

# EAST RELEASES RESCUED PRIMATES

*By Dr Alison Cronin*

At the beginning of October Jeremy and I went to Dao Tien to help with the construction of two electric fences – one for a nursery group of young gibbons and another to create a large semi-wild enclosure at the tip of the island. This was it – the beginning of phase II of our rescue, rehabilitation and release project!

We now have 22 gibbons on Dao Tien along with 6 pygmy loris and two douc monkeys. Already we have radio-collared and released 2 of the loris, Mistletoe and Thang. With their radio-collars we were able to follow them and make sure that they were adapting well to life in the forest on Dao Tien. The rescued loris seemed to know exactly what to do and headed quite a distance away from our centre to a bamboo forest that is in the new semi-wild enclosure (see Dao Tien Map). As planned, their collars have now dropped off and we are re-using one collar on one more female that will join Thang and Mistletoe in the coming weeks. **Stolen from the wild, kept in a bird cages in the city, and now they are back where they belong – in the forest!**



*Pygmy loris before rescue*



*Mistletoe after her rehabilitation and release*

Following the success of the pygmy loris, we were concerned that we were working too slow for our rescued douc monkeys. We had plans to release them back into Cat Tien National Park (CTNP) during 2010 but they were easily upset by people and no matter how hard the team on Dao Tien worked they could not collect the variety of leaves, on a daily basis, that the douc's would normally eat in the wild. We decided to put the doucs into the overgrown nursery gibbon enclosure that had a small stand of 30-40 metre trees to see if they could move well through the trees and if they would settle down. Little did we know that the female, Chinh, had bigger plans! It was wonderful to see Chinh, and the young male Thanh, up in the trees, picking their own leaves and moving through the treetops with such ease.



*Douc langurs, Chinh and Thanh before rescue*



*Chinh after her release*



On October 17th, after just one day of being in the natural enclosure, Madam Chinh decided to make her move and head for the forests on Dao Tien! We found her high up in a neighbouring tree along side the enclosure, calling for her man. Thanh, who was still in the enclosure, was panicking and alarm calling back to his partner on the outside. Marina Kenyon, Director of Dao Tien, and I had a quick chat and decided that we had been holding the douc's back and that Chinh had shown us how strong the draw of the forest is for the douc monkeys. We turned off the electric fence to let Thanh join Chinh but he did not realise and after half an hour he plucked up the courage to follow his lady and jump from 35+ metres, clearing a 5 metre boundary, to land in a low bamboo thicket on the other side! It was truly amazing. Thanh survived the huge leap and we were able to follow the pair through the forest on Dao Tien for over an hour. Both were fit, eating leaves, and moving through the trees as they should. They were wild again.

Even though Chinh and Thanh did not follow our planned schedule, we are very happy with the result. At 65 hectares, Dao Tien is large enough to support a small troop of douc monkeys and a couple of groups of pygmy loris. Without a GPS collar it is not always easy to find the doucs but we see them every few days and we know that they are still together and are healthy and relaxed. **Stolen from the wild, kept in small cages in an amusement park, and now they too are back where they belong – in the forest!**

This was a very emotional trip for Jeremy and I. The dream was to release rescued primates back to the wild and we have done it. However, there are many more to go and before the releases back into the national park, we need to put radio collars and GPS collars on the loris and gibbons so that we can make sure they are doing well. Please help us to help them by sponsoring a radio/GPS collar for a rescued gibbon to go back to the wild. The details are on the EAST website ([www.go-east.org](http://www.go-east.org)) and there is a Just Giving page ([www.justgiving.com/gpsgmtrackingcollars](http://www.justgiving.com/gpsgmtrackingcollars)) so you can join us in our efforts to put rescued monkeys and apes back into the wild.



*Alison & Jeremy and the new semi-wild enclosure*



*Site map of Dao Tien in Vietnam*



*Chinh & Thanh back in the wild*