

# Conservation news

## International workshop to develop a conservation action plan for the Critically Endangered cao vit gibbon *Nomascus nasutus*

On 17–19 March 2021, Fauna & Flora International (FFI)–Vietnam Programme, in collaboration with Cao Bang Provincial Forest Protection Department (Viet Nam), Bangliang National Nature Reserve (Guangxi, China), Daji Nature and the IUCN Species Survival Commission Conservation Planning Specialist Group, organized an international workshop to develop a 10-year species conservation action plan and a 30-year vision to 2050 for the Critically Endangered cao vit gibbon *Nomascus nasutus*. The workshop engaged 85 multi-level government representatives, protected area managers, international experts and NGO representatives who gathered physically in two workshop hubs, in Hanoi, Viet Nam, and Guangxi, China, and in a shared virtual space. The workshop was trilingual, with participants contributing in Vietnamese, Mandarin or English. The first day of the workshop was dedicated to presentations on the gibbon's ecology, behaviour and population dynamics, and implications for conservation. Delegates then worked on a vision of what successful conservation of the cao vit gibbon would entail, examined current threats and brainstormed specific action points to address these threats in the next 10 years.

The cao vit gibbon is endemic to forest habitats on the Sino–Vietnamese border. It was believed to have been formerly widespread in northern Viet Nam and southern China but was considered extinct by the latter half of the 20th century. The species was rediscovered in the Cao Bang forest in 2002 by FFI experts, who recorded > 20 individuals. In 2006, the species' presence was confirmed in the same forest in Guangxi, China. Protected areas were gazetted to protect the species: the Cao Vit Gibbon Species and Habitat Conservation Area (Trung Khanh, Cao Bang, Viet Nam) and Bangliang National Nature Reserve (Jingxi, Guangxi, China). Monitoring since 2007 indicates the population is now stable at c. 120 individuals, and this is thought to be at or near the carrying capacity of the species' current habitat.

The workshop was not only an opportunity to reflect on past conservation actions—ranging from population monitoring and habitat restoration to law enforcement and community outreach—but also served as a platform for discussion of coordination among protected area managers, conservationists and academics, and across the international border. The main outcome of the workshop will be an update of the 2015–2020 action plan, with a new species conservation action plan for 2021–2030. The vision for the species reflects the consensus that the risk of

extinction is now low in its last remaining home, and that the long-term priority is recovery, by exploring establishment of a second wild population.

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## The future of Indonesian gibbons: challenges and recommendations

Indonesia is home to nine species of small apes, all of which are categorized as Endangered on the IUCN Red List but conservation efforts for them have been limited. To address this, Perhimpunan Ahli dan Pemerhati Primata Indonesia (an Indonesian primatology association) held a webinar series during November–December 2020 to update information on the ranges of these species on Java, Sumatra (including Mentawai) and Borneo.

For the silvery gibbon *Hylobates moloch* there has been long-term behavioural research in Gunung Halimun Salak National Park, West Java, and a community livelihood-based conservation programme has been initiated outside the protected areas of Central Java. Nevertheless, the species' range is fragmented, and habitat corridors thus need to be developed, and law enforcement and a behavioural change strategy are required to counter illegal trade of this species.

The major threats to gibbons on Sumatra and Mentawai are habitat fragmentation and disease. The siamang *Symphalangus syndactylus*, agile gibbon *Hylobates agilis*, and lar gibbon *Hylobates lar* are known to occur in fragmented forests, but the degree of population persistence remains unknown, and there has been an outbreak of scabies in a siamang population. Corridors need to be included in land-use planning for these species, and research on disease outbreak risks is needed. Information on the status of these species is outdated, although there has been a recent survey of Kloss's gibbon *Hylobates klossii*.