



# GOING APE FOR RAM

exhibits. The Islands is home to four Orangutans—males Segundo and Teak, and females Bella and Amber. This frolicking foursome never fails to fascinate Zoo-goers young and old; they also keep their trainers on their toes. Amber, the seemingly sweet female orangutan is especially mischievous.

“All of the orangs are smart, but Amber is crazy smart,” said Training Supervisor Jane Anne Franklin. “She’s rotten,” Jane Anne remarks with a smile, “she’s so intuitive, so personable, and she understands everything.” In a recent training session, the keepers had oranges for the orangutans as rewards. In addition to the juicy fruit, Amber also likes to eat the whitish inside of the rind. This takes time. “I looked at her and explained that she could take her oranges back to her bedroom until the training was over.” Amber then did exactly that coming right back to continue the training. When that was completed, she headed back to her oranges and ate them in her particular style.

Training animals at the Zoo has an important purpose, to allow keepers to closely monitor the animals’ health and well-being without the need of anesthesia or other procedures that might cause

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All photos by Kara Bussabarger

## HOW CAN YOU HELP THE ORANGUTANS?

Orangutans are critically endangered due to large-scale habitat conversion for agriculture, especially palm oil plantations. Other products originating from Indonesia may have been made with materials that come from the rainforests. Here are some tips from the Orangutan Conservancy:

As you shop, ask yourself:

- Do I really need that picture frame or piece of furniture crafted from tropical hardwood?
- Do I really need clothing made of rayon?
- Do I want to make palm oil a part of my diet?
- Is there proof that

this exotic wood product has come from well-managed forests by an accredited certifier of the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC)?

**E**ver since the Islands Exhibit opened at the Louisville Zoo in 1997, it has been a favorite destination for visitors of all ages. With its multiple species of mammals and birds, the diversity of the Islands provides a new adventure around every bamboo-lined turn.

One group of animals always draws a crowd, whether they’re climbing on fire hoses or hanging from the nets in the indoor exhibit or climbing on the rocks in one of the outside



(Above) Amber and (right) Teak.

# INGS



(Left below) Bella and (left) Amber. (Below) Training Supervisor Jane Anne Franklin rewards Amber with her favorite fruit treats.



stress. In one instance, Jane Anne and her staff were teaching the orangutans how to be X-rayed. "I needed Amber to back up, so she would be in the correct position for the machine to work. But we'd never taught them to back up. She looked at me dead in the eye and then took two steps back so we could take the X-ray. She knew exactly what we were talking about, and what we needed her to do."

It is perhaps this intelligence and intuitiveness in orangutans that makes humans such big fans of the large apes. Orangutans are considered to be one of the closest living relatives to humans, sharing 97 percent of the same DNA. They are masters of problem solving, and the use of tools by wild and captive orangutans is well documented. They will

use sticks and other items to scratch with, probe for food and make ladders and bridges.

Once believed to be solitary animals, much more is now known about the orangutans' complex social relationships. The strongest bond is between mother and child, which lasts up to 10 years, providing the longest childhood of any ape species.

Historically, orangutans were found throughout Southeast Asia and even as far north as China. But today with the rapid decline of their rainforest homes, orangutans live only on the islands of Borneo and Sumatra. It is estimated that suitable orangutan habitat in Malaysia and Sumatra has declined by more than 80 percent in the last two decades, and the wild population of Sumatran orangutans has dropped by nearly half.

The Louisville Zoo participates in the Orangutan Species Survival Plan (SSP), which carefully manages and oversees all aspects of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) captive population of orangutans. Jane Anne Franklin is a member of the Orangutan SSP Steering Committee.

"Everything we learn about the orangs in training sessions helps us plan for their survival," Jane Anne says. "Of course, I think they learn just as much about us at the same time."



## PALM OIL

According to a report released by the United Nations Environment Programme in Feb. 2007, the spread of palm oil plantations and illegal logging to the national parks in Indonesia constitutes a conservation emergency for the critically endangered orangutan. Palm oil is becoming increasingly popular as an alternative to trans fats, and is found in one of ten supermarket products, including margarine, baked goods, sweets, detergents and lipsticks. There is also an increasing market for vegetable oil as a renewable fuel (biofuel), in response to the need to reduce global carbon dioxide emissions, and palm oil is currently considered the most productive source of biodiesel fuel. Organizations like the United Nations Environment Programme and the Indonesian government are working to find economically and environmentally responsible solutions.

Download the full report, "The Last Stand of the Orangutan—State of Emergency: Illegal Logging, Fire and Palm Oil in Indonesia's National Parks," at [http://www.grida.no/\\_documents/orangutan/full\\_orangutanreport.pdf](http://www.grida.no/_documents/orangutan/full_orangutanreport.pdf). For more information about palm oil and its uses, go to [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Palm\\_oil](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Palm_oil).