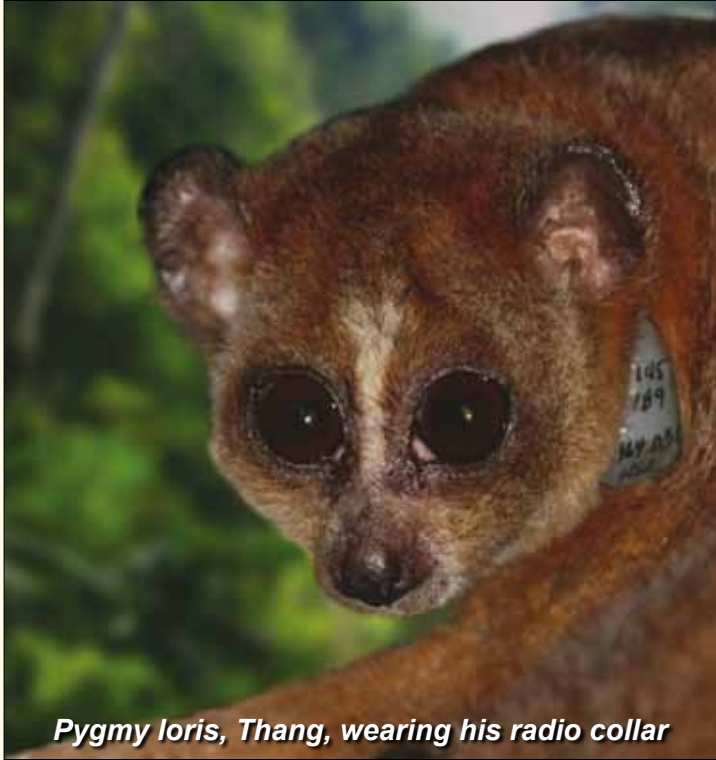


DAO TIEN UPDATE

By Dr Marina Kenyon



Pygmy loris, Thang, wearing his radio collar



Pygmy loris, Mistletoe, back in the wild

Releasing primates back to the wild is no easy task, especially when they have been stolen from the wild at a young age before they have learned the vital skills of how to survive in the forest from their mothers. In order to ensure that our rehabilitation process is as good as possible it is essential that we follow up on the primates we release to find out:

- Where they go?
- Are they feeding well?
- Are they moving through the forest ok?
- And are they staying together?

On July 22nd, our young pygmy loris, Mistletoe and Thang, were both fitted with radio collars that would allow us to track and find them over the next six months once they were released into the forest on Dao Tien Island. Thanks to financial sponsorship of the collars from supporters and veterinary support from Pingtung Rescue Centre and the expertise of Professor Dr. Kurtis Pei and veterinarian Uli Streicher, the loris had tiny collars fitted and they were ready to go. We kept Mistletoe and Thang in their cage for ten more days to ensure there were no complications with the collars such as them falling off, getting caught in the loris' mouths, or getting caught on branches. The first night the loris did not eat their normal dinner but from that day onwards life continued as normal.

On August 4th at 6.00pm the cage door was left open for Mistletoe and Thang to leave. Thang was out straight away but our sleepy female, Mistletoe, who usually does not wake until 8.00pm, just kept wandering past the open door. Next morning, at 5.30am, the cage was empty - Mistletoe and Thang were free! We quickly turned on the receiver, and waving the antenna above my head, the small 'beep beep' of the radio collars could be heard. Both Mistletoe and Thang were within 50m of the cage.

The following night we tried to get close to see them but the male was moving away, so we decided to leave them to settle in the forest for a couple of days before we pursued them. Since then our team go out every night using the receiver to take bearings for the loris' locations - making sure they are moving and finding enough food. The forest on Dao Tien is perfect habitat for loris as it is abundant with insects. Our main concern for Mistletoe and

Thang's welfare was hypothermia. Studies of released lorises in Northern Vietnam showed that some individuals sat out in the rain, got cold, and died of exposure but it is much warmer in Southern Vietnam so this shouldn't be a problem for our lorises. We had expected the lorises to stay close to their cage, where we were still providing food, but this turned out not to be the case with the two young lorises, traveling over 300m between sleep sites!

After more than a week it was time to track our pair of lorises down and see how they were doing. The first night Mr. Binh and I set off following the beep into impenetrable bamboo forest to find the male. The radio signal seemed strongest on the floor and I was worried that Thang must be in trouble on the ground or that the collar had dropped off. Then the beep of the collar changed - Thang was moving away from us! We decided to leave him and find Misteltoe who surprisingly was very close. Radio telemetry is not very accurate and as we stood with the antenna above our heads the familiar beep was the same strength in all directions. This meant she was close and perhaps just above our heads. We eventually found her looking very healthy with her collar in tact!

The next night it was time to find Thang. Again, he was close but where?! The battery on our large torch was fading after two hours searching a ten-metre square area, but then I saw a small orange flash of a loris' eye. Thang was also fine, moving slowly, looking very calm and content. Over the next few months we will follow them, trying not to disturb them, to gather information on their behaviour and ecology. Meanwhile we are preparing our release cages for the next four lorises.

Our Gibbons

We now have 21 gibbons with the recent arrival of Lucy, a tiny gibbon estimated to be 4 years old who was kept as a pet in Saigon. She had lived with a bulldog and learned to play rough so when she first met Misu, Lucy charged at her with a rugby tackle as she was so excited to play. Lucy has taken to life with other gibbons and the only problem is that she plays a little rough for the nursery group!



On her first day at Dao tien, golden-cheeked gibbon, Lucy, needed some reassurance to enter her new home, but quickly adapted



Semi-wild enclosure fencing

By the time you are reading this edition of the ARC, we should be completing the final stages of our semi-wild enclosure on the island that is 25+ acres. It is a very exciting time for us, and the gibbons, to see how they will get on semi-free in the forest on Dao Tien!

Our Langurs

The black-shanked douc langurs are ready for the forest. The langur semi-free is now ready and we are just waiting for the solar panel and electric fence equipment to arrive. Chinh and Thanh have gained weight on their wild leaf diet and during the next month a 12kg adult male, Nua Chua, will be sent to us from Cuc Phuong Endangered Primate Rescue Centre. He will join our pair, forming a small group for release in the coming months.

