



Tonkin Snub-nosed Monkey Conservation Project

Ha Giang Province, Vietnam

A community-based primate conservation project implemented by Fauna & Flora International (FFI) Vietnam Conservation Support Programme and Ha Giang Provincial Forest Protection Department

Aim of the Project

Long-term conservation of the **critically endangered** Tonkin snub-nosed monkey (*Rhinopithecus avunculus*) in Ha Giang Province

Project Objectives

1. Protection of the Tonkin snub-nosed monkey population and its habitat
2. Raised awareness among stakeholders about the Tonkin snub-nosed monkey and the importance of its conservation
3. Further understanding of Tonkin snub-nosed monkey behaviour and ecology through scientific research

Project Background

The Tonkin snub-nosed monkey (*Rhinopithecus avunculus*) is one of the 25 most endangered primates in the world and only known from north-eastern Vietnam. It was thought to be extinct until it was rediscovered in Na Hang District in Tuyen Quang Province in the early 1990s. In 2002, FFI discovered another vitally important population of Tonkin snub-nosed monkeys in a small area of limestone forest known as Khau Ca in the buffer zone of Du Gia Nature Reserve, Ha Giang Province.



The total known global population is difficult to estimate but is believed to be about 200 individuals found only in Ha Giang and Tuyen Quang. There are about 90 individuals at Khau Ca.

Further surveys by FFI in 2007 and 2008 led to the discovery of another population about 40km further north in Quan Ba District close to the border with China. So far about 20 individuals have been sighted but there could be many more.



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The most important issue for conservation of the Tonkin snub-nosed monkey at Khau Ca is the limited area and isolation of its forest habitat. Although direct threats to the monkey currently appear to be quite low, there are still several issues: exploitation of wood for house construction and trade; hunting wildlife with traps; grazing livestock; cultivation; and the collection of non-timber forest products. There have been no reports of Tonkin snub-nosed monkey being hunted in the area since FFI began working there.

In Quan Ba District, hunting has been identified as a significant threat as well as general use of the forests by local communities, particularly for growing cardamom. Currently the forest is not protected for conservation, although protected by landmines laid during previous border conflicts.

Main Project Achievements

1. Immediate protection of the monkeys by a community patrol group, supervised by the Forest Protection Department
2. Raised awareness and pride among local communities concerning the Tonkin snub-nosed monkey
3. On-going pioneering research of the behaviour and ecology of the Tonkin snub-nosed monkey
4. Planning and mapping with local communities to identify areas for strict protection
5. Discovery of two separate Tonkin snub-nosed monkey populations in the province



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Summary of Activities

Since the discovery of the Tonkin snub-nosed monkey at Khu Ca in Ha Giang in 2002, Fauna & Flora International has been working with the Provincial Forest Protection Department to reduce immediate threats to their survival.

Protection

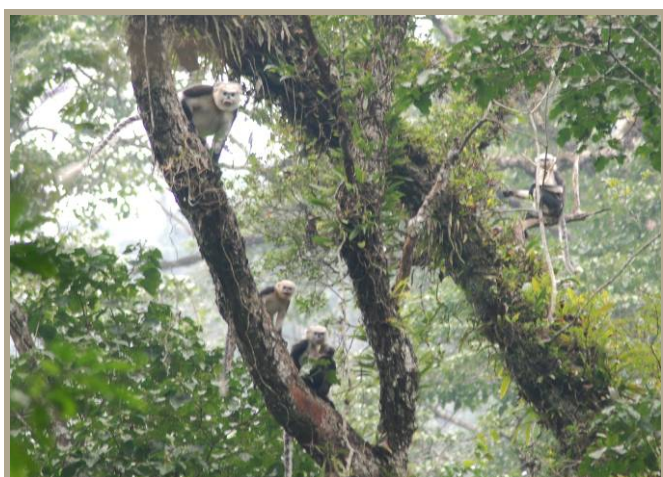
Providing on the ground protection to the monkeys was deemed an immediate priority. A core conservation zone and buffer zone was agreed upon by local commune authorities. Commune endorsed conservation agreements were drawn up and signed by households in surrounding villages. The project deploys six local community rangers to patrol Khu Ca forest, monitor the monkey population and raise awareness in the local villages.

The Forest Protection Department was supported by the community patrol group to confiscate guns from households in the villages surrounding the monkey's habitat

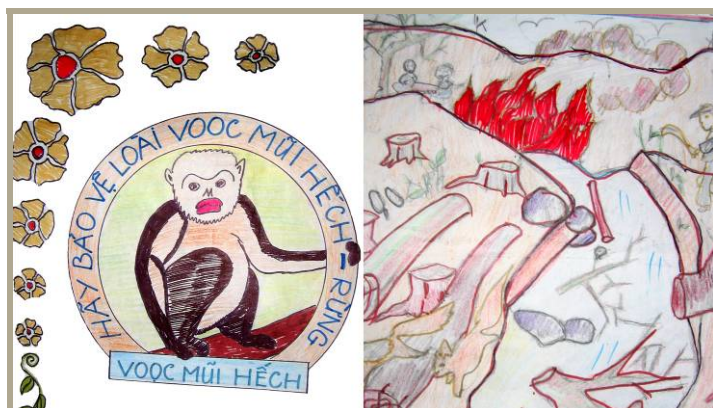
Awareness-raising

Awareness-raising among local communities about the importance of this species and measures to protect it is an important and ongoing activity. The community rangers have an integral role in informing local people about the species and the project as well as organising village meetings. Initially awareness raising was very active and focused on raising local pride of the presence of this rare species. Every year the project gives calendars depicting the monkey to all local households to decorate their homes.

An environmental education programme focusing on the monkey has also been established by the project and is currently being implemented in three local schools.



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Conservation posters made by school children

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Establishing a protected area

Following biodiversity surveys, resource use surveys and land use mapping with local communities, FFI has supported the Forest Protection Department to prepare a feasibility study for establishing the Tonkin Snub-Nosed Monkey Species and Habitat Conservation Area at Khu Ca. The protected area is expected to be gazetted early in 2009.

Research

Studies of Tonkin snub-nosed monkey behaviour and ecology are essential for the development of conservation strategies that ensure the survival of this primate species and its habitat. Since late 2004, research has been carried out on the ranging behaviour, food resource use, and activity of this species at Khu Ca forest. This research has engaged four people from Tung Ba Commune who continue to collect data and monitor the population. The research is overseen by scientists from the University of Colorado at Boulder, USA and Kansas City University of Medicine and Biosciences, USA.

Discovering a new population in Quan Ba District

In 2008 the presence of a new population of Tonkin snub-nosed monkeys was confirmed in Tung Vai Commune, Quan Ba District. Based on FFI's recommendation, the province has initiated measures for protecting the monkey's habitat, including stopping further cardamom production in the forest. FFI is now planning activities with local authorities to conserve this new population in Tung Vai. As a result of this finding, the Swiss NGO Caritas, which is operating in the same district, is also now planning on supporting the local communities in this poor and remote commune.

Acknowledgements

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