

# Study: Deforestation decimates orangutans

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A three-year study by the Cardiff School of Biosciences reveals genetic evidence that shows colonialists pushed orangutans to the brink of extinction.

The study indicates the population of Bornean orangutans in Malaysia has declined up to 100 fold since the late 19th century, coinciding with the arrival of colonial powers on Borneo and resulting deforestation.

"This is the first time that an alarming and recent human related decline of a great ape population has been demonstrated using genetic data," said Cardiff Professor Benoit Goossens.

The researchers sampled the feces from 200 orangutans in a northern Borneo wildlife sanctuary. DNA profiling was used to discover the most

likely history of the population that would give rise to their genetic profiles.

"It is clear that the remaining population of orangutans in Sabah is a very small fraction of what originally existed and, more importantly, if the decline continues at the same speed, the population will be extinct within a few decades," said Goossens.

The research appears in the journal, PLoS Biology.

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