Taxonomy, geographic variation and population genetics of Bornean and Sumatran orangutans

Abstract

This chapter reviews the published data and discusses the taxonomy and population genetics of orangutans. The orangutan was traditionally classified as two separate subspecies, *Pongo pygmaeus pygmaeus* in Borneo and *P. p. abelii* in Sumatra. Recent molecular data have suggested a re-classification into two separate species: *P. pygmaeus* in Borneo and *P. abelii* in Sumatra. Moreover, three subspecies have been described on Borneo Island: *P. p. pygmaeus* in Sarawak and west Kalimantan, *P. p. morio* in Sabah and east Kalimantan and *P. p. wurmbii* in central and south Kalimantan. Despite this, little is known about the intra-subspecific variation between isolated Bornean populations and among the Sumatran populations. More data are needed, which should include a large sampling of all geographically separated populations in Borneo and Sumatra in order to provide a more complete genetic information database.