Monkeys of Asia:

The Endangered Douc Langur

By Camille Dorian

Monkey Matters Website

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The red-shanked douc langur (pronounced duke LANG-grrr) is an endangered monkey that comes from the forests of Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia.

The mother douc langur is named Moki. Like the other douc langurs, she has dark, almond shaped eyes. Her white face has shades of tan on the nose, cheeks, brow and ears.

Sparse white whiskers form a ruff around the cheeks and chin on adult douc langur's face. The male douc langur does not have the same pale

blue as Moki does on her chin.

Young douc langurs are born with dark faces. Their muzzles lighten and their white whiskers grow longer as they get older. The infant spends a lot of time clinging to the mother's stomach, where he is well camouflaged. His mother helps protect him from predators like large overhead birds.

Moki is holding her offspring, JD. (JD stands for Junior Douc.) He is her first born male. Douc langur monkeys have one infant at a time (twins are rare).

Monkeys use hugging and body contact to help their offspring feel safe and secure.

JD is 9 months old and is part of a zoo breeding program for endangered monkeys. He lives with his mother Moki, his father Jack (photo left) and two aunts. Infants are weaned at 12 to 18 months.

It is natural for adult douc langurs to have big bellies, but Jack is sometimes mistaken for a preg-

nant female because of it.

Douc langurs are leaf eating monkeys. All leaf-eating monkeys have specially adapted stomachs. The stomach of a langur has more than one compartment. The stomach contains special colonies of bacteria that help the monkeys to digest the fibrous leaves, petioles (slender stems), flowers, unripe fruit and seeds that they eat. Young, tender leaves are a favorite food.

JD's aunt Rose is eating hibiscus leaves. JD learns to eat the leaves of the ficus tree from watching the older langurs.

When Moki eats, JD begs to get his share.

When monkeys live in the zoo, they also eat a high fiber food called

leaf eater monkey biscuits. Raw broccoli and raw yams are added to their diet. The douc langur does not eat animal prey like some monkeys do.

Jack drops the hard biscuits in a water bowl to soak before he eats them.

Most monkeys have hands that are shaped similar to human hands (four fingers and an opposing thumb). Monkeys have fine fur on their fingers and backs of the hands, but the palm and gripping side of the fingers are bare like the human hand. Most leaf-eaters have short thumbs and some leaf eaters have no thumbs at all.

Doucs sometimes eat by putting their mouths right on the leaves and sometimes they use their hands to strip the leaves off first.

The leaf eating monkey's foot looks similar to a hand. The big toe is like a thumb, so the monkeys can grip leaves and branches with their feet as well as their hands.

Most of the douc langur's fur is black or gray ticked with white. But from the knee to the ankle the fur is rust colored. Adult douc's also have a rust col-

ored "necklace" on the chest.

Above the tail the adult douc langur is marked by a white rectangle. The thighs are black, which makes the white patch stand out even more. Design patterns like the white throat, white tail and white rectangle probably help douc langurs to identify each other at a distance in the shadowy overgrown jungles. Fur color and pattern is a kind of communica-

tion.

When the douc langur is upset, he uses a different kind of language--body language--to communicate. His head juts forward from the shoulders and his ears move back. His eyes glare at his opponent. This is called a threat stare.

It is a warning to an enemy or an outsider. It is the douc's way of saying, "Back off. Stay out of my space, or else."

Younger doucs use expressions of their own to communicate. Studies show their large eyes help in getting care from adults.

The douc youngster will grimace by wrinkling up his face and opening his mouth to an adult. This is a submissive gesture. He usually makes a small

Other langurs..... There are many species of leaf eating monkeys. Some live in Africa and some in Asia. A group of Asian langurs is known as "the odd-nosed monkeys".

Some of the odd-nosed monkeys are "snub-nosed". Three of these live in China in deciduous forests that are snow covered for a few months of the year.

The other odd-nosed monkey is the proboscis monkey of Borneo. It has a long tubular nose and the males nose is much bigger than the females. All of the odd-nosed monkeys are endangered.

Where douc langurs live..... Red-shanked doucs live in the high canopy from 980 feet to 6560 feet up (the equivalent of a 120 to 820 story building). They live in moist tropical rain forest but have also adapted to dry (monsoon) forest.

The sounds they make..... Red-shanked doucs are quiet monkeys, making few sounds. They make a low pitched growl as a threat and a short, harsh squeal of distress.

sound at the same time. JD makes this grimace when his mother is trying to wean him. She wants to discourage him from nursing. This is natural for mother monkeys whose offspring are growing up. If JD grimaces, his mother will nurse him for a short time.

Douc langurs make this submissive grimace in response to the threat stare from another douc.

Langurs live in social groups with one dominant adult male and several females. In most langur groups, the females are responsible for maintaining the groups territory.

JD climbs in the branches. Young langurs have the most energy for play. He sometimes runs and

slides on his belly. He plays leap frog over the back of one of his aunts. He swings with his arms and leaps and will swing from the tail of an adult.

JD’s aunt Tulip is one of the adult females. She relaxes by sunning herself.

Aunts sometimes help care for infants in the

A day in the life of a douc langur..... All monkeys have a daily rhythm or schedule that they keep when living in the wild. Some langurs travel as much as five miles a day in search of the foods that are right for them.

Early in the morning, the douc langur monkeys rise. The adults groom in and around their sleeping trees, while young ones play. Foraging starts in the morning. Langurs eat their foods as they find them. Different foods are available during different seasons.

With many monkeys, a group rest time comes in the afternoon. Dinner foraging is followed by settling in chosen sleeping trees. The langurs groom some more, then sit with family members to fall asleep.

Daily rhythms change with the weather. If it is very hot, monkeys seek shade and rest. Rain also interrupts foraging.

group. This baby-sitting may help the mother by giving her a rest from an active youngster like JD. It gives the younger females in the group practice with their infant care skills as well.

The adult male langur is dominant (head of the group). Males are always bigger than the female. Male doucs can mate and have offspring at the age of five. Females are mate at the age of four years.

Male langurs who live in the wild often lose their position as head of the family. This is the natural

way of langurs who live in the wild. A younger, stronger male langur wants to come into a group and take the older male's place. When this happens the older male then moves on to a new group.

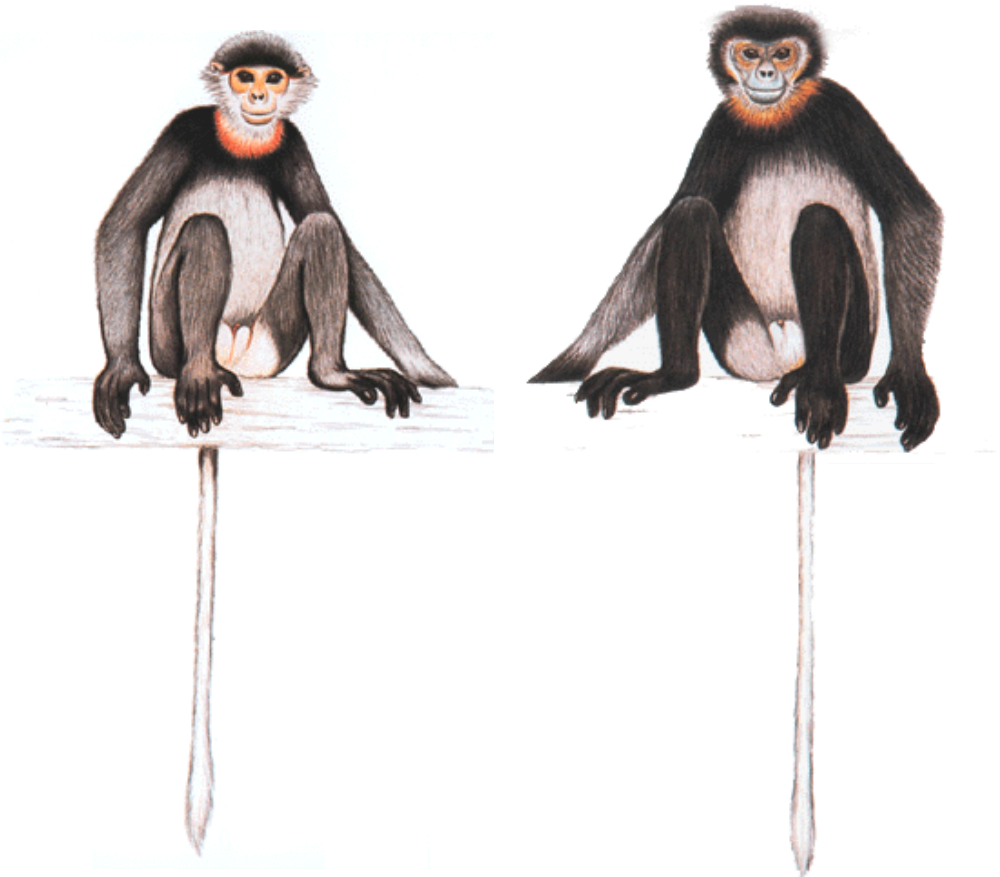
Langurs spend some time each day grooming

themselves and grooming each other. The adult females groom the male, the offspring, each other and themselves.

Young langurs do almost no grooming, but they learn what it is by watching the older monkeys. Jack is groomed by all the females of the group, but he gives little or no grooming in return.

Like all doucs, JD’s white tail is straight like a piece of rope. It is used to help him balance when he climbs and when he runs along slender branches.

There are three species of douc langur, the northern or red-shanked douc *(Pagathrix nemaeus)*,



the southern or black shanked douc *(Pagathrix nigripes)*, right, and the grey shanked douc *(Pagathrix cinereus)*. The gray shanked douc was the last species to be identified and is thought to reside only in Vietnam.

All douc langur monkeys are endangered, but the gray shanked douc is the most at risk.

The Francois' langur, top, is also endangered, as is the rare Ca Ba langur.

The most studied leaf eater is the common gray Hanuman langur. Unlike the douc langur monkey, the gray langur spends much of its time on the ground. Gray langurs are well populated in

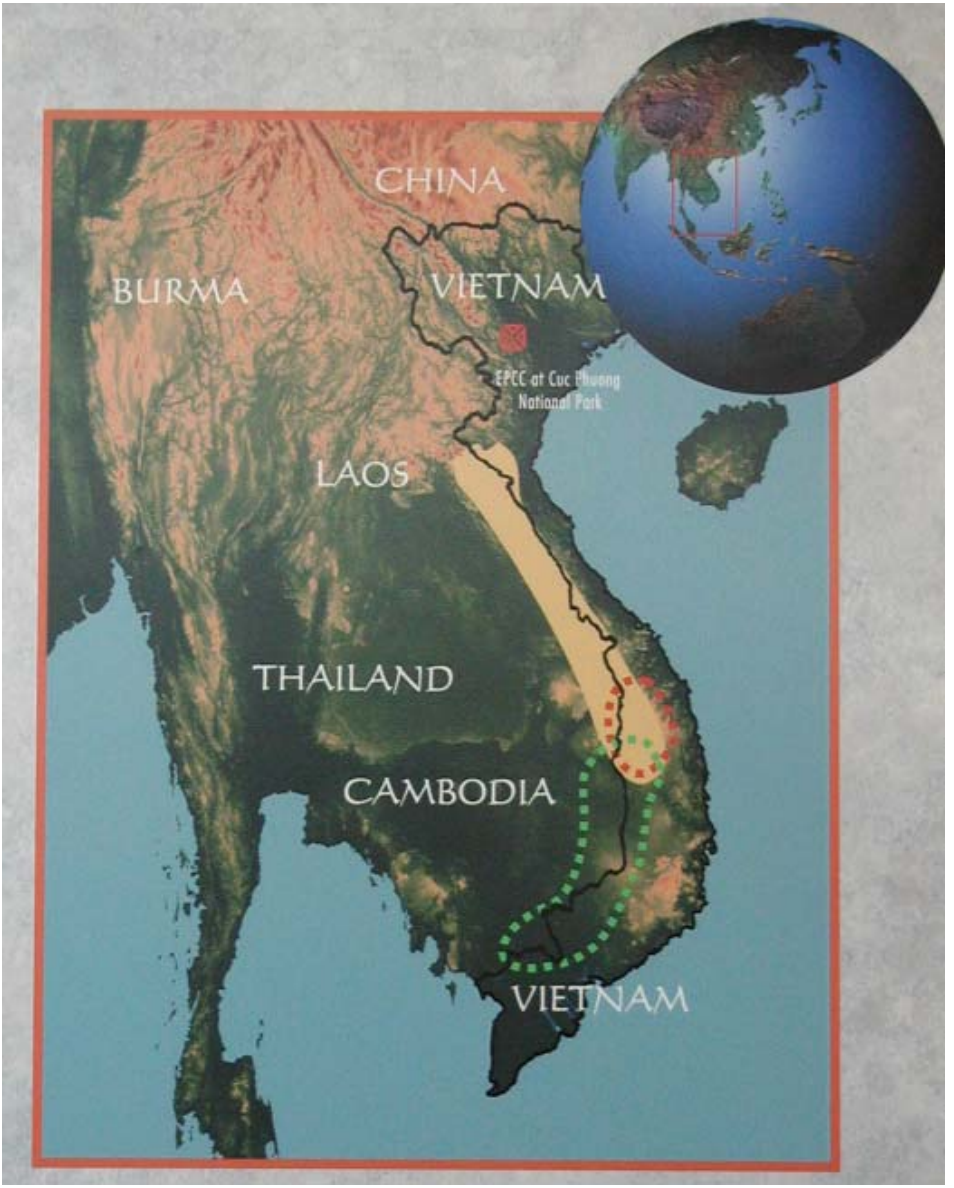
the wild too. These two facts make their habits and behaviors easier to watch.

Douc langurs are the most colorful of all the leaf eating monkeys, but they are hard to find because they live hidden in the leafy tree tops. There are very few douc langurs remaining in the for-

ests. Therefore it is hard for primatologists to study these intelligent primates.

Like all langurs, the douc langur eats and sleeps close to its social group. But little is known about them compared to what is known about most other kinds of monkeys.

Doucs are highly endangered because.....
Over sixty percent of the forest in Vietnam is gone because of logging, farming and the Vietnam war. This is called loss of habitat. Sadly, the forests are still being cut.



Douc langurs are also hunted as food. They are considered a delicacy all over Southeast Asia. They are also in danger of becoming medicinal products. (Some traditional oriental medicines use douc langur body parts.)

In Vietnam, laws have protected the monkeys since 1992. Still, tourists often find endangered monkeys for sale when they travel in Southeast Asia. Monkeys who are taken from the jungle and sold as pets do not mate and reproduce themselves. When douc langurs are bought as pets, they usually have short lives. This is because a

careful diet is critical with this type of monkey. Feeding them even small amounts of foods that people eat can cause illness and suffering for the monkey. Most of them will die from improper diet.

Conservation can be complicated.....
Protecting endangered animals in Southeast Asia has not been easy for many reasons.

One problem is economics.....
The poor people of these regions still want to make use of native animals for food and trade.

Another problem is hunters and meat poachers

who break the law deliberately by shooting and trapping endangered monkeys. They profit by selling the skins of douc langurs to tourist shops. The meat is sold at a high price and the bones are sold for medicines. Many of these hunters believe hunting is the best way for them to make a living. Some of them use guns to threaten rangers and conservationists.

Young endangered monkeys are sold as pets. If they are not sold, baby monkeys are kept and fattened up like livestock to eat when they are full grown.

Endangered primates are also smuggled to other countries for profit. Smugglers don't understand the care needs of the monkeys. The monkeys often suffer and die during shipping.

Logging continues to deplete the forest habitats of endangered monkeys. Loggers make a living selling wood to be made into products that people will use. If they are not regulated, loggers will cut down the remaining rain forests in Vietnam and other parts of Southeast Asia.

Lack of education is a big problem..... Some native people who use endangered monkeys do not understand that these monkeys cannot be found in other parts of the world, that once they become extinct in Southeast Asia, they will never exist anywhere again.

Ordinary people may not understand the difference between an endangered douc

langur and a non-endangered monkey like the long-tailed macaque.

One example is a Vietnamese farmer who wanted to make *cao* (a thick monkey-balm made from boiling down the bones, mixed with alcohol to be used as a medicinal preparation). He could have legally collected macaques for this. Instead he shot six endangered gray-shanked douc langurs at one time. Although he was fined, fining does not bring back the monkeys.

Even people who are in charge of wildlife trafficking are not always educated enough to identify the endangered monkeys from the non-endangered ones. This makes it hard for them to enforce the law.

Education is needed for local Viets so that monkey meat is taken off their menus.

Most hunters and loggers have no other skills. A special education program could help them find a different way to make a living.

Reforming conservation efforts..... If too many organizations have some responsibility over rain forest protection, none of them will effectively carry out that responsibility. One

main organization needs to be responsible for saving rain forests and endangered species in each country, inlcuding the borders. Responsibilities need to be clear and specific, so the programs can be enforced.

Types of monkeys are not always easy to identify. Park guards and rangers must have clear photographs and the education to identify endangered animals.

Many more steps are involved in cases of wildlife trafficking. Reports of illegal activity must be answered promptly. Rangers must be trained to deal with uncooperative hunters and smugglers who are armed.

Easy wildlife exploitation laws is a very big problem. Law breakers can be fined but they cannot be brought to court, even if the incident is serious. The government needs to give more serious punishment for crimes against wildlife. Fining is not enough of a penalty.

To prevent global extinction, conservationists recommend (1) that the wild populations must be protected (difficult, and has not yet been accomplished), (2) that the monkeys be bred in captivity (very few are currently being bred), and (3) that a safe, large natural habitat be pre-

served for them in the wild (difficult, and has not yet been accomplished).

New strategies for primate conservation…..
Some innovative conservationists are seeking to

preserve endangered monkeys by involving poor local villagers in their fate.

Conservation experts realize a primate reserve is not enough. Community involvement is needed. If the community doesn't want to care for endangered monkeys, an outsiders conservation program will not work.

It is important for local villagers to establish the boundaries of primate reserves and help select the rangers that will patrol them. A weekly radio program, which includes conservation news, has been started by one conservationist. Former wildlife traders have been converted to teachers.

"At first native people don't realize they are harboring a monkey that exists nowhere else," conservationists say. "But they can develop a pride that they are hosting the only population in the world."

Vietnamese primates are also threatened by

their proximity to China, where their appetite for exotic monkey meat and medicine seems insatiable.

What you can do to help.....

■ Conserve and recycle paper, glass and plastics, etc. to save natural resources.

■ Conservation programs are needed to help ensure the douc langur's future in the wild. Support people who carry out endangered species breeding and study programs.

■ Make douc langur posters as a group to help with a fund raising project. You can support the Vietnamese Endangered Primate Conservation Center (CEPCC) in Cuc Phuong National Park with donations of money. This park works hard to rescue and care for douc langurs and other endangered primates that have been taken from the jungle.

■ Get a class or group together and organize a bake sale or a garage sale. Proceeds can be donated to the CEPCC or to a zoo (like the San Diego Zoo or the Oregon Zoo) that breeds douc langurs.

■ Donate your time to help conservation groups like CEPCC fund raise and put out their newsletter.

■ Don't buy rain forest products. Most throwaway

chopsticks, some paper products and furniture are made by the destruction of rain forest trees.

■ If you visit Southeast Asia, so not buy animals, animal skins, exotic meats or other animal products.

■ Join the Peace Corp and work in Southeast Asia for conservation.

■ Write to your government officials and ask them to vote for measures that save the rain forest. Ask them to vote for measures to enact strict punishments for those who deal illegally in endangered animals.

■ Human population control is very important. Don't contribute to over-populating our planet. An overpopulation of people has already started to deplete the earth's rain forests and other natural resources.

Glossary

Adapt: To change in order to live in a certain habitat
Camouflaged: Hidden from sight by blending in to surroundings
Communication: To send a signal
Conservation: Planned protection of natural resources to prevent loss
Daily rhythm: A repeated pattern of daily activities
Deciduous forest: Trees that lose their leaves and are bare branched in the winter, then leaves are regrown in the spring
Diet: The food that an animal or person usually eats
Endangered species: A species whose continued existence is threatened
Extinction: When not a single member of a species remains alive
Forage: To gather food
Grooming: To clean the fur and skin
Habitat: The place where an animal or plant normally lives and grows
Mate: To join with an animal of the same kind to produce offspring
Muzzle: The mouth and nose of an animal
Offspring: The young or child of an animal
Predators: Animals that hunt and kill other animals
Prey: Animals that are hunted and eaten by other animals
Primates: Any of an order of mammals including humans, apes, monkeys and related forms (tarsiers and lemurs)
Primatologist: Someone who studies primates (monkeys and humans)
Reserve: A protected place set aside for plants or animals.
Species: A class of animals with common characteristics who are capable of mating and producing offspring
Territory: An area of land or a foraging range defended by a group of animals
Weaned: To stop dependence on the mother for nursing
Wild: Natural surroundings
Wildlife exploitation: To use wildlife unjustly for one's own advantage