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COGNITIVE STUDIES WITH ORANGUTANS IN CAPTIVITY - ENRICHING, REVEALING, STIMULATING, AND EDUCATIONAL

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Studies of orangutan cognition conducted in captivity are relatively uncommon when compared to those with African apes. When they do occur, orangutans are reported to respond with enthusiasm and persistence. The obvious attraction between captive orangutans and problem solving is entirely consistent with the range of mental challenges faced by these great apes in the wild. Experimental studies that provide self paced, incrementally more difficult problems for orangutans are one way of providing the type of mental challenge that orangutans seem to crave. Both longitudinal and finite studies conducted in captive settings will be discussed, including results that demonstrate differences between orangutans and African apes. The value of cognitive research for enlightening and educating the general public will also be addressed.

Keywords: orangutan, cognition, enrichment, problem-solving