



## 'Tails of Cambodia':

**Empowering local people through education to conserve Cambodia's primates.**



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### **Abstract**

Eleven of Cambodia's 12 primate species are threatened with extinction. Although Cambodia has the ability to significantly contribute to global primate conservation, habitat destruction and illegal hunting severely threaten the survival of the country's primates. Conservation education is vital for long-term conservation. Often local people are aware and concerned about environmental issues but lack the knowledge, skills or motivation to counteract them effectively. I developed an education project entitled *Tails of Cambodia* that fills specifically these gaps to empower local people living around Kbal Spean and Phnom Kulen national park to conserve Cambodia's primates. The objectives were to enhance people's knowledge, attitude and skills concerning primate conservation.



The project was carried out from the 15<sup>th</sup> of April to the 31<sup>st</sup> of July 2014 at Angkor Centre for Conservation of Biodiversity (ACCB) in Cambodia. I created a children's education program with an accompanying PowerPoint presentation and an illustrated book; implemented smaller informal engagement sessions ('miniclubs') with local children; trained local ACCB staff members to carry out the education program and miniclubs; and developed a [website](#) and Facebook page for outreach of the project.

**Figure left:** *Illustration of an Endangered Indochinese silvered langur.*

ACCB's educators and I implemented four education programs, with which we reached 129 children. We implemented evaluation pre- and post-questionnaires to evaluate the program's success in reaching the objectives. The results showed that the participants increased in positive attitudes and skills concerning primate conservation, as these scores were significantly higher on the post-evaluation test than on the pre-evaluation test. No increase in knowledge was observed, which may be due to a ceiling effect: the participants scored higher on pre-questionnaire knowledge than the control group. The evaluation questionnaire could be improved by making the knowledge-items somewhat harder.

With the nine miniclubs we reached a total of 307 children from various local communities (see pictures below). The miniclubs included colouring, playing games and listening to stories concerning primate conservation. They required little resources and could be implemented before or after an unrelated program. The ratings of engagement demonstrated that the children were interested, actively engaged and concentrated on each activity for the majority of the miniclubs. I furthermore received affirmative feedback from ACCB's educators on the staff training, and from non-local people on the outreach websites, indicating that Tails of Cambodia's activities empowered adults as well as children.

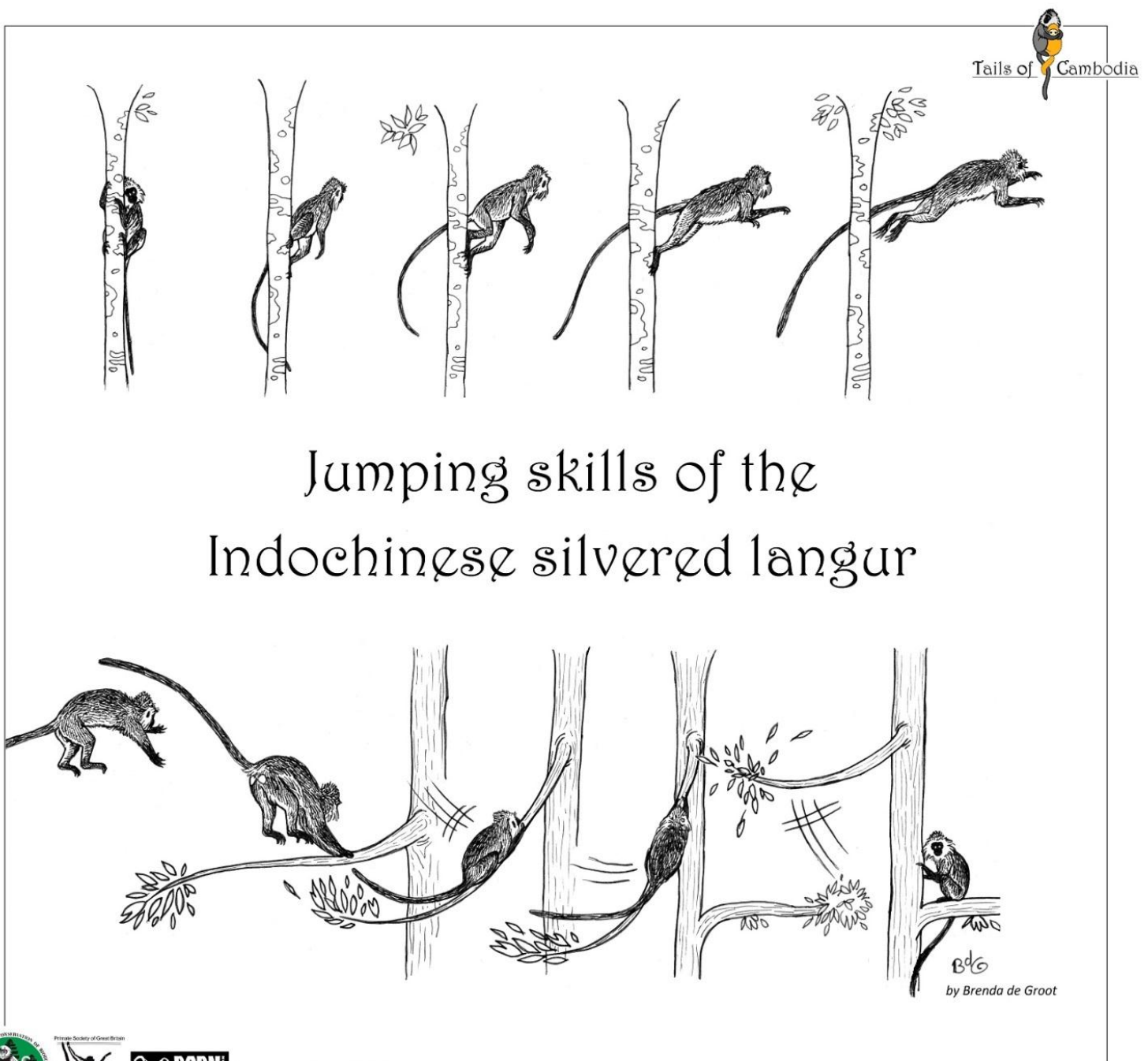


*Pictures taken during miniclubs at communities in and around Phnom Kulen national park.*

ACCB remains access to the outputs of the project, to aid the project’s long-term impact. These resources can be found and downloaded from the Primate Education Network’s (PEN) website, so future conservation educationists can use or learn from them. ACCB proceeds with the project and continues to distribute the illustrated book among Cambodian children and sell it to visiting tourists and other interested people. Throughout my stay at ACCB, I took pictures which are now shown on ARKive's pages of the [Indochinese silvered langur](#) and on the [Pileated gibbon](#) page.

From my experiences with the *Tails of Cambodia* project I would recommend future conservation education initiatives to improve evaluation methods, gather knowledge from other scientific disciplines and to continue empowering local communities through education to cope with conservation issues.

**Figure below:** Illustration made of the jumping behaviour of the Indochinese silvered langur.



## Jumping skills of the Indochinese silvered langur