

**ARE ENVIRONMENTAL AND ANIMAL WELFARE ACTIVISTS COUNTER-PRODUCTIVE IN GREAT APE CONSERVATION?"**

E. Meijaard

*People and Nature Consulting International, Bali, Indonesia*

*Presenter's Email: [emeijaard@pnc-int.com](mailto:emeijaard@pnc-int.com)*

As indicated by the rapid decline in populations, effective great ape conservation is very difficult. It requires mitigating the complex causes that underlie the main threats, hunting and habitat loss, but also more fundamental social and economic factors such as persistent poverty and unsustainable population growth. Resolving these issues requires holistic, multi-stakeholder approaches that integrate conservation targets with socio-economic development aspirations. The complexity and scale of these issues means that progress is often slow. Environmental and animal welfare activists tend to be impatient, and demand quick solutions that address the needs often of individual animals or populations. Such demands often go against broader government objectives (e.g., requests to stop all oil palm development), leading to highly polarized, often unconstructive debates. I investigate the role of activism in orangutan conservation, and make recommendations on how to design a form of activism that strikes the right balance of encouraging altered behavior but not being alienating.

Keywords: activism, animal welfare, conservation, great apes, rehabilitation