

ORANGUTANS AND SUSTAINABLE PALM OIL

A NEW STUDY CO-AUTHORED BY MARC ANCRENAZ, DIRECTOR OF OUR PARTNERS HUTAN, REVEALED THAT BORNEAN ORANGUTAN POPULATIONS HAVE DECLINED BY 25% OVER THE LAST 10 YEARS! IT IS NOW TIME TO ACT FOR ORANGUTANS AND ONE WAY TO DO IT IS BY SUPPORTING SUSTAINABLE PALM OIL.

We have been working closely with [HUTAN-Kinabatangan Orangutan Conservation Project](#), an organisation located in Sabah, Malaysian Borneo, for over a decade now to make a difference and [help protect orangutans](#). The critically endangered Bornean orangutan is one of only two great ape species found in Asia – the other being the critically endangered Sumatran orangutan.

The species is protected under Malaysian and Indonesian law but is still facing many threats including habitat loss, fragmentation due to forests being turned into agricultural, mining or infrastructure development sites, human-orangutan conflict, and hunting for bushmeat and wildlife trade.

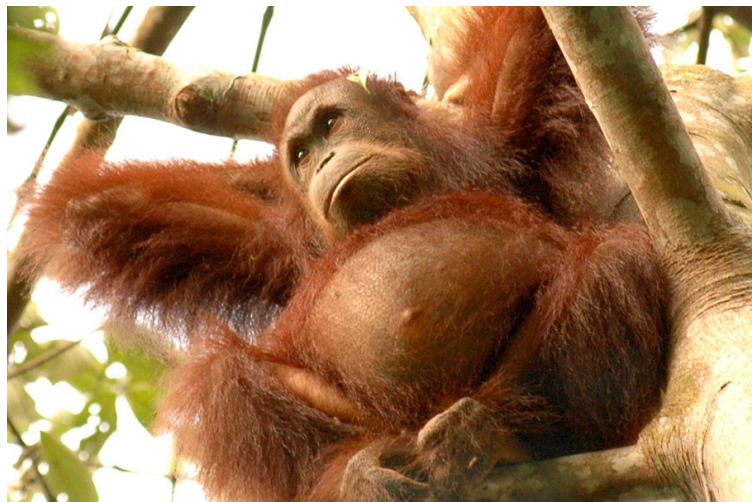


PHOTO CREDIT: HUTAN/KOCP

The new study revealed that the iconic ape species has suffered a 25% decline over the past 10 years, contradicting some views and non-supported claims that indicated an increase in orangutan numbers previously. The populations' survival in Sabah were estimated especially at risk, as the average size of forest patches where the species currently reside was assessed to be the lowest in Borneo! Even though the populations in Sabah are mainly found within the boundary of protected areas, they are facing high threats due to the protected areas small sizes and their lack of connectivity.

Maintaining high forest cover and improving connectivity among remaining forest patches is crucial to increase orangutan survival. Due to the extent of oil palm plantations developed in the region, the oil palm industry is a key player to engage with to solve these challenges.

Because palm oil is efficient, versatile and high yielding, it has become the world's most widely used vegetable oil and global consumption is rising. The problem is that the demand for palm oil has resulted in the rapid expansion of plantations triggering vast areas of rainforest, home to various endangered species, to be cleared to make way for palm oil trees.



BRIDGES ALLOW ORANGUTANS TO TRAVEL BETWEEN DIFFERENT

In recent years a number of companies have started to produce and source palm oil more sustainably. [The Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil](#) (RSPO) has developed sustainability standards for palm oil produced with minimal impact on wildlife, local people and the environment. Buying only [products](#) that contain certified sustainable palm oil is an important first step in the journey to protect animals like orangutans and others that share its rainforest habitat.

An alliance of UK industry associations and NGOs have recently signed the Commitment to Support 100% Sustainable Palm Oil in Europe by 2020. The Roundtable joins various European private sector organizations in support of this commitment. This UK alliance can make an important contribution to the efforts of the private sector across Europe to remove deforestation from their supply chains, and to ensure fully sustainable palm oil supply chains by 2020. BIAZA, the professional body representing the best zoos and aquariums in the UK and Ireland, is a member of the alliance.

At Chester Zoo we partner and support conservation projects in South East Asia, with a focus on orangutans in Malaysian Borneo, protecting the wildlife that is threatened by palm oil production. We've been working to raise awareness of the impact that the production of [palm oil in South East Asia](#) has had on rainforests all over the world and increase collaborations with like-minded organisations to work together to make sustainable palm oil the norm.



*THE GREEN GOLD CONSPIRACY IS AN INTERACTIVE GAME AROUND PALM OIL ISSUES.
PHOTO CREDIT: MUSEUM OF SCIENCE AND INDUSTRY. SEBASTIAN MATTHES. MANNOX
PATCHES OF FORESTS. PHOTO CREDIT: YOSUKE OTANI*

After starting small and auditing our own supply chain, making sure that the food products that we stock in our shops and restaurants that contain palm oil were from certified sustainable sources, we are now taking a step forward by launching our new initiative: **Sustainable Palm Oil City**.

If you're a restaurant or business and want to join us in making Chester the WORLD'S FIRST sustainable palm oil city we've created the toolkit which contains everything you need to get started. We'll promote any business in the city that takes the pledge to make Chester the first Sustainable Palm Oil City in the world and will follow your journey to celebrate your successes!

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<https://www.actforwildlife.org.uk/conservation-news/orangutans-sustainable-palm-oil/>

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