected her pregnancy in January 2024 and closely monitored her condition, predicting she would give birth around July or August 2024. Unfortunately, by September 2024, Bibi no longer showed signs of pregnancy, confirming the loss.

This was heartbreaking news, as her baby would have been the third offspring of hers we have documented in our study. Yet, this is the reality of the wild — nature is unpredictable, and we continue to learn from these events.

Looking Ahead to 2025

As we close out 2024, we are incredibly grateful to our readers, supporters, donors, and everyone who has contributed to our work. A special thanks goes to the Gunung Palung National Park Authority, whose partnership is essential in protecting the heart of Borneo's orangutan habitat.

Thank you for being part of this journey. See you in 2025—Happy New Year!

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 Faculty of Biology at Universitas Nasional (UNAS) and Boston University.

“Nature does not hurry yet everything is accomplished.”
—Lao Tzu



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