Vietnam’s primates are on the edge of extinction

The world’s primate experts have revealed the 25 most endangered primates globally. This list includes three of Vietnam’s species.

Hanoi, Vietnam, 24 November, 2015 – Primatological experts have gathered in Singapore over the last week to assess the status of all Asian primates and launch a revised list of the top 25 most endangered primates. Experts from around the world assessed the threat of extinction for 182 primate species in South China, South and Southeast Asia, including 25 species that occur in Vietnam.

The findings for Vietnam were particularly dire. Eleven species that occur in Vietnam were listed as Critically Endangered, up from seven species on the 2008 list. Several of the species occur only in Vietnam, putting the country in the spotlight for both its diversity of primates as well as the enormous threats that they face, primarily from hunting and habitat loss. All but one species is listed as globally threatened.

The 11 species from Vietnam now on the edge of extinction include:

1. Cat Ba langur (Trachypithecus poliocephalus) – < 70 individuals
2. Delacour’s langur (Trachypithecus delacouri) – < 200 individuals
3. Tonkin snub-nosed monkey (Rhinopithecus avunculus) – < 200 individuals
4. Grey-shanked douc (Pygathrix cinerea) – < 1,500 individuals
5. Red-shanked douc (Pygathrix nemaeus) – population unknown
6. Black-shanked douc (Pygathrix nigripes) – population unknown
7. Cao vit gibbon (Nomascus nasutus) – ~ 130 individuals
8. Western black crested gibbon (Nomascus concolor) < 60 individuals in Vietnam
9. Northern white-cheeked gibbon (Nomascus leucogenys) < 300 groups in Vietnam
10. Southern white-cheeked gibbon (Nomascus siki) – population unknown
11. Con Dao macaque (Macaca fascicularis condorensis) – < 2,000 individuals

Fauna & Flora International’s (FFI) Vietnam Programme is currently working on the conservation of five of these species: Cat Ba langur, Tonkin sub-nosed monkey, cao vit gibbon, grey-shanked douc and western black-crested gibbon; however it is clear that additional work is needed.

“These updated assessments continue to highlight the importance of Vietnam as a centre of primate importance globally,” says Dr Ben Rawson, FFI-Vietnam Programme Country Director and IUCN SSC Co-Vice Chair for SSE Asia Region. “They also highlight that Vietnam is at risk of being the first country to lose a primate species to extinction.” To date no primate extinctions have been recorded in the 20th or 21st Century.

Dr Le Khac Quyet, a leading Vietnamese primatologist, commented, “We need more actions to conserve Vietnam’s endangered primates and their habitats by improving population protection, afforestation, law enforcement and conservation biological studies as well as involvement of local people in wildlife conservation.”


Dr Russell Mittermeier, Chair of the IUCN SSC Primate Specialist Group and Executive Vice Chair of Conservation International, said: “The purpose of our Top 25 list is to highlight those primates most at
risk, to attract the attention of the public, to stimulate national governments to do more, and especially to find the resources to implement desperately-needed conservation measures. In particular, we want to encourage governments to commit to desperately-needed biodiversity conservation measures.”

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Notes to editors:

i) The Top 25 Most Endangered Primates List is as follows (Vietnamese species in bold italics):

1. Cat Ba langur (golden-headed langur) - 60
2. Delacour’s langur - 234-275
3. Tonkin snub-nosed monkey - fewer than 250
4. Lavasoa dwarf lemur - unknown
5. Lac Alaotra bamboo lemur - about 2,500-5,000
6. Red-ruffed lemur - unknown
7. Northern sportive lemur - around 50
8. Perrier’s sifaka - 1,700-2,600
9. Rondo dwarf galago - unknown but remaining habitat is just 40 square miles
10. Roloway monkey - unknown but thought to be on the very verge of extinction
11. Preuss’s red colobus monkey - unknown
12. Tana River red colobus monkey - 1,000 and declining
13. Eastern lowland gorilla - 2,000-10,000
14. Philippine tarsier - unknown
15. Javan slow loris - unknown
16. Pig-tailed langur - 3,300
17. Kashmir grey langur - unknown
18. Western purple-faced langur - unknown
19. Hainan gibbon - 25
20. Sumatran orang-utan - 6,600
21. Ka’apor capuchin - unknown
22. San Martin titi monkey - unknown
23. Northern brown howler monkey - fewer than 250 mature animals
24. Colombian brown spider monkey - unknown
25. Ecuadorian brown-headed spider monkey – unknown

About Fauna & Flora International (FFI) (www.fauna-flora.org)

FFI protects threatened species and ecosystems worldwide, choosing solutions that are sustainable, based on sound science and take account of human needs. Operating in more than 40 countries worldwide – mainly in the developing world – FFI saves species from extinction and habitats from destruction, while improving the livelihoods of local people. Founded in 1903, FFI is the world’s longest established international conservation body and a registered charity.

FFI Vietnam Programme focuses on the conservation of Vietnam’s most threatened wildlife and important habitats and ecosystems. Its primate conservation activities – which have been running for more than 15 years – form a particular focus of the programme and have resulted in the discovery and protection of some of the world’s rarest primate species.