

Borneo's orangutan population has plunged by 100,000 since 1999

JAKARTA, Indonesia (AP) — The most comprehensive study of Borneo's orangutans estimates their numbers have plummeted by more than 100,000 since 1999, as palm-oil and paper industries shrink their jungle habitat and fatal conflicts with people increase.

The finding, published in the journal *Current Biology*, is in line with the 2016 designation of Borneo's orangutans as critically endangered by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

Researchers from the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology and other institutions said the original population of the gentle ginger-haired great apes is larger than previously estimated, but so is the rate of decline.

The most dramatic declines were found in areas where tropical forests were cut down and converted to plantations for palm oil, which is used in a vast array of consumer products, and for timber.

But significant population declines occurred in selectively logged forests.

"In these forest areas, human pressures such as conflict killing, poaching, and the collection of baby orangutans for the pet trade, have probably been the major drivers of decline," the authors of the study said.

In February, an orangutan on the Indonesian part of Borneo island died after being shot at least 130 times with an air gun, stabbed, and clubbed.

Erik Meijaard, a conservationist involved in the study, said current estimates of the orangutan popula-



PLUNGING POPULATION. A wild orangutan is spotted in a tree during a rescue and release operation for orangutans trapped in a swath of jungle destroyed by a forest fire in Sungai Mangkutub, Central Kalimantan, Indonesia, in this January 7, 2016 file photo. The most comprehensive study of Borneo's orangutans estimates their numbers have plummeted by more than 100,000 since 1999. (AP Photo/Dita Alangkara, File)

tion on Borneo range from 75,000 to 100,000.

He said the estimates vary because of uncertainty about how many animals are living in alien habitats such as plantations and burnt forests.

According to IUCN, their numbers could drop to 47,000 by 2025 from their 2016 population estimate of about 105,000.

Sumatra's orangutan, a separate species, is even more endangered, with a population estimated at about 12,000 animals.

In a positive twist, the new study found Bornean orangutans are more resilient and adaptable than thought. They walk on the ground more often

than previously known and can feed on plants that have not been part of their natural diet.

The authors said this may allow them to survive in smaller forests and in landscapes where the forest is fragmented.

"The one thing they cannot cope with, however, is the high killing rates seen currently," said Serge Wich of Liverpool John Moores University, one of the researchers.

"Orangutans are a very slow breeding species," he said in a statement. "If only one in 100 adult orangutans is removed from a population per year, this population has a high likelihood to go extinct."

Cambodian genocide documented in victims' preserved clothes

By *Sopheng Cheang and Grant Peck*
The Associated Press

PHNOM PENH, Cambodia — As a leader in the field of textile conservation, Julia Brennan has worked to preserve many glamorous and historic articles of clothing, from a kimono presented to Babe Ruth, to singer James Brown's jumpsuit, to a British aristocrat's coronation gown.

Her profession, however, has also brought her into contact with humanity's darkest moments, including genocides in Rwanda and Cambodia.

Brennan recently began a project at the Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum in Cambodia's capital, Phnom Penh, where the Khmer Rouge in the late 1970s tortured as many as 17,000 men, women, and children before killing them. The museum's macabre artifacts include torture devices and displays of skulls.

The most haunting display comprises photo portraits that were kept as part of the meticulous record-keeping ordered by Tuol Sleng's Khmer Rouge commander, who in 2012 was sentenced to life in prison for crimes against humanity, murder, and torture.

But only a small amount of victims' clothing is displayed; most was stowed away in nooks and crannies, untouched since the museum was established in 1980. Museum director Chhay Visoth felt it was urgent to register and preserve these holdings, and he sought Brennan's help in 2014.

The 59-year-old Brennan was born to American parents in Indonesia, where her father was on a Jesuit scholarship teaching at universities and doing research. She was raised in northern Thailand, where her father worked for the U.S. government, and when he later worked on a European Union arms control project in Cambodia, Brennan became acquainted with the country's culture.

Brennan was keenly interested in the Tuol Sleng project, and the U.S. Embassy in Phnom Penh eventually gave a \$55,000 grant to support it.

She then began her work to jumpstart the preservation of 3,000 to 5,000 articles of prisoners' clothing and train Cambodian staff to care for them.

Brennan worked on a similar project for the past two years in Rwanda, where long-standing rivalries between two tribes led to the killings of an estimated 800,000 people in 1994. She helped to preserve clothing at the



THREADS OF EVIDENCE. A leg shackle, used to bind prisoners of the Khmer Rouge, lies on a table in a makeshift laboratory in the Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. International textile conservationist Julia Brennan has begun a massive preservation project of artifacts at the Tuol Sleng prison-turned-museum, where the Khmer Rouge in the late 1970s tortured as many as 17,000 men, women, and children before killing them. (AP Photo/Heng Sinith)

Nyamata church, where more than 10,000 people were slaughtered as they sought shelter from marauding mobs. The church is now a memorial site, with the clothing an integral part of its exhibition.

The power of clothing in documenting genocide is widely recognized by experts. The collection at the Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial and Museum in Poland includes 390 striped inmates' uniforms and 246 Jewish prayer shawls, according to Pawel Sawicki, a press officer for the memorial.

The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C., holds a variety of items of clothing as well. One of the most striking exhibits is of 4,000 shoes from some of the victims of the Majdanek concentration camp in Poland.

"The exhibit very simply shows the magnitude of Nazi murder while simultaneously allowing the viewer to individualize the horror," Jane Klinger, the Holocaust museum's chief conservator, said in an e-mail.

Brennan, who since 1996 has had her own company, Caring for Textiles, in Washington, D.C., made a similar point during an interview at Tuol Sleng.

"You're not going to necessarily cry or have memories when you see a skull, but when you see a skirt that's the

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