

Bornean orangs make first appearance together at the Oregon Zoo’s Red Ape Reserve

Kitra, a 14-year-old female orangutan who recently arrived in Portland from the Cleveland Metroparks Zoo, made her Oregon Zoo debut this month, joining 10-year-old Bob, another recent arrival, in the indoor portion of the zoo’s Red Ape Reserve.

The two orangutans had already spent some time together behind the scenes and were comfortable with each other, according to Asaba Mukobi, the zoo’s senior primate keeper.

Mukobi expects the new couple will be together most days now, and will remain separate from Red Ape’s other two orangs, 10-year-old Kumar and 55-year-old Inji, who is the oldest Oregon Zoo resident and one of the oldest orangutans in the world.

Bob and Kitra are Bornean orangutans, a separate species from Kumar and Inji, who are Sumatran orangs.

The name “orangutan” comes from the Malay *orang*, meaning man, and *hutan*, meaning wilderness or jungle. According to Mukobi, many zoo visitors are struck by the orangutans’ close resemblance to humans.

“Orangutans share nearly 98 percent of their DNA with humans, and visitors feel a very strong connection to them,” Mukobi said. “Building on that connection, we’re trying to create awareness about what’s happening to orangutans in their native lands and let people know how they can help.”

Kitra’s transfer to the Oregon Zoo was recommended by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums’ (AZA)



NEW COUPLE. Kitra, a 14-year-old Bornean orangutan, made her local debut this month at the Oregon Zoo’s Red Ape Reserve. (Photo/Michael Durham, courtesy of the Oregon Zoo)

Species Survival Plan (SSP) for orangutans, which is a cooperative program that helps create genetically diverse, self-sustaining populations to guarantee the long-term future of animals. SSPs also support relevant field projects, research, and public education to help prevent animal endangerment and extinction.

“Orangutans are at a really critical point right now in both Borneo and Sumatra,” Mukobi said. “The number one threat to their survival is the production of palm oil, which is a common ingredient in everything from candy bars to cosmetics. The good news is that people can urge companies to change the way they produce palm oil in a way that is less

harmful to orangutans and other wildlife.”

People interested in encouraging major companies to pursue wildlife-friendly palm oil can do so through the Oregon Zoo’s “Use Your Reach” project at <www.oregonzoo.org/reach>.

The zoo also supports the Hutan-Kinabatangan Orangutan Conservation Programme, which works to research, protect, and reduce human-wildlife conflict for species, including orangutans and elephants. To learn more, visit <www.hutan.org.my>.

The Oregon Zoo is located at 4001 S.W. Canyon Road in Portland. For more information, call (503) 226-1561 or visit <www.oregonzoo.org>.



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