



Same planet. Different world.

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Photo Credit: Toronto Zoo

Toronto Zoo Sumatran Orangutans Join The iPad Generation!

August 23, 2012, Toronto, Ontario: The Toronto Zoo is the only Zoo in Canada with Sumatran Orangutans, and is now the only Zoo in Canada that has iPads for orangutans. Orangutans are highly intellectual and have learned to use tools, such as sticks for a variety of purposes, and are now adding iPads to the list. The Zoo received donated iPads from an anonymous benefactor at the beginning of March and, since then, keepers have been working with the Sumatran orangutans introducing them to their new enrichment device.

Toronto Zoo Wildlife Care Keeper, Matthew Berridge, in 2011, attended the Orangutan SSP (Species Survival Plan) Husbandry Worksop in Waco, Texas where Richard Zimmerman (Director of Orangutan Outreach and creator) presented the "Apps for the Apes" program. He described how orangutans at the Milwaukee Zoo were using an iPad. Inspiration from this conference is where the iPad program at the Toronto Zoo originated. Other Zoos that currently have iPads and are working with orangutans include: Auckland Zoo, Birmingham Zoo, Cameron Park Zoo, Centre for Great Apes, Houston Zoo, Kansas City Zoo, Milwaukee County Zoo, Oregon Zoo, National Zoo, Lowery Park Zoo, Hogle Zoo and Zoo Atlanta.

"Orangutans are intelligent animals," says Matthew Berridge, Wildlife Care Keeper at the Toronto Zoo. "At the Toronto Zoo we provide our orangutans with various forms of behavioural enrichment, and the iPads provide an added form of enrichment for the orangutans". "The orangutans have worked with similar programs in the past by using touch screens. This was part of cognitive studies by York University students. Using the iPad is the next step in providing orangutans with mental stimulation".

The Toronto Zoo has reached new and exciting milestones while working with the orangutans and their new iPad tool. This is the first phase of the Zoo's orangutan iPad program and the progress being made is extremely rewarding!

TIMELINE

March 2012:

- iPads donated to the Toronto Zoo by an anonymous benefactor.
- Toronto Zoo Wildlife Care Keepers introduce iPads to the Sumatran orangutans for the first time. Orangutans seem more interested in the protected cover, than what is on the screen!
- The keepers began to realize the orangutans touch the screen with their nails, since using the nail does not actually work on the screen the keepers began to teach the orangutans to touch with their skin instead.

April 2012:

- Wifi Internet installed in the Indo-Malaya Pavilion where the Sumatran orangutan exhibit is located.
- Orangutan mother and son duo, Puppe and Budi, Skype with Orangutan Outreach Director Richard Zimmerman.
- The orangutans began to learn to use their knuckles, as well as, finger tips to touch the screen.

May 2012:

- The infamous "Colbert Report" films at the Toronto Zoo for their "Enemy Within" segment.
- Orangutans enjoy watching videos of each other.
- Toronto Zoo orangutans Skype with Milwaukee Zoo orangutans. The video footage ended up being quite blurry (caused by the orangutans swinging back and forth) and it was hard for the orangutans to know exactly what was on the screen!

June 2012:

- Orangutans are now consistently using fingertips or knuckles to work the iPad screen.
- Orangutans are now using a memory game app and drawing with the iPad.

July 2012:

- Orangutans begin working with iPads on exhibit.

Orangutan's current status is critically endangered; the main threat of orangutans today is loss of habitat. Forest habitat is being rapidly destroyed by conversion to agriculture, both by large commercial plantations and smaller subsistence farms, illegal logging, gold mining, and in particular palm oil plantations. The increased demand for palm oil is fueling destruction of the rainforest habitat of Sumatran and Bornean orangutans, pushing the already endangered species even closer to extinction. Estimates show that if something isn't done soon to stop the spread of palm oil plantations into the forests that harbor these orangutans, they will be extinct in ten to fifteen years. Palm oil can be found in cookies, crackers, frozen dinners, shampoo, lotions, cosmetics, pet food, and many other products and is now the most widely produced edible oil. The Toronto Zoo encourages people to help orangutans in the wild by purchasing palm oil free products.

The Toronto Zoo is a leader in conservation efforts, with the increased attention caused by the iPads from Zoo visitors, general public and media it is a great opportunity to raise awareness of the essential need to protect orangutans in the wild and to promote conservation efforts already in place. In particular, Orangutan Awareness Weekend, which is an annual public event held at the Toronto Zoo, brings awareness and funding to preserve habitat for orangutans, encouraging people to come out to the zoo and donate to help orangutans in the wild. With the support of members, visitors and volunteers last year's event raised \$3,000! This year's event is taking place Friday, 2012-08-24 through to Sunday, 2012-08-26. The Zoo works closely with other Zoological associations and conservation institutions, including Orangutan Outreach on these efforts.

The Toronto Zoo has six Sumatran orangutans: Puppe (female) and her son Budi (male), Sekali (female) and son Kembali (male) and Rami (female) and daughter Jingga (female). The troop can be seen on exhibit in the Indo-Malaya Pavilion.

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About Toronto Zoo:

The Toronto Zoo is Canada's premier zoo and a leader in animal preservation and environmental protection. More than a tourist attraction, the Toronto Zoo boasts a number of leading programs for helping wildlife and their natural habitats – from species reintroduction to reproductive research. A world-class educational centre for people of all ages, the Toronto Zoo is open every day except December 25 and attracts approximately 1.3 million visitors each year.

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