

Wide-eyed primate caught on camera for first time

19 July 2010



an adult male slender loris sitting on a tree branch.



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The Horton Plains slender loris is a small, nocturnal animal which can grow up to 17 centimetres (six inches) long with big, bulging eyes.

Endemic to Sri Lanka, it was first discovered in 1937 but had only been seen four times since then.

Scientists last caught a glimpse of the [primate](#) in 2002, and believed the elusive animal had since died out.

But field researchers, working with the Zoological Society of London, managed to track down the mysterious creature in the forests of central Sri Lanka.

In a world first, they were able to take pictures of

This is an undated handout photo issued Monday July 19, 2010 by the Zoological Society of London (ZSL) of a Horton Plains slender loris, sitting on a forest branch in a mountain forest in central Sri Lanka. Researchers say they photographed the rare primate thought to have been extinct for more than 60 years in a forest in central Sri Lanka. The Zoological Society of London said in a statement on Monday that a Horton Plains slender loris with wide eyes and short limbs has been caught on camera by ZSL and Sri Lankan researchers after they surveyed forest patches for more than 200 hours, looking for signs of the primate. (Zoological Society of London/Ho)

The field team was able to capture one of the creatures and give it a physical examination, the first time that has ever been done, before releasing it back into the wild.

But experts warned that [deforestation](#) in Sri Lanka -- largely blamed on the drive to create tea

plantations in the region -- was now the biggest threat to the lorises.

Craig Turner, a [conservation biologist](#) at the ZSL, said their natural [forest habitat](#) had been divided up for farming and logging use, cutting off the "very cute" animals from their partners.

"The forest has now been fragmented into a series of small islands," Turner told BBC radio.

"They can't move to one another, they can't mate, breed, so it has real implications for the future persistence of the species."

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APA citation: Wide-eyed primate caught on camera for first time (2010, July 19) retrieved 1 December 2021 from <https://phys.org/news/2010-07-wide-eyed-primate-caught-camera.html>

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