



THE ORANGUTAN FOUNDATION

Research – Conservation – Education

THE ORANGUTAN FOUNDATION - FACTSHEET

Orangutans are in grave danger of extinction because their rainforest habitat is being converted for human use - the biggest threat is permanent agriculture in the form of palm oil plantations and more recently illegal logging within protected areas.

The aim of the Orangutan Foundation is to protect the orangutan and the conservation of its rainforest habitat whilst caring for and repatriating ex-captive orangutans back into the wild.

Additionally the Orangutan Foundation through its educational programme plays a vital role disseminating information about the orangutan and its plight in order to galvanise the public and policy makers towards an appreciation of the ape's value and current dilemma so that it might be saved from extinction.

Background

The orangutan was once found throughout Southeast Asia but now the species only survives in relic populations on the islands of Borneo and Sumatra. Only ten years ago the estimated population was approximately 27,000, today the population has declined drastically and recent estimates suggest that it could be as low as 15,000.

The Orangutan Foundation established in 1991, is an international chapter of the OFI which was founded in 1986 by Dr. Biruté Galdikas who is recognised as the world's leading expert on orangutans. Dr. Galdikas embarked upon her study of wild orangutans, now in its 29th year, with the encouragement of the late, renowned Dr. Louis Leakey. Dr. Leakey also supported Jane Goodall's study of chimpanzees that has spanned 39 years, and the late Dian Fossey's 19 year study of mountain gorillas.

The Foundation is the only organisation that is actively conserving the orangutan and its habitat whilst conducting long term research on the ecology of orangutans and other fauna and flora within their rainforest habitat. Our objectives are to deliver an educational programme in the UK, fundraise and raise public awareness.

The Orangutan Foundation has been successful in developing relationships with both the media and other conservation bodies. Recent television coverage includes an 'In the Wild' series programme featuring Julia Roberts with the orangutans of Tanjung Puting National Park, screened in July (1998) and 'Blue Peter' (BBC, 1997). Publicity support has been provided by well-known fantasy writer and Orangutan Foundation UK trustee, Terry Pratchett, Jane Asher and TV's Michaela Strachan, Chris Packham and Shauna Lowry. The UK Foundation has also produced its first educational documentary 'Orangutan - The Forest Ape'.

Recent accomplishments

In 1997 the OFI, through the influence of Dr Galdikas, was instrumental in securing a one third (100,000 hectare) increase in the size of Tanjung Puting National Park. In addition to this the Dr Galdikas successfully lobbied for a wildlife refuge in Central Kalimantan. The Lamandau reserve is a new orangutan release site consisting of 76,000 hectares of expired logging concession. This crucial development was only made possible because of Dr. Galdikas's consultancy role to the Republic of Indonesia's then Ministry of Forestry which enabled the OFI to exercise increased influence at the policy-making level of Indonesian government.

Another vital development took place in 1998 when the Foundation co-funded an urgently needed Orangutan Care Centre in Central Kalimantan which provides a quarantine area and clinic for the treatment and rehabilitation of confiscated pet orangutans. The care centre complements the work of the rehabilitation centres in Borneo and Sumatra which since 1971 have returned just over 800 orphaned orangutans to the forest. However, it must be stressed that this is welfare NOT conservation. In the last decade it is estimated that we have lost about 25,000 orangutans from the wild. Rehabilitant orangutans will never replace the wild population.

Our main projects for 2000 are:-

- ~~✍~~ Maintaining Camp Leakey, the orangutans research site established nearly 30 years ago by Dr Galdikas, and expanding its facilities for scholars and eco-tourists
- ~~✍~~ Rescuing orphaned and injured orangutans and rehabilitating them for a life in the wild. Currently 130 orphaned orangutans are being cared for
- ~~✍~~ Restoring illegally logged and otherwise degraded rainforest, as well as former slash-and-burn fields, by planting light-tolerant canopy species in areas adjacent to the park and
- ~~✍~~ Educating young Indonesians on the devastation of Indonesia's rainforests and what that means for the endangered wild orangutan populations.

The only way to save the orangutan is to save the forest itself – our primary aim!

Orangutan Foundation, 7 Kent Terrace, London, NW1 4RP
Tel: 020 7724 2912 Fax: 020 7706 2613 Email: info@orangutan.org.uk

www.orangutan.org.uk

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