

Eastern black gibbon (*Nomascus nasutus*) at the Parc zoologique de Clères, France

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Summary

In 1926 three young female gibbons arrived from Vietnam at the Parc zoologique de Clères, France. The exact origin of the gibbons is not known. One of the gibbons was kept until its death in 1946. The head coloration of this gibbon supports the systematic identification as eastern black gibbon (*Nomascus nasutus*). There is only one animal of this species known to have been kept in captivity, at Tierpark Berlin, Germany. This individual, also a female, arrived at the Tierpark in 1962 from northern Vietnam.

Vượn đen Đông bắc (*Nomascus nasutus*) tại vườn thú Clères, Pháp

Tóm tắt

Ba cá thể vượn cái từ Việt Nam được đưa đến vườn thú Clères, Pháp vào năm 1962. Nguồn gốc xuất xứ của những cá thể vượn này không được xác định rõ. Một cá thể được nuôi nhốt tại vườn thú và chết năm 1946. Màu sắc trên đầu của cá thể vượn này phù hợp với đặc điểm hình thái ngoài của loài Vượn đen Đông bắc (*Nomascus nasutus*). Chỉ có một cá thể cùng loài được nuôi nhốt ở một vườn thú châu Âu khác là vườn thú Berlin, Đức. Cá thể vượn cái này được đưa đến vườn thú Berlin năm 1962 từ miền Bắc, Việt Nam. Cá thể này đã chết sau nhiều năm nuôi nhốt.

In 1926 three young female gibbons arrived at the Parc zoologique de Clères as a present to Jean Delacour from the Governor of Cochinchine (now southern Vietnam). These gibbons were the first ones in Clères.

The Governor was interested in animal keeping and received individuals from all over Indochina. The origin of the gibbons has never been verified but Delacour mentioned: "Belonging to the Tonkinese race".

One of the three gibbons was moved to an island in the lake of the Duke of Westminster, at Heaton Hall, near Chester and finally to London Zoo. A second animal was gifted from Delacour to one of his friends.

The third gibbon with the name "Orfeuille" (Fig. 1) was kept in Clères. Delacour pointed out: "Her face was really beautiful, with a prominent nose; she had a long, thick, pale coat, a black cap and a black patch between the shoulders" (Delacour 1966). The gibbon survived the bombing and destruction of Clères and died in 1946.



Fig.1. Jean Delacour at the Parc zoologique de Clères, France, with the female eastern black gibbon “Orfeuille” (*Nomascus nasutus*). Photo: Collection Jean Delacour [Delacour J (1966): The Living Air].



Fig.2. Female eastern black gibbon (*Nomascus nasutus*). Photo: Zhao Chao.

Delacour noted: “In 1945, when things quietened down, “Orfeuille” alone was there (speaking about Clères), but she died soon after, probably old age, and when I returned to Clères the following year not a single gibbon remained”.

All female gibbons of the seven currently recognized species belonging to the genus *Nomascus* (Mittermeier et al., 2013; Roos et al., 2013) show very similar head coloration, except the females of the eastern black gibbon. Only these females have long white hairs around the face, like a frame (Mootnick, 2006) (Fig. 2). The gibbon “Orfeuille” shows this typical feature and is most likely an eastern black gibbon.

The only known individual of this species in captivity was the gibbon “Patzl” at Tierpark Berlin, Germany (Fischer, 1980) (Fig. 3). It was also a female and originated from the Hon Gai area, in northeastern Vietnam. The gibbon arrived in November 1962 at the Tierpark Berlin (Fischer 1966).



Fig.3. The female eastern black gibbon “Patzl” (*Nomascus nasutus*) at Tierpark Berlin, Germany. Photo: Wilfried Fischer.

The species had in historical times quite a large distribution area in northern Vietnam and southern China (Rawson et al., 2011), but is limited now to the very small Cao Vit Gibbon Conservation Area, Trung Khanh District, Cao Bang Province, close to the Chinese border (Rawson et al., 2011), and on the Chinese side of the border in the adjacent Bangliang Nature Reserve (Fan

Pengfei et al., 2007). The total population of this species is estimated to be around 120 individuals (Nguyen The Cuong 2013; Nguyen The Cuong et al. 2014).

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