



Dear Friends and Supporters,

Like many of you reading this, I am looking out at a snow covered landscape in the dead of winter. What a contrast to the humid tropical rainforest! So, take a dive with me into the heart of Borneo to learn about our latest accomplishments and our newest excited staff member.

I'm thrilled to share that we are very close to protecting an additional 3,700 hectares of rainforest through the *Hutan Desa* (Village Forest) framework. Hendri Gunawan, Hutan Desa Program Coordinator, shares more about this process in the first article.

The second article this month comes from our newest staff member, Gunawan Wibisono. Gunawan joined us last

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November as the new staff botanist. He writes about his time spent thus far in the forest, and it is clear from his first-hand account just how passionate he is about botany!

I wish you all a happy and healthy March!

Sincerely,



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

Technical Verification of Matan Jaya and Lubuk Batu Village Forest Proposals

By Hendri Gunawan, Hutan Desa Coordinator

One form of Indonesia's Social Forestry Initiative is the *Hutan Desa* (Village Forest). The government grants approval to village institutions to manage and utilize these *Hutan Desa*, with the aim of improving the welfare of village communities and environmental sustainability.

In July 2021, Yayasan Palung/GPOCP, the community in Lubuk Batu Village and the community of Matan Jaya Village, proposed that the forest area in these villages be managed by the community through the *Hutan Desa* framework. Lubuk Batu, which is on peat forest, has been proposed with the status of production forest. It makes up an area of about 1,800 hectares. Meanwhile, Matan Jaya, which contains montane forest, is proposed with the status of protected forest, and makes up an area of about 1,900 ha. In order for *Hutan Desa* to be officially decreed, a series of steps must be carefully carried out. The final step is the technical verification.

However, since the proposals were first submitted in 2021, this process has been constrained by the COVID-19 pandemic. Specifically, local travel restrictions meant that people could not enter and exit Kayong Utara Regency, thus hindering the implementation of technical verification in the field. This step is essential, as in order to become designated by the Ministry of Environment and Forestry of the Republic of Indonesia, technical verification must ensure the proposed *Hutan Desa* is administratively included in the village area that proposed it, ensure appropriate membership of the *Hutan Desa* Management Board (LPHD), ensure the area has no land disputes, and more.



The field survey team for the verification of Matan Jaya. Author, Hendri Gunawan, stands second from right.

From February 10th to 11th, 2023, technical verification was carried out by a team consisting of the Kalimantan Region Social Forestry and Environmental Partnership Agency (BPSKL), the West Kalimantan Province Environment and Forestry Service (DLHK), the Forest Area Consolidation Center (BPHK) Region III Pontianak, the Forest Management Technical Implementation Unit (UPT KPH) of Kayong Region, and Yayasan Palung/GPOCP as Working Groups and independent assistants for the Hutan Desa program.

The aim of this activity is to find out directly and synchronize field conditions regarding the 'subject' of the applicant, and also the 'object' of the forest area that is proposed to become a Hutan Desa. The results of the technical verification then become the basis for issuing the Hutan Desa Management Agreement (PPHD).

During the 'object' verification process, the team conducted a field survey of the proposed forest areas in Lubuk Batu and Matan Jaya villages in order to see the areas proposed as Hutan Desa first-hand. The field survey activities included recording the land cover of the proposed area, collecting data on the elevation, vegetation and animals, and taking coordinate points for the outer boundaries of the area. We also collected data on potential non-timber forest product (NTFP) resources, noting location points that have already been worked on by the community. We also took coordinates of other important points such as the village office, area boundaries, area function boundaries, forestry licensing boundaries, and natural tie points like rivers and roads.



The field survey team for the verification of Lubuk Batu. Hendri Gunawan is pictured in the center wearing red, and Erik Sulidra (YP/GPOCP's Animal Protection Manager) stands far left in the back.

The results of the field survey in Lubuk Batu village showed that there is potential for the use of NTFPs in the form of honey, rattan and medicinal plants, and the potential for utilization of environmental services in the form of carbon. In addition, we saw several orangutan nests, heard the sounds of gibbon calls, and saw the scratch marks of sun bears on tree trunks, which indicates that this forest is home to a variety of protected animals. The area does not have arable land that is currently used by the Lubuk Batu community, but there are several areas utilized by other village communities, especially along the banks of the river. Later, once approved as a production forest, the community will grow coffee plants.

In Matan Jaya, the verification field survey found potential for NTFPs such as rattan and medicinal plants, and the potential for clean mountain water that can be managed directly by the community. In addition, this hilly region covered with beautiful rocks is habitat for hornbills and gibbons. However, we found several points of construction of community housing within the proposed protected forest area. There is also a road that divides the area and an independent plantation within the proposed Hutan Desa area. This means we will work with the community to re-map the proposed area with updated boundaries before it is verified.

Furthermore, the technical verification includes activities for 'subject' verification – namely, checking the completeness of population documents and holding meetings and discussions with the community to ensure completeness, correctness and validity of the application documents submitted to the Ministry of Environment and Forestry. These application documents include legal information and maps of the proposed area.



Community discussions as part of the technical verification process in Matan Jaya.

The results of the technical verification concluded that the proposed forest management in Lubuk Batu village will be considered for further processing. The technical verification results will now be submitted to the Director General of Social Forestry and Environmental Partnerships (PSKL). The Matan Jaya village government will correct some necessary documentation in order to also move to the next step of approval by the Director General of PSKL. We are excited that the verification process of these two new Hutan Desa is nearly complete! It is a great achievement for conservation to be able to protect an additional ~3,700 ha of important rainforest for orangutans and other wildlife.



Community discussions for the technical verification in Lubuk Batu.

A Botanist's View of the Rainforest

By Gunawan Wibisono, Surveyor and Botanist

My name is Gunawan Wibisono and I am the newest staff member of Yayasan Palung/GPOCP. I originally come from a village called Pak Utan, in Toho District, Mempawah Regency in Kalimantan (Borneo). In 2015 I began studying Biology, in the Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences at Tanjungpura University in Pontianak. I completed my degree in 2021, and then resided in Sintang and Kubu Raya districts. Since I started at YP/GPOCP in November 2022, I have been assisting with phenological surveys at Cabang Panti Research Station and the Rangkong River camp. Trained as a botanist, working for YP/GPOCP and helping with these observations has been a great experience for me.



*Gunawan observes fruit skins of the species *Artabotrys ochropetalus* that fell to the forest floor in the Rangkong River research area.*

The first time I went to Cabang Panti Research Station in Gunung Palung National Park, I was with Research Manager, Ahmad Rizal, and camp maintenance/caretaker, Udin. We traveled to the forest by river, on a small motorized boat. I saw all kinds of avifauna along the river bank and flying through the sky. I also saw macaques and proboscis monkeys in trees along the river. As we entered the boundaries of the National Park area, I was presented with a phenomenon that I found to be quite unique. The river that was very dark in color changed to crystal clear in the upper reaches of the river. This happened when one river merged with another. We entered the *Sungai Air Putih* (white water river), which leads to the research station. Apart from the uniqueness of the river, during my time at Cabang Panti I have also observed many different habitat types which are home to orangutans.



The Air Putih River, which runs in front of Cabang Panti Research Station. Photo © Tim Laman.

The freshwater and peat swamp habitats that I walked through presented plant species with anchor roots and floating buttresses. On the forest floor, I saw pools of water which were very interesting and unique. In the alluvial habitat, which has a forest floor made of silt from riverbanks, I observed flowers and plant litter fall on top of the silty soil. Not too far from the alluvial habitat, I noticed a stretch of brownish sand, indicating we were entering the lowland sandstone habitat.

The next day, when I took part in a phenology survey, I saw a forest floor with white sand, which meant we were entering the kerangas (heath) habitat. While assisting with observations near the Rangkong River, I picked up several fruits known locally as “gansing” (*Lithocarpus spp.*) from the forest floor. Seeing these fruits brought back fond memories from my childhood in rural Kalimantan, when we would use these fruits as toys. Above, I heard the clear calls of hornbills breaking through the sounds of the jungle. During the night, while we stayed at the new satellite camp, we were serenaded with a variety of sounds, some of which I could identify as frogs and insects near the camp. I also saw unique plants, such as a species of durian (*Durio*) which bears its fruit at the base of the trunk, instead of high up on branches. I was so excited to learn more about all the habitats and flora that I witnessed during my first trip to Cabang Panti.



Gunawan identifies plant samples eaten by orangutans back in the lab at Cabang Panti Resarch Station.

Since starting this new position, I have journeyed to Cabang Panti and the Rangkong River camp each month. Each time I walk in the forest I have a new first-time experience. There is always new biodiversity to discover. Even just the hike to get to Cabang Panti presents a huge amount of beautiful biodiversity. At the very end of 2022, I saw orangutans in Gunung Palung National Park for the first time. I was an extraordinary experience. I participated in an orangutan follow at Cabang Panti, shadowing the field assistants as they collected behavioral data. I helped to identify various fruits that the orangutans were eating. I was also excited to see, for the very first time, leftover fruits and seeds that were left behind by orangutans! It was very interesting for me to see how the forest and the orangutans within it interact and have their own way of maintaining the stability of the Kalimantan tropical rainforest ecosystem.

I am very grateful to Yayasan Palung/GPOCP for giving me the opportunity to contribute as a staff member, as well as to the Gunung Palung National Park Bureau (BTN-GP) who have helped me a lot and allowed me to assist with phenology in Gunung Palung National Park.

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.

"Morally speaking, we should be concerned for our whole environment. We need to teach people that the environment has a direct bearing on our own benefit."

– Dalai Lama



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