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Spanish soccer star kicks off UN campaign to save endangered orangutans



Spanish soccer star Carles Puyol

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Soccer star Carles Puyol, who led Spain to the World Cup title last year, is the face of a new United Nations [campaign](#) to save endangered orangutans that could face extinction within the next few decades.

“Act Now for Orangutans” is developed by the UN Great Apes Survival Partnership ([GRASP](#)) – an alliance that works to respond to the conservation crisis facing chimpanzees, gorillas, orangutans and bonobos – and the United Kingdom-based International Animal Rescue (IAR).

Less than 66,000 wild orangutans are thought to remain in the forests of Borneo and Sumatra in Indonesia, and more than half of that population has been lost since 1950, according to a news release issued by the UN Environment Programme ([UNEP](#)), which created GRASP in 2001.

“Orangutans face a very real threat of extinction, perhaps within the next few decades,” said Doug Cress, GRASP Coordinator. “It will take a significant effort by leaders across all walks of life to halt this crisis, and we are very pleased that Carles has stepped up.”

Mr. Puyol, the 33-year-old captain of FC Barcelona, is the centrepiece of the campaign’s posters that state “I Care – Do You?” and asks supporters to visit a website that provides information on orangutan conservation, reforestation, and the impact of palm oil production on orangutan habitats.

For every individual who pledges their support on the website, GRASP will plant a tree to help expand key forests surrounding Sumatra’s Gunung Leuser National Park, a major orangutan habitat.

“The plight of the orangutan is an issue that touches me profoundly,” said Mr. Puyol. “When I was asked if I would support the campaign, I didn’t hesitate. Time is running out fast for these magnificent great apes and I’m proud to be part of efforts to save them.”

The posters, which feature the soccer star standing in front of images of orangutans in distress, will be displayed on billboards and banners in Indonesia.

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