

Fact Sheet: Threats

The main threats: destruction of the rainforest due mainly to encroaching palm oil plantations, illegal logging, fires and poaching

Borneo: the world's third largest island

Surface: 462,000 sq miles

Reduction of the forest: Since 1980 25% of Borneo's forests have disappeared.

Human population: more than 15 million

Nations: Borneo is divided between three countries: Indonesia, Malaysia and Brunei



The orangutans used to live spread out over South East Asia all the way to what is now southern China. Most of the land was then covered with huge continuous rainforest areas and the orangutans could roam freely over large distances. Today the logging and the human expansion have limited the untouched rainforest to very little intact areas.

The numbers of orangutans are diminishing because of human impact. The threat comes mainly from three human activities: destruction of the forest, fires and poaching.

Large parts of the original forests of Asia have disappeared. They have been replaced by farm land, palm oil plantations, cities and villages. Huge areas are also disappearing as the forest companies are illegally cutting down the trees, without permits from either the government or the local populations, who depend on the forest for their survival.

When creating plantations it is common to first burn the land. Over the years these planned fires have often spread uncontrollably, leaving an enormous destruction in their wake. Many orangutans are killed by the fires as they have no chance of escape.

The poaching of the orangutan is another obstacle for the survival of the species. The infants are sold as exotic pets while the flesh from the adults is eaten. Despite the fact that it is illegal to kill, capture or sell orangutans there is a lot of money to be made— which makes it very difficult to come to terms with the problem.

