

# The SILVERY GIBBON PROJECT

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## PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Dear Members and Friends

Thank you so much to everyone who supported our recent Art Auction. The generosity of both local and international artists was once again overwhelming and it certainly was a fabulous evening. The turn out was not quite as good as expected, which may be a reflection on the current economic climate but we still managed to raise almost \$15,000 which was a great effort. Thanks must go to our committee and helpers who worked tirelessly to ensure this event was a success.



Images from  
2012 Art Auction



We are very excited to announce that Silvery Gibbon Project (SGP) is one of the beneficiaries for 'An Evening for the Animals'. The gala will be held in the Supreme Court Gardens on October 27 and is sure to be an incredible event. Please visit the website [www.eveningfortheanimals.org](http://www.eveningfortheanimals.org) or Facebook page for more information about this.

Wildlife Asia has also kicked off to a great start. Our Partnerships Manager Scott is busy networking and building opportunities and there are some exciting prospects on the horizon.

In gibbon news, two of our most popular adoptees Jeffery and Nancy have recently been released into Pattiwel Forest adjacent to the Javan Gibbon Centre (JGC). This pair will be

monitored closely and negotiations are underway to secure a larger release site. I remember Jeffrey from my very first visit to JGC. It was distressing to watch him jump up and down on the spot, a stereotypic behaviour that had developed after years in a confined space. Having watched his successful rehabilitation over the last 9 years it is the ultimate sense of satisfaction to know that he is now enjoying life as he should be, free in the forest. For those of you who have adopted Jeffrey and Nancy, you may wish to consider renewing with one of our other gibbons still requiring support at JGC.

SGP is continuing to explore opportunities to expand our support of other gibbon projects and we are currently seeking funding support for programs operated by Kalaweit, including the construction of a vet clinic, release programs and the purchase of land in Sumatra.

Holly Thompson and I are heading off to the USA to attend and present at the 1<sup>st</sup> International Gibbon Husbandry Conference, being held in Greensboro, North Carolina. This will be a great opportunity for us to introduce SGP to a new audience and hopefully generate support for gibbon conservation in the USA. Tune into our Facebook page for regular updates on our adventures.

And finally, thank you in advance to our end of financial year donors. These funds are critical to our success and we truly appreciate your generosity.

Take care

**Clare Campbell**  
**President, Silvery Gibbon Project**

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Save this date for:  
**SILVERY GIBBON PROJECT**  
**Quiz Night**  
**Friday Evening**  
**14 September 2012**  
More details to follow



Late last year the Silvery Gibbon Project was one of four Perth-based conservation organisations to join a new umbrella organisation, Wildlife Asia; the prime objective of which is to increase the conservation contribution, capacity and efficiency of wildlife conservation. The four member organisations concentrate their activities on in-situ conservation measures for endangered species in Asia. The following provides a brief overview of the three other organisations involved: Asian Rhino Project, Free the Bears Fund and The Orangutan Project.

The **Asian Rhino Project** (ARP) formed in 2003. It is a nation-wide organisation, but its home base is Perth. The primary aim of the organisation is to raise awareness and support conservation measures of the three endangered Asian rhino species: the Indian rhinoceros, Javan rhinoceros and Sumatran rhinoceros. The biggest threats to rhinos are poaching and habitat loss. Effort is now being put into maintaining the remaining populations and finding protected habitat. In the short term this may involve the relocation of rhinos to areas outside their current territory. Rhinos are not easily kept in captivity, so it is critical that secure areas of suitable land can be found where the chances of increasing numbers are maximised. The current numbers for the three species are alarming, and populations for Javan and Sumatran rhinos are particularly critical.

The Asian Rhino Project has had some notable successes since 2003. ARP is the key funder of the Indonesian based Rhino Protection Unit, which has been the main force in closing down poaching in Java and Sumatra in the past decade.

Western Australia Branch Manager, Sophie Dentrinos, says that ARP was a keen supporter of collaborative efforts in conservation. The organisation joined Wildlife Asia because it provided opportunities to learn from others in the conservation of endangered species, as well as to promote the issues surrounding the Asian rhinos. "It's important to think about the entire eco-system, rather than a single species. The same issues face all of them and being part of a collaborative organisation like Wildlife Asia

means that every dollar raised for conservation will count for more”.

The **Free the Bear Fund** formed in 1995. It is based in Perth but has support throughout Australia and also has an office in the United Kingdom. The aim of Free the Bears (FBT) is to protect and enrich the welfare of bears throughout the world. Its main focus is on the highly vulnerable Asian bears, including the Asiatic Bear, the Sloth Bear and the Sun Bear. Founding member Mary Hutton says that by joining with the other three organisations to form Wildlife Asia provided ‘the opportunity to learn how others tackle common issues of habitat loss and poaching’.

Bears throughout Asia have been impacted severely by poaching from the wild. Many are kept in inhumane conditions and subjected to cruel treatment as part of the tourist trade. Impacts on habitat have also reduced numbers in the wild, but reliable figures have been difficult to assess. It is considered however that the plight of bears is dire. Yet in the 16 or 17 years since the formation of FTB awareness of poaching and welfare of bears has increased significantly. FTB has had great successes in retrieving captive bears in India and throughout Southeast Asia. More than a 100 were rescued in Cambodia alone, making it the most impressive record of rescued bears in the world. But good work is being done in Laos, Vietnam and India, among other places. Mary Hutton says that education among local peoples is critical, and points out that providing some form of compensation for the loss of income of locals is also a delicate but necessary process.

**The Orangutan Project** (TOP, formally the Australian Orangutan Project) formed in Perth in 1995 with the aim to preserve orangutans in the wild. Like each of the other organisations, intermediate aims include providing high levels of welfare for rescued animals. The largest populations of wild orangutans are in Sumatra and Borneo, but their numbers are declining as deforestation is increasing. Palm oil and timber industries have had the biggest impact. Expanding farm lands is also adding to the rate of destruction of forest habitat.

TOP has in place facilities and in-situ projects in Sumatra and Indonesian Borneo (Kalimantan). These include veterinary services, and centres for the welfare and rehabilitation of rescued orangutans. TOP is also working with supportive

Indonesians in promoting sustainable farming practices, reforestation projects, and educating local residents to support conservation measures and animal welfare.

Like the other organisations involved in Wildlife Asia, TOP co-operates with international organisations and government agencies to maximise efforts in species conservation. Bill Waterer says that Wildlife Asia is a coalition of like-minded conservation organisations. ‘Basically we have the same issue of habitat loss. Animal welfare and community education is also something that we see as important to move things forward.’

The four organisations that make up Wildlife Asia volunteer their time. 100% of funds donated and raised goes into in-situ conservation projects and community-based education in promoting animal welfare and conservation. In the following respective issues of this newsletter each of the organisations will be reviewed in more detail.

**Robin Stevens**

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## **KLOSS’S GIBBON: A PROFILE**

Kloss’s gibbons (*Hylobates klossii*) are the closest living relatives of the Javan (Silvery) gibbons (*Hylobates moloch*). They live solely on four small islands which run parallel to the western Sumatra coast, Indonesia. These are the Mentawai islands of Siberut, Sipora, and North Pagai and South Pagai.

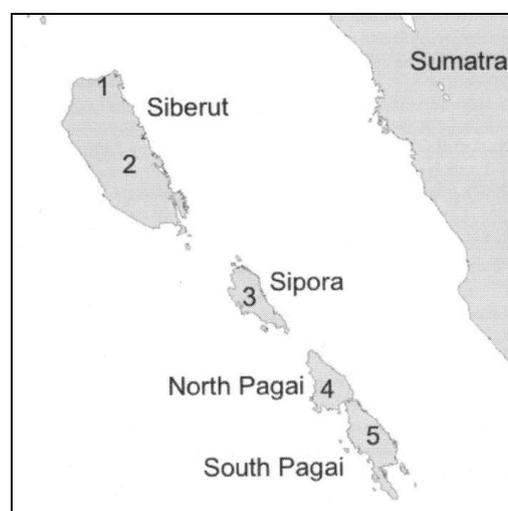


Figure by D.J. Whittaker 2010

Forestry is a major industry, which - along with expanding agriculture and palm oil plantations and a booming but illegal pet trade - is having a devastating impact of the natural forest habitat of gibbons and other primates of the islands. More than other gibbons, Kloss's gibbons have the added threat of being hunted in significant numbers for meat, especially in South Pagai. The Siberut National Park, located on the northern most island, is home to the largest population of Kloss's gibbons, and the only protected area in which they live. It is estimated that the entire population of the Kloss's gibbons over the four islands is somewhere between 20,000 and 25,000, more than half of which live within the confines of the Siberut National Park. It is also estimated that population decline is rapid, up to 50% between 1980 and 2005 (Whittaker 2005, 2006).



Kloss's gibbon on Siberut Island. Abegg 2005

The Kloss's gibbon is a small gibbon with an entirely black pelage (fur colour). It eats fruits, leaves and insects and arthropods of the upper canopy, is monogamous, and like other gibbons has distinct vocalisations in a patterned morning routine (early morning songs) unique to the species. But unlike other gibbon species, with the exception of the Javan gibbon, Kloss's do not sing in male-female duets. The male will vocalise just prior to a breaking dawn, and their female partners will take over after dawn. When it rains, singing is rare.

Recent genetic analysis (Whittaker 2010) and vocalisation studies (Keith, Waller and Geissmann 2010) into biological divergence within Kloss's gibbon populations indicates that despite geographic isolation of the island populations Kloss's gibbon is a single species, with no sub-speciation apparent. There is however some diversity between populations, which researchers believe may be critical in maintaining genetic variability within the species if it is to survive. Without a concerted effort for conservation of the species throughout the Mentawai Islands, notably through protection of its habitat and curbing hunting, genetic variability will be reduced, and its potential to adapt to a changing environment will be limited. The Kloss's gibbon, like its near cousin the Javan (Silvery) gibbon, is under threat. Its habitat is being encroached upon at an alarming rate. The Silvery Gibbon Project (SGP) is supporting Indonesian based initiatives to help in the preservation of this species. While maintaining its focus on Javan (Silvery) gibbons the SGP recognises that all species of gibbon are suffering severe decline in numbers, and will be putting more energy to raise awareness of the plights of all 17 species (and sub-species) of gibbon throughout southeast Asia. The single biggest threat to their continued survival in the wild is loss of habitat. Securing protected areas of habitat will be critical to the survival of the species.

References:

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***Robin Stevens***

## WALKATHON UPDATE

This year's Walkathon was the debut of Wildlife Asia in Perth. Wildlife Asia is a collaboration of four conservation organisations based in Perth: The Orangutan Project, Asian Rhino Project, Free the Bears Fund and the Silvery Gibbon Project. The walkathon signified the first step in a collaboration designed to provide more efficient means of contributing to the conservation of these species throughout the same regions.



Channel Ten's Michael Shultz opening the Walkathon

The walk started at the Shelley Beach Park in Shelley, Wilson. The location was great and the weather perfect. There was merchandise aplenty, a coffee van to wake everyone up, bouncy castle to keep the kids entertained and a sausage sizzle to rush back for.



The Silvery Gibbon Project is excited to be a part of Wildlife Asia and the walkathon was a great family friendly event. Thanks to those of you who participated and we hope to see you next time.

To find out more about Wildlife Asia visit [www.wildlifeasia.org.au](http://www.wildlifeasia.org.au)

*Holly Thompson*

## GIBBONS IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

In late news (31 May 2012), an article by Christian Roos and Ben Rawson (<http://theconversation.edu.au>) states that Southeast Asia's small apes are swinging close to extinction. The problem is particularly critical in Vietnam, where expanding economic infrastructure is cutting into the natural habitat of the all six species of crested gibbon there.



In the next issue of the newsletter, SGP take up the issue of conservation and economic development in areas of critical gibbon habitat.

Clare Campbell, President of Silvery Gibbon Project said: 'Vietnam's growing economic prosperity, and demand for cute pets, has given its gibbons a bleak future'.

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## ALMA PARK ZOO'S GIANT GARAGE SALE RAISES A GRAND FOR WILDLIFE ASIA

THE money has been counted and it is official - Alma Park Zoo's Giant Garage Sale has raised an impressive \$1,000 for Wildlife Asia. The Garage Sale was held on Saturday, May 19, sold a variety of items generously donated by Zoo staff and public.

All proceeds went to Wildlife Asia ([www.wildlifeasia.org.au](http://www.wildlifeasia.org.au)) which helps a variety of endangered rainforest animals including the Orang-utan, Silvery gibbon, Rhino, Bears, Elephants and Tigers.



Some of the items up For Sale  
at the Alma Park Zoo's  
Giant Garage Sale.

The Garage Sale Trail even has the backing of federal politicians such as Tony Burke MP, minister for Sustainability and the Environment; and Greg Hunt MP, shadow minister for Climate Action and Environment. **'Alma Park Zoo is a great example of what we hoped to achieve with the Garage Sale appeal for Wildlife Asia. We hope they will do it again next year and that others will follow their example. Asian rainforests and wildlife will benefit when they do.'** said **Scott Lyall, Partnerships Manager for Wildlife Asia.**

"It was a great day and we are very pleased to have raised significant funds which will go a long way in helping Wildlife Asia's cause," Zoo Manager Julie Seabrook said.

This year, Alma Park Zoo has also rallied for animal conservation on a number of other occasions most recently including the Teddy Bears' Picnic in April for Free the Bears.

Curator Dr Heather Hesterman noted staff members at the Zoo felt a strong sense of responsibility to raise awareness and support conservation initiatives for Endangered animals on a global scale.

"Alma Park Zoo is home to several Threatened Asiatic species including Malayan Sun Bear and Red pandas. We are fortunate to be involved in *ex situ* (captive) conservation programs but also need to contribute to preservation of *in situ* (wild) populations and their natural habitat" she said.

"Participating in national events such as the Garage Sale Trail is a team effort that boosts morale and lends a sense of community with our Zoo visitors".

Dr Hesterman thanked the public for their donations, support and involvement and congratulated Zoo staff and volunteers on their efforts.

**Scott Lyall**  
**Partnerships Manager for Wildlife Asia**

