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## Primates in Trouble, Says Report on 25 Rarest

Michael Casey in Bangkok, Thailand  
Associated Press

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Almost a third of all apes, monkeys, and other primates are in danger of extinction because of rampant habitat destruction, the commercial sale of their meat and the trade in illegal wildlife, a report released Friday said. ([See pictures of all 25 primates.](#))

Of the world's 394 primate species, 114 are classified as threatened with extinction by the World Conservation Union. (IUCN)

The report by Conservation International and the International Primatological Society in Hainan, China, focuses on the plight of the 25 most endangered primates, including China's Hainan gibbon, of which only 17 remain.

"You could fit all the surviving members of the 25 species in a single football stadium—that's how few of them remain on Earth today," said Russell A. Mittermeier, president of Conservation International.

"The situation is worst in [Asia](#), where tropical forest destruction and the hunting and trading of monkeys puts many species at terrible risk," said Mittermeier, who is also chairman of the IUCN's Primate Specialist Group.

The 25 most endangered primates include 11 from Asia, 11 from Africa and 3 from South and Central America. The list includes well-known primates like the Sumatran orangutan of Indonesia and the Cross River gorilla of Cameroon and Nigeria, as well as lesser known species, such as the greater bamboo lemur from Madagascar.

Six species are in the report for the first time, including a recently discovered Indonesian tarsier that has yet to be formally named and the kipunji from Tanzania, which was discovered in 2003.

"Some of the new species we discover are endangered from the get go," Mittermeier said. "If you find a new species and it's living in an area heavily impacted by habitat destruction and hunting, you recognize it's in trouble."

Habitat loss due to the clearing of tropical forests for agriculture, logging and fuel wood continues to be the major factor in the declining number of primates, according to the report.

In addition, climate change is altering the habitats of many species, leaving those with small habitat ranges even more vulnerable to extinction.

Hunting for subsistence and commercial purposes is another major threat to primates, especially in Africa and Asia. Capture of live animals for the pet trade also poses a serious threat, particularly in Asia, the report found.

Four primates on the list from [Vietnam](#) have been decimated by hunting for their meat and bones, according to Barney Long, a Vietnam-based conservation biologist for the WWF Greater Mekong Program.

"All four species are close to extinction," Long said of the Delacour's langur, golden-headed langur, grey-shanked douc and Tonkin snub-nosed monkey. "The key populations have been stabilized. But there needs to be a lot more law enforcement and work to persuade local communities to support conservation for those numbers to increase."

The news is not all bad.

Nine primates from the last report in 2004 were taken off the list, mostly because of bolstered conservation efforts to save their populations. Among them are the eastern gorilla from Africa, the black-faced lion tamarin and the buffy-headed tufted capuchin from Brazil and the Perrier's sifaka from Madagascar.

"If you invest in a species in a proper way and do the conservation measures needed, you can reduce risk of extinction," Mittermeier said. "If we had resources, we would be able to take every one of the species off the list in the next five or 10 years."

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