

Gunung Palung Orangutan Conservation Program

Code RED

an e-newsletter from your friends in West Kalimantan

November 2020

Issue 95

Dear Friends and Supporters,

This year I have a lot to be thankful for. I am feeling especially thankful for the dedicated team of hard-working staff that are running GPOCP on the ground in Indonesia. As many of you know, all foreign staff and researchers returned to their home countries in March. I was also not able to make my regular trip to the field this year. Fortunately, our team of 35 Indonesian staff have persisted throughout the pandemic. Many members have stepped into new roles, allowing our important conservation and research work to continue throughout the year.

I am also thankful for all of you, our supporters. Without the help of our strong, international base of supporters, GPOCP's work would not be possible. As we enter the end of the year, with the holidays and giving season just around the corner, many of you have already shown great generosity by joining our new [Save Wild Orangutans](#) initiative, [donating to our programs](#), and helping to spread our message via [social media](#).

TOMORROW, December 1st, is Giving Tuesday – a global giving day that inspires millions of people around the world to give, collaborate and celebrate generosity. I encourage you all to consider making a charitable, tax-deductible donation tomorrow. On the sidebar, check out some other ways that you can continue to support our cause. I'm also excited to share that my husband, Wildlife Photojournalist Tim Laman, is generously hosting an [orangutan print sale](#). All proceeds from these prints will be donated back to GPOCP.

Our first newsletter article this month comes from Mariamah Achmad (Mayi), who is the Environmental Education and Conservation Awareness Program Manager. Sadly, Mayi will be leaving GPOCP at the end of next month in order to pursue her Master's degree at Tanjungpura University in Pontianak and take on a new position at FHI 360 (Family Health International) Indonesia. Here, she shares some insights from her 11 years at GPOCP. We are so grateful for all that she has contributed towards orangutan conservation, youth empowerment and community education over the years.

The second article comes from our new Assistant Research Manager, Ahmad Rizal. Rizal first went to Gunung Palung to conduct a 6-month research project for his undergraduate senior thesis in 2019. After graduation, Rizal came back to Gunung Palung in September to work as the Assistant Manager. Here, he shares the story of how he came into this new role.

I wish you all a happy and healthy December.

Sincerely,



Cheryl Knott, PhD
Executive Director

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

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GIVING TUESDAY PRINT SALE



"The Wild Ride" by Tim Laman.

All orangutan prints are on sale through Tuesday, December 1. [Buy an orangutan print](#) today to support our cause, or purchase one to give as a gift! 📺



We have a new logo! To learn more about this logo and see behind-the-scenes footage, become a member of SWO and check out the latest issue of [Orangutan Diaries](#).

More ways to support GPOCP:

Purchase [GPOCP apparel](#)

Shop at [Amazon Smile](#) and choose GPOCP as your charity

Lessons Learned Over a Decade of Educating the Community

By Mariamah Achmad

I have worked at GPOCP (known as *Yayasan Palung* in Indonesia) for the past 11 years, since October 2009. Throughout my time at Yayasan Palung, it has been like my home, since I've spent so much time here. Prior to working at Yayasan Palung, I worked for a different organization, empowering farming communities on the coast of West Kalimantan. This included political education and youth education, as well as strengthening the capacity of environmental activists. I have a degree in Forestry, so when I began working at Yayasan Palung, it seemed like I was returning to my educational background. I also was able to continue to exercise my passion for community education.



Mayi gives a lecture at a local middle school.

Eleven years is quite a long time working in one place, so you may be wondering, why did I stay so long working at Yayasan Palung? This job has not been about making money, but allows me, and other people like me, to live our respective passions, especially in the field of conservation. Yayasan Palung does not follow a rigid and formal work structure, but rather prioritizes strong relationships. We work in a friendly staff environment, with no firm hierarchy between positions. We all work together, while also maintaining professionalism.

Some of my favorite methods of education happen while in nature. For example, we take students to the forest, try new hiking trails, and forget about any fatigue when coming across beautiful nature and its sounds of animals and waterfalls. We also go on environmental education expeditions to remote villages, visiting new locations and meeting people from friendly rural communities. Traveling and being in nature is refreshing, but it can also be sad. Sometimes we see the conditions of people who are still living in poverty or the forests that have been damaged or converted into oil palm and mining plantations.

Yayasan Palung is well known by the wider community in the Ketapang and Kayong Utara Regencies, as well as throughout Indonesia. This is not only because it is the oldest conservation organization in the region, but also because our programs suit the needs of many communities. Yayasan Palung's strengths are having staff who are experts and experienced in their respective fields, and who work loyally and happily in the field of nature conservation. We run programs that advocate for human rights, gender equality, and the rights of minority groups and the underprivileged who live around the forest.



Mayi plants a tree seedling during an outreach event.

My team and I manage three programs: Environmental Education, Conservation Awareness, and West Bornean Orangutan Caring Scholarships (WBOCS). These programs are all related to increasing the educational capacity of people of various age groups, ranging from children to adults. We visit schools and universities to provide knowledge, skills and insight into conservation. We teach about orangutans, forests, biodiversity, climate change, waste, environmentally friendly lifestyles and more. Our scholarship recipients study a variety of disciplines at university and are involved in orangutan protection campaign activities throughout the year. We also reach people in rural areas through routine radio broadcasts, film screenings and community discussions. We reach a wider community through the dissemination of information and knowledge on our website, social media, monthly magazines and articles in regional newspapers both online and offline. We foster a space for local young people to volunteer and participate in outreach activities. We also mentor student interns at the Yayasan Palung office, who come from several different schools and universities.

Since Yayasan Palung has now been running for over 20 years, we have many programs already set in place. But still, each staff member is given the autonomy and opportunity to be creative and develop programming according to scientific developments or changes in the community over time. For example, puppet shows, lectures and student field trips to the forest have been around since Yayasan Palung was founded, yet each year we still implement new content and adapt our methods based on current conditions and needs.



Mayi leads a forest walk to teach students about leaf morphology and tree identification.

Each of our programs has an important purpose and role to play in order to achieve our mission to build a love for the environment among the young generation, and get the Indonesian people to be involved in nature conservation efforts. In both the short and long term, we have seen that this has a very positive impact on the land.

After running the program at Yayasan Palung for a long time, my capacity still continues to grow. In particular, I continue to build upon my knowledge and skills for reaching the community to be involved in conservation efforts. More and more, I continue to understand the importance of these critical education initiatives for saving the remaining natural resources in Indonesia.

I find much joy from working in the field of education. I believe that education is the starting point for solving problems that continue to occur around us, such as poverty, forest destruction and other social issues. For the younger generation, education fuels dreams and motivation for their bright future.



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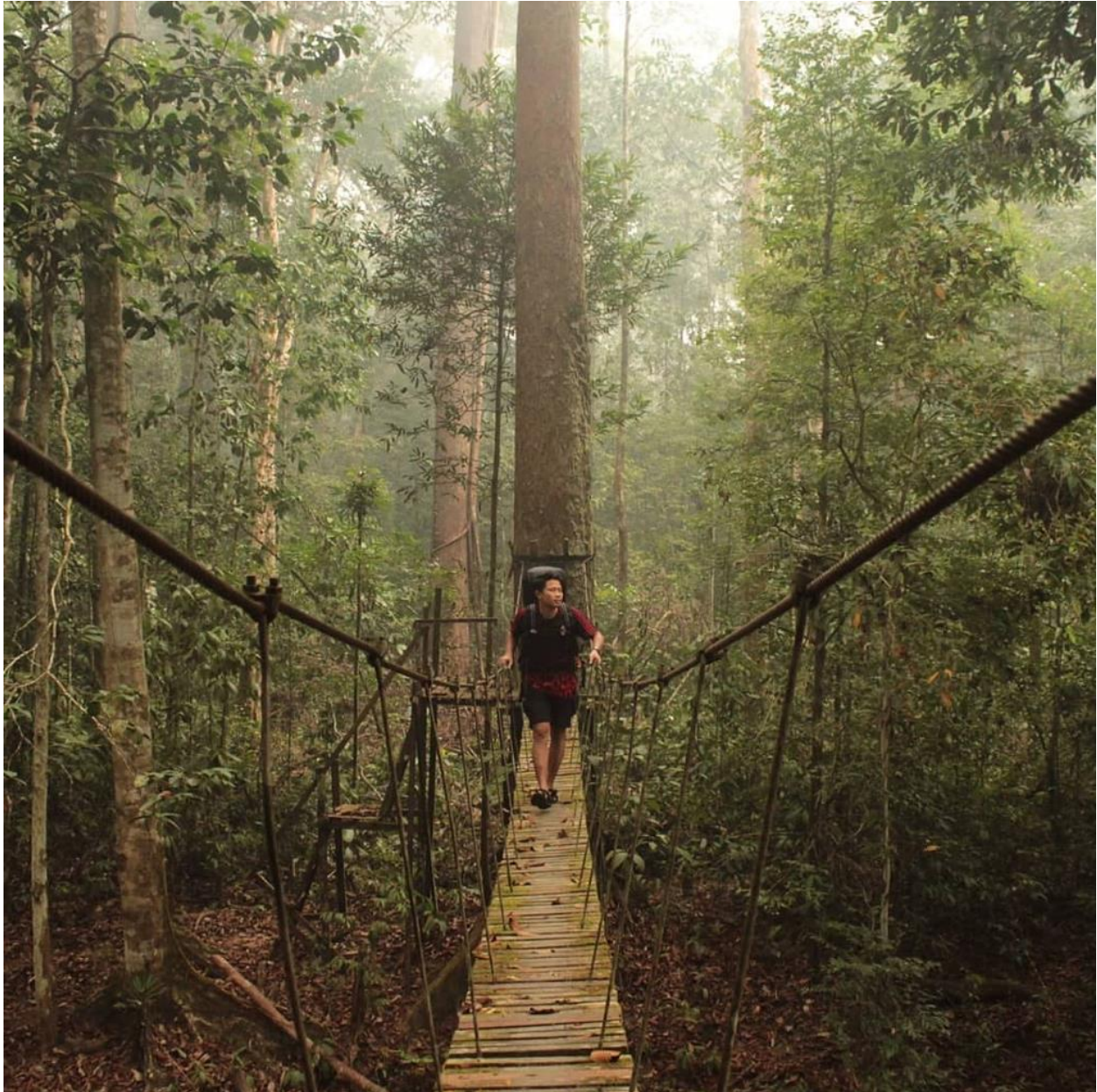
Mayi at the People's Climate March in Germany in 2017. She received an award to attend the People's Climate Summit as a representative of GPOCP and travelled throughout Germany to spread awareness about our cause.

My hope is that Yayasan Palung's programs will continue to develop, benefit the community and slow the rate of forest destruction in order to preserve Indonesia's remaining natural resources. It will be sad to say goodbye, but I'm so grateful for all the opportunities that Yayasan Palung has given me. Thank you Yayasan Palung!

A New Journey During the Pandemic

By Ahmad Rizal

My name is Ahmad Rizal. I am working with the Gunung Palung Orangutan Conservation Program as the Assistant Field Research Manager. I work at the Cabang Panti Research Station, located in Gunung Palung National Park, West Kalimantan. Gunung Palung has some of the best flora and fauna diversity in Indonesia, and one of its greatest treasures is the Bornean Orangutan.



Rizal crosses the suspension bridge, located at the entrance of the research station.

On August 25, 2020 my journey began. I received an offer to work with GPOCP. My love and desire to take action and contribute to conservation, especially orangutan conservation, made my acceptance of this offer an easy decision. I was also motivated to come back by my love and longing for the Cabang Panti Research Station. I continue to be charmed by the extraordinary beauty of the forest, the exotic flora and fauna. Cabang Panti also holds a special place in my heart thanks to the community that feels like my family and the inclusive environment at camp.



The Cabang Panti “family” with Rizal in the middle row, second from the right, October 2019.

What makes my story interesting is that I started my journey in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. While most people had to stay at home, I was able to travel from my home in East Java to Kalimantan to start my work. It was a long and tiring journey to get back to Cabang Panti. Despite the condition of the world, I was excited to begin my journey, and go through the various protocols before getting permission to enter the Park. I also had to isolate in the town of Ketapang before travelling to Cabang Panti.

I started my job at Cabang Panti with great joy. When I arrived, I was surprised to see the new look of Cabang Panti, which coincided with my new journey. The Gunung National Park Office reconstructed all of the facilities at Cabang Panti to better support research activities.

Together, with GPOCP Research Director Wahyu Susanto and Field Laboratory Assistant Sumihadi, I began training on everything related to research management. I learned to process orangutan samples in the field and in the field laboratory, as well as search and find orangutans, and collect data on orangutan behavior. I am so excited as I continue on with this new journey, and motivated to continue to research and conserve wild Bornean orangutans.



Rizal hikes towards Cabang Panti, with the silhouette of the Gunung Palung mountain range in the background.

"Be present in all things and thankful for all things"

- Maya Angelou

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