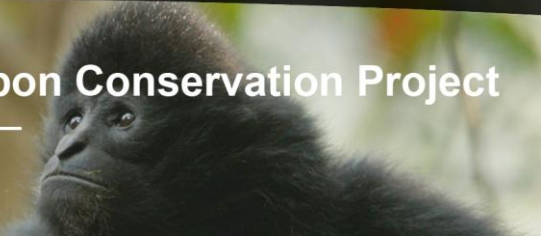




The Western Black Crested Gibbon Conservation Project

Yunnan Province, China



Juvenile Western black crested gibbon © Zhao Chao

A primate conservation project implemented by Fauna & Flora International (FFI) China with support from the Yunnan Forestry Bureau.

Aim of the project

Long-term conservation of the **critically endangered** Western black crested gibbon (*Nomascus concolor*)

Project objectives

1. Protection of the gibbon population and its habitat
2. Establish a conservation action plan for the Western black crested gibbon
3. Development of a conservation network of nature reserves
4. Establish standards for patrolling and monitoring the Western black crested gibbon
5. Support local communities to reduce their dependency on forest resources and improve their livelihoods
6. Further understanding of gibbon ecology through scientific research
7. Raising awareness among stakeholders about the Western black crested gibbon and the importance of its conservation

Project background

The Western black crested gibbon (*Nomascus concolor*), is critically endangered due to extensive habitat fragmentation and loss. Its distribution is scattered between Yunnan Province in southern China, northern Vietnam, and northern Laos, with Yunnan containing the largest share of the global population at approximately 1000 individuals.

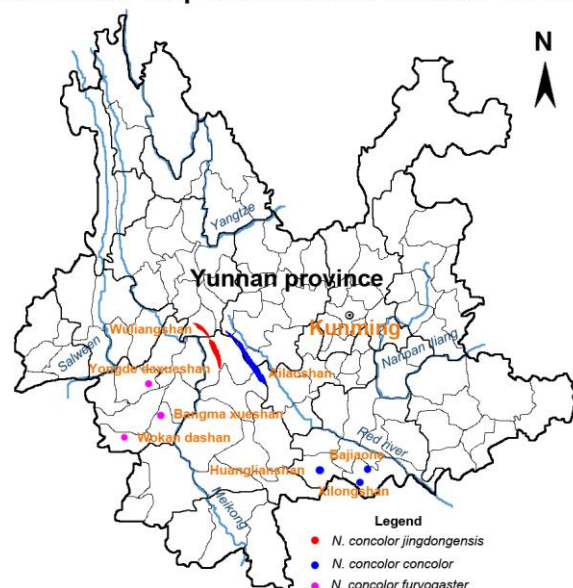
In October 2008, FFI China held a conservation status review and strategy workshop in Yunnan, where participants presented the latest information on the abundance and distribution of the Western black crested gibbon and discussed the threats, strategies, conservation objectives and priority actions in Wuliangshan and Ailaoshan National Nature Reserves, in particular, and southern and western Yunnan generally. The workshop concluded with the establishment of a conservation network for the Western black crested gibbon in Yunnan comprising nature reserves, researchers, NGOs and government agencies.

In the near future, FFI proposes to work with relevant stakeholders to establish a GIS monitoring system to plan for the conservation of the Western black crested gibbon, and to formulate a conservation action plan for the species to ensure all conservation activities fit into an integrated framework.

Main project achievements

1. Establishment of a conservation network of nature reserves for the Western black crested gibbon in Yunnan Province, China.
2. Field survey updating the status of the population in Wuliangshan mountain range, Jingdong County.
3. Field survey in Ailaoshan mountain range, Xiping County, recording the largest known population of the western black crested gibbon.
4. Development of specific patrolling and monitoring standards for the species.
5. Raised awareness and pride among local communities concerning the gibbon.

Distribution map of *Nomascus concolor* in China





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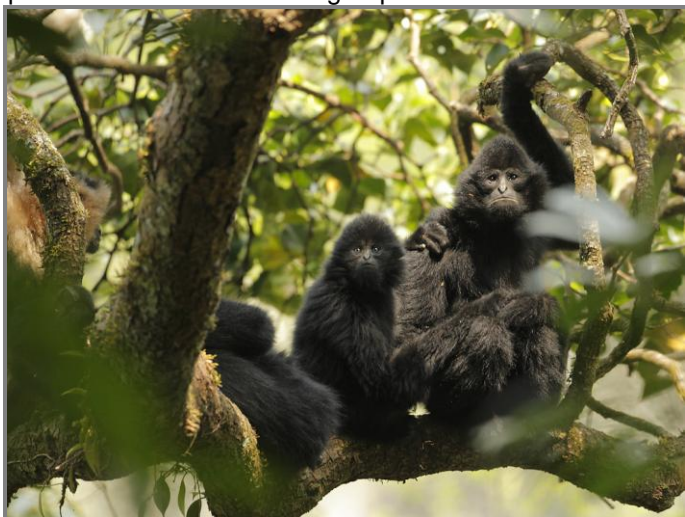
Yunnan Province, China

Summary of activities

Population and distribution field surveys

Yunnan Province in China remains the most important area for the Western black crested gibbon. Before 2009, The largest known population in Yunnan and globally is found along the north-south Ailaoshan mountain range, part of which belongs to Ailaoshan National Nature Reserve with an estimated 150 to 180 groups. However, the nature reserve's location across three county lines has not yet permitted centralized protected area management and a comprehensive estimate of the gibbon population remains lacking, while certain areas have not yet been surveyed.

Wuliangshan National Nature Reserve, located along another north-south mountain range to the west of Ailaoshan, contains the next largest population of the species estimated about 87 groups.



Male Western black crested gibbons © Zhao Chao

In 2009/2010, FFI supported a survey in Xinping County in the area where the status of *N. concolor* was least known. The results were very positive with 113 groups confirmed during the field survey and another 11 groups recorded from local interviews. Other areas of the nature reserve still need to be surveyed to confirm the population and distribution of *N. concolor*.

Establishment of a conservation network

Since 2008, FFI has supported establishment of a network for conservation of *N. concolor* and through this network endeavours to build the capacity of protected areas and local government forestry bureaus for gibbon conservation. The members of this network include nature reserves, forestry agencies, researchers and NGOs. FFI is promoting information sharing and learning between members of the network, and using it is a platform for implementing a gibbon conservation action plan. Annually a network newsletter is sent out to all member organisations.



Gibbon Month awareness campaign © Jingdong Management Board

Standard patrolling and monitoring method

In March 2010, a monitoring and patrolling workshop was held at Jingdong County to establish a system to monitor both gibbon populations in the wild and the current state of the human threat to them and their habitat. Together, FFI and Jingdong management bureau selected several sites in and around the nature reserve to initiate monitoring activities following the newly defined objectives and methods. Another workshop will be held late in the year to evaluate and improve the standard method.

Conservation action planning

Long-term conservation of the Western black crested gibbon requires a systematic planning process. Using the platform of the Western black crested gibbon conservation network, FFI is organising a series of workshops to facilitate the preparation of a gibbon conservation action plan. Nature reserves and forestry departments are participating to ensure the actions listed in the plan meet the real needs and can be implemented by relevant parties. Hopefully, through this action plan more support can be leveraged from provincial and central government.

Conservation awareness raising

In 2009, FFI organised the "2009 Month of Chinese Gibbon Conservation". The campaign aimed to raise awareness of the urgent need to protect these unique and highly threatened primates. In Yunnan, the campaign was carried out at several areas with *N. concolor* as well as the capital Kunming, and reached more than 20,000 people.

Acknowledgements

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