

Tonkin Snub-nosed Monkey

Rhinopithecus avunculus Dollman, 1912

Vietnam

(2000, 2002, 2004, 2006, 2008)

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The Tonkin snub-nosed monkey is one of four unusual, large, Asian colobine monkeys of the genus *Rhinopithecus*, all of which possess a characteristic turned-up nose. The three other species are endemic to China, while the Tonkin snub-nosed monkey is found only in northeastern Vietnam. This species was discovered in 1911, collected on perhaps no more than two occasions over the course of the subsequent 50 to 60 years, and consequently presumed to be extinct by a number of primatologists until it was rediscovered in 1989. Historically the species occurs only east of the Red River between about 21°09'–23°N. Due to widespread deforestation and intensive hunting in recent decades, its distribution has become severely restricted.

Currently, there are only five known locations with recent evidence where Tonkin snub-nosed monkeys occur, and these are completely isolated. In 1992, a population was found in Na Hang District, Tuyen Quang Province. As a result of the discovery, a nature reserve was established in 1994. The nature reserve comprises two separate areas: the Tat Ke and Ban Bung sectors. A study in 1993 observed 72 individuals and estimated 80 in the Tat Ke sector, and observed 23 individuals and estimated 50 in the Ban Bung sector. A later study, in 2004–2005, found far lower densities, and estimated only 17–22 individuals in the Tat Ke sector; no estimation of numbers was possible for the other subpopulation in Ban Bung sector. The main threat to the monkeys in Tat Ke Sector was hunting. This may result from a hydropower and flood prevention dam project in Na Hang. Construction began in 2002, and some 10,000 workers moved into the area for dam construction. This created a number of access roads and a demand for wildlife products and firewood. Conservation activities carried out by several organizations have been unsuccessful, and it has resulted in a reduction of this population.

A population of about 70 individuals was estimated for Cham Chu Nature Reserve in 2001, also in Tuyen Quang Province. Based on interviews of local people during a survey that was reported in 1992, the population was believed to have dropped to only 20–40 individuals. A survey in 2006 provided no sightings and no reliable evidence of the survival of the population. Local reports indicate, however, a small group of 8–12 individuals still in the area. The current threats to the populations of the monkeys are hunting and habitat destruction. Conservation efforts should target reducing human activities inside the reserve.

A population of about 60 Tonkin snub-nosed monkeys was discovered in 2001 and a later study (2005–2006) confirmed about 90 animals in Khau Ca, close to Du Gia Nature Reserve, Ha Giang Province. This is the only population which is not immediately threatened. There, public awareness and community participatory activities are being linked to increased protection efforts under the supervision of Fauna and Flora International (FFI).

A new population of about 20 Tonkin snub-nosed monkeys was discovered in a small forest patch in Tung Vai Commune of Quan Ba District close to the border with China. This is the second population of Tonkin snub-nosed monkey discovered in Ha Giang Province. The newly discovered population at Tung Vai appears to be threatened by hunting and habitat loss due to timber exploitation, shifting cultivation and the collection of non-timber forest products for

commercial purposes. The immediate measures are likely to be training and establishing patrol groups, awareness-raising, more survey work to locate other groups and assess the range of the monkeys, and assessment of the impact of cardamom production on the habitat.

The total population of the Tonkin snub-nosed monkey is believed to be less than 200 individuals.

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