



Media Release
7th November 2010

Dublin Zoo Supports Orangutan Awareness Week

This week, 7th – 13th November, is international Orang utan Awareness Week which aims to highlight the troubles facing orang utans in their natural habitat. Dublin Zoo, home to Sibü one of the most genetically important orangutans in Europe, will host a series of events to educate and inform guests about orang utans and why conservation of their natural habitats is critical to survival of this amazing species.

Dublin Zoo will host a number of extra keeper talks, enrichment* demonstrations, face-painting and much more during the week.

Orang utans, which are found in the rainforests of Sumatra and Borneo, are facing extinction and it is estimated that in 10 years there will be none left in the wild.

Facts about Orang utans

- “Orang utan” translates into english as “person of the forest”
- Orang utans share 97% of the human DNA and are one of the closest relatives to man
- They are very intelligent creatures who have the ability to reason and think
- Orang utans are large but in general are quite gentle

Troubles Facing Orang utans in the Wild

- Orang utans live in rainforests in Sumatra and Borneo but these are being destroyed due to urban growth, palm oil plantations and farming
- Orang utans are highly endangered and have less than ten years left in the wild before they are extinct

Sibü – Dublin Zoo’s most popular orang utan

Sibü is a 30 year old male Bornean orang utan whose laid back character and amazing good looks have always made him a great favourite with visitors. He has amassed quite a fan club during his 17 years in Ireland.

Born in Los Angeles Botanical Gardens in 1978, Sibü later travelled to Rotterdam Zoo, before arriving at Dublin Zoo in 1984. He was sent on a breeding loan to Rhenen Zoo, in the Netherlands, in 2001 where he spent seven years and sired one baby which was hugely important development to the species.

Weighing in at 140kg and with his 3m arm span, Sibü is of significant importance genetically to the European population of orangutans because of his origins in the United States.

Director of Dublin Zoo, Leo Oosterweghel commented, "At Dublin Zoo we are passionate about maintaining the survival of these apes and have been involved in successful European breeding programme within Europe. However we also need to highlight the challenges they are facing in the wild and we would encourage people to support Orang utan Awareness Week."

To find out more about Orang utan Awareness Week, please visit www.redapes.org and www.orangaware.org.

To find out more about what is happening in Dublin Zoo during Orang utan Awareness Week, please visit www.dublinzoo.ie.

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Notes to Editor:

***Enrichment** is a practice whereby the zookeepers make parcels of food for the animals. These food parcels are placed in various different places around the animal's habitat. The animals then go and search for the parcels and when they have found them they have to work at unraveling them to get the treats inside. The reason for this is both physical and mental exercise for the animals to keep both their minds and their bodies active.

The keepers will be doing enrichment demonstrations over the weekend and visitors will be able to make up their own parcels for the orang utans.

In 2009 Dublin Zoo sponsored a rainforest regeneration programme coordinated by the Bornean Orang utan Survival (BOS) Foundation.

BOS is the largest primate rescue centre in the world and is actively involved with protecting orang utans and their habitats. They have developed a programme of recreating rainforest - Samboja Lestari – named after an area of once pristine rainforest but now an ecological wasteland. BOS are recreating rainforest in this area working with local communities and providing a sanctuary for orang utans, sunbears and other endangered Borneo wildlife. Dublin Zoo sponsored 700m² in Samboja Lestari to help with this vital reforestation work.