

in Primate People  
Introduction

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A new species of Titi monkey was discovered and recorded in western Bolivia in 2004 (Madidi Titi), joining more than four hundred other recorded primate species. What do most of us know about these many other primates—about the proboscis monkey, Hainan gibbon, pygmy tarsier, or slow loris?

Earth was once rich with primates, but each species—except one—is now endangered because of just one primate: *Homo sapiens*. Meat industries threaten both South American and African primates. Roughly one hundred primate species live in Brazil, a nation where rain forests are leveled to pasture cattle in order to export meat to wealthy consumers. Africa's bushmeat trade (trade in non-human primate flesh) has been augmented by logging roads that wind deep into once isolated habitat. West Africa's bonobos, perhaps our closest relatives, have been devastated by the bushmeat trade: "In one human generation, 90 percent of the Bonobos have disappeared" (Brown 2008, 102). Miss Waldron's red colobus monkeys (also of West Africa) have been driven to probable extinction by the human appetite for their flesh.

Who were these primates, and what forces destroyed their existence? How many people outside of West Africa knew of Miss Waldron's red colobus monkeys? Would we care more about these individuals if we knew something of their lives and their suffering? Will we change what we purchase if we learn that our consumer choices harm and endanger other primates? Once informed, might we support those who work on behalf of endangered primates, or lobby for change

ourselves? If we do, can we save Earth's many and wondrous nonhuman primates from ongoing, extreme suffering and the finality of extinction? My hope is that the answer is, "Yes."

Delacour's langurs cling to cliffs and sleep in caves on the borders of Vietnam, Laos, and China. Adults are largely black with a white band around their hips (the reason they are sometimes called "white shorts" monkeys) while their infants are distinctively orange. Delacour's langurs are small with bushy tails that reach nearly three feet—much longer than their bodies. These primates eat mostly leaves but may also dine on fruit, flowers, and seeds. They live in communities of eight or nine with only one adult male, serving as protector, in each group.

Unfortunately, agricultural development and quarrying have devastated Delacour's langur habitat; deforestation now separates diminished populations. Estimates indicate that there are only 317 of these monkeys left on the planet (Nguyen 2009, 4–5). Nonetheless, human predators continue to shoot these langurs from their sandstone-cliff homes to use their body parts for medicines.

Apes, in contrast to monkeys, have rotary shoulder blades, no tails, and proportionally larger brains. How much do most people know about gibbons, the smallest and most diverse species of ape? Gibbons are covered in thick, soft, woolly hair (Crair 2008, 6). Dozens of species of gibbons live high in the forest canopies of Southeast Asia ("Highland Farm" 2009, 6). They are the only apes who reside in the tops of trees. Gibbons swing on ball-and-socket wrists that rotate as much as 180 degrees. Swinging to and fro on their long, graceful arms, aided by unusually long fingers and nonopposable thumbs, they race across the forest canopy, reaching an astonishing thirty-five miles per hour.

When earthbound, gibbons walk on two legs and have extremely sophisticated vocalizations—they sing beautifully. Gibbons are territorial and live in monogamous couple relationships (Crair 2008, 7). Their haunting duets reinforce monogamous bonds and establish individual territories ("Wildlife Friends" 2009, 9).

Gibbons are at greater risk of extinction than any other ape (Crair 2008, 7). Although all gibbons are endangered, the Hainan gibbon of China is the most threatened: it is estimated that just twenty individuals remain ("Highland Farm" 2009, 6). The eastern black gibbon of Vietnam has been reduced to only a few dozen individuals. The Javan gibbon is also very rare, as is the western hoolock

