



**Conservation Group of the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology  
& Wild Chimpanzee Foundation**

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Dear all,

Over the course of the past decade the number of illegally traded great apes (chimpanzees, gorillas & bonobos) has risen substantially across their range countries and is now posing a serious threat to their long-term survival. A recent report by the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) confirmed that as a result of the illicit pet trade thousands of young apes are lost to the wild throughout Africa. Many of the orphans are sold to people living in the capitals of the respective range countries, with expats being some of the major buyers.

Although, it is heart-breaking to see a desolate young ape orphan offered for sale, buying such an animal neither helps the particular individual nor does it contribute to the protection of these animals. In contrast, buying orphaned individuals further stimulates the illegal pet trade as it provides a financial incentive for the seller to capture more animals. On top of that, for each sold individual many more are killed during its capture as fellow group members try to defend the infant.

Captive great apes endure extreme mental and physical suffering when kept in confined spaces and away from their own kind. They cannot be released back into the wild, because after being fed with human food they are no longer able to sustain themselves in their natural environment. In addition, after having been exposed to human diseases, which can easily be transmitted between humans and great apes, a reintroduction would pose a serious threat to any wild population.

Finally, it is important to mention that great apes are threatened species and protected by law and the possession of or the trading with protected species can lead to a fine or even a jail sentence.

Therefore, we urge you to:

- never buy any great ape orphan or other protected animal
- not pay attention to people selling protected species, so as to avoid conveying any interest

- note down the location and date (if possible sex and approximate age) when seeing great ape orphans for sale or those kept as a pet

We are currently working on establishing a database to collect information on the number and location of captive great apes across their range countries in Africa, as part of establishing strategies with the local wildlife authorities to stop the illegal trade with these animals. So reports on illegally kept or sold individuals are greatly appreciated.

To report a captive great ape or other protected species or should you have further questions please contact: **orphan.apes@eva.mpg.de**

Thank you for your collaboration.

Julia Riedel

in the name of the Conservation Group of the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology and the Wild Chimpanzee Foundation