

FACT SHEET



KING KONG

Scientific Name: *Megaambula craniensis*

Distribution: Skull Island, South China Sea

Quick Facts

Height: 30.5 metres

Weight: 1.4 million kg

Life Expectancy: 40-50 years

Status: Critically Endangered

Diet: Local vegetation, insects, large mammals and local marine life

Evolutionary History

M. craniensis' (henceforth referred to by the nickname for last surviving individual, King Kong) primate ancestors are likely to have migrated to what is thought to be a larger chain of islands around 10-20 million years ago, where they evolved larger body types as a result of being released from natural competitors. This island chain was subsequently broken up, potentially by volcanic activity or fluctuating sea levels, at which point the species became endemic to Skull Island.



Warner Bros Pictures, 2017

Description

King Kong stands around 30.5 metres and weighs around 1,500 tons. He is almost completely hairless due to his extreme metabolic rate and the high ambient temperatures of his island home. He is completely bipedal, and as such carries all of his weight exclusively on his hind limbs. Because of this and his extreme size, he is unable to jump and his speed on land is quite limited. Movement across the island occurs in slow continuous steps that can take up to a few seconds for each leg raise and fall. His legs are composed primarily of slow twitch muscle fibres to help with this incredible task of endurance. His legs are thickened and have an appearance more consistent with those of an elephant, terminating in feet without toes.

Contrary to popular belief, King Kong is not extremely strong for his size and can lift less than 25% of his own body weight. King Kong, like other primates, has a traditional respiratory system and closed cardiovascular system. However, due to his extreme size, he is limited to a respiratory rate of 1 ½ breaths per minute and a heart rate of 7 beats per minute.

Diet

King Kong's incredible size requires a large amount of food per day to maintain, requiring the consumption of between ~5 million kilocalories per day to meet his daily energy requirements. King Kong's dietary requirements are met primarily through consumption of various megafauna that are plentiful on the island. This ranges from creatures like the mire squid to the sker buffalo. Some needs are also met through the consumption of various forms of vegetation on the island and cellulose containing organisms like the spore mantis. Some facts still remain unknown in regards to how all of his complex nutritional needs are fulfilled. Based on his extreme energy requirements his activity levels are often limited, as overexertion can place him at risk of collapse.

Unlike many other primates, King Kong's fluid requirements are not met through consumption of large amounts of megafauna. Instead, King Kong must spend time at the lake each day consuming over 81 million litres water.

Habitat

Kong is native to only Skull Island, a landmass of about 6,000km². The tropical island supports a lush variety of vegetation similar to what is seen in other similar climates across the world, but no megafauna. The island has a great degree of geographical variety including forests, swamps, mountains, lakes, and valleys. A variety of other type of megafauna share the island with King Kong including the viscous Skull Crawlers and the Mother Longleg spiders.

Reproduction

Like all other primates, Kong reproduces sexually. However, as the last of his species Kong reproductive capabilities are currently non-existent. It is not known at this time if another female of his species still exists in some other area of the world.

Conservation Status

Migration of the reptilian predator *Horribilis bipedis* (Skull crawler) to Skull Island (presumably as a result of aquatic dispersal from a nearby island chain) resulted in significant reduction in *M. craniensis* populations. Kong is now the last remaining individual, and is subsequently an example of the ecologically 'walking dead'. If a suitable female were found, species would likely not persist as a result of inbreeding depression. It is forecasted that the species will be extinct in 30 years.