

A Survey of White-cheeked Gibbons (*Nomascus leucogenys* Ogilby, 1840) in Dakrong Nature Reserve, Quang Tri Province

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*Awarded a PSGB Conservation Grant in August 2004
Supported by the Born Free Foundation and Ape Alliance*

Dakrong is the only protected area in Quang Tri province. The reserve is identified as an important stronghold for white-cheeked gibbons (*Nomascus leucogenys*), as well as other endangered mammal such as the Indochinese tiger (*Panthera tigris*), gaur (*Bos gaurus*), saola (*Pseudoryx nghetinhensis*) and red-shanked douc (*Pygathrix nemaeus*). Among them, the white-cheeked gibbon is one of the most significant conservation species in the reserve. Nevertheless, due to a variety of reasons, the species is still facing some crucial threats to its survival, such as home range and natural population decline, habitat disturbance and isolation.

During February and June 2006, we undertook a survey to identify the distribution and status of the gibbon in Dakrong and to start training the nature reserve's rangers about gibbon and primate survey techniques. This was intended to raise awareness of the gibbon and other endangered primates and their conservation needs in this vital nature reserve. During the short survey, 12 groups of gibbons were recorded in the nature reserve, and two areas were identified as important for white-cheeked gibbons: (i) the forest area within Ta Long-Huc Nghi-A Bung-Hong Thuy communes; (ii) the forest area within Trieu Nguyen-Ba Long-Hai Phuc communes.

Habitat destruction and degradation were identified as the major threats to gibbons in Dakrong. Hunting and habitat disturbance are the secondary threats. To protect the gibbons and other primates in Dakrong effectively, habitat destruction and hunting need to be eliminated in the nature reserve. In addition, building up working capacity, by, for instance, providing appropriate essential field equipment and training local rangers in the monitoring and conservation of the gibbons and other endangered primates, is a crucial action. Wildlife protection awareness campaigns for local people and promoting the study of the ecology of this endangered gibbon is also important for creating long-term conservation plans.