

Tonkin Snub-nosed Monkey Conservation Project

Ha Giang Province, Vietnam

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



Photo: FFI / Le Khac Quyet

Project profile last updated – 03 May 2006

The aim of the project

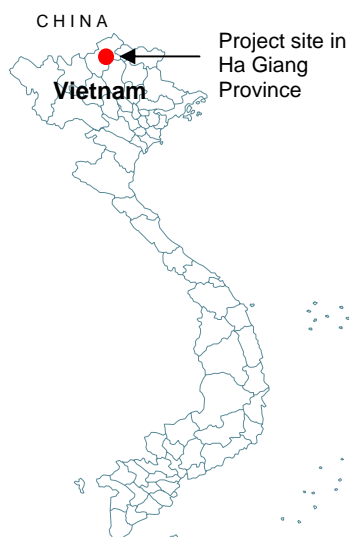
Long-term conservation of the Tonkin snub-nosed monkey (*Rhinopithecus avunculus*)

Project objectives

1. Protection of the Tonkin snub-nosed monkey population and their habitat
2. Raising awareness among stakeholders of the Tonkin Snub-nosed Monkey and the importance of its conservation
3. Further understanding of Tonkin snub-nosed monkey ecology through scientific research

Project background

The Tonkin snub-nosed monkey (*Rhinopithecus avunculus*) is one of the 25 most endangered species of primate in the world and is only found in Vietnam. It was thought to be extinct until it was rediscovered in Na Hang District in Tuyen Quang Province in the early 1990s. In May 2002, another vitally important population of Tonkin snub-nosed monkeys was discovered by FFI biologist Le Khac Quyet, in a small patch of limestone forest known as Khu Ca in the buffer zone of Du Gia Nature Reserve in Ha Giang Province.



The total known global population is currently under 300 individuals found only in Ha Giang and Tuyen Quang Provinces. There are estimated to be between 40-60 individuals in the Khu Ca area of Ha Giang. Ongoing monitoring of the Tonkin snub-nosed monkey population in Khu Ca has shown the presence of a number of young suggesting that the population is growing.

Socio-economic surveys in communities close to the site of the Tonkin snub-nosed monkey habitat highlighted several major threats to the monkey and its habitat:

1. The commercial exploitation of timber from Khu Ca forest;
2. Exploitation of a range of non-timber forest products (NTFPs) for commercial and subsistence purposes;
3. Shifting cultivation;
4. Fuel wood collection;
5. Grazing livestock, especially goats, in the forest; and,
6. Hunting, although hunting of the Tonkin snub-nosed monkey is currently not a threat.

It was determined that most of the direct disturbances to the Tonkin snub-nosed monkey habitat were caused by illegal logging for commercial purposes. Most other activities in the forest were for subsistence purposes, and hunting was carried out largely opportunistically.

Achievements

1. Immediate on the ground protection through the establishment and training of community patrol groups
2. Local agreement on boundaries of a protected area encompassing the monkey's habitat
3. Raised awareness and pride among local communities concerning the Tonkin snub-nosed monkey
4. Establishment of a research programme for understanding the ecology of the Tonkin snub-nosed monkey

Summary of activities

Since the rediscovery of the Tonkin snub-nosed monkey in Ha Giang in 2003, 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 the people's committees of the three communes bordering the monkey's habitat (Tung Ba, Minh Son and Yen Dinh). Commune endorsed conservation agreements were also drawn up and signed by households in the villages. The project has deployed six local community rangers to patrol Khau Ca forest, monitor the monkey population and raise awareness in the local villages. The community rangers are managed by Ha Giang Provincial Forest Protection Department and the project provides support for salaries, training and equipment.

Although hunting is not the biggest threat to the Tonkin snub-nosed monkey, it is still a significant potential threat as the population is so small and hunting could potentially have a large impact. In response the Forest Protection Department, with the authority of the Provincial People's Committee, was supported by the community patrol group to confiscate guns from households in the villages surrounding the monkey's habitat.

Awareness-raising

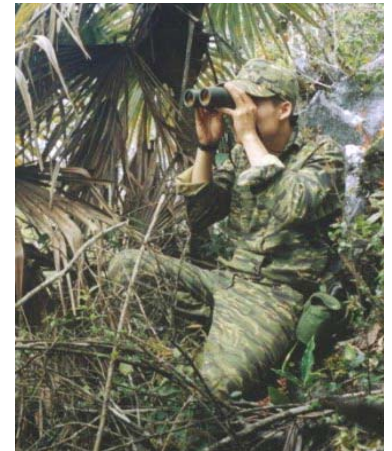
Awareness-raising among local communities about the importance of the monkey and measures to protect it is an important on-going activity and a targeted awareness strategy is in place. The community rangers have an integral role in informing local people about the species and the project as well as organising village meetings. FFI staff support them directly by providing training and awareness materials. The project has video footage of the Tonkin snub-nosed monkey in Khau Ca forest which serves as a useful tool for raising awareness about the species within local communities as well as local authorities and other stakeholders. There are also plans in place to develop a school-based environmental education programme focused on the monkey as well as activities with local unions.

Protected area designation

So far, activities appear to have been successful in reducing short-term threats to the monkey's habitat. Steps are now underway to provide the highest level of national protection to the monkey's habitat through the establishment of a protected area.

Research

Very little is known about the ecology of the Tonkin snub-nosed monkey. It is essential to understand more clearly its habitat requirements for its long-term survival. In order to plan further conservation activities pioneering research is being undertaken into the feeding ecology and behaviour of the species by FFI biologist Le Khac Quyet as part of his Masters degree with Hanoi National University. The research should provide valuable information about improving or expanding the monkey's habitat. This research is also supported by Prof. Bert Covert from the University of Boulder, Colorado and Barth Wright from George Washington University in the USA.



Community ranger on patrol



Signing household agreements



Dr. Barth Wright and Prof. Bert Covert in the field

Donors

In 2005 the projects donors were: The Governments of the UK (Defra's Flagship Species Fund) and Australia (Regional Natural Heritage Programme). Margot Marsh Foundation has provided funds for the project in 2006.