

Orangutans in Odisha

Prelims: Current events of national and international importance | Environment

Why in News?

Forest officials rescued 5 young orangutans during routine patrolling in the Udayapur section of the Jaleswar Range in Odisha's Balasore district, transferred to the Nandankanan Zoological Park.

Orangutans

- **Genus** - Great apes belonging to the genus *Pongo*. They are Asia's only living great ape species.
- **Nativity** - Orangutans are not native to India or the South Asian subcontinent.
- **Habitat** - Found exclusively in the rainforests of Southeast Asia, restricted to two islands:
 - **Borneo** (*Pongo pygmaeus*)
 - **Sumatra** (*Pongo abelii* and *Pongo tapanuliensis*).
- **Ecological Role** - Known as the "gardeners of the forest," they are predominantly arboreal (tree-dwelling) frugivores that play a critical role in seed dispersal across rainforest ecosystems.
- **Conservation Status**
 - **IUCN Red List** - All three recognized species of orangutans, Bornean, Sumatran, and Tapanuli are classified as **Critically Endangered (CR)**.
 - **CITES Protection**- Listed under **Appendix I** of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), strictly prohibiting commercial international trade.
 - **Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972** - In India, exotic species listed under CITES Appendices are protected under **Schedule IV** (as amended in 2022), making illegal possession, trade, or transport of imported wildlife a severe, punishable offense.
- **Exceptional Intelligence** - They are known for Using tools, learning through observation, Problem-solving and Constructing sleeping nests in trees.
- **Major Threats**
 - Habitat Loss
 - Human-Wildlife Conflict
 - Illegal Wildlife Trade
 - Climate Change



Three Species. One Genus. A Shared Future.

Pongo pygmaeus | *Pongo abelii* | *Pongo tapanuliensis*

Three species of orangutans | One remarkable genus – *Pongo*

Different islands.
Same family.
Same fight.



Pongo pygmaeus
(Bornean Orangutan)



Common name
Bornean Orangutan



Distribution
Island of Borneo
(Indonesia, Malaysia, Brunei)



Habitat
Tropical and subtropical forests,
including lowland and peat-swamp
forests.



Size (adult male)
~ 1.4 – 1.8 m; 70 – 100 kg



Distinctive features

- Fuller cheeks
- Reddish-brown coat (darker in males)



Pongo abelii
(Sumatran Orangutan)



Common name
Sumatran Orangutan



Distribution
Northern parts of Sumatra
(Indonesia)



Habitat
Tropical forests, mainly lowland
and hill forests.



Size (adult male)
~ 1.2 – 1.6 m; 50 – 90 kg



Distinctive features

- Flatter face
- Lighter, redder coat



Pongo tapanuliensis
(Tapanuli Orangutan)



Common name
Tapanuli Orangutan



Distribution
Batang Toru ecosystem,
North Sumatra (Indonesia)



Habitat
Tropical forests, particularly
in the Batang Toru forest complex.



Size (adult male)
~ 1.1 – 1.5 m; 40 – 80 kg



Distinctive features

- Smaller size
- Darker, shorter hair
- More pronounced cheek pads (in males)



Quick Facts

- Genus: *Pongo* | Family: Hominidae | Order: Primates
- Only great apes naturally found in Asia.
- Highly intelligent, predominantly arboreal.
- Important seed dispersers and forest gardeners.

Healthy forests
need orangutans,
and orangutans need
healthy forests.



Conservation Status

All three species are listed as
CRITICALLY ENDANGERED
on the IUCN Red List.



Reference

[Times of India | Young orangutans was found abandoned in Odisha](#)



SHANKAR
IAS PARLIAMENT
Information is Empowering