
GPOCP: June 2023 - Planting Trees & Becoming a Field Research Assistant



Dear Friends and Supporters,

As you read this letter, I am in-flight on my way back to Indonesia for the summer. I look forward to reconnecting with staff, seeing all that's changed in the past year and, of course, observing the wild orangutans of Gunung Palung National Park. Stay tuned for more updates throughout my time here.

Our first article this month, written by Petrus (Pit) Kanisius, is about a tree planting event held in honor of both World Environment Day and World Rainforest Day, both of which were celebrated in June.

The second article was written by Aynuddin (Udin). Udin joined our team back in 2018 to help out around the research station, but has since been promoted to the position of Field Research Assistant. Udin writes about his journey to this job and reflects on what he has learned thus far.

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**Join Save Wild
Orangutans**

I wish you all a happy and healthy July!

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Sincerely,



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

Planting Trees to Commemorate World Environment Day and World Rainforest Day

By Petrus Kanisius, Media Coordinator and Environmental Education Officer

This June we commemorated two special days – World Environment Day, celebrated June 5th, and World Rainforest Day, celebrated June 22nd. We commemorated both days simultaneously by planting trees along the road to the tourist destination of Celingcing Mangrove Forest in Suka Baru Village, Benua Kayong District, Ketapang Regency on Sunday, June 18th. This planting activity was organized by the Yayasan Palung/GPOCP Environmental Education Program in collaboration with the West Bornean Orangutan Caring Scholarship (WBOCS) students and youth group volunteers from RK-TAJAM and REBONK. We also collaborated with the Gunung Palung National Park Bureau (BTN-GP); the Ketapang Regency Housing, Settlement and Environment Office; Ketapang Military Command 1203; Ketapang District Resort Police; Indonesian Navy Base (LANAL); Tanjungpura University Forestry Alumni Association (IKAHUT); Tourism Awareness Group (Pokdarwis); Celingcing Suka Baru United Village group; and other government and non-governmental organizations. Also in attendance were students from several schools throughout the Ketapang Regency.



Representatives from the Ketapang Military Command plant a tree together with Yayasan Palung/GPOCP staff. Field Director, Edi Rahman, is on the far right.

YP/GPOCP Field Director, Edi Rahman, gave opening remarks at the event, explaining the two important days we were celebrating with the tree planting. The land rehabilitation event also supported the Ketapang District Regent's Circular Letter Number 8 of 2023 Concerning Action for Continuing the Planting of a Million Trees, and supported the Suka Baru Village which is designated as a mangrove tourist destination in Ketapang. We'd like to thank all the parties who supported the tree planting activity so that everything could be carried out according to plan.



YP/GPOCP Field Director, Edi Rahman (second from right), plants a tree.

In total, there were representatives from 60 different institutions (government agencies, NGOs, community organizations, universities and schools) invited to the tree planting event, with over 175 participants in attendance. A total of 500 seedlings of mahogany and *areca* species were planted. The first symbolic planting was carried out by the YP/GPOCP Field Director, the head of the Gunung Palung National Park Bureau, and many of the invited representatives from other agencies. Then we all worked together to plant the remaining seedlings.



Participants join together at the event in honor of World Environment Day and World Rainforest Day.

We also asked all participants who attended to bring drinks from their respective homes using bottles that were not made of plastic. We aimed to reduce plastic waste at the event, particularly because this year's theme for World Environment Day was "Beat Plastic Pollution." After all the tree planting was complete, we all socialized and relaxed together at the Celinging Beach, enjoying the scenic views and cool air of the mangrove forest.

My Journey to Becoming an Orangutan Field Research Assistant

By Aynuddin, Field Research Assistant

My name is Aynuddin, but I am usually called Udin. I come from Dusun Tanjung Gunung in Kayong Utara Regency. This is the story of how I began working at the Cabang Panti Research Station (CPRS).

Before I worked at CPRS, I was just an ordinary person who worked different odd jobs as a construction worker. Part of the reason for this was that I only completed junior high school. For many years, I was willing to do any kind of work. As long as it was lawful, I would do it. But then, my story began to change.

In August 2018, I received news from my friend that there was an opening to work as a Camp Maintenance Assistant at Cabang Panti Research Station. My whole life I had lived in the village that directly borders the National Park, and many of my family members and other people from my village had worked over the years at Cabang Panti. So, this was an exciting opportunity that I wanted to take. A few days later, I received news that I was accepted for this position! I felt so lucky to be able to work at CPRS.

Since then, I have worked more than four years as the Camp Assistant. I gained many experiences and felt the joy of living in the forest. I also met so many nice people, and gained new friends who have now become my family.

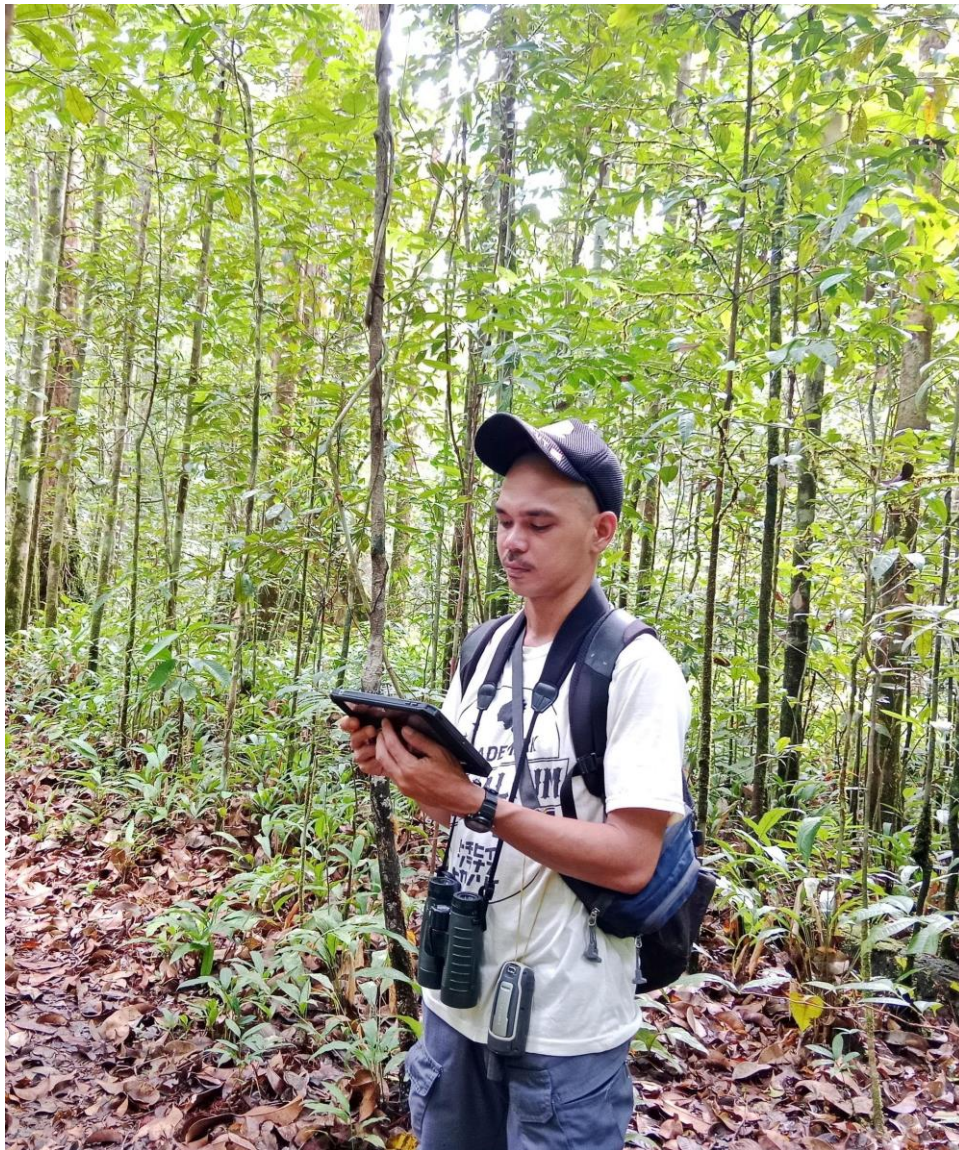


Udin drives a motorized canoe downriver from Cabang Panti Research Station, with Indonesian university students and Cabang Panti field staff accompanying.

But the story does not end there! Over time, I became trusted by the Orangutan Project. I learned a bit about what Field Research Assistants did each day, and this interested me. Excitingly, in early 2023, I was accepted to join as a Field Assistant for the project!

I soon started my training period of three months. I participated in observing orangutans and learning how to take phenology data. I quickly learned that following orangutans was both fun and tiring! Little by little, I learned more about orangutans and how to collect all the necessary data. I found this new experience to be very personally rewarding.

I think that every orangutan has a different character and personality, almost the same as humans! Some orangutans are easy to approach, and some are difficult to approach. The difference between older (habituated) orangutans and newer (unhabituated) orangutans became very clear. Habituated orangutans have long been used to seeing humans and so they are easier to observe and follow. Unhabituated orangutans, however, are a little bit difficult to observe and follow because they might be scared when they see us.



Udin collects data during an orangutan focal follow.

So far, being a field assistant has been fun and exciting, but also challenging when we are in the field and when we are sometimes alone observing orangutans. I had to learn to be brave when working alone in the field. But for me, it is a challenge that must be faced.

I am grateful for all the experiences I have gained so far during my time at Cabang Panti and excited to keep continuing my journey. Thank you to the project and to the entire *Keluarga Cabang Panti* (Cabang Panti Family)!

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.

"He who plants a tree, plants a hope."

– *Lucy Larcom*



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