

Indonesian Primate Profile

Pongo pygmaeus

Common name: Orangutan

The Orangutan is the only great ape in Southeast Asia, it consist of two sub species, *Pongo pygmaeus pygmaeus* from Kalimantan and *Pongo p. abelii* from Sumatera. Its habitat is in lowland and hilly tropical rain forest, including dipterocarp and peat-swamp forest. The Orangutan is readily distinguished by its large size, red, long hair which makes a very striking appearance.

The Orangutan is active in the day time and spends most of its time in the trees. Adult males are about twice the size of females and have cheek flanges or fibrous tissue that enlarge their face and very long hair which enhance their aggressive displays. Adult males may weigh 50-100 kg, while adult females are weighing 35-50 kg. Orangutans have very long arms for arboreal locomotion and hook-shaped hands and feet. The female Orangutan reaches adult body size at about 8 to 10 years age, but the male may not reach maturity until 15 years old. These apes reproduce quite slowly, giving birth only every four or five years, with gestation periods of 260 to 270 days.

Their diet consists mainly of fruits and young leaves, and Orangutans roam over areas of 100 meters or more in search for food, to return to individual trees throughout the year when the fruits start to ripen. The Orangutan has a huge capacity for food and will sometimes spend a whole day sitting in a single fruit tree, gorging. About 60 percent of all food eaten is fruit, including such well-known tropical species as durians, rambutans, jackfruit, lychees, mangosteens, mangoes and figs. The remainder of the diets is mostly young leaves and shoots, but they regularly eat insects, mineral-rich soils, tree bark and woody lianas and occasionally eggs and small vertebrates, raiding nest of birds and squirrels. Water is drunk from tree holes, the ape dips in a hand and sucks the water-drops falling from its hairy wrist.

Sources:

All the World Animals. Primates. Torstar Books. New York-Toronto. 1984.

Francis C.M. 2001. A Photographic Guide to Mammals of South-East Asia including Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Myanmar, Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam, Java, Sumatra, Bali and Borneo. New Holland. United Kingdom.



Orangutans are rather solitary animals. Apart from occasional sexual consort ships, adult animals travel and forage independently. Each animal occupying an individual though non-exclusive home range of several square miles. Infants remain with their mothers. Juvenile (3-7 years old) become increasingly independent, sometime traveling alone, and by adolescence (7-10 years old) they have usually complete left their mothers. Juvenile and adolescents are the most social as in others apes. The Orangutans longevity is up to about 35 years (up to 50 years in captivity).

Several rehabilitation stations have been established in Indonesia and Malaysia to train confiscated young pet Orangutans to return to the wild. Some success has been achieved, particularly in drawing local attention to the plight of this superb ape. It has, however, been generally agreed that returning human oriented animals, capable of carrying human disease into healthy wild population is not a useful exercise. Instead rehabilitated animals should be released in areas where Orangutans no longer occur in order to establish new populations.

Photos (above and cover) by: Ikin Mansjoer