

by the need to protect fish and their habitat from exploitative practices, in January 2021 the Khengjang and Yangoulen village councils in Manipur and the Lapalang village council in Meghalaya declared conservation zones in stretches of the river adjoining their villages.

In Manipur, the Khengjang and Yangoulen villages of the Thadou Kuki tribe declared 2.47 km of the Tuivang River as a fish conservation zone, banning all fishing and other human activities that could threaten fish or the river. The biodiversity of the river has not yet been documented, but local fishers say the river provides breeding sites for fish during the monsoon. While monitoring the fish conservation zone, the project team and local communities will document biodiversity and record stream flows.

In Meghalaya, the Lapalang village of the Khasi War tribe is seeking to protect a 250 m stretch of the Rymben River from Jingsum Rimyllim to Jingsum Boit, where deep pools act as refugia for fish, especially during the dry season. Currently, there are 10 species of fish known from this stretch of the river, of which the chocolate mahseer *Neolissochilus hexagonolepis*, Gray's stone loach *Balitora brucei* and catfish *Glyptothorax striatus* are categorized as Near Threatened on the IUCN Red List. The next steps in both zones will be to consider the roles of stakeholders, a management strategy, and an implementation framework.

NICOLE PINTO (ORCID [orcid.org/0000-0001-8048-468X](https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8048-468X)) and SRINIVAS VAIDYANATHAN (ORCID [orcid.org/0000-0003-3642-0309](https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3642-0309)) Foundation for Ecological Research, Advocacy and Learning, Bengaluru, Karnataka, India. E-mail [nicole@feralindia.org](mailto:nicole@feralindia.org)

SUSAN VARUGHESE (ORCID [orcid.org/0000-0002-1592-3110](https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1592-3110)) and JAGDISH KRISHNASWAMY (ORCID [orcid.org/0000-0001-7985-0005](https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7985-0005)) Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and the Environment, Bengaluru, India

BASHIDA MASSAR St. Anthony's College, Meghalaya, India

JAMES V. HAOKIP Sikkim University, Sikkim, India

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### New records of the forest musk deer *Moschus berezovskii* in Viet Nam revealed by camera traps

The forest musk deer *Moschus berezovskii* is categorized as Endangered on the IUCN Red List, having declined precipitously, primarily through unsustainable hunting to supply the trade in musk. Although the majority of the species' range lies in China, it extends marginally into north-east Viet Nam. In the late 1990s, the population in Viet Nam was estimated to be 200 individuals, and declining, but there have been no updates on the species' status in Viet Nam since then, and given the high hunting pressure in



Forest musk deer *Moschus berezovskii* camera-trapped in February 2021 in Viet Nam.

many of the country's protected areas, it was unknown whether the species persists.

In January 2021, scientists with the Vietnam National University of Forestry were provided with photographs of a musk deer that had reportedly been captured by local hunters in the buffer zone of a protected area in north-east Viet Nam. Follow-up camera-trapping during 3–19 February, with 10 cameras set in mountainous karst habitat within the reserve, resulted in two photographic sequences of musk deer from two of the 10 cameras (it is unclear whether the photographs represent one or two individuals). To our knowledge, these photographs provide the first confirmation in more than 2 decades that the species persists in Viet Nam.

We recommend additional surveys of the musk deer in the protected area where it was recorded, and surveys in other karst areas in northern Viet Nam to assess if other populations survive. It is likely that unsustainable hunting through the setting of indiscriminate wire snares is a threat to any remaining musk deer, as it is to other large mammals. We recommend increased snare removal efforts, education and outreach with local communities, and the implementation of proactive wildlife crime prevention approaches.

DUNG VAN TRAN (ORCID [orcid.org/0000-0002-6211-9360](https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6211-9360)) Wildlife Department, Viet Nam National University of Forestry, Ha Noi, Viet Nam, and Graduate School of Global Environmental Studies, Kyoto University, Kyoto, Japan

DAI PHAN VIET and THINH VU TIEN Viet Nam National University of Forestry, Ha Noi, Viet Nam, and Institute for Tropical Biodiversity and Forestry, Ha Noi, Viet Nam

AN NGUYEN Leibniz Institute for Zoo and Wildlife Research, Berlin, Germany, and Re:wild, Austin, USA

CAP PHAM VAN Lang Son, Viet Nam

ANDREW TILKER ( [orcid.org/0000-0003-3630-8691](https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3630-8691) ) *Re:wild, Austin, USA, and Leibniz Institute for Zoo and Wildlife Research, Berlin, Germany. E-mail [atilker@globalwildlife.org](mailto:atilker@globalwildlife.org)*

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## Preliminary survey of the southernmost Tapanuli orangutan population

The newly discovered orangutan species *Pongo tapanuliensis* faces population declines driven by habitat fragmentation and hunting. Historically, the Tapanuli orangutan occurred from the uplands of West Toba lake in North Sumatra to the Bukit Tinggi district, West Sumatra, but the current population is limited to the Batang Toru ecosystem, North Sumatra, in three forest blocks separated by a river and roads. Most Tapanuli orangutan populations are in unprotected forest areas, although the southernmost population is in the Lubuk Raya Reserve.

With the support of Tropical Forest Conservation Action–Sumatra, we conducted a preliminary study of the Tapanuli orangutan in the Lubuk Raya Reserve in January 2021. In a 10 km transect survey we did not encounter any orangutan nests, although we observed three nests outside the targeted transect, and a habitat suitability analysis showed that 44% of the area could potentially be used by orangutans. We spoke with 20 people in seven villages and found that they see orangutans in this area, especially those people who live on the border of natural forests and agricultural lands. Most correspondents indicated they do not kill orangutans, although previous studies have found that hunting has caused drastic declines in Sumatran orangutan populations.

Although zero losses have been proposed as a means to save the Tapanuli orangutan (*Oryx*, 55, 10–11), other approaches are needed. More than half of the species' population occurs outside protected areas, and we observed extensive agricultural expansion in the area we surveyed, which could trigger conflict with orangutans. However, many local people are aware of the conservation status of this species as the result of an ongoing campaign by the orangutan conservation project of the United States Agency for International Development, which began in 2007. Any strategy to protect the Tapanuli orangutan will need to involve communities and the private sector, with collaborative management, and the establishment of a sanctuary for the species that could be used for ecotourism.

DIDIK PRASETYO ( [orcid.org/0000-0001-5486-2624](https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5486-2624) ) *Fakultas Biologi Universitas Nasional, Jakarta, Indonesia E-mail [dprasetyo.unas@gmail.com](mailto:dprasetyo.unas@gmail.com)*

MISDI MISDI *Fakultas Pertanian prodi Kehutanan, Program Studi di Kampus Utama Universitas Syiah Kuala Gayolues, Jalan Blangkejeren-Blangpidie, Aceh, Indonesia*

TAUFIK MULYANA, FAUZAN CHOLIFATULLAH and HAERUDIN SADJUDIN *The Indonesian Wildlife Conservation Foundation, Jakarta, Indonesia*

WANDA KUSWANDA *Environmental and Forestry Research and Development Institute of Aek Nauli, North Sumatra, Indonesia*

JITO SUGARDJITO *Center for Sustainable Energy and Resource Management, Universitas Nasional, Jakarta, Indonesia*

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## Primate Specialist Group ARRC Task Force

In early 2020, the IUCN Species Survival Commission Primate Specialist Group officially launched the ARRC (Avoid, Reduce, Restore, Conserve) Task Force ([arctaskforce.org](https://arctaskforce.org)), to provide advice to companies and banks to Avoid ape habitat, Reduce impacts where avoidance is not possible, Restore habitats that have been negatively affected, and contribute positively to ape Conservation. Development projects such as mines and hydroelectric dams occur throughout ape habitat, and are a significant threat to their survival. The task force provides guidance on the distribution of apes and the location of priority areas, so that projects with the most significant anticipated impacts can be avoided. It also offers technical guidance to improve the practices of those projects that proceed, to reduce their impacts on apes. The task force is guided by a steering committee of 20 members, nine from ape range countries, and draws from the expertise of c. 150 ape experts. One major achievement of the task force was the inclusion, in the latest iteration of the Guidance Note to the International Finance Corporation (IFC) Performance Standard 6 (PS6; best practice lending standards for biodiversity), of a paragraph regarding projects operating in great ape habitat. As a result, companies seeking loans will need to engage with the task force to avoid great ape habitat and, where avoidance is not possible, develop appropriate mitigation measures.

The task force has advised c. 20 projects, leading to improvement in baseline surveys, increased avoidance of ape habitat, and improved practices, with better outcomes for apes. The task force will also review and monitor sensitive projects, will not be involved with projects where impacts to apes are deemed too significant to be mitigated, and will not engage with projects that directly or indirectly affect apes within World Heritage Sites. In addition to advising projects, lending banks and governments, the task force is also committed to strengthening capacity on these subjects