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ORANGUTAN FACT SHEET

**STATUS:**

Endangered.

DESCRIPTION:

Orangutans have thin, shaggy, reddish-brown hair. They have long, powerful arms and strong hands that they can use to manipulate tools. Orangutans have the ability to make 13 to 15 different types of vocalizations.

SIZE:

Most orangutans are four to five feet long, some can reach a length of six feet. Adult males weigh between 100 and 200 pounds and adult females weigh between 65 and 100 pounds. Orangutans have an arm spread of about five feet.

POPULATION:

An estimated 19,000 to 25,000 orangutans live in the wild. Another 900 live in captivity.

LIFESPAN:

In the wild, orangutans live for about 35 to 40 years.

RANGE:

Orangutans are only found on the islands of Sumatra and Borneo in Southeast Asia.

HABITAT:

Orangutans are arboreal creatures, which means they spend most of their lives slowly walking, swinging and climbing through dense rain forests.

FOOD:

Orangutans feed mainly on fruits, especially wild figs. They also eat other kinds of vegetation, insects, small vertebrates and birds eggs.

BEHAVIOR:

Orangutans are solitary creatures. Adult males live primarily alone and only come together with females to mate. Adult females live with their young. Occasionally, adults will live with other adults for short periods in small temporary groups.

Orangutans spend most of their lives in a "home range" of 0.4 to 3.7 square miles. Females have a smaller home range than males. Sometimes the home ranges of individual orangutans overlap.

OFFSPRING:

Females are able to give birth after age seven, but in the wild they generally do not mate until age 12. They give birth to one young at a time, which clings to its mother's stomach until it is about a year old. When an orangutan reaches adolescence at about four or five years, it becomes more independent but may seek protection from its mother until it reaches seven to eight years.



THREATS:

The orangutan's most serious threat is the destruction of forest habitat from excessive logging. Female orangutans are also killed and their young are taken and illegally placed in circuses and zoos. Orangutans are highly endangered in the wild. Orangutan habitat destruction due to logging, mining and forest fires has been increasing rapidly in the last decade. Much of this activity is illegal, occurring in national parks that are officially off limits to loggers, miners and plantation development. There is also a major problem with the illegal trapping of baby orangutans for sale into the pet trade; the trappers usually kill the mother to steal the baby.

CAPTIVITY:

Performing captive wildlife -- elephants, lions, tigers, bears, baboons, monkeys, camels, llamas - all endure years of physical and psychological pain and suffering in traveling acts to "entertain" an uninformed audience. Animals used in the circus and other traveling acts travel thousands of miles each year without water, in railroad cars or trucks not air conditioned in summer or heated in winter.

Despite their professed concern for animals, zoos remain more "collections" of interesting "items" than actual havens or simulated habitats. Zoos teach people that it is acceptable to keep animals in captivity, bored, cramped, lonely, and far from their natural homes.

Zoos claim to educate people and preserve species, but they frequently fall short on both counts. Most zoo enclosures are quite small, and labels provide little more information than the species' name, diet, and natural range. The animals' normal behavior is seldom discussed, much less observed, because their natural needs are seldom met. Many animals who naturally live in large herds or family groups are often kept alone or, at most, in pairs. Natural hunting and mating behaviors are virtually eliminated by regulated feeding and breeding regimens. The animals are closely confined, lack privacy, and have little opportunity for mental stimulation or physical exercise, resulting in abnormal and self-destructive behavior, called zoochosis.

Zoo babies are great crowd-pleasers, but what happens when babies grow up? Zoos often sell or kill animals who no longer attract visitors. Deer, tigers, lions, and other animals who breed often are sometimes sold to "game" farms where hunters pay for the "privilege" of killing them; some are killed for their meat and/or hides. Other "surplus" animals may be sold to smaller, more poorly run zoos or to laboratories for experiments.

INTELLIGENCE:

Like the other great apes, orangutans are remarkably intelligent. Although tool use among chimpanzees was documented by Jane Goodall in the 1960s, it wasn't until the mid 1990s that one population of orangutans was found to use feeding tools regularly.

PROTECTION:

Endangered Species Act, CITES* Appendix I

*Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, an international treaty with more than 144 member countries. Appendix I listed species cannot be traded commercially. Appendix II listed species can be traded commercially only if it does not harm their survival.