

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

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orangutans further north but that completely ceased 10,000 to 20,000 years ago, according to the genetic study.

Aside from genetic evidence and the physical differences that include frizzier hair and a smaller head, other unique characteristics include diet, restriction of habitat to upland areas, and the male's long call.

There is no standardized international system for the recognition of new species, but to be taken seriously a discovery requires at least publication in a credible peer-reviewed scientific journal.

Primatologist Russell Mittermeier, head of the primate specialist group at the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), called the finding a "remarkable discovery" that puts the onus on the Indonesian government to ensure the species survives.

Mittermeier, who was not one of the 37 authors of the study, said he was "very excited" by the research.

Last year, the IUCN classified Bornean orangutans as critically endangered due to a precipitous population decline caused by destruction of their forest habitat for palm-oil and pulp-wood plantations. Sumatran orangutans have been classified as critically endangered since 2008.

Matthew Nowak, one of the study's authors, said the Tapanuli orangutans live in three pockets of forest that are separated by non-protected areas.

"For the species to be viable into the future, those three fragments need to be reconnected via forest corridors," he said.

Additionally, the authors are recommending that development plans for the region, including a hydropower plant, be stopped by the government.



"It is imperative that all remaining forest be protected and that a local management body works to ensure the protection of the Batang Toru ecosystem," Novak said.

Wiratno, the director general of

conservation of natural resources and ecosystems at Indonesia's Forestry and Environment Ministry, told a news conference in Jakarta that most of Batang Toru forest was designated as protected in December 2015.

**GREAT APE.** A director general at Indonesia's Forestry and Environment Ministry, center, inspects a screen displaying maps of Batang Toru forest in the Tapanuli districts of Northern Sumatra, where a population of orangutans with frizzier hair and smaller heads have been located. The researchers say the population is highly vulnerable and its habitat is facing further pressure from development. (AP Photo/Tatan Syuflana)

He said its management will be a priority and is a "great challenge."

"We are deeply committed to maintaining the survival of this species," said Wiratno, who uses one name.

The Batang Toru orangutan population was found during a field survey by researcher Erik Meijaard in 1997 and a research station was established in the area in 2006.

It was not until 2013, when the adult male skeleton became available, that scientists realized how unique the population was, which sparked the largest genomic study of wild orangutans ever carried out to provide further evidence of a third orangutan species.

*Wright reported from Bangkok.*

## Container ships returning to the Port of Portland

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Major shipping companies made weekly visits to Portland before halting service in 2015. The stoppage forced businesses that used the terminal for international shipping to send their goods to out-of-state ports via truck or rail.

The disruption was largely blamed on productivity problems that stemmed from a labor dispute between the longshoremen's union and ICTSI-Oregon, the terminal operator at the time. Though ICTSI is a major global ports operator, Portland represented its first venture in

the United States, and management quickly clashed with American labor.

The Port of Portland ended its contract with ICTSI earlier this year, resolving that issue. Carriers, however, still must be convinced to return to the port that's less convenient to access than others on the west coast.

The governor's office has chipped in \$250,000 from the state's strategic reserve

fund. It'll help pay for bar pilots who navigate vessels up the Columbia River. Port of Portland CEO Curtis Robinhold said it takes two bar pilots and costs carriers \$20,000 more to visit Portland than other ports.

"This is really walking before you can run," Robinhold told OPB. "What we're really trying to do is show we can get T-6 working again."

*The staff at The Asian Reporter wish you and your family a happy and safe Thanksgiving!*

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