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*Rhinopithecus avunculus* Khau Ca Vietnam  
Photo: Le Khac Quyet

# Primate Conservation Inc. UPDATE

1997

## Director's Report

This is the fourth year that PCI has been giving grants. With your support we are achieving our goal of funding field research and conservation projects on the least known and most endangered primates. We are very proud of the 57 projects in 17 countries that have been funded to date. I regret that I have neglected to report to you about our progress. I have been preoccupied with writing *The Pictorial Guide to the Living Primates* that was published in 1996 by Pogonias Press. It is the first book to include photographs of the 234 species of primates. The text is a short synopsis of what is known about the behavior, diet, habitat, life history, physical characteristics, social structure, and taxonomy of each species including *Homo sapiens*. The publisher will donate 30% of the net profits from the sale of this book to PCI. My greatest hope is that *The Pictorial Guide* will be used by students, primatologists and policy makers to study and protect endangered primates and their habitats. If you would like a copy of this book it can be ordered directly from the publisher (1800 296-6310). If you are a supporter of PCI you will receive a 10% discount.

### **The Importance Of Surveys**

Sadly the threats to primates on this planet have not diminished and in many countries they are becoming critical. Although surveys are often of short duration, they are one of the important first steps for long term conservation. Knowing where endangered primates still exist and with an estimate of their density, researchers can draw attention to the plight of the species and their habitat. This has been the case for a species endemic to

Vietnam, the Tonkin snub-nosed langur. It was reported to be "locally common" in the mid 1960's, but some experts feared that it had not survived the civil strife.

A successful survey by Dr. Le Xuan Canh, Marc Myers and Noel Rowe, Director of PCI, took place in December 1992 through January 1993. With the help of the Vietnamese Institute for Ecology and Biological Resources, PCI designed and sponsored a color conservation poster to inform the local people about the plight of the Tonkin snub-nosed langur. With PCI's encouragement the Wildlife Conservation Society sponsored Dr. Ramesh Boonratana and Dr. Canh to undertake a long term study of the species.

PCI awarded a grant to Dr. Canh in 1994-5 to continue his conservation work with Vietnam's snub-nosed langur. In 1995, the last two forests in which the Tonkin snub-nosed langur is found were declared the Na Hang Nature Reserve. An ecotourism company has begun taking hardy travelers on visits of the Na Hang Nature Reserve. This has provided support financial support for the local communities that have voluntarily preserved their forest. The reserve has been included in a proposal for a large United Nations Global Environmental Facility grant to protect the forest and this endemic species. Unfortunately the wheels of this bureaucracy turn slowly and the grant money has yet to reach this area in dire need of protection.

As Dr. Canh reported to the 1996 International Primatological Society in Madison, Wisconsin, what is currently needed is equipment for the staff to better patrol the reserve. They especially need a small motorboat (\$1500) and a motor bike (\$2000). If you would like to

help raise funds for these important items please contact me.

### **Is Miss Waldroni's Red Colobus Extinct?**

In 1996 PCI funded two interrelated surveys for Miss Waldroni's red colobus, which historically was found in Ivory Coast and Ghana. This subspecies of the western red colobus (*Procolobus badius waldroni*) may have the dubious distinction of being the first primate taxa to be lost to extinction in our lifetime. Though "only a subspecies" we must remember that every taxa is very important to the health of its forest home and ultimately, of the planet. Each of the subspecies of red colobus lives in a separate region of Africa.

Tom Struhsaker, a primatologist who has studied many of the red colobus subspecies, believes that each lives in a forest refugia that has survived the many wet and dry climatic periods that have affected the ecology of Africa over the last few million years. If one of the integral species of this region is lost forever, we will never know its particular role in maintaining the forest to which it has adapted. The forest and the local human population will be that much poorer without the red colobus.

Dr. Scott McGraw from the Department of Anatomy at the New York Institute of Technology will be conducting a survey of the forests on the eastern edge of Ivory Coast adjoining Ghana. Dr. McGraw did his Ph.D. thesis on the primates of the Tai forest in Ivory Coast.

Michael Abedi-Lartey from the Ghana Wildlife Department will be conducting the other survey in the forests of western Ghana. It is hoped that one or more populations of Miss Waldroni's colobus still exist in the forest reserves on the boundary of these two countries. Dr. George Whitesides who received a grant from PCI in 1995 to do a survey for 3 endangered taxa in Ghana, reported that although the forests were being protected from logging, there were very few animals sighted. No red colobus were seen by him. Poaching seems to be the main problem.

### **Bushmeat Trade Threatens Apes in West Africa**

The bushmeat trade, the commercial hunting of wild animals for food to be sold in the markets of towns and cities, is having a devastating effect on many primate populations. Some of the worst examples of the bushmeat trade has been documented by Karl Amman in Cameroon, where commercial hunters are targeting chimpanzees and gorillas. The meat of our closest living primate kin is being sold in the cities for more money per pound than beef or chicken. This dangerous trade is facilitated by the logging companies that build new roads ever deeper into the forest. The roads and logging trucks make it possible for the hunters to get the meat to market quickly. As Americans we know from our history, the buffalo was hunted to near extinction. The railroad made it possible for the hunters to ship the meat and hides quickly to the cities. Only the enforcement of laws passed and the hard work of many people, saved the buffalo for us to know and appreciate today. We must do all we can to protect our fellow apes from extinction.

Sincerely,

Noel B Rowe  
Director

