

## Orangutan Foundation Press Page



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### Fascinating Orangutan Facts

1. Orangutans are found only on the islands of Borneo and Sumatra.
2. Orangutan means person of the forest. *Orang* – person and *hutan* – forest.
3. Some tribes in Borneo believe orangutans can speak, but don't, for fear of being put to work!
4. Orangutans are very intelligent and show a capacity for tool-use.
5. Orangutans share 97% of our DNA.
6. Orangutans make a natural umbrella by covering their heads with leaves when it rains.
7. Orangutans are the largest tree-living (arboreal) mammal in the world. Males can weigh up to 120kg.
8. The oldest known orangutan died in 2018 at the age of 62
9. The gestation (length of pregnancy) of an orangutan is almost the same as humans, at around 9 months.
10. Orangutans make and sleep in a new nest each night.
11. Orangutans are frugivorous, their diet comprises mainly fruit.
12. The male orangutan's long call can travel more than 2km (listen to it here).
13. Orangutans use plants to self-medicate.

### Hard facts (One hectare is about 1.5 football pitches)

According to the recent Population and Habitat Viability Assessment (PHVA) in May 2017 there are an estimated 57,000 Bornean orangutans, 13,000 Sumatran orangutans and 800 Tapanuli orangutan in the wild. 80% of orangutans live outside of protected areas.

Bornean orangutan population is predicted to decline by 86% from 1950 to 2025, due to loss of habitat.

In under 40 years, Borneo has lost 10 million hectares, or 39%, of its original forest cover.

In 2015, fires in Indonesia resulted in the loss of forest, prime orangutan habitat, equal to an area approximately the size of Wales.

It is projected that another 37% of suitable orangutan habitat, amounting to 1.5 million hectares, will be converted to plantations between 2010-2025.

With natural habitat being reduced and fragmented orangutans can become crop raiders or are stranded and left clinging to the last standing tree. Those that are not rescued are either persecuted or die of starvation.

## **Five reasons to save orangutans**

1. There are three species of orangutans and all are critically endangered. Orangutans are only found on the islands of Borneo and Sumatra. The Bornean orangutan (*Pongo pygmaeus*), the Sumatran orangutan (*Pongo abelii*) and the Tapanuli orangutan (*Pongo tapanuliensis*).
2. Like all great apes, orangutans are highly intelligent, they have large brains, are self-aware and capable of reasoning. They share 97% of our DNA.
3. Vital cog in the rainforest ecosystem as seed dispersers and opening light gaps in the forest canopy.
4. Prime orangutan habitat is tropical peat forest which takes in carbon dioxide and stores huge amounts of carbon. Forest play a vital role in regulating the Earth's climate.
5. Orangutans are 'umbrella species' when you protect orangutans thousands of other species are protected too.

## **About Orangutan Foundation**

Orangutan Foundation was founded in 1990, by Ashley Leiman OBE, with the mission to conserve the critically endangered orangutan by protecting their habitat. All its field programmes in Indonesian Borneo are carried out by a team of skilled and committed Indonesian staff. Orangutan Foundation has a unique and diverse approach to orangutan conservation which is reflected through its simple aim - a future for orangutans, forests and people.

**Orangutans** - Foundation have rescued hundreds of orangutan and released them back into the wild establishing a new orangutan population. The Orangutan Foundation's vet and field staff monitor and protect this important and increasing population of orangutans. When an infant orphaned orangutan is rescued and is too young for immediate release they enter the Orangutan Foundation's Soft-release Programme.

**Forests** - Orangutan Foundation actively protects over a million acres of forest and more than 4,500 orangutans in two protected areas. It has built a series of manned guard posts which act as deterrents to people entering the forests illegally and are bases from which regular patrols can be carried out. All the guard posts contain fire-fighting equipment. The Orangutan Foundation has a Forest Restoration Programme, where to date over 35,000 saplings have been planted out in areas damaged by fires. As the forest regenerates, so will the natural ecosystem.

**People** - The orangutan shares its forest home with people who rely on the forests for their livelihood and the priceless and essential ecological services it provides. Orangutan Foundation works closely with local partners to support educational and livelihood projects, which promote sustainable forest use and greater local participation in forest management decisions.

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