

International

Orangutan

Day

Orangutans Are Not Pets Fact Sheet

Moms and Babies

Orangutans have a special bond with their moms. They stay together for up to 8 to 10 years, to learn everything they need to know to survive in the wild. It's like going to school, but with their mom as their teacher! Sadly, taking away baby orangutans from their moms to use them for entertainment or as pets is really hurtful to their development. By decreasing the demand for orangutans as pets we can help make sure orangutans can grow up in their natural habitat, surrounded by the care and guidance of their mothers.



Arboreal Apes

Orangutans live their lives high up in the trees. They are what we call "arboreal," which means they spend most of their time in the treetops. Unfortunately, when orangutans are kept by humans for entertainment purposes or as pets, they miss out on the chance to be in the environment that makes them feel most at home. Here at the zoo we give our orangutans lots of opportunities to climb and move throughout their habitat the way they feel most comfortable.

Semi-Solitary

Orangutans are unique from other primates in that they are "semi-solitary," which means they prefer to spend most of their time alone. When orangutans are used for entertainment purposes, they are often exposed to a lot of human interaction and surroundings that can be overwhelming for them and may find the constant stimulation and presence of humans to be uncomfortable and distressing. It's important for us to create environments that prioritize their well-being, allowing them to live in a way that feels most natural and comfortable to them.



Many Expressions

An orangutan's smile may look similar to a human smile, but it actually carries a different meaning. When orangutans pull back their lips and reveal all of their teeth, it is not a sign of happiness or joy; instead, it is often a display of anxiety and fear. It's their way of communicating distress or discomfort. Orangutans, just like us, have their own unique ways of expressing their emotions, and it's important for us to understand and respect their signals. By observing their behaviors closely, we can better understand their needs and ensure their well-being.

Orangutans are Strong

Orangutans are incredibly strong due to their ability to swing from branches, and adult orangutans can be 5-7 times stronger than humans. This strength, combined with their natural instincts and behaviors, can make orangutans used in entertainment settings very dangerous as they grow older. Because they can be dangerous, they retire them before they reach maturity. This practice is not sustainable or ideal. Orangutans have long lifespans, often living up to 40 or even 50 years.



To address this issue, it is essential to prioritize conservation efforts and prevent the use of orangutans in entertainment. By promoting responsible practices and raising awareness about the needs and conservation of orangutans, we can work towards a future where orangutans can thrive.

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Protect Orangutans

Orangutan mothers are incredibly protective of their young, and capturing a baby orangutan often involves the heartbreaking loss of the mother, as poachers resort to extreme measures to separate them. This tragic process not only removes at least two orangutans from the wild—the mother and the baby—but it also disrupts the potential for future offspring from both individuals, further exacerbating the depletion of the population.

The dependency period of orangutans is long, and they typically have significant gaps between having offspring. This means that the removal of even a single individual from the wild has an exponential impact on the overall population. The slow rate of population regrowth makes it especially challenging for orangutans to recover from such losses.

It is vital to recognize the severe consequences of capturing orangutans from the wild for entertainment purposes. The impact goes beyond the immediate individuals involved and has long-lasting effects on the entire species. Conservation efforts should focus on protecting and preserving the natural habitats of orangutans, preventing illegal capture, and promoting sustainable practices that safeguard the well-being and future of these remarkable animals.



What Are We Doing?

1. Conservation and Research

AZA zoos actively contribute to conservation efforts for orangutans in the wild. They support and participate in research projects focused on orangutan behavior, habitat conservation, and breeding programs. These initiatives help gather valuable information to aid in the conservation of orangutans and their natural habitats.



2. Education and Outreach

AZA zoos are dedicated to educating the public about orangutans and their conservation needs. They provide educational programs, interactive exhibits, and interpretive displays to raise awareness about the challenges orangutans face in the wild, including habitat loss and illegal trade. By engaging visitors, AZA zoos inspire empathy and promote actions to protect orangutans and their habitats.

3. Breeding Programs

Many AZA zoos participate in orangutan breeding programs, coordinated through Species Survival Plans (SSPs). These programs focus on maintaining healthy and genetically diverse populations of orangutans in captivity. By carefully managing breeding pairs, AZA zoos contribute to the long-term sustainability and genetic health of the orangutan population under human care.



4. Enrichment and Welfare

AZA zoos prioritize the welfare of orangutans in their care. They provide spacious and enriching environments that mimic natural habitats, allowing orangutans to engage in natural behaviors like climbing, swinging, and foraging. Enrichment activities, such as puzzle feeders, sensory stimuli, and social interactions are provided to ensure the mental and physical well-being of orangutans.

5. Collaborative Efforts

AZA zoos work together with conservation organizations, research institutions, and government agencies to develop collaborative strategies for orangutan conservation. These partnerships allow for the sharing of knowledge, resources, and expertise to maximize the impact of conservation initiatives and support orangutan populations in the wild.



Through these various efforts, AZA zoos contribute to the conservation, welfare, and public understanding of orangutans. They play a critical role in raising awareness about the challenges faced by orangutans in the wild and promoting actions that can help protect these remarkable animals for generations to come.

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What Can You Do?

1. Learn More

Learn about the issue and understand the negative impacts of using orangutans for entertainment. Research and educate yourself about the natural behavior, needs, and conservation status of orangutans.



2. Spread Awareness

Share what you've learned with others. Use your voice to raise awareness about the ethical concerns surrounding the use of orangutans in entertainment. Share information through social media, conversations, or by supporting organizations that advocate for orangutan welfare.

3. Support EcoTourism

Be conscious of the activities you support when traveling or visiting wildlife-based attractions. Avoid visiting venues that exploit orangutans or other animals for entertainment purposes. Instead, choose responsible tourism options that focus on conservation, education, and respect for animal welfare.



4. Support AZA Zoos

Visit or support accredited zoos that prioritize the well-being and conservation of orangutans. These organizations play a crucial role in education, research, conservation, and rehabilitation efforts.

5. Donate

Contribute to reputable conservation organizations, like Orangutan S.A.F.E., which partners with credible organizations working to protect orangutans and their habitats. Financial support can aid in conservation initiatives, rescue and rehabilitation programs, and advocacy campaigns.



6. Support Sustainable Palm Oil

The palm oil industry is a significant driver of deforestation in orangutan habitats. Support companies that commit to sustainable palm oil practices or choose products that are certified as sustainable palm oil.

7. Talk to Leaders

Support initiatives and organizations working towards stricter rules and regulations that protect orangutans and prevent their use in entertainment. Write to leaders in your community advocating for stronger legislation and enforcement against the exploitation of orangutans.



8. Make Informed Choices

Be a conscious consumer and avoid engaging with media derived from the exploitation of orangutans or their habitats and purchasing products that might harm orangutans. Choose products and watch media that are environmentally friendly and promote the protection of wildlife.

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