



Dear Friends and Supporters,

Although we are starting to get ahead of COVID-19 here in the US and some other parts of the world, the pandemic is far from over in Indonesia. Since the surge in cases after the Idul Fitri holiday this past month, we have taken extra caution to keep all our staff and conservation activity participants safe, and are closely monitoring the situation. We continue to adhere to all COVID-19 precautions at the field site for the safety of both humans and wildlife. I continue to be grateful for the outstanding job that all of our staff, in Indonesia and abroad, have been doing to keep our programs running.

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Our first article this month is about the six newest [West Bornean Orangutan Caring Scholarship](#) recipients! These students were selected to receive college tuition scholarships last month, and their achievement was officially celebrated at a special dinner last week. We are excited to watch these students begin their next chapter at university, as they continue to develop their environmental stewardship.

Our second article comes from Ishma Fatiha, the newest addition to our field laboratory team! Ishma first visited the Cabang Panti Research Station in 2018, while she conducted her senior thesis project on orangutan intestinal parasites. Now, three years later, she's back working for the project, and writes about her new role.

I wish you all a happy June!

Sincerely,



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

The 2021 West Bornean Orangutan Caring Scholarship Recipients

By Petrus Kanisius, Environmental Education and Communications Officer

Since 2012 we have partnered with the [Orang Utan Republik Foundation](#) to sponsor local students through the West Bornean Orangutan Caring Scholarship (WBOCS). We provide well-deserving, under-privileged students with complete financial aid to attend Tanjungpura University (UNTAN) in the city of Pontianak, the provincial capital of West Kalimantan. Now, there have been [49 WBOCS recipients](#), 12 of whom have graduated. The program continues to develop a generation of university-trained young adults with a commitment to and concern for orangutans and their habitat.

After a rigorous application process, the 10th class of recipients, made up of 6 students, was selected by a jury in April, and last week they were awarded at a special dinner. On May 25th the students, along with their parents and guardians, and members of the GPOCP staff and Yayasan Palung Board, celebrated at the Hotel Nevada in Ketapang. The night began with an opening address by Wahyu Susanto, GPOCP Research Director and Yayasan Palung Board Chairman. The 6 scholarship recipients then signed a joint agreement with GPOCP and the Orang Utan Republik Foundation.



The 2021 WBOCS recipients display their acceptance certificates after the award ceremony, alongside GPOCP Research Director, Wahyu Susanto (far left), and Field Director, Edi Rahman (far right).

GPOCP Environmental Education Manager, Dwi Yandhi Febriyanti, presented about the history of the program, and shared some of the accomplishments over the past 10 years. Gary Shapiro, President and Co-Founder of the Orang Utan Republik Foundation, then expressed his appreciation to GPOCP, via Zoom, for working together to run the WBOCS program. The night ended with each of the 2021 scholarship recipients introducing themselves and sharing their goals for the future.

Read on to learn a bit about each student!



Agun Prayoga

Agun Prayoga is 21 years old. He comes from the village of Rantau Panjang, Simpang Hilir District, Kayong Utara Regency, where he attended high school at SMA 3 Simpang Hilir. By joining WBOCS, Agun aims to continue his education and wants to take part in preserving orangutans and their habitat. He's also excited to become part of the big "WBOCS family".

Agun will be a student in the Department of Forestry at UNTAN this September. He aspires to be an environmental activist, because the orangutan population is already small, and continues to decrease. He also notes that orangutans are known as "forest farmers" and are only found in Borneo and Sumatra. He says orangutans are a symbol of Indonesia, and the country has great pride for this animal.

Agun says "The forest is not a legacy from our ancestors, but rather a deposit. Therefore, it should be cared for and preserved so that it can be felt and enjoyed by every generation, from the past to the future."



Egi Iskandar

Egi Iskandar is 19 years old. He was born in Ketapang and attended high school at SMA Negeri 2 Sukadana. Egi has a great desire to continue his education. He has experience in the field of conservation and aspires to be an environmental activist, who plays an active role in forest and orangutan conservation efforts.

Egi will major in Forestry at UNTAN. He shares that we should all care about orangutans because they are one of the four types of great apes (excluding humans) in the world, and they are classified as critically endangered by the IUCN. In Indonesia, orangutans are also protected by law.

Egi shares his message for conservation, saying "Let's protect and preserve nature, which has a very important role and function for the survival of living things for the future. If we can treat nature wisely, then nature will provide unmatched satisfaction."



Keti Agusti

Keti Agusti is 18 years old. She comes from the village of Penjawaan, in the Sandai District of the Ketapang Regency, and attended school at SMA Negeri 1 Sandai. The reason Keti became interested in WBOCS was because she hopes to preserve nature and all living things. She says, “With this scholarship program, it can be a place for me to channel and develop my love and desire to maintain a balance between ecosystems and living things.”

Keti also shares that WBOCS is very helpful financially, and will ease the burden on both her parents, since the program will finance her college education. Keti plans to major in Biology, in the Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences at UNTAN. She hopes to one day work as a laboratory analyst, and shares that the field of Biology will help her to understand living things and how species function, evolve, and interact.

Keti's message for conservation is “Maybe now the idea that prevention is better than a cure is no longer realistic, but instead, our generation should promote the idea that conservation is better than silence.”



Riko Wibowo

Riko Wibowo comes from Podorukun Village, Seponti District, Kayong Utara Regency. Riko is 18 years old and attended SMA Negeri 01 Seponti. He plans to study Forestry at Tanjungpura University.

Riko shared that the reason he became interested in conservation was because the forest in his village continues to shrink as the land is converted for oil palm. The small forests that remain are quite far from his home in the village. Now, he is motivated to defend nature and the environment.

Riko invites everyone to come together to protect and preserve the forest and its living things so that it can last and be preserved for the future. "If not now, then when? If not us, who will it be?"



Rita Kurniati

Rita Kurniati is 20 years old. She comes from Delta Pawan Village, Sukabangun Dalam, Ketapang Regency, and attended high school at SMA Negeri 3 Ketapang. She plans to study Forestry upon arriving at UNTAN.

Rita hopes that she can become a part of the generation that cares more about the environment and can motivate the people around her to care about the importance of preserving nature and animals. Rita says, "Stop exploitation to save animals."



Yeli Kurniasari

Yeli Kurniasari comes from Sandai District, Ketapang Regency, and attended SMA 1 Sandai. She aspires to continue with higher education and wants to further enhance her experiences and increase her love for orangutans and conservation.

Yeli will study International Relations in the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences at UNTAN. Her dream is to become a spokesperson at the international level.

Yeli shares that we should care about the fate of orangutans because they are specially protected creatures in Kalimantan. It is her hope to sustain the population of these special animals.

My Journey Back to Cabang Panti Research Station

By Ishma Fatiha, Field Laboratory Assistant

My name is Ishma Fatiha. Earlier this year I had the opportunity to return to the Cabang Panti Research Station as a Laboratory Assistant for the Gunung Palung Orangutan Project. Previously, I came here for 6 months for my senior thesis research in 2018. The experience I got at that time was very lasting and extraordinary. There are so many things that I learned and great people that I met here. I always knew in my heart, if given the chance, I would come back to Cabang Panti.



The author, Ishma Fatiha, crosses the bridge to get to the Cabang Panti Research Station.

Three years later, the opportunity really came! In March 2021, in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, I was so excited to return back to Cabang Panti. I was careful to follow all the necessary health protocols on my way to the field.

Even after being gone 3 years, this place still feels so familiar - the trails, the trees, the river and my co-workers who are like family. Of course, there are a lot of changes here and there, such as the camp buildings being renovated and different members of the project team coming and going. But with all the changes, this place still feels the same as it was in 2018.



Ishma observes a fecal sample under the microscope, in our new field lab, searching for and identifying parasites.

I have now been back in the forest for 2 months. As a Laboratory Assistant I have learned to process samples of feces and urine, and manage the data that is collected. I have also gone to the field to follow wild orangutans.



Ishma collects a sample during an orangutan follow.

During my first time here as a student researcher, I conducted a project on parasitology. Since I am trained on these lab methods, I have re-started the collection and on-site analysis of intestinal parasites found in orangutan fecal samples. This helps us to better understand and monitor orangutan health.

There are still so many things for me to see and learn. But I hope that someday my small contribution will be useful for the research and conservation of wild orangutans.



Ishma observes parasites in a fecal sample during her first trip to Cabang Panti in 2018.

*"Every individual matters. Every individual has a role to play.
Every individual makes a difference."*

- Jane Goodall



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