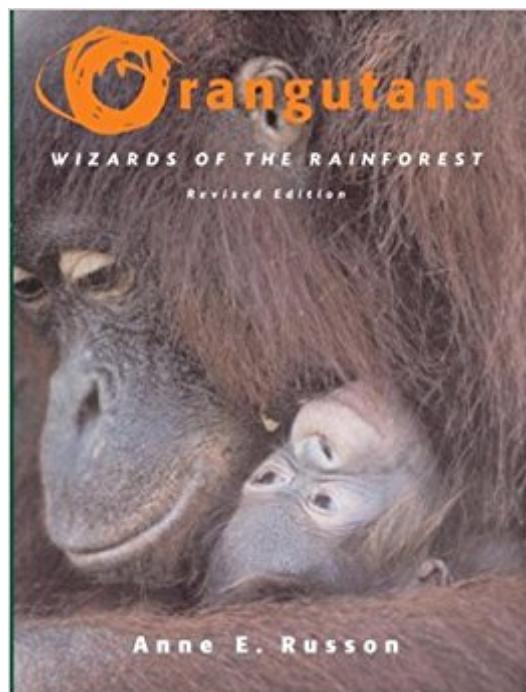


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# Orangutans: Wizards Of The Rain Forest



## Synopsis

Praise for the previous edition: "A fascinating firsthand account of the behavior and intelligence of orangutans, Russon's book is also an account of the successes, failures, and politics of orangutan rehabilitation in the forests of Borneo and Sumatra... The book is lavishly illustrated with full color photographs." - Choice The only great apes found in Asia, these arboreal wizards are by nature elusive and solitary, and inhabit nearly inaccessible tropical rainforests. The tragedy is that orangutans are almost extinct, surviving in the wild only on the islands of Borneo and Sumatra where human influx is rapidly appropriating their habitat. Based on fifteen years of research, this extraordinary and definitive book focuses on orangutan intelligence and behavior. This book includes: A scientific history of orangutans Detailed descriptions of orangutans and their natural habitat Astonishing behavior patterns Rehabilitation operations at Camp Leakey and Wanariset The complex politics of orangutan rescue work Results of orangutans released back into the forest Updated resources What the future holds for these primates. With one hundred color photographs taken by the author during her visits to the rainforests, *Orangutans* is an absorbing and instructive look at the unusual world of orangutans.

## Book Information

Paperback: 240 pages

Publisher: Firefly Books; Revised edition (August 7, 2004)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1552979989

ISBN-13: 978-1552979983

Product Dimensions: 9.8 x 7.6 x 0.6 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.7 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.8 out of 5 stars 6 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #499,699 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #67 in Books > Science & Math > Biological Sciences > Animals > Apes & Monkeys #67 in Books > Science & Math > Biological Sciences > Zoology > Primatology #1468 in Books > Science & Math > Environment > Environmentalism

## Customer Reviews

Can orangutans be called intelligent? And are they doomed? Russon, a psychologist at the University of Toronto, spent 10 years in Indonesia among these mellow and ruddy great apes, seeking definitive answers to the first question; her book touches inevitably on the second.

Orangutans live in the forests of Borneo and Sumatra, where they "eat, rest, travel and occasionally socialize." Orangs, "reflective, meticulous and orderly" (at least compared to chimpanzees), can take 12 years to grow up and live to age 60. They're threatened by poachers, by kidnappers (who sell them as pets) and also (like most large tropical animals) by human encroachment on their habitat. Experts set up camps to care for former captives and help return them to the wild: the best-known, and during the '80s the most successful, was Camp Leakey, run by world-famous primate expert Biruté Galdikas. Russon spent much time around these camps: one chapter describes the complex and enjoyable life of orangs at Camp Leakey. The soft toys and changed policies Russon introduced at another rehab center "brightened a few orangutan days." But--as we learn when Russon moves to the forest-- those orangutan days may be numbered. If Indonesia can't preserve its wilderness, these great apes will have nowhere left to live. As for braininess, orangs can learn by observation how to "make pancakes" (crack eggs in cup, add flour, mix); how to make delicious lather from soap; even how to siphon kerosene and start a barbecue. One young adult female orang "hammered nails, sawed wood, sharpened axe blades, chopped wood... blew blowgun darts, lit cigarettes.... carried parasols against the sun, and applied insect repellent to herself." If that isn't smart, what is? More than 100 color photos. (Mar.) Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Orangutans, the only great apes found in Asia, have been less studied than their chimpanzee and gorilla relatives. Russon chose to study orangutans precisely because most researchers had ignored them. A slow-moving lifestyle coupled with a long childhood means that young orangutans have a lot of time for learning. Orangs have also been shown to be mechanical geniuses when studied in captivity, demonstrating a mastery of sophisticated tools. Russon wanted to study how orangutans learn, and she wanted to study them in the wild, not in captivity. Wild orangutans can be difficult to find, so she settled on working with ex-captive orangs who had been sent to a rehabilitation center and were learning how to live in the wild. Learning by imitation was something she discovered that orangs excel at, and she relates a number of amusing stories about orangs using human implements. At the heart of the book is a plea for the ongoing conservation of this highly endangered primate. This extremely well-written work is an excellent introduction to the more scientific writing on orang intelligence and will be very popular with animal lovers. Nancy Bent --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

If you want to learn about orangutans as a species, but are afraid of getting close to individual

animals who show personalities, likes and dislikes, moods, and -- yes -- cultural adaptations, then stay away from this marvelous book. Anne Russon writes simply and wonderfully. She patiently takes the reader through an evolution of thought and appreciation for the individual orangutans who go through rehabilitation, until we are caught up in the successes and failures they experience. Most of us will never spend time at an orangutan sanctuary, so we rely on Russon for her insights. And she doesn't let us down. Her great strength is in portraying these animals as individuals who have lives that are distinctive and of value. I wish she would start a website as an "afterward" for this book, and keep us up to date on the fates of the individuals we met in these pages. Let's hope that they make it through the wanton destruction and murders that are threatening the orangutans of Indonesia and Malaysia.

Anyone who gets this book is likely a fan of the orangutan to begin with, as was the case with me. I found this book only increased that feeling. It's written simply, not overly scientific at all. I found it a very revealing look into the lives of our red-haired cousins. Their society, their habits, their mannerisms, and their personalities are all detailed in the pages of this book. The book doesn't discuss threats to the animals too much, but logging and habitat destruction are touched on. It provides a sad reminder to the plight these gentle creatures face. My favorite part by far was all the pictures. I found them to be the best part of reading this book. Some will make you laugh, some will make you sad, but all make you think and wonder what is going on in the head of the featured orang(s). I'd definitely suggest getting this for anyone who is a fan of the orangutan, great apes, or animals in general.

Orangutans are nearly gone. As this book shows, it would be such a tragedy if they were to disappear from the wild. The book is beautiful - the pictures alone are worth the purchase. The informative book is well written - touching, sad, and, as always when reading about the great apes, even some humor.

Not taking anything away from Birute Galdikas who has been studying Orangutans longer than Anne Russon, but this book is different than Galdikas' two books, and as a scientific overview of these great apes it is hard to beat. Galdikas' *REFLECTIONS OF EDEN* mixed natural history with memoir, and *ORANGUTAN ODYSSEY* is slim - less text and more photographs - and serves as a good coffee-table book. Russon worked with ex-captive and former pet Orangs who were stationed at a rehabilitation center learning how to be "wild". Her descriptions of their behavior is fascinating.

They have extended childhoods, and in the wild they would spend this time with their mothers learning by imitation. In captivity their learning ability has been transferred into a fondness for using human tools. The incredible imitative skills of Orangutans was a revelation for Russon. This is something that primatologists have stressed as significant about all the great apes. Galdikas recognizes this as a challenge in reintroducing apes to the wild. Frans de Waal goes further and has done studies on how such "human imprinting" has impinged on the animal's "culture". Russon only provides an introduction to such topics as animal intelligence and whether or not they have a culture. Her examples of Orangutan learning and imitative behavior make for a thoroughly interesting read and may encourage readers to further explore the subject. I therefore highly recommend this well written book.

After reading a short biography about Birute Galdikas, I wanted to learn more about the interesting world of orangutans. Some reviewers of her books highly recommended this one instead, and I thank them for the good advice. What a wonderful and insightful book--Anne Russon doesn't shine the light on herself. Instead she incorporates brief details about her purpose in studying orangutan behavior into a broader-scoped book which furnishes the ABCs (and more) of orangutan life. I was particularly surprised to read about the negative impact Earthwatch and ecotourism has had. As another reviewer noted, delightful pictures grace almost every page, and they are strategically inserted to correspond with what is being read. This book will inspire you to learn more about our closest relatives. Anne Russon also provides information in the back of the book to do just that.

Interesting and funny look at the behavior of the endangered species of orangutans. This book describes the experience of Russon and her colleagues' work in transitioning abused and pet orangutans back to living in a natural environment. Orangutans are visibly very cunning animals, which have managed to trick the researchers in this national park more than once. Russon recounts her experience with an orangutan that insisted on washing clothes, and describes stories of them raiding secured guard posts and untying canoes and taking them up and down the river. I recommend this book to anyone who has interests in psychology, especially that of animals and people with pets.

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