

# First photo evidence of snub-nosed monkey species in China

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This is a female *Rhinopithecus strykeri*. Credit: Liu Pu

Chinese researchers have published the first evidence that a population of the recently discovered snub-nosed monkey, *Rhinopithecus Strykeri*, live in China. Until now researchers have been unable to photograph the monkey, whose upturned nostrils are said to make it sneeze in the rain. The paper is published in the *American Journal of Primatology*.

The [species](#) was first discovered by a team led by Ngwe Lwin from the Myanmar Biodiversity and [Nature Conservation](#) Association and described by Dr Thomas Geissman in the [American Journal of Primatology](#) in October 2010. It was believed that the species was isolated to the Kachin State of north eastern Myanmar. However, this new discovery reveals the international range of this critically endangered species.

The new expedition, led by Yongcheng Long from the Nature Conservancy China Program, travelled to the Yunnan province of China after a forest guard, Liu Pu, took photos of a group of snub-nosed [monkeys](#) in a forest in near Pianma, in Yunann's Lushui County.

"The population of this species is hard to estimate, but based on our contacts with the monkey group both in October 2011 and in March 2012 we estimate the population to be less than 100 individuals," said Long. "However, while we now know the home range to be far greater than previously believed, we still do not yet know the true population number or the extent of their home range as the monkeys are shy and very hard to access."

In local dialects the species is called meynwoah, 'monkey with an upturned face', although it was officially named '*Rhinopithecus Strykeri*' in honour of Jon Stryker, President and Founder of the Arcus Foundation, which supported the initial project.



This is a male *Rhinopithecus strykeri*. Credit: Liu Pu

Local hunters claim the monkey is easy to find when it is raining because they often get rainwater in their upturned noses causing them to sneeze. However, long term observations did not show that they spend [rainy days](#) sitting with their heads tucked between their knees as the hunters also claim.

Thomas Geissmann, who led the taxonomic description, described the monkey as having almost entirely blackish fur with white fur only on ear tufts, chin beard and perineal area. It also has a relatively long tail, approximately 140% of its body size. The new photos confirm this description.

"After the discovery of the new species of Snub-nosed Monkey in Myanmar we conducted hunter interview surveys along the Chinese-

Myanmar border which suggest at least one group in contiguous forest across the border in Yunnan. I contacted Long Yongchen my friend and colleague from the IUCN primate specialist group who followed and organised the first surveys that document the presence of the Myanmar 'snubby' in China," said Frank Momberg, Fauna & Flora International, Myanmar Program Director. "The discovery of *Rhinopithecus strykeri* in China gives a bit more hope for the species survival, however the population is still considered critically endangered, due to the high level of threats and very small population."

With a range crossing national borders efforts to conserve this endangered species will no longer be isolated to Myanmar. The country is currently experiencing political reform, which is expected to lead to economic and industrial development, which may impact natural areas. The researchers are calling for action from China, Myanmar and the international conservation community to protect the area's rich biodiversity.

"This monkey group was actually found in an area designated as a nature reserve 30 years ago and while local people have been hunting the species for ages, local managers knew nothing about it," concluded Long. "This highlights the need to improve wildlife management in China, as it is likely quite a few new species of plants and animals may be discovered in the border areas between [China](#) and Myanmar."

**More information:** Yongcheng long, Frank Momber, Jianma, Yue Wang, Yongmei Luo, Haishu Li, Guiliang Yang, Ming Li, 'Rhinopithecus strykeri Found in China!' *American Journal of Primatology*, Wiley, 2012, [DOI: 10.1002/ajp.22041](https://doi.org/10.1002/ajp.22041)

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