

## THE ORANGUTANS OF INDONESIA

Orangutans share 97% of our DNA and are among the most intelligent beings to have evolved on land. As individuals, orangutans display unique and rich personalities. They provide models for human behavior, in terms of physiology, cognition and evolution. As great apes and one of humankind's closest primate relatives, orangutans are sentient beings that deserve respect and life.

Orangutans are the world's largest arboreal (tree-dwelling) animals and their fruit-eating and seed-dispersing behavior helps to shape and preserve tropical rain forests. They are a "keystone species," meaning that their disappearance signals the disappearance of thousands of other animals and plant species in fragile tropical rain forest habitats.

**There are only two places left in the world where orangutans can be found in the wild :  
on the Indonesian islands of Borneo and Sumatra.**

Both Bornean and Sumatran Orangutans are listed as *Critically Endangered* on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species. Orangutan populations declined by as much as 97% in the 20th century due to pet trade, hunting and forest loss. It is now estimated that there are less than 40,000 Bornean and 7,000 Sumatran orangutans remaining in the wild.

For years, the orangutan pet trade was partly responsible for the decline of the orangutan population. During the early 1990s, over 1,000 orangutans were illegally imported to Taiwan alone because children watched a TV show featuring a young orangutan and demanded one for themselves. With this in mind, the Orangutan Freedom Campaign, established in the early 2000s, put out a worldwide call for pet owners everywhere to return their orangutans to the wild.

In the years since then, thousands of previously-captive orangutans have been returned to Borneo and Sumatra, and orangutan rehabilitation centres have been set up to help returning orangutans develop the skills and behaviors required to live independently in the jungle.

Among the many support services provided by these orangutan rehabilitation centres, they have "daily feeding times." In the morning, afternoon and evening, the centres typically set out fruit and other foods on a platform, then ring a large bell to attract back to the centre those ex-captive orangutans who are having difficulty feeding for themselves in the wild.

Although the orangutan pet trade has subsided in recent years, a much greater threat to the survival of the orangutan has emerged - ongoing and widespread illegal logging. Today, the Orangutan Rehabilitation Centres of Borneo and Sumatra are spearheading the campaign for forest preservation and the restoration of forests to their original functionality.

**The lowland tropical rainforest surrounding the Sekoyer River in south Borneo is one of the world's most important sanctuaries for wild orangutans. Made famous by the long-term research carried out by Dr Biruté Mary Galdikas at Camp Leakey on the Sekoyer River, the area is now home to over 5,000 orangutans and three orangutan rehabilitation centres.**

**On IndoExcursions' Borneo Riverboat Excursion (3-Days, 2 nights) travellers cruise up Borneo's Sekoyer River, stopping at all three of the River's Orangutan Rehabilitation Centres at feeding time, including the renowned Camp Leakey.**