



Pongo pygmaeus

Bornean Orangutan

Habitat: Tropical rainforest

Distribution: Borneo and Sumatra

Diet: Mainly fruit, also leaves, bark, nuts, eggs and small vertebrates

Longevity: Up to 35 in the wild, and 50 in captivity

Status: Critically Endangered

The name orangutan means ‘man of the woods’ from the Malay words: orang meaning ‘man’ and utan meaning ‘forest’. Orangutans are very well adapted to life in the rainforest. Their long red-orange fur helps camouflage them (red is hard to see in rainforests, because red light is absorbed by the green leaves). They have long arms (almost twice the length of their legs), perfect for swinging through the forest. Their hands and feet are large and curved, providing them with excellent grip. Adult males have facial flanges and a large throat pouch. These help the males make extra loud noises when they communicate with other orangutans far away in the forest. This communication is usually about territory, since orangutans are usually solitary (unlike the other great apes: chimpanzees, bonobos and gorillas). Orangutans are highly intelligent, using leaves as umbrellas and sticks to catch fish.

Orangutans are critically endangered. Their major threat is habitat loss, which is especially problematic because the only place they live are the islands of Indonesia. The rainforests of Indonesia are being cut down to create unsustainable palm oil plantations. This is a very high profit crop with the oil being used in many foods and household items.

