



Tonkin Snub-nosed Monkey

(*Rhinopithecus [Pygathrix] avunculus*)

Living only in Northern Vietnam, the Tonkin Snub-nosed Monkey (*Rhinopithecus [Pygathrix] avunculus*) is among the rarest primates in the world, with only about 250 believed to be surviving. The Na Hang Nature Reserve harbors two thirds of the population while the Northern Tat Ke Sector has over 100 of the species. Other isolated groups do not exceed 50 individuals.

The Tonkin snub-nosed monkey belongs to the *colobines* or leaf-eating monkeys. Its diet consists primarily of leaves and some unripe fruits. It has a special stomach that assists in the breakdown of cellulose. Three related species of Snub-nosed monkeys are found in China.

Adults of both sexes have black fur on the back and outer sides of the limbs. The front is creamy-white. The facial skin around the eyes is blue. The female monkey is smaller (8.5 kg) than the male (14 kg) in body weight. This type of monkey has a long tail.

It lives in subtropical broadleaf forest on steep jagged limestone mountains, staying entirely in trees. The basic social unit is one adult male accompanied by several females and their young. Other males form all-male bachelor groups.

This species is critically endangered. Like many other wildlife, the Tonkin Snub-nosed Monkey is threatened by agricultural encroachment, collection of fire-



wood, release of livestock and animal poaching. Its meat is eaten and the bones are boiled into a native medicine called *cao*, which is thought to bring energy and health. Conservation of this rare monkey conflicts with development needs. A hydropower dam has been planned inside the Na Hang Reserve.

The Tonkin Snub-nosed Monkey cannot be found in any zoo. No animal has ever survived more than a few months in captivity. Every possible conservation measure should be taken to protect this beautiful and rare animal, especially the group in Tat Ke Sector.

Status: Critical

- By Bettina Martin

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