

Facebook addicts at most risk of losing their friends

IT should surely come as a warning if you are an over-zealous Facebook user.

The most addicted members of the social networking site are the most likely to be 'defriended' – because their online pals get bored with their constant and trivial updates, a study has found.

Being boring is the number one crime on the website that has an estimated 500million users worldwide including 27million in the UK alone, according to the research.

'Defriending' is when someone decides to no longer be a Facebook 'friend' with another user of the site, deleting them from their list of online buddies.

Denver Business School researchers from the University of Colorado analysed 1,500 Facebook accounts to find the top

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reasons for defriending. The list is headed by the dullness of having to read what someone had for breakfast, how long it took them to get to work or who their favourite pop star is.

Posting too often on the site, talking about politics or religion, being too opinionated or making racist or crude comments can also turn off online friends.

According to the survey, defriending also occurs when children tire of their parents' nosiness and deny them access to their personal profiles, and when partners who have split up in real life decide also to sever their links online.

Of all those who removed a Facebook friend, 57 per cent did

so specifically for something that happened online, while 27 per cent did so for something that happened in the real world.

Christopher Sibona, of the University of Colorado, offered some advice for anyone hoping to avoid being defriended.

He said: 'The 100th post about your favourite band is no longer interesting.'

'Another reason was posting about polarising topics like religion and politics.'

'They say not to talk about religion or politics at office parties and the same thing is true online.'

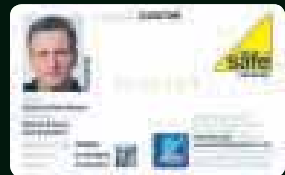
Dr Sibona added that being defriended does not cause much pain or hurt.

He said most users on the receiving end were amused, and that none was traumatised by the experience.



“He took my money then my daughter's life”

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SHACKLED

One woman's campaign to save an ape called Mely

by Bill Moulton and Laura Powell

HER look seems to plead with you. Mely the orang-utan is a pitiful sight as she sits slumped, depressed and shackled by a chain.

The 15-year-old ape was snatched as a baby from her rainforest home by a fisherman who had callously shot dead her mother. He seized Mely and keeps her captive, constrained by padlocks and chains on the balcony of his riverside shack near the River Sambas in Borneo. Why? The fisherman charges gullible tourists a fee to look at her.

Mely is now so weak that her long arms, which should be propelling her happily through the rainforest canopy, are barely strong enough to pull her to her feet. She is constantly shackled and is fed an utterly unsuitable diet of raw noodles, chilli powder and other donated food scraps from passers-by. The result is that she is often racked with pain.

Lis Key, a worker at the International Animal Rescue, a Sussex-based charity, was first made aware of Mely's plight when she watched a BBC-TV Panorama documentary about the expansion of palm oil plantations which have devastated the orang-utan's natural habitat.

The farmers, together with strip-mining firms, have been ruthlessly burning down the rainforest so fast in Borneo and Sumatra that even neighbouring countries are often shrouded in smog.

MANY people worry about what this means for climate change. Lis worries about what it means for orang-utans, and focused particularly on Mely. She decided to do anything to free Mely and take her to a specialist sanctuary to recover.

Travelling to Indonesia, Lis found the fisherman, who offered to sell Mely for £300 – but then Lis learned it was illegal to trade in orang-utans. So she was worried that if the charity paid to rescue Mely, it might be encourage even more locals to trap and try to sell vulnerable wild orang-utans as a quick moneyspinner.

Instead, the charity is hoping an Indonesian government-backed forestry officer will be sent to rescue Mely. Meanwhile, Lis is spearheading a crusade to raise funds and expand International Animal Rescue's rehabilitation centre in Borneo, which is already at full capacity.

Orang-utans are extraordinarily intelligent – sharing 97 per cent of the same DNA as humans.

No doubt, that's why the indigenous people of Malaysia named them 'Orang Hutan' – literally 'People of



Shocked into action: Lis Key
Pictures: ROGER ALLEN

the Forest'. In 1900 there were more than 315,000 in the wild, but today there are fewer than 50,000.

As they swing through the forest (their arms stretch six feet from fingertip to fingertip), they let out loud rumbling 'long calls' (which can be heard more than a mile away) to make sure they stay out of each other's way.

They typically eat mangoes, insects, tree bark and young leaves.

Now aged 15, Mely should be in her prime, since orang-utans typically live for 45 years – though the oldest one in captivity lived until 58.

As she waits for rescue, Mely remains chained to a post, picking feebly at the lock with her fingers in the forlorn hope of escape.

'She's thin but such an expressive, gentle animal. It breaks my heart to see her there,' says Lis sadly.

Mely may be one of the great apes. Ironically, all she needs from us is a shred of humanity.

■ INTERNATIONAL Animal Rescue, internationalanimalrescue.org, 01825 767688.



Top: Chained up in misery, Mely is kept on a stinking verandah in sight of the jungle where she should swing free. Above: Tourists feed her unsuitable food that makes her ill while (right) she tries in vain to undo her chains