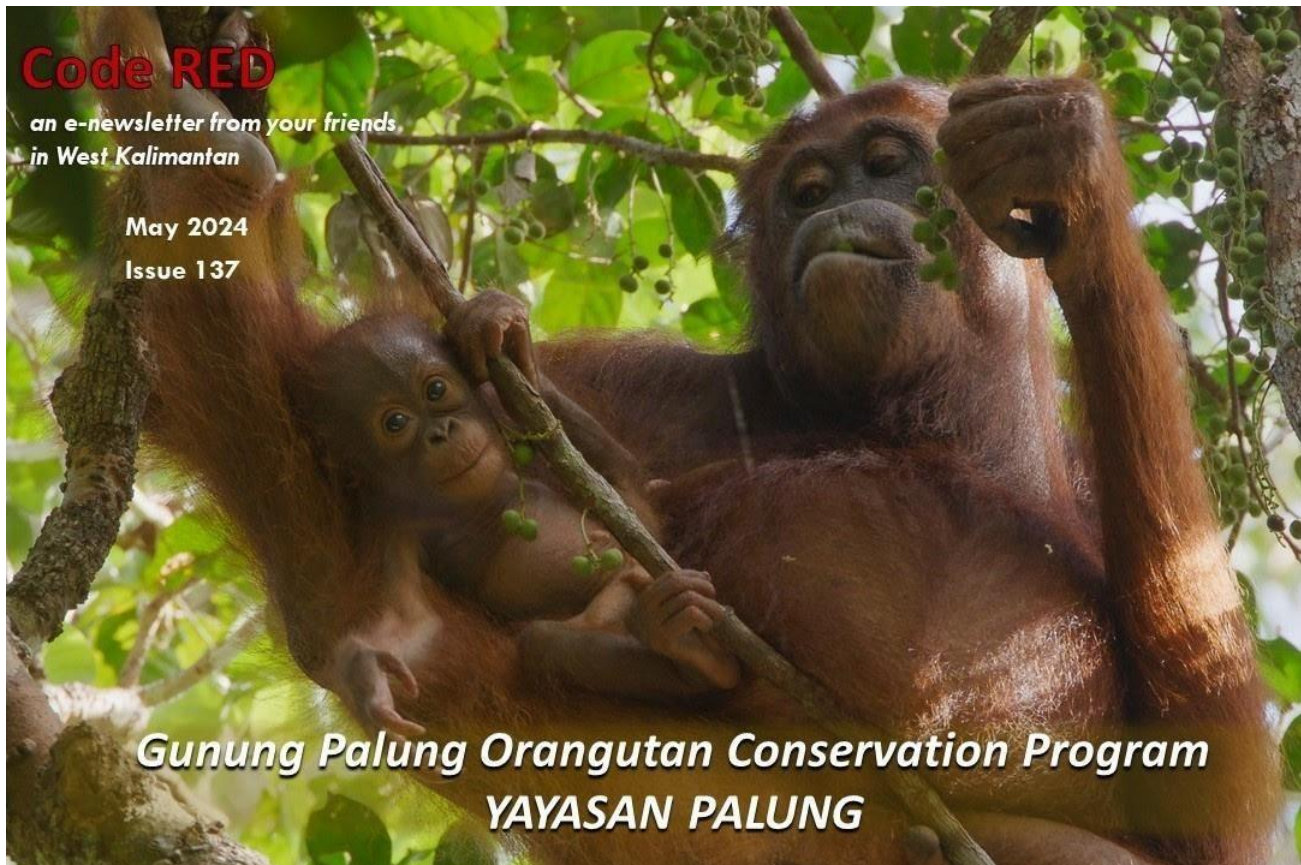

GPOCP May 2024 - Biodiversity Surveys & Local Conservationist Returns to Camp



Dear Friends and Supporters,

We always love the opportunity to meet our partners in-person. This month we had that opportunity when Deputy Director Caitlin O'Connell and I traveled to Salt Lake City, Utah, for the Zoos and Aquariums Committing to Conservation (ZACC) conference. It was a fantastic meeting, connecting with some of our longtime zoo partners and exchanging many ideas for successful conservation strategies with other leaders in the field. I am now gearing up for my annual trip to Indonesia which I will embark on at the end of the June.

In this month's issue of Code RED we hear from Edi Rahman, our Field Director, about the annual biodiversity surveys that we conduct in the Village Forests. These surveys allow the villagers to understand what types of plants and animals are

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present in these areas. Then, together with our team, they can monitor changes in the flora and fauna over time and use this information to inform their forest management strategies. These data are also used to compare Village Forests to different forest types inside the boundaries of the national park to better understand how different levels of protection impact flora and fauna, and show how wildlife respond to ecological changes.

We also hear from Ari Marlina, our new laboratory assistant at the Cabang Panti Research Station. Ari, who goes by “ii,” was one of the past recipients of the West Bornean Orangutan Caring Scholarships that we host in partnership with Orang Utan Republik Foundation. Now that she has completed her undergraduate degree, we are thrilled to have her continuing on her research and conservation journey as a member of our team. Welcome back, ii!

I look forward to sending updates from Indonesia next month. It will be a busy summer with visits to the field from partners, researchers, and students. I hope you all are having a great start to the summer!



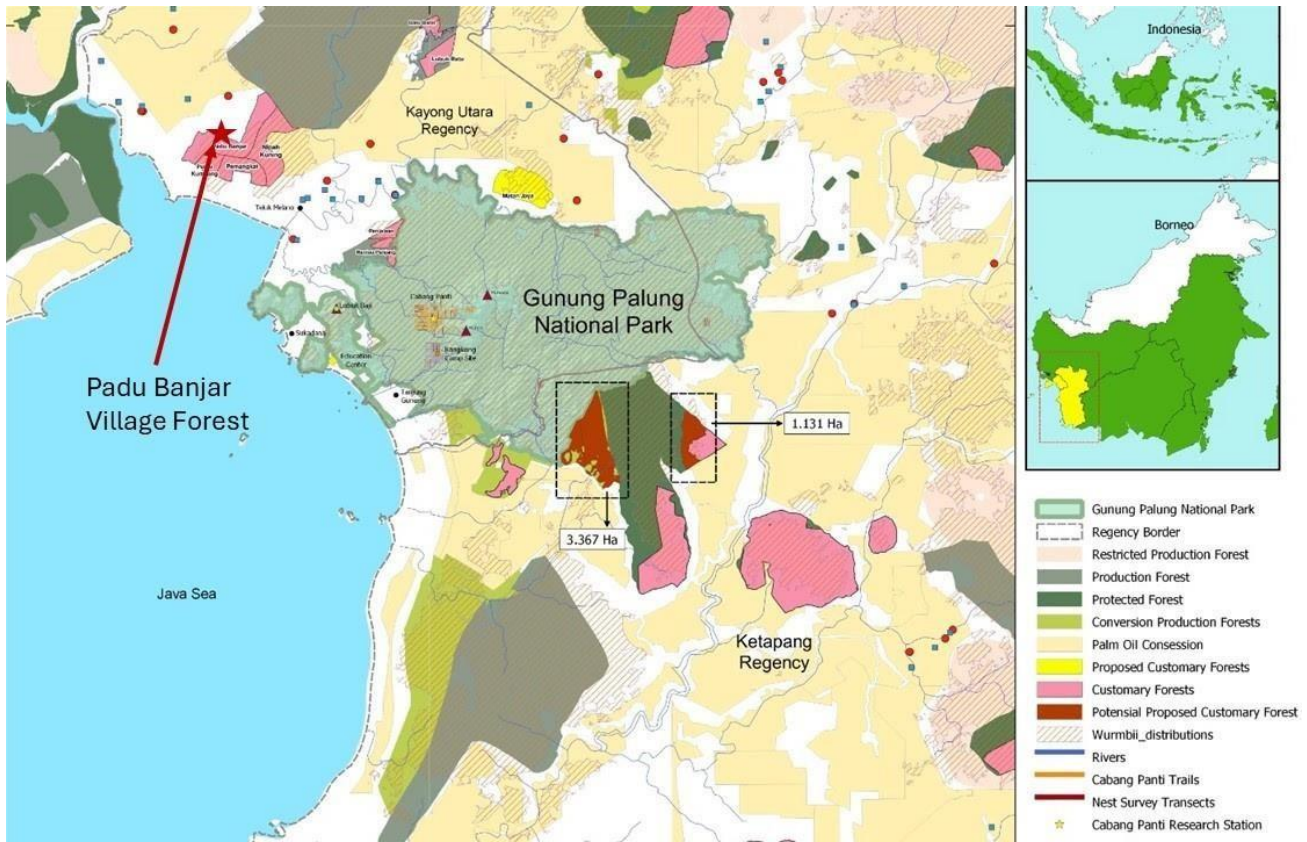
Cheryl Knott, PhD
Executive Director

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

Jungle Jewels: Discovering the Biodiversity of Village Forests

By Edi Rahman, Field Director

From 2014 to the present, Yayasan Palung has assisted multiple villages in managing their Village Forests. These are areas that villagers have traditionally tended to in various ways that they now have legal title to sustainably manage and utilize. We work together with each Village Forest Management Board (LPHD) to carry out a range of monitoring and sustainability activities both within Village Forests and in community areas outside their boundaries.



The location of Padu Banjar Village Forest in relation to Gunung Palung National Park.

One of the activities that is routinely carried out with LPHD is the annual biodiversity survey in the Village Forest area. These surveys began in 2016 and this year we started the rounds in April in the Padu Banjar Village Forest. The surveys will continue so that by the end of the year, we have surveyed the biodiversity present in six Village Forests. There are several objectives for these surveys, including obtaining up-to-date information on the population of orangutans found in these areas, the quality of orangutan habitat by identifying and quantifying tree species that are a source of food for orangutans (and thus, are plant species that have high conservation value), and updating data on the diversity of other wildlife species, especially from mammal and bird taxa. During these surveys we also identify any threats to wildlife and their habitat and use these data to inform Village Forest management plans.



Erik Sulidra, our Animal Protection Program Manager, observes the position of a degrading orangutan nest in Padu Banjar Village Forest.

We know from previous surveys that the Village Forest in Padu Banjar, part of the Sungai Paduan Peat Protection Forest area, is a peat swamp forest and a comfortable place for various protected animals to live, including orangutans and numerous other species. We have found evidence of orangutans, gibbons, deer, several squirrel species, bearded pigs, and more. As with all our biodiversity surveys, we work together with the Village Forest Management Board, made up of members of the Padu Banjar community. It is the Management Board that has management rights to the Village Forest, and we help to build their capacity to monitor and sustainably utilize the forest for themselves and their village. This investment and training will give these management boards the ability to independently identify nests, identify orangutan food, use the technological tools, and troubleshoot as challenges are encountered. In addition to our own team members and the LPHD, we also involve members of the Kayong Forest Management Unit (KPH) Brigade in survey activities.



Member of LPHD Padu Banjar takes part in the annual biodiversity survey.

Within the six Village Forests that we target for biodiversity surveys, there are 16 transects that we monitor, including 12 in the Peat Protection Forest (HLG) landscape of Sungai Paduan, which is made up of Village Forests in Padu Banjar, Pulau Kumbang, Pemangkat, and Nipah Kuning villages. There are another 4 transects in the Sungai Purang Production Forest (HP) landscape, and this area consists of Penjataan and Rantau Panjang Village Forests.



Yayasan Palung team member, Susanto, takes measurements during the biodiversity survey.

Starting this year, we have added an additional protocol to our annual biodiversity surveys – thermal drone orangutan surveys. There are several objectives of data collection using thermal drones including rapid assessment of orangutan populations in Village Forests and assessing the temperature of the forest canopy as a measure of degradation and risk of forest and land fires. These rapid assessments with the thermal drone are highly dependent on weather conditions, whether it is sunny, overcast, or raining. But in general, thermal drone flights are carried out in the morning when the sun has only just started to rise, and the heat has not yet penetrated the forest canopy. When the weather is sunny, the suitable time to fly the drone is between 5:00 and 6:30 AM and if the weather is cloudy, the suitable timeframe is extended from 5:00 to 7:30 AM or beyond if the sunlight has not yet penetrated the clouds. After completing 4 transects in Padu Banjar Village Forest in April, we carried out the May survey in Pulau Kumbang Village Forest covering 2 transects and then Pemangkat Village Forest which also has 2 transects. We seem to discover additional species present with each survey and are heartened by the breadth of the diversity that call the Village Forests home. It is clear these areas are very worth protecting.



The April 2024 Biodiversity Survey team in front of their camp site in Padu Banjar Village Forest, including Yayasan Palung staff, LPHD members, and a representative from the regional Forest Management Unit.

Me, Orangutans, and My Daily Rhythm in the Rainforest

By Ari Marlina, Laboratory Assistant

I am Ari Marlina, and I go by "ii". I was one of the recipients of the West Bornean Orangutan Caring Scholarship (WBOCS) in 2018 supported by Yayasan Palung (YP) and the Orangutan Republik Foundation (OURF). I studied at the Faculty of Forestry, Tanjungpura University in Pontianak and graduated in October 2023.



ii at Cabang Panti in 2022.

My story at the Cabang Panti research station began when I conducted a research project entitled "Social Behavior of Orangutan Mothers and Offspring at the Gunung Palung National Park Cabang Panti Research Station" for 3 months, from November 1 to January 31, 2023. This was my first time in the jungle in a long time.

My interest in taking on this project was because I wanted to see the life of orangutans in the wild and understand the relationship between orangutan mothers and their offspring. I had previously only seen and heard many stories about the lives of orangutans who were kept captive by humans and cared for in rehabilitation centers.

While I am sure that many others have witnessed the social behavior of mothers and offspring at Cabang Panti and other wild study sites, this was very new and memorable to me. I have learned a lot about the lives of living things in general, and that the instinct of a mother to protect and nurture her child does not only occur in human life, but in wildlife as well. Orangutans are protective of their babies in their own way, the way they share food, the way mothers scold their offspring, the way they watch their offspring play, the way they ask for milk from their mothers, and many other stories. They are so adorable and fun to observe!



Berani (mother) and Bani (infant) during a rest in 2022.

Now, a few months after I graduated, thanks to the great family of Yayasan Palung, I have returned and have the opportunity to be part of the Orangutan Project, Gunung Palung Orangutan Conservation Program (GPOCP) as a laboratory assistant at Cabang Panti Research Station.

My daily activities at Cabang Panti this time around are more dominated by time in the laboratory, collecting and processing the orangutan urine and fecal samples, working on orangutan food sample collections and recording orangutan feeding data per day when followed, weighing and measuring plant parts from each feeding bout, and performing data entry and management for operational ease of the project.



Documentation of orangutan food samples (right) and ii is processing orangutan fecal samples (right) in 2024.

My routine at Cabang Panti this time is in accordance with my joy and passion - the world of plants and primates. As an avid conservationist with multiple and varied experiences with biodiversity, I think the lives of orangutans and other wildlife in the core zone of Gunung Palung National Park are all interconnected. The biodiversity of flora and fauna and other abiotic components come together to form a perfect and special ecosystem.



Looking down a trail in the forest at Cabang Panti in Gunung Palung National Park.

Cabang Panti is one of the many examples of the uniqueness possessed by Gunung Palung National Park, along with the current beautiful condition of the forest. I firmly believe that anyone who reads this article will understand about our common duty as stewards of the Earth - take care of the forest for the future.

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.

"Look deep into nature, and then you will understand everything better."

- Albert Einstein



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