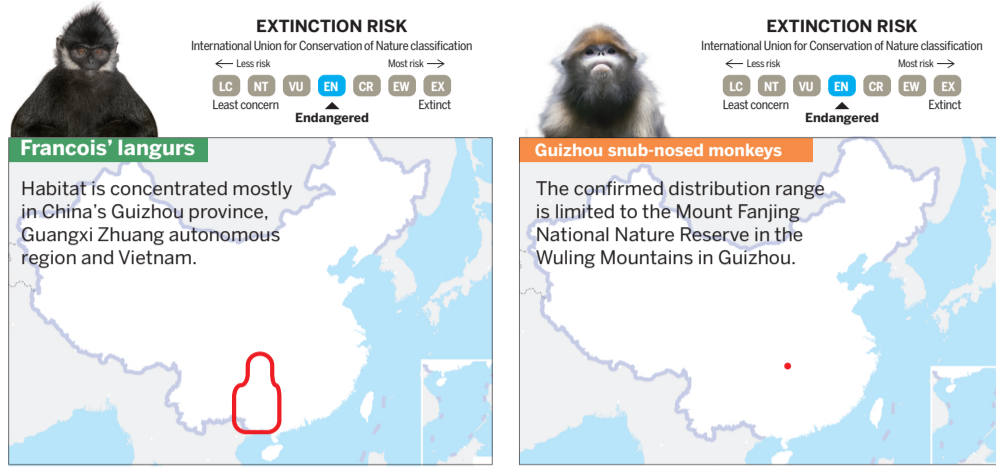


Editor's note: As protection of the planet's flora, fauna and resources becomes increasingly important, China Daily is publishing a series of stories to illustrate the country's commitment to safeguarding the natural world.

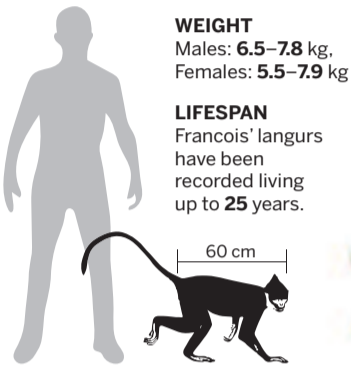
Rare primates on the rise in karst mountains

Guizhou province and Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region are home to some of the world's rarest species



With slender bodies, Francois' langurs, or leaf monkeys, are agile and acrobatic. Their dark, furry forms look like shadows as they climb up and down gray karst formations and leap between the trees that overhang steep ledges.

Long limbs and muscular fingers are their best insurance against a deadly slip down the side of their mountain homes.



Females also have a distinctive white patch of fur close to their genitals.

FROM GOLD TO BLACK

Infant Francois' langurs are born a conspicuous golden-orange color. Their bright coats, which darken to black as they mature, make it easier for adults to keep a close eye on the juveniles as they learn to navigate the hazardous steep karst forests they call home.



A newborn weighs approximately 500 grams and has a golden-yellow crown and a flesh-colored face.



On the 60th day, the crest starts to darken and the yellow color begins to gradually fade.

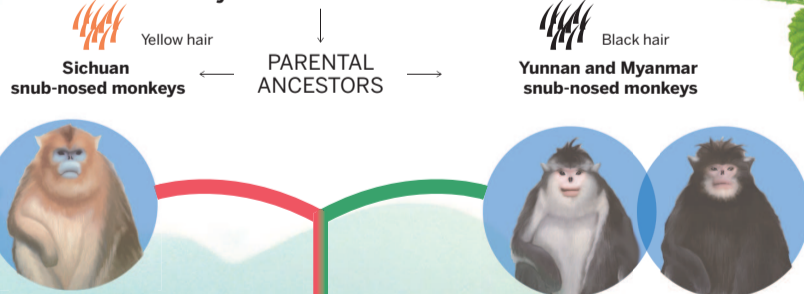
On the 100th day, the fur appears blacker and the facial color gradually turns darker.

GUIZHOU SNUB-NOSED MONKEYS



Its head, neck, and ends of its limbs are black, except for a golden brow.

Why the color of their fur?



Adults are covered with long, fine hair, generally grading from brown on its upper body to gray on its lower body, with a white patch between its shoulder blades.

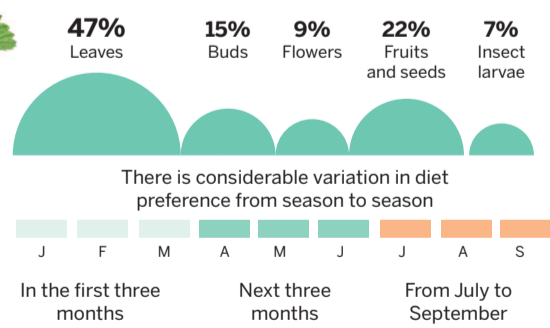


Video
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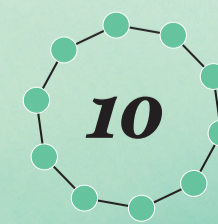
Source: Guizhou Mayans River National Nature Reserve
GRAPHICS BY TIAN CHI AND JORGE CORTES / CHINA DAILY

DIET

Guizhou snub-nosed monkeys' diet comprises



GROUP DYNAMICS



Guizhou snub-nosed monkeys live in groups of up to 10 individuals, which include a dominant male, a harem of females, and their offspring. All-male groups consisting of two to five individuals usually live near family groups, waiting for an opportunity to take over a harem.

Forest rangers safeguard 'special child of the Earth'

By YAN DONGJIE and YANG JUN

There are only about 800 Guizhou golden monkeys in the world, making them even rarer than giant pandas. They are a national first-class protected wild animal in China and are classified as endangered by the International Union for Conservation of Nature.

China is home to three species of rare golden monkeys, and of them the Guizhou golden monkey has the smallest population. They can only be found in the Fanjing Mountain National Nature Reserve in the northeastern part of Guizhou province, earning them the nickname "the special, and only child of the Earth".

There are still many unanswered questions about the Guizhou golden monkey, or Guizhou snub-nosed monkey. To gain a better understanding of this precious animal, the Fanjing Mountain Administration's forest rangers have been conducting regular patrols. The administration has also been improving its monitoring systems, providing valuable data on the population, distribution, habitat, and threats to the monkeys, which serves as a scientific reference for conservation efforts.

Fanjing Mountain is home to over 7,100 species of wild plants and animals. The nature reserve was established in 1978 and designated as a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve in 1986. Covering an area of over 77,500 hectares, it was recognized as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2018.

Li Guobin, 58, is one of the hundreds of forest rangers on Fanjing Mountain who has been protecting it for 15 years. He can

identify different animals by their feces and distinguish various plants.

Li said that the forest rangers patrol the mountain for 25 days each month, searching for traces of wildlife activity and documenting the distribution of rare plants.

"Even in winter, nothing changes. The temperature mostly stays below freezing, and when it rains, the ground becomes slippery," he said. Li usually brings a bottle of strong liquor to keep warm. "I feel extremely proud that I can help protect our country's rare animals and plants."

Dong Wandai, 36, has been working at a monitoring station in the reserve for ten years. "Our main task is to monitor the activities of the Guizhou golden monkeys and the surrounding environmental changes. We also conduct field patrols in their habitats to ensure their safety," he said.

Li Haibo from the administration's science and education department explained that to better protect and observe the Guizhou golden monkeys, the administration has set up four video surveillance systems in the reserve.

They have also installed 48 sets of visible light and infrared thermal-imaging monitoring systems and established monitoring stations in the core area where the golden monkeys are active. The administration has installed 420 infrared cameras in total and deployed six drones.

"Since 2016, we have been using infrared cameras to monitor the golden monkeys and, for the first time, discovered their nocturnal activities, proving the phenomenon of nonhuman primates being active at night," Li Haibo said.

FRANCOIS' LANGURS

APPEARANCE

The skin on their faces, hands, and feet is as black as their fur. Above a gull-shaped brow ridge, a tuft of hair rises to a triangular peak. Their ears, also black in hue, are rimmed at the tops with bright white fur that extends down their cheeks like white sideburns—their most striking feature.



Francois' langurs are less officially known as white side-burned black langurs.

Number of rare Francois' leaf monkeys climbing

By YAN DONGJIE and YANG JUN in Tongren, Guizhou

Last month, near a winding mountain road in Guizhou province, tourists encountered several families of inquisitive Francois' leaf monkeys.

The karst valley is an essential habitat for the Francois' langurs. The Mayang River National Nature Reserve, located in the stone mountain valleys, is an ideal habitat for these monkeys. It is home to approximately one-third of the world's wild Francois' langurs and is known as the home of the species.

"Thirty years ago, the number of Francois' langurs in the reserve was only around 300 in 38 groups. Now, it has increased to over 700 in 72 groups. Through the joint efforts of the reserve and the local villagers, combined with ecological restoration and increased awareness among the villagers, the population of the monkeys has doubled," said Wu Ankang, the secretary of the Party Committee and director of the reserve administration.

In the early 1980s, there was heavy confrontation between the villagers and the monkeys, Wu said. In order to increase food production to solve shortages, the villagers cut down trees and cultivated farming land. This reduced the monkeys' habitat and their food sources such as leaves and fruit.

As a result, Francois' langurs frequently raided the villagers' crops, causing damage to agricultural produce. The villagers used to intimidate and drive away the monkeys to protect their crops.

Wu said that the protection of black leaf monkeys primarily focused on ensuring their habitat, living spaces, and food sources, while also raising awareness about protection among the villagers living in the reserve. Deforestation and land clearance are strictly prohibited in the reserve, and efforts have been made to actively involve farmers in forest protection work.

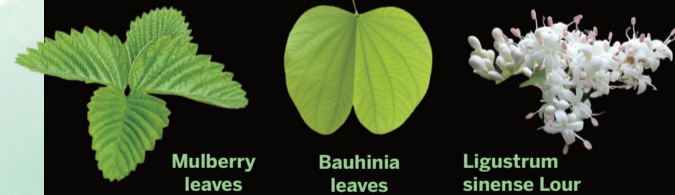
Eight forest rangers like Xiao work at Liangqiao Management Station in the reserve, along with 50 part-time rangers.

The Francois' langur is a first-class protected wild animal in China. The species is mainly found in Guizhou and Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region, with

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DIET

Half of a Francois' langur's diet consists of young and mature leaves.



Certain fruits, and the occasional insect, serve as infrequent—but no less nutritious—snacks.



GROUP DYNAMICS

Groups of Francois' langurs have a single male whose primary responsibilities include mating with the female members of his group and protecting this harem, and their offspring, from threats.

