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Firefighters on front line of snake scourge

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Boy can't swim, floats on oil drum

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Frizzy-haired, smaller-headed orangutan may be new great ape



TAPANULI ORANGUTAN. This undated photo released by the Sumatran Orangutan Conservation Programme shows a Tapanuli orangutan with its baby in the Batang Toru forest in the Tapanuli district of Northern Sumatra, Indonesia. Scientists are claiming an isolated and tiny population of orangutans on the Indonesian island of Sumatra with frizzier hair and smaller heads are a new species of great ape. It is believed that there are no more than 800 of the primates that researchers named *Pongo tapanuliensis*, making it the most endangered great ape species. (James Askew/Sumatran Orangutan Conservation Programme via AP)

By Stephen Wright and Andi Jatmiko
The Associated Press

JAKARTA, Indonesia — A remote population of frizzy-haired orangutans on the Indonesian island of Sumatra seems to be a new species of primate, scientists say.

But the purportedly newest member of the family tree of advanced animals that include humans may not be around much longer. Their numbers are so small, and their habitat so fragmented, that they are in danger of going extinct, say the scientists who studied them.

A study published in the journal *Current Biology* said there are no more than 800 of

the primates, which researchers named *Pongo tapanuliensis*, making it the most endangered great ape species.

The researchers say the population is highly vulnerable and its habitat is facing further pressure from development.

"If steps are not taken quickly to reduce current and future threats to conserve every last remaining bit of forest we may see the discovery and extinction of a great ape species within our lifetime," they said.

It's the first great ape species to be described by scientists in nearly 90 years. Previously, science has recognized six great ape species: Sumatran and Bornean orangutans, eastern and western gorillas,

chimpanzees, and bonobos. Some scientists also classify humans as great apes but others argue for a separate categorization.

The research is based on analysis of the skeleton of an adult male killed in a conflict with villagers, a genetic study indicating the population's evolutionary split from other orangutans occurred about 3.4 million years ago, and analysis since 2006 of behavioral and habitat differences.

The primates are confined to a range of about 425 square miles in the Batang Toru forest in the Tapanuli districts of Northern Sumatra. Historically, the population had low levels of interbreeding with Sumatran

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