



Asian Species Action Partnership  
Conserving species on the brink



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## Another 5 Southeast Asian primates now Critically Endangered



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Articles, News  Primates, Red List

## Another 5 Southeast Asian primates now Critically Endangered

The latest update to the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species™ sees five Southeast Asian primates newly listed as Critically Endangered. The update brings the total number of ASAP species to 235, with new turtle and fish additions too.

Our closest biological relatives, primates, make up the largest proportion of the new ASAP species in the latest update to the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species™ in July. Five Southeast Asian species have been newly listed as Critically Endangered, a move which signals them as one step from extinction in the wild. The news sounds an alarm bell for primates across Southeast Asia.

The latest additions follow a worrying trend in primate populations. Alarming high numbers of primate species are globally threatened with extinction, with even higher numbers in South and Southeast Asia. With their long lifespan, low productivity and ease of being hunted, they are often at higher risk than other mammal species.

### The doucs at hazard

One of the latest to be listed as Critically Endangered, the Red-shanked Douc *Pygathrix nemaeus* lives in forests across eastern Lao PDR (south of the northern highlands), central Viet Nam and perhaps northeastern Cambodia. The little studied species eats mainly leaves, topping that up with the occasional fruit and seeds.



Red-shanked Douc ©Chris Schuhman

Like many primates, the Red-shanked Douc faces a major threat from hunting. The meat of doucs is highly favoured by locals, and they are hunted for consumption. In Viet Nam, their bones are processed to make a paste which is used to treat various ailments. They are also sold as pets around the world, though this is thought to be opportunistic, taking young orphans when adults are killed. Thus, all three doucs are now listed as Critically Endangered.

Unfortunately, hunting has been made easier with logging creating better access to the remote forests where Red-shanked Doucs live. In Viet Nam much forest has been converted to coffee, rubber, and cashew plantations. In Lao PDR, ongoing deforestation, mining and hydropower are also key drivers of easing access for hunters.

In a cruel cycle, the rarer a species becomes the more valuable it is, making it more worthwhile for poachers to target it, and take higher risks to find it.



Red-shank Doucs ©Chris Schuhman

### **A giant problem**

Beyond primates, the Malaysian Giant Turtle *Orlitia borneensis*, also known as the Bornean River Turtle, belongs to the family Geoemydidae, the family with the largest number of living turtles. Found in large lakes, swamps, and slow-flowing rivers of Malaysia and Indonesia, this species lives up to its name by weighing up to 50kg.

Over the last three generations (90 years for this species), the number of Malaysian Giant Turtles has declined by at least 80% – a depletion across much or all of its range. Despite legal protection, it is traded across East Asian food markets. Its habitat is being converted into palm oil plantations – another significant threat.

### **Pulau Tioman gains sixth ASAP species**

The Critically Endangered listing of the fish *Speonectes tiomanensis* brings the number of ASAP fish up to 76, the largest biological class of ASAP species. Very little is known about the species, which was last sighted two decades years ago. At the time, only 20 individuals were found in a single cave (outside which the species has never been found) on Pulau Tioman, an island off the coast of Peninsular Malaysia.

*Speonectes tiomanensis* is the sixth ASAP species that is endemic to Pulau Tioman, joining another fish *Clarias batu* and the snakes *Calamaria ingeri*, *Gongylosoma mukutense*, and *Oligodon booliati*.

### New ASAP species:

Fishes:

- > [Speonectes tiomanensis](#)

Mammals

- > [Bangka Slow Loris \*Nycticebus bancanus\*](#)
- > [Black-shanked Douc \*Pygathrix nigripes\*](#)
- > [Red-shanked Douc \*Pygathrix nemaeus\*](#)
- > [Mentawai Langur \*Presbytis potenziani\*](#)
- > [Southern White-cheeked Gibbon \*Nomascus siki\*](#)

Reptiles:

- > [Malaysian Giant Turtle \(Bornean River Turtle\) \*Orlitia borneensis\*](#)

The species classed as ASAP species require urgent and immediate conservation attention. That is why ASAP exists – to catalyse conservation action for these threatened species and support the organisations that are focused on their protection and recovery. If your organization contributes to the conservation of any of the new ASAP species and you're interested in becoming an ASAP Partner, [sign up here](#), or [get in touch](#).

Featured image: ©Chris Schuhman

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The IUCN SSC Asian Species Action Partnership (ASAP) is an initiative aimed at reversing the declines in the wild of Species On The Brink of extinction – Critically Endangered land and freshwater vertebrates in Southeast Asia.

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