

Recommended Research for Orangutans in the Wild

Note for all teachers: This is a list of recommended sources of websites, videos and articles for accurate, fun research about orangutan's natural behavior and abilities in the wild! Please make sure to **review all links** for appropriate content and reading level before assigning research to your students or showing content in class. Especially look for potential **advertisements** that may have changed since Zoo staff reviewed the site.

Top Pick #1

Title: How smart are orangutans?

URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gFzqqaBA9wQ>

Type of Resource: 5-minute Video

Source: Lu Gao, on behalf of Ted Ed

Notes: This cartoon video focuses on orangutans' intelligence and how their intelligence factors into their daily life.

Warning: Discusses how poachers often target orangutan mothers and sell their babies as exotic pets.

#2

Title: 10 Orangutan Facts!

URL: <https://www.natgeokids.com/uk/discover/animals/general-animals/ten-facts-about-orang-utans/>

Type of Resource: Website Article

Source: National Geographic Kids

Notes: A simple introduction to the physiology and wild behavior of orangutans. Each fact covers one facet of orangutan life, from social structure to diet. It also contains links to leopards (one of their predators) and deforestation (a threat to their survival).

#3

Title: Orangutan: Life in the Trees

URL: <https://kids.sandiegozoo.org/animals/orangutan>

Type of Resource: Website with video, live cams, and short article

Source: San Diego Zoo Kids

Notes: With its simple style, brightly-colored motifs, and abundant (and adorable) pictures, this is ideal for the younger set. Despite its apparent simplicity, it provides an excellent overview of different aspects of orangutan biology and behavior. It ranges from their diet, to their social dynamics, to their use of intelligence to survive in the wild. It also provides multimedia content: a recording of an orangutan call and a short video about brachiation.

#4

Title: Orangutan

URL: <https://kids.nationalgeographic.com/animals/mammals/orangutan/>

Type of Resource: Website article

Source: National Geographic Kids

Notes: This web page is kid-oriented, but rich in information. Among other facts, it discusses orangutans' arboreal lifestyle and how they use techniques like nest-building and brachiation. It even includes some relatively obscure facts, such as mother orangutans using their long arms as a living bridge for their children to scamper across.

#5

Title: Behavior

URL: <https://seaworld.org/animals/all-about/orangutans/behavior/>

Source: SeaWorld Parks and Entertainment

Type of Resource: Website article

Notes: This article covers diverse aspects of their social structure, comparing interactions between males, females, young, and even the social differences between Bornean and Sumatran orangutans. *For this assignment, the most relevant topic is the “individual behavior” section.*

#6

Title: Watch Orangutans Build | National Geographic

URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3hfkDJ-r3DQ>

Source: National Geographic YouTube Channel

Type of Resource: 2-minute Video

Notes: This video is brief, yet rich in detail. It is packed with wild behavior and even mentions cultural differences between different populations of orangutans

#7

Title: Orangutans – Person of the Forest

URL: <https://easyscienceforkids.com/all-about-orangutans/>

Type of Resource: Website Article

Source: Easy Science for Kids

Notes: Extremely well-crafted for use in the classroom (it is even easily printable through in icon in the top right corner), this site includes detailed information as to their diet and behavior in the wild. It comes complete with a vocabulary list and multiple links to additional articles within the website. There is even a short video on orangutan intelligence, featuring David Attenborough.

#8

Title: Orangutan Using Tool

URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pXOTAgg-eiY>

Type of Resource: 1.5-minute video

Source: Alain Compost, a documentary filmmaker

Notes: This brief piece of footage shows a female orangutan using a stripped stick to scoop ants out of a hollow in a tree. *Due to the ambient noise, I would suggest playing this video in mute mode*

#9

Title: Zoobooks: Orangutans

URL: *Available for purchase* via zoobooks.com

Type of Resource: Magazine

Source: Zoobooks

Notes: Like others in this prolific series, it condenses a wide variety of kid-friendly information into its' magazine format. It focuses on their behavior in the wild, and covers their habitats, technology, connections between food supply and social structure, and more.

Bonus Research for Advanced Readers and Additional Connections

Challenge for Advanced Readers

Title: Orang-Utans

URL: https://wwf.panda.org/knowledge_hub/endangered_species/great_apes/orangutans/

Type of Resource: Online Article

Source: World Wildlife Fund

Notes: Contains additional details and advanced vocabulary about orangutans. This article covers physical and social elements of orangutans in the wild.

Challenge for Advanced Readers

Title: Is Orangutan Culture Made of Ideas?

URL: <https://blogs.scientificamerican.com/thoughtful-animal/is-orangutan-culture-made-of-ideas/>

Type of Resource: Online article

Source: Scientific American; the Thoughtful Animal

Notes: This article recounts a study to determine whether orangutan behaviors – specifically, tool use – are inherently genetic, or the result of a culture. It focuses on behaviors like “honey dipping” with sticks and compares different forms of tool use in orangutans from different areas (and therefore, different cultures). While it is rich with information, it also uses a complex vocabulary and other scientific elements.

Bonus: International Connection

Title: Orangutan Jungle School

Type of Resource: TV Show (2 hour-long episodes available for free)

URL: <https://watch.smithsonianchannel.com/details/series/orangutan-jungle-school>

Source: Smithsonian Channel

Warning: Discusses the loss of adult orangutans due to poachers and plantation owners, there are cases of trauma and/or abuse with the orangutans. Additionally, when an orangutan is ready to be returned to the wild, the staff must use tranquilizers to get them ready for transport.

Notes: *Only the first two episodes are available for free.* There are 10 episodes in total, for teachers willing to spend the money on “Smithsonian Channel Plus.” This show covers an orangutan” school.” It follows the day-to-day operation of the facility, and the behaviors the orangutans must learn if they are to return to the wild. To utilize this in a classroom setting, selected clips could be shown. Entire episodes might be assigned as homework. *Make sure to preview all content to ensure it is appropriate for your students before assigning any videos at home.*

Bonus: Literary Connection

Title: Discworld Series by Terry Pratchett

Type of Resource: Book series for grades 4-7 (depending on reading level and maturity)

Notes: Sir Terry Pratchett, a popular author of humorous fantasy, decided to put an orangutan librarian into his stories. “This prompted Terry Pratchett’s curiosity about orangutans and his long-term support of the Orangutan Foundation.” The character appeared in many of his books, and his physiology and behavior is very well researched. Visit <https://presswire.com/content/2602/terry-pratchett-discworld-and-his-long-lasting-legacy-orangutans> for more information on the connection to orangutans.