

Golden-headed Langur or Cat Ba Langur

Trachypithecus poliocephalus poliocephalus (Trouessart, 1911)

Vietnam

(2000, 2002, 2004, 2006, 2008)

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The golden-headed langur, *Trachypithecus p. poliocephalus*, is probably the most endangered of the Asian colobines. This sub-species occurs only on the Island of Cat Ba in the Gulf of Tonkin, northeastern Vietnam. The Cat Ba Archipelago is in the world-famous Ha Long Bay, a spectacular karst formation that was invaded by the sea. The golden-headed langur inhabits tropical moist forest on limestone karst hills, and shares this habitat preference with the other six to seven taxa of the *T. francoisi* group. These so called karst langurs, including the Cat Ba langur and its closest relatives, the white-headed langur, *T. p. leucocephalus* Tan, 1955, in southern China, display strict behavioral adaptations to their karst habitat.

There are no systematic and reliable data available on the historic density of the langur population on Cat Ba Island. According to reports of indigenous people the entire island of Cat Ba (140 km²) and some smaller offshore islands were previously densely populated by langurs. Hunting has been the sole cause for the dramatic and rapid population decline from an estimated 2,400–2,700 in the 1960s to only 53 individuals by 2000. The langurs were poached mainly for trade in traditional medicines. Since the implementation of strict protection measures towards the end of 2000, the langur population on Cat Ba Island increased to current 60–70 individuals.

Although the growth of the population is encouraging, the overall status of the sub-species is most critical. As a result of habitat fragmentation, the remaining population is now divided into seven isolated sub-populations, probably only four of which include males, while the others are all-female groups and thus non-reproducing social units. The total reproductive output in this species is accordingly low. Since a peak in births in 2003, the reproductive output

of the Cat Ba Langur has stagnated at 1-2 offspring per year.

Cat Ba Island and the surrounding area are nationally and internationally recognized for their importance to biodiversity conservation. Cat Ba National Park was established in 1986. It presently covers more than half of the main island. The Cat Ba Archipelago (some 1,500-2,000 large and small islands, cliffs and rocks) was designated a UNESCO Man and the Biosphere Reserve in 2004.

Despite this, nature and wildlife protection on Cat Ba Island is deficient, though awareness as well as partnership and commitment with the local communities are slowly increasing. However, efforts to effectively conserve the langurs and their habitat face major obstacles due to the need to better address the local community's aspirations for development, and due to the steadily increasing human population, besides persistent, severe deficiencies in law enforcement. As elsewhere in the region, poaching is driven by increasingly attractive commercial gains in satisfying the immense local and regional demand for wildlife and animal parts. The strictest protection regime possible is necessary for the survival of all the mammals and other species on Cat Ba that are, like the langurs, targeted by the Asian wildlife trade.

A conservation program for the golden-headed langur on Cat Ba was initiated in November 2000 by the Zoologische Gesellschaft für Arten- und Populationsschutz (ZGAP), München, and Allwetterzoo Münster, Germany. The aim is to provide for their protection, reduce population fragmentation, and contribute to the conservation of the biodiversity on Cat Ba Island in collaboration with Vietnamese authorities.

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