

PREPARING FOR OUR FIRST RELEASE!

By Marina Kenyon

Dao Tien Endangered Primate Species Centre has been in operation for 10 months and we are now preparing for the first release of a primate back to the wild. Our first candidate is a pygmy loris (*Nycticebus pygmaeus*) and while she only weighs 325g, she is very important.

Mistletoe, a young female, arrived on Christmas Day 2008. She was confiscated by Dinh Quan Forestry Protection Department while being illegally smuggled to the markets of Ho Chi Minh City. Pygmy loris are sold in markets throughout Vietnam and Laos. They are generally kept as pets but the eyes, fur, and other parts of the body can be used for traditional medicine. As their name implies, pygmy loris are small with large eyes adapted to seeing in the dark as they hunt insects at night. Loris will also eat small birds, geckoes, some fruit, and gum. Their large reflective eyes sadly make them easy targets for hunters with large torches. The reflective part of their eye, which helps them to see at night, shines brightly when the light of a hunter's torch passes over their hidden bodies in the forest.

Wild distribution of the pygmy loris is predominantly the evergreen forests and secondary shrub of Vietnam and Laos but there is limited information about their numbers in the wild. What is clear is that little is known about the behaviour and ecology of pygmy loris in the wild, and there is a significant illegal trade in this declining species. The successful release of this endangered species is important, for their welfare and conservation.

In preparation for her release Mistletoe has undergone several health checks - disease screening, blood profile, DNA confirmation, as well as a general health and dental check. She has passed all checks and is a healthy adolescent



Dao Tien Director, Marina Kenyon & Education Officer/Primate Care Staff, Wendy Derham



Mistletoe, the pygmy loris



Mistletoe's dental check

know that she understands loris etiquette before she is released into the wild. We have 2 radio collars waiting, weighing 4g each, to monitor Mistletoe and her mate as they are released into the trees on Dao Tien. The habitat is perfect for loris with a high density of bamboo making it easy to travel and hunt for insects.

A special thank you goes to **Patsy Glazier** who sponsored Mistletoe's radio collar, all the others who have bought EAST t-shirts, and those that have become official sponsors of Mistletoe from our new sponsorship scheme for the endangered primates of Dao Tien. The other aspect that makes this release special is the team that will follow Mistletoe and monitor her progress. Pygmy loris live in 1-2 hectares of forest and on average travel 500m per day. She should be easy to follow and it is a perfect opportunity to train a Vietnamese team on radio tracking in preparation for the larger and much faster gibbons and langurs that will follow! On Dao Tien today we have 17 golden-cheeked gibbons, 2 douc langurs, 1 silvered langur and Mistletoe. The first semi-wild enclosure is now being built in preparation for the first two pairs of gibbons that will be released back into the trees later this year and I am just putting the finishing touches on a new website for EAST and Dao Tien for all of you who would like to follow our progress and help with the rescue, rehabilitation, and eventual release of these endangered primates.

female approximately 10 months of age. It was a relief to receive the results for her medical checks as she is extremely difficult to see and examine in her large cage full of bamboo. During the day Mistletoe is just a fluffy ginger ball fast asleep and at nighttime she is impossible to see without the aid of torch and then it is just a pair of reflective eyes staring back! We try not to trouble or interact with Mistletoe as we are preparing her for release on the island - we presumed all was well as every morning her food has disappeared overnight and the remains of stick insects and flying bugs are scattered around the cage. Over the next month we plan on introducing Mistletoe to a male, as she possibly has never seen a male before and we want to





MORE AND MORE RESCUES!



By Alison Cronin

At the beginning of February I visited **Dao Tien Island** to: catch up with the team, see how the rescue centre was progressing, have sponsorship meetings with local and international businesses, and perhaps most importantly to assist **Cat Tien National Park (CTNP)** and the **Forestry Protection Department (FPD)** in the confiscation of more endangered primates. This time the rescues were for two new species; black-shanked douc langurs (*Pygathrix nigripes*) and a silvered leaf monkey (*Trachypithecus cristatus*).



A-Chih at the restaurant

First we negotiated the “donation” of a young male silvered leaf monkey from a restaurant on the outskirts of Saigon that is best known for its wildlife menagerie and bear bile farm. The owners were not happy but agreed to co-operate with the project on Dao Tien as the langur was wild caught and illegal. This rare leaf-eating langur has already had his first health checks, which were all clear, and he has been named A-chih. Following DNA tests we have discovered that little A-chih is the only Eastern silvered langur known in captivity! There is a small population of this species in CTNP and we are now making plans as to how we will prepare the healthy young langur for release into the wild.

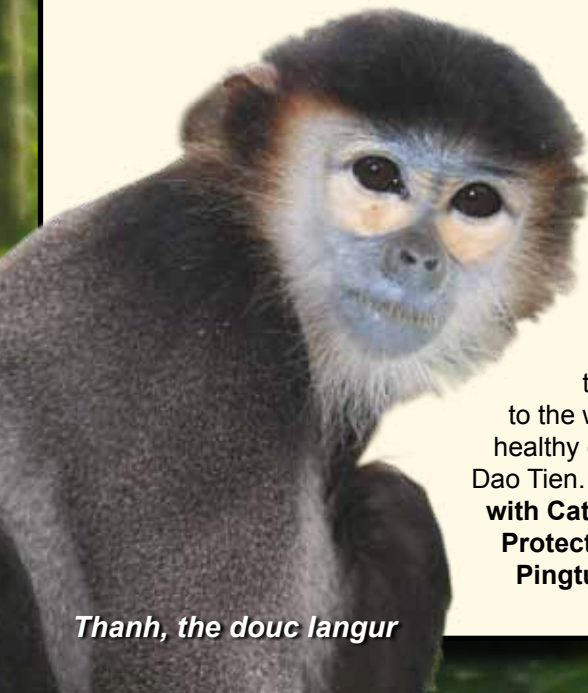
Next we organized the rescue of two black-shanked douc langurs that we had not seen but had heard reports of at a large amusement park in Saigon. We made a surprise visit to the park, along with officials from CTNP and the FPD to make sure that these endangered monkeys were not hidden from us. Following a couple of hours negotiation and incredible passionate arguments from Mr. Thanh, Director of CTNP, the owner of the amusement park was convinced to work in co-operation with Dao Tien and hand over the two illegal langurs. One was an adult female and the other a young male leading us to wonder if they were mother and son that had been trapped at the same time in the wild. Douc langurs have a very specialized diet and we were all concerned that we get them back to Dao Tien as soon as possible to start them on a more appropriate diet of a wide selection of leaves picked from the forest. The two are now eating 3kg of leaves every day and they have settled very well. We delayed their health checks until we knew they were stable and eating well but they have now received the “all clear” and with DNA tests we have established that the female named Chin, and the young male, named Thanh, are not related. Along with A-chih we are now making plans for their eventual release back into the forests of CTNP!



The caged doucs at the amusement park

It is so amazing to see; in under a year we now have a fully functioning rescue centre in Vietnam with 17 gibbons, 2 black-shanked douc langurs, 1 silvered langur, and 1 pygmy loris.

We are continuing the preparations for semi-wild training for eventual release back to the wild for ALL physically and mentally healthy endangered primates that come to Dao Tien. **Our co-operation and team work with Cat Tien National Park, the Forestry Protection Department of Vietnam, and Pingtung Rescue Centre is key to this success.**



Thanh, the douc langur



Silvered langur, A-Chih