

## Foreword


Understanding the impact of human behavior on the environment and the countless species facing serious threats to their survival is critical to developing intelligent and flexible approaches that will enable us to live within our planetary boundaries, sustaining the diversity of life and lives. The *State of the Apes* series brings together data and knowledge about the impact of human activities on apes and their habitat. By identifying potential solutions to avoid or minimise harm, it serves as an important resource for surmounting the many challenges confronting us and all other species on this planet. Across their range, ape populations are declining as a result of habitat loss and degradation, hunting and disease; all ape species face the threat of extinction. Understanding the scope and the impact that killing, capture and trade have on the different ape species across Africa and Asia, and how these threats affect their conservation, as well as the well-being of individual animals, is vital to finding solutions for their protection.

The fourth volume in the *State of the Apes* series focuses on one of the most direct threats to apes: hunting. This activity, which is a threat in almost all areas where non-human apes are found, results in their killing, often with the aim of using their body parts for food, medicine or other purposes, or live capture and trade to keep the animals as pets, for props in the entertainment industry or displayed in collections. All apes are protected under the law in every country where they exist: the killing, capture and trade in apes is therefore illegal. Despite this, apes are hunted in every country where they occur naturally, albeit for different and often complex reasons. In some cases, people hunt for cultural reasons, but often it is motivated by economic drivers, either to earn cash, obtain food or to remove

an animal that is perceived as a nuisance, destroying crops.

Apes are among the most charismatic groups of species in tropical forests across Africa and Asia. They are intelligent, sentient, social and emotional beings, and given their close genetic similarity and shared evolutionary history with humans, they are often fascinating to people. This fascination or attraction has been one of the factors that has given rise to the threats apes currently face. It is largely based on their “almost-human” aspect that great apes and gibbons are captured to fuel the entertainment industry and to supply the vibrant pet trade and animal collections.

The impact of hunting on the individual apes concerned are also severe, leading to traumatized animals that experience fear, loneliness, pain, confusion and isolation from other individuals of their species. Most apes are social animals, spending years with their mother and natal group, learning how to survive and interact in the wild. When kept in captivity in artificial, stressful conditions, they experience trauma that lasts a lifetime. The hunting and killing or capture of apes, and their trade, has severe impacts on the conservation of these highly threatened species, who often exist in fragmented populations in forest patches that have already been seriously degraded by industrial agriculture, extractive industries and infrastructure projects. The removal of even a few individuals can have significant impacts on a species’ future. Their survival is, quite literally, in our hands.



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