

ORANGUTAN



FACTS

The name orangutan means "man of the forest" in the Malay language. In the lowland forests in which they reside, orangutans live solitary existences. They feast on wild fruits like lychees, mangosteens, and figs, and slurp water from holes in trees. They make nests in trees of vegetation to sleep at night and rest during the day. Adult male orangutans can weigh up to 200 pounds. Flanged males have prominent cheek pads called flanges and a throat sac used to make loud verbalizations called long calls. An unflanged male looks like an adult female. In a biological phenomenon unique among primates, an unflanged male can change to a flanged male for reasons that are not yet fully understood.

WHY THEY MATTER

Orangutans are "gardeners" of the forest, playing a vital role in seed dispersal in their habitats. They live in tropical forests and prefer forest in river valleys and floodplains of their respective islands. Orangutans' extremely low reproductive rate makes their populations highly vulnerable. Females give birth to one infant at a time about every 3-5 years, so these species can take a long time to recover from population declines. With human pressure only increasing, orangutans face an increasing risk of extinction.

THREATS

Orangutans are an easy target for hunters because they're large and slow targets. They are killed for food or in retaliation when they move into agricultural areas and destroy crops. This usually occurs when orangutans can't find the food they need in the forest. Females are hunted most often. When caught with offspring, the young are often kept as pets. The pet trade is a major problem.

The habitats of Asia's only great apes are fast disappearing under the chainsaw to make way for oil palm plantations and other agricultural plantations. Today, more than 50% of orangutans are found outside protected areas in forests under management by timber, palm oil and mining companies.

PROTECTION

WWF works in both Borneo and Sumatra to secure well-managed protected areas and wider forest landscapes to connect sub-populations of orangutans. Our work on sustainable production of commodities contributes to the conservation of major orangutan habitats in Borneo and Sumatra. We also monitor orangutan populations, work on ecotourism and provide community based support for orangutan conservation.

All information comes directly from the World Wildlife Fund Website

