
BBC LEARNING ENGLISH

Lingohack

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The story...

New ape species discovered

Learn language related to...

Animal discovery

Need-to-know language

species – group of animals or plants sharing similar characteristics that can breed with each other

DNA – (deoxyribonucleic acid) a chemical substance that contains genetic information and is found in all living cells

genetic comparisons – looking at differences between the genes in more than one living thing

evolutionary history – biological and physical changes over millions of years

breakthrough – new and important discovery following much hard work

Answer this...

How many species of orangutan are there following this new discovery?

Watch the video online: <http://bbc.in/2j9i8e7>

Transcript

The remote mountain forests of Sumatra are home to some of our closest ape relatives. And a small population here, first discovered just 20 years ago, has been hiding a scientific secret.

This is the Tapanuli orangutan - a **species** new to science. Until now, it was thought that there were just two distinct **species** of orangutan – Sumatran and Bornean, like this big male here. But this new study shows that there are actually three – a tiny population has been hidden away and isolated by hundreds of thousands of years of evolution.

Early **DNA** analysis suggested these animals were peculiar compared to the other Sumatran apes. So scientists embarked on a detailed study examining what they ate and their unique calls.

Years of painstaking **genetic comparisons**, enabled scientists to reconstruct the animal's **evolutionary history**. The final piece of the puzzle though, was tiny but consistent differences between the Sumatran, and this, the Tapanuli orangutan skull.

Professor Serge Wich, Liverpool John Moores University:

“It’s an amazing **breakthrough**, I think. There's only seven, if we exclude ourselves, of great ape species. So adding one to that very small list is spectacular.”

With just eight hundred individuals, this species will go straight onto the critically endangered list. Logging, mining, and plans for a hydro-electric dam already pose a threat to its habitat. The hope is that adding this ape to the biology textbooks will help to ensure its survival.

Did you get it?

How many species of 'orangutan' are there following this new discovery?

Following this new discovery, there are now three species of orangutan.

Did you know?

An orangutan is a type of primate. The name orangutan means ‘people of the forest’. They are Asia's only great apes with one species found on the island of Borneo, and the other two on Sumatra.