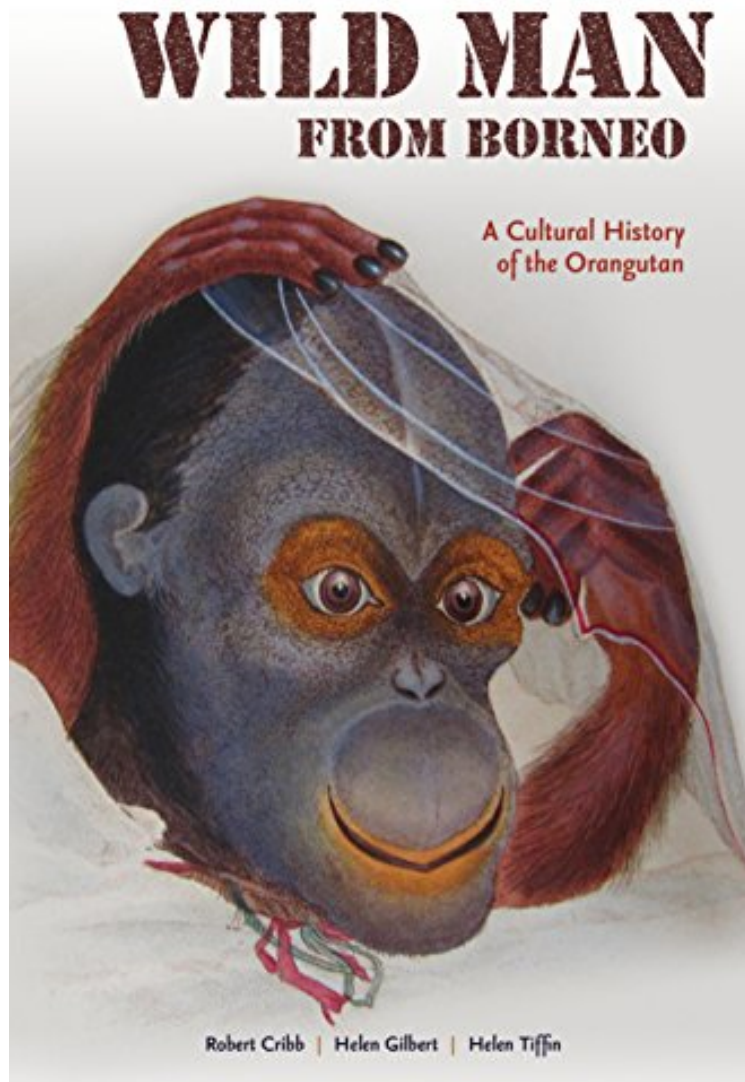


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Wild Man from Borneo: A Cultural History of the Orangutan

Robert Cribb, Helen Gilbert, Helen Tiffin
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Robert Cribb, Helen Gilbert, Helen Tiffin : Wild Man from Borneo: A Cultural History of the Orangutan before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Wild Man from Borneo: A Cultural History of the Orangutan:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. More a history of human use of the idea of oranges than natural history. The writing is good, the chapters a bit tedious. By lyndonbrecht I expected a much different book, more along the lines of natural history and conservation. Those are covered but rather briefly. The book mostly considers cultural use of orangutans, mostly European and American (the book portrays peoples living near the apes as not particularly interested in them). What I mean by that is the chapters examine the European debate about apes and the relationship

of apes to humans, starting early in colonial times (Dutch colonialism in Indonesia--the apes are native to Borneo and Sumatra--began in the early 1600s). There were all sorts of interpretations, some of them using oranges as metaphors for human traits, some using the apes as elements in satires and novels. Science gradually came to a better understanding of them. The story the book tells is largely of human use of oranges, as much the idea of oranges as anything else, especially in popular literature (which continues as "Planet of the Apes" sequels continue into the 21st century). Living and dead oranges and dead orang parts were popular in the cabinets of curiosities on the 1700s and the natural history exhibitions of the 1800s, which gradually shaded over into modern zoos, and the sense of show gradually became that of education and conservation. Orangs seem to have been for a time popular figures in plays, acted by men in costume. Among the sections of the book that readers may find of interest are chapters 5 and 6, which examine oranges as characters in fiction, and chapter 7 which does the same for oranges on stage and screen. The chapters can be a little tedious. Chapter 8 looks in a general way at zoos and chapter 9 at extinctions. The latest survey, says this book, in 2004 found about 7,000 oranges in Sumatra and 57,000 in Borneo, but given extensive forest fire events and heavy harvesting of timber, that number is probably considerably less. Chapter 10 looks at conservation, with some pessimism, and also examines the idea of the great apes having legal rights.

Wild Man from Borneo offers the first comprehensive history of the human-orangutan encounter. Arguably the most humanlike of all the great apes, particularly in intelligence and behavior, the orangutan has been cherished, used, and abused ever since it was first brought to the attention of Europeans in the seventeenth century. The red ape has engaged the interest of scientists, philosophers, artists, and the public at large in a bewildering array of guises that have by no means been exclusively zoological or ecological. One reason for such a long-term engagement with a being found only on the islands of Borneo and Sumatra is that, like its fellow great apes, the orangutan stands on that most uncomfortable dividing line between human and animal, existing, for us, on what has been called "the dangerous edge of the garden of nature." Beginning with the scientific discovery of the red ape more than three hundred years ago, this work goes on to examine the ways in which its human attributes have been both recognized and denied in science, philosophy, travel literature, popular science, literature, theatre, museums, and film. The authors offer a provocative analysis of the origin of the name "orangutan"; trace how the ape has been recruited to arguments on topics as diverse as slavery and rape, and outline the history of attempts to save the animal from extinction. Today, while human populations increase exponentially, that of the orangutan is in dangerous decline. The remaining "wild men of Borneo" are under increasing threat from mining interests, logging, human population expansion, and the widespread destruction of forests. The authors hope that this history will, by adding to our knowledge of this fascinating being, assist in some small way in their preservation.

Tracing a story from early-modern dissections, through philosophical treatises, nineteenth-century novels, zoo tea-parties, Las Vegas performances, post-apocalyptic films, and much more, the book chronicles the presence of the red ape in our lives and consciousness over the last four centuries. The authors offer a history, an indictment, an elegy, and ultimately a path to a deeper understanding of our relationship with an enigmatic other. Nigel Rothfels, author of *Savages and Beasts: The Birth of the Modern Zoo* The orangutan has tickled Western imaginations for centuries. First because we knew so little, later because we knew so much. This expertly researched and lively history of discovery details the blurring of the human-animal line represented by this fascinating ape. Frans de Waal, author of *The Bonobo and the Atheist* In this rich story of one of our world's truly intriguing and elusive living beings, the authors have drawn on a sometimes surprising array of scientific and cultural figures from Linnaeus to Charles Darwin, from Jean-Jacques Rousseau to Queen Victoria, from Edgar Allen Poe to Tim Burton who have all, one way or another, responded with fascination to the great red ape. The wealth of new knowledge offered here can only inspire the reader, not only to protect these remarkable animals and their habitat, but also to learn from them how to inhabit our shared world in less destructive ways. Philip Armstrong, author of *What Animals Mean in the Fiction of Modernity* Wild Man from Borneo is an illuminating and revealing study, which will appeal to general readers as well as specialists. Nick Cheesman, *New Books in Southeast Asian Studies*-- "<https://www.uhawaiiipress.com/p-9137-9780824837143.aspx>"

Tracing a story from early-modern dissections, through philosophical treatises, nineteenth-century novels, zoo tea-parties, Las Vegas performances, post-apocalyptic films, and much more, the book chronicles the presence of the red ape in our lives and consciousness over the last four centuries. The authors offer a history, an indictment, an elegy, and ultimately a path to a deeper understanding of our relationship with an enigmatic other." -- Nigel Rothfels, author of *Savages and Beasts: The Birth of the Modern Zoo* The orangutan has tickled Western imaginations for centuries. First because we knew so little, later because we knew so much. This expertly researched and lively history of discovery details the blurring of the human-animal line represented by this fascinating ape. -- Frans de Waal, author of *The Bonobo and the Atheist* In this rich story of one of our world's truly intriguing and elusive living beings, the authors have drawn on a sometimes surprising array of scientific and cultural figures -- from Linnaeus to Charles Darwin, from Jean-Jacques Rousseau to Queen Victoria, from Edgar Allen Poe to Tim Burton -- who have all, one way or another, responded with fascination to the great red ape. The wealth of new knowledge

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The details and comparative interpretations offered are in some ways impressive.-- "Times Literary Supplement" In its detailed attention to changing Western views, the book is certainly comprehensive. . . . The book's greatest value is its exhaustive demonstration of how Western representations of the ape have alternated between a view of the orangutan as a very humanlike and a definitely non-human creature, a mere animal among other animals.-- "Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde" This joint-authored, multidisciplinary study offers a wonderful introduction to the promise and challenge of investigating human-animal histories.-- "American Historical "The book documents the history of the importation and keeping of orangutan specimens in Europe, for the purposes both of science and of entertainment. It looks at attitudes to the process of killing animals who were generally portrayed, in their forest homes, as savage and dangerous; and it explores how the ways in which orangutans were treated and displayed once they reached Europe - which often mimicked human ways and manners - reflected the continuing toying with the possibility that orangutans were some kind of 'primitive' human.-- "ASEASUK News" The great strength of this book lies in its historical analysis and it provides a detailed, insightful, and entertaining exploration of our ever-shifting relationship with our close cousins.-- "Australian Book "Wild Man from Borneo is an illuminating and revealing study, which will appeal to general readers as well as specialists. Over 50 illustrations complement the authors' elegant and detailed written account. In view of the orangutan's precarious condition today, the book also contains an urgent message that the disappearance of the 'wild man' from the wild would be a tragedy not only for the orangutan but for humanity as well.-- "New Books in Southeast Asian Studies" Professors of Asian history, theatre and postcolonial and studies respectively, Cribb, Gilbert and Tiffin have collaborated to produce a sweeping account of wild and captive orang-utans in the scientific, artistic and popular imagination. . . . The book's main strength lies in its well-researched details about the orang-utans' place in cultural traditions as seen through works of biology, zoology, psychology and anthropology, as well as through literature, drama and film. . . . The details and comparative interpretations offered are in some ways impressive. (Times Literary Supplement) Wild Man from Borneo is an illuminating and revealing study, which will appeal to general readers as well as specialists. (New Books in Southeast Asian Studies) In its detailed attention to changing Western views, the book is certainly comprehensive. . . . The book's greatest value is its exhaustive demonstration of how Western representations of the ape have alternated between a view of the orangutan as a very humanlike and a definitely non-human creature, a mere animal among other animals. (Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde) This joint-authored, multidisciplinary study offers a wonderful introduction to the promise and challenge of investigating human-animal histories. (American Historical) The book documents the history of the importation and keeping of orangutan specimens in Europe, for the purposes both of science and of entertainment. 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In view of the orangutan's precarious condition today, the book also contains an urgent message that the disappearance of the 'wild man' from the wild would be a tragedy not only for the orangutan but for humanity as well. (New Books in Southeast Asian Studies) About the Author Robert Cribb is professor of Asian history at the Australian National University. Helen Gilbert is professor of theatre at Royal Holloway, University of London. Helen Tiffin is a leading scholar in postcolonial theory and literary studies. She was professor of English at the University of Tasmania and the University of Queensland in Australia.