

Final Evaluation Report

We ask all grant recipients to complete a project evaluation that helps us to gauge the success of your project. This must be sent in **MS Word and not PDF format**. We understand that projects often do not follow the predicted course but knowledge of your experiences is valuable to us and others who may be undertaking similar work – remember that negative experiences are just as valuable as positive ones if they help others to learn from them.

Please DO NOT fill in and submit this form until the project has been completed.

Complete the form in English. Note that the information may be edited before posting on our website.

Please email this report to jane@rufford.org.

Your Details	
Full Name	Lau A Ky
Project Title	Conservation of two Critically Endangered <i>Nomascus concolor</i> and <i>Nomascus leucogenys</i> in Muong Nhe Nature Reserve, Vietnam
Application ID	41608-1
Date of this Report	01/15/2026

1. Indicate the level of achievement of the project’s original objectives and include any relevant comments on factors affecting this.

Objective	Not achieve	Partially achieve	Fully achieve	Comments
Assess the population status, key habitats, and major threats to two <i>Critically Endangered</i> gibbon species				Field surveys and assessments were conducted comprehensively and in accordance with standard scientific methodologies, enabling a clear identification of population status, priority habitats, and key threats. The results fully met the intended objective.
Provide technical support and capacity-building training to enhance conservation capacity at Muong Nhe Nature Reserve				Technical assistance and training activities were implemented as planned, contributing to improved professional capacity and practical conservation skills of reserve staff in species and habitat conservation.
Propose management recommendations for species and habitats, including measures to mitigate illegal hunting and address illegal logging and forest encroachment				Management recommendations for species and habitats were developed comprehensively and tailored to local conditions. These recommendations are feasible and provide a strong foundation for the implementation of future conservation actions.

2. Describe the three most important outcomes of your project.

a). Assessment and update of the status of two *Critically Endangered* gibbon species

Survey scope and duration

The project was implemented entirely within Muong Nhe Nature Reserve.

Field surveys were conducted from July 2023 to December 2026, covering a period of approximately 2.5 years.

Distribution status and population size

As part of the project activities, the research team established 12 survey clusters comprising 36 listening posts in areas assessed as having suitable habitat potential for gibbons. In addition to fixed listening posts, diurnal transect surveys were conducted after the completion of morning listening sessions. Transect surveys recorded one gibbon group on Transect 12 on 13 November 2025, while no additional groups were detected on the remaining transects. This record was located near listening post LP2 ([Table 1](#)). Survey results indicate that gibbons are currently restricted to the northern section of Muong Nhe Nature Reserve, adjacent to Phou Dendin Protected Area (Lao PDR).

During the period 2023–2026, the team conducted seven field survey campaigns: (1) 20–29 December 2023; (2) 18–28 September 2024; (3) 25 October–08 November 2024; (4) 20–31 December 2024; (5) 17 July–04 August 2025; (6) 08–18 November 2025; and (7) 18–28 January 2026. Total survey effort amounted to 89 field days. Surveys covered 18 transects with a combined length of 118.44 km (mean = 6.58 km per transect) (Table 1 and Figure 1).

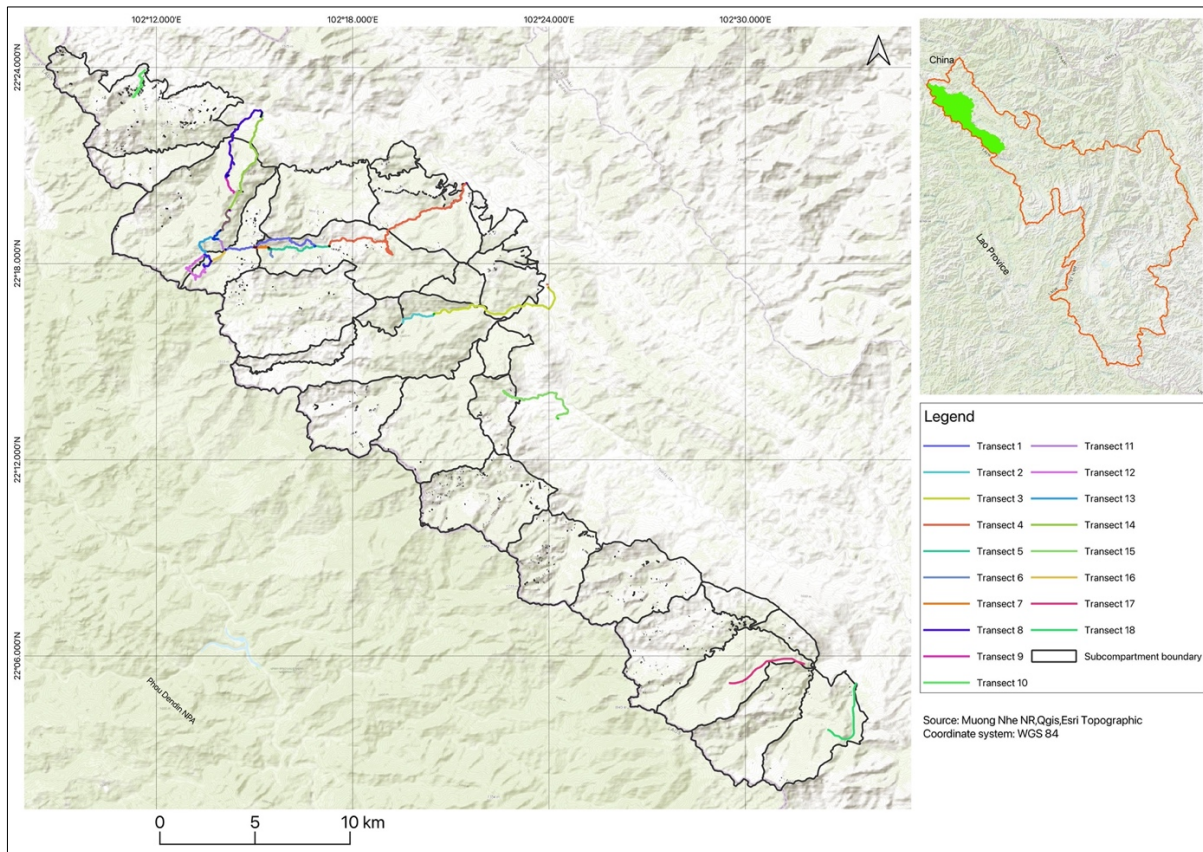


Figure 01: Map of survey transects in Muong Nhe Nature Reserve

Survey efforts in 2023, covering almost the entire reserve, did not produce any verified evidence of either gibbon species within the protected area. By late 2024, the first gibbon group was detected based on acoustic evidence, and continued monitoring in 2025 resulted in the confirmation of an additional group within the same distribution area. At present, the gibbon population in Muong Nhe Nature Reserve is confirmed to consist of only two groups, with an estimated total population size of 6–10 individuals ([Figure 2](#) and [Appendix 1](#)). After identifying the core distribution area of the two groups, the research team installed three Spartan Lumen Dual Flash camera traps in suitable trees within the species' activity area. Camera-trap records documented three adult individuals of the Northern white-cheeked gibbon. To date, no additional verified evidence has been obtained for the presence of the Western black crested gibbon in Muong Nhe Nature Reserve. However, the possible occurrence of this species in the area cannot yet be completely excluded and requires further verification through long-term monitoring with increased survey intensity. Given its very small population size, restricted distribution, and high level of isolation,

the gibbon population in Muong Nhe is facing a very high risk of local extinction in the near future unless urgent and effective conservation measures are implemented.

Table 1. Summary of transects and field survey periods in the study area

No	Transect Name	Length (km)	Total No. of Surveys ¹	Notes
I. Transect Information				
1	Transect 1	7.48	4	
2	Transect 2	2.97	4	
3	Transect 3	9.44	4	
4	Transect 4	16.39	6	
5	Transect 5	6.97	4	
6	Transect 6	2.95	2	
7	Transect 7	2.60	8	
8	Transect 8	9.19	6	
9	Transect 9	1.54	4	
10	Transect 10	6.54	2	
11	Transect 11	6.62	8	
12	Transect 12	9.11	6	Gibbon recorded (13 Nov 2025)
13	Transect 13	8.11	6	
14	Transect 14	9.51	8	
15	Transect 15	8.52	2	
16	Transect 16	1.42	8	
17	Transect 17	4.48	2	
18	Transect 18	4.60	2	
Total		118.44	86	
II. Field Survey Periods				
	Survey Period	Duration (days)	Season	
19	20 - 29 Dec 2023	10	Dry season	
20	18–28 Sep 2024	11	Wet season	
21	25 Oct – 08 Nov 2024	15	Transition (Wet to Dry)	

22	20–31 Dec 2024	12	Dry season	
23	17 Jul – 04 Aug 2025	19	Wet season	
24	08–18 Nov 2025	11	Dry season	
25	18–28 Jan 2026	11	Dry season	
Total		89		

¹Total No. of Surveys refers to the cumulative number of surveys conducted for each transect across all field campaigns

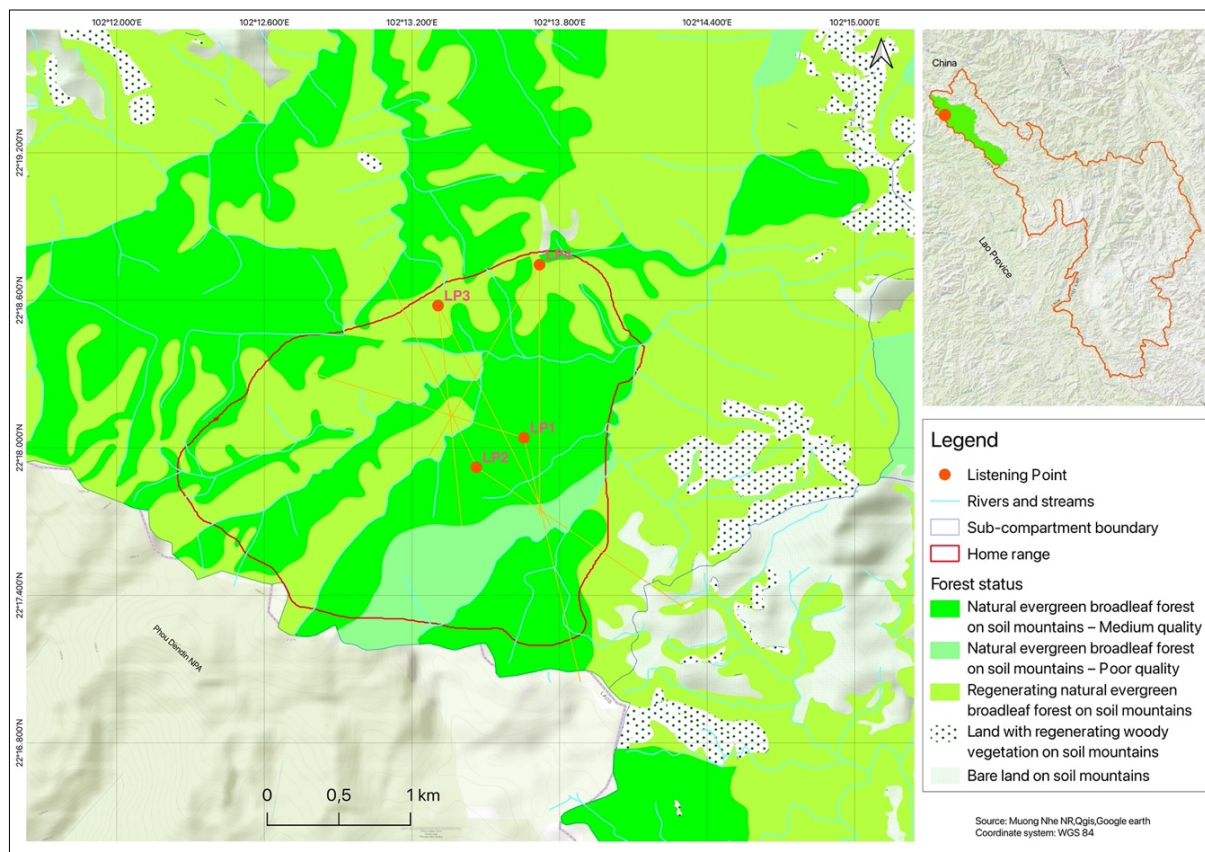


Figure 02. Distribution map of gibbons in Muong Nhe Nature Reserve

Population decline trends

Comparison with historical data indicates that the gibbon population in the study area has undergone a severe decline over the past decade. In 2010, approximately 16 gibbon groups were recorded in this area (Nguyen Manh, H., pers. obs., 2023). However, to date, the number of groups has decreased by more than 85%, and the distribution range has contracted substantially, with gibbons now restricted to the northern forest area of the nature reserve. The contraction of the distribution range, combined with the current small population size, suggests that the population is under considerable pressure from external

threats. This situation significantly increases the risk of further population decline if appropriate conservation and management interventions are not implemented in a timely manner.

Habitat and major threats

Currently, gibbon groups mainly inhabit mid-elevation evergreen broadleaf forests, degraded forests, and regenerating forests at elevations above 1,000 m. These habitat types are experiencing intense pressure from human activities. The main threats recorded in the area include:

- Wildlife hunting was identified as a major and immediate threat to the gibbon population in the study area. During field surveys, the research team confiscated one homemade ([Appendix 1](#)). firearm within habitat currently occupied by gibbons and also recorded several newly established hunter camps, indicating that hunting pressure remains ongoing
- Non-timber forest product (NTFP) extraction, particularly wild honey harvesting;
- Free-ranging livestock grazing, causing habitat disturbance and affecting wildlife population structure;
- Forest fires, leading to further loss and degradation of remaining habitats.

Evidence recorded during recent patrols indicates that human pressure remains ongoing and is increasing, particularly in the remaining areas where gibbons are still present. These impacts not only degrade habitat quality but also increase the risks of habitat fragmentation, population isolation, and long-term reductions in reproductive potential.

Urgency of conservation intervention

Given the extremely small population size, restricted distribution, and continued anthropogenic pressures, the gibbon population in Muong Nhe Nature Reserve is highly dependent on the maintenance and protection of remaining suitable habitats. In this context, the implementation of a targeted conservation project focusing on population monitoring, protection of key habitats, mitigation of direct

threats, and raising awareness among local communities is urgently required to support the long-term persistence of gibbons in the area.

b). Enhancing conservation capacity at Muong Nhe Nature Reserve

As part of the project, in addition to field survey activities, the research team also implemented capacity-building and conservation awareness activities for the two gibbon species in Muong Nhe Nature Reserve. Specifically, one community training session involving 60 participants was conducted in Nam San 2 village to raise awareness of the conservation value of gibbons and the importance of protecting forest habitat. In addition, five awareness posters on gibbon conservation were displayed at three ranger stations and Sin Thau Secondary School to improve access to conservation information for forest management staff and local communities. Furthermore, 20 forest rangers received training in biodiversity monitoring methods, including field data collection, the use of monitoring equipment, and documentation of wildlife evidence. In particular, reserve staff showed strong interest in techniques for detecting and surveying gibbons in the field, including identification of vocalizations, recognition of field signs, and the application of camera traps for long-term monitoring. These activities contributed to strengthening local management capacity, promoting community participation, and establishing an important foundation for the long-term conservation of gibbons in Muong Nhe Nature Reserve.

c). Developing and promoting the application of effective management recommendations

The project developed and proposed a set of concrete and feasible recommendations for species and habitat management, including measures to reduce illegal hunting, control illegal logging, and prevent forest encroachment. These recommendations have been integrated into the management practices of Muong Nhe Nature Reserve, contributing to the protection of key habitats and supporting the long-term survival of the two endangered gibbon species.

3. Explain any unforeseen difficulties that arose during the project and how these were tackled.

- Initial interviews with 30 local residents, including hunters and individuals with extensive forest experience, indicated that there had been almost no reliable records of gibbons in the study area during the previous five years. In late 2024, during a routine patrol, reserve rangers obtained an audio recording considered consistent with a gibbon vocalization. This represented the first preliminary evidence that gibbons were still present in the area and the first acoustic record obtained by reserve staff after many years without verified information. Following this finding, field surveys were intensified, leading to the confirmation of the first gibbon group in the project area. After two years of continued monitoring and repeated field surveys, a total of two gibbon groups were confirmed within the project area.

- Steep terrain and the remote border location of the study area posed significant logistical challenges, limiting access to gibbon groups and constraining survey and monitoring activities.

- Limited awareness and understanding of gibbon conservation among local communities resulted in a lack of community support and acceptance, posing additional challenges to conservation outreach and on-the-ground implementation.

4. Describe the involvement of local communities and how they have benefitted from the project.

At the initial stage of project implementation, local communities showed a low level of agreement and support for the conservation of gibbons within the nature reserve. However, through continuous engagement, communication, and outreach activities, community awareness of gibbons and wildlife conservation gradually improved. Local people developed a better understanding of the ecological importance of gibbons and began to show increased interest in wildlife conservation, particularly in relation to gibbons.

This project also marked the first time that villages in the project area were exposed to and participated in a wildlife conservation initiative, laying an initial foundation for long-term collaboration between local communities and relevant stakeholders in conservation efforts.

5. Are there any plans to continue this work?

Yes. We plan to implement in-depth surveys and assessments of the current population status, along with community education activities targeting local buffer-zone communities around Muong Nhe Nature Reserve. These activities aim to update the most recent and reliable information on the species, which will serve as a foundation for conservation actions in the subsequent phase.

6. How do you plan to share the results of your work with others?

All collected data and analytical results have been shared with the Management Board of Muong Nhe Nature Reserve. This information is being used as baseline data to support future conservation activities, as well as upcoming training and capacity-building programmes.

At present, we are also working towards preparing a scientific manuscript for submission to peer-reviewed scientific journals in order to disseminate the project findings more widely.

7. Looking ahead, what do you feel are the important next steps?

Through interviews, we identified that knowledge of gibbons, as well as the capacity for gibbon surveys and monitoring among nature reserve staff—particularly forest rangers—remains limited. Due to the time constraints of the project, training activities could not be fully implemented. Therefore, strengthening knowledge and enhancing capacity for gibbon conservation among forest rangers has been identified as the most important priority for the next phase of the project.

8. Did you use The Rufford Foundation logo in any materials produced in relation to this project? Did the Foundation receive any publicity during the course of your work?

Yes. We used the Rufford Foundation logo on project T-shirts, all PowerPoint presentations, and project posters. In addition, we introduced and promoted the Rufford Small Grants programme to nature reserve staff, thereby providing information on funding opportunities to support future conservation activities.

9. Provide a full list of all the members of your team and their role in the project.

Mr. Lau A Ky (Project Leader):

Directly involved in and primarily responsible for all project activities, including developing the implementation plan; coordinating and working with the nature reserve management and relevant authorities; designing survey questionnaires; planning and conducting fieldwork; analysing data; implementing conservation activities; and compiling and writing the project reports.

Mr. Nghiem Ly Thinh (Project Member):

A core team member who worked closely with the Project Leader in implementing survey activities, collecting data, and carrying out technical and field-based tasks.

Mr. Nguyen Quoc Tang (Project Member):

Within the scope of this project, Mr. Tang participated as a team member, working directly with the Project Leader and research assistant in conducting field activities, coordinating at the local level, and supporting conservation efforts.

10. Any other comments?

Due to the limited availability of reliable information on gibbons from initial interviews, additional time was required to confirm the presence of the species, resulting in survey activities taking longer than originally planned.

In addition, the extremely small population size, together with ongoing habitat disturbance (e.g. livestock grazing), may have influenced calling behaviour and detection probability of gibbons in the study area compared to other sites where the same species occurs. This factor cannot be ruled out and should be taken into account when interpreting survey results.

**ANNEX – Financial Report
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Appendix 1. Field Survey Photographs















Appendix 2. Training Activity Photographs









