



The quiet ones

A shadow play story written and created by Leith Hogan [Drawingtolearn] and Rachel Sheffield.

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Early on a quiet morning in the misty and cloudy forests of the Annamite mountains, a Saola was quietly minding his own business. He was in the shadows of the undergrowth, eating leafy plants, fig leaves, and forest berries amongst the ferns, stems and leaf litter at the edge of a little river.

He was a very beautiful animal. He was often called the Asian Unicorn because of his long pointed spindle horns. Despite being so beautiful, he was rarely seen.

His ears pricked up and he became very still. He had heard something....he wasn't sure what it was. He looked up. The sound was coming from the other side of the river, in a little forest clearing at the base of the mountain, not too far away.





Boots crunching on sticks and pebbles and rustling leaves were moving closer and closer towards the silent Saola.

The noise was getting louder and louder as it got closer.

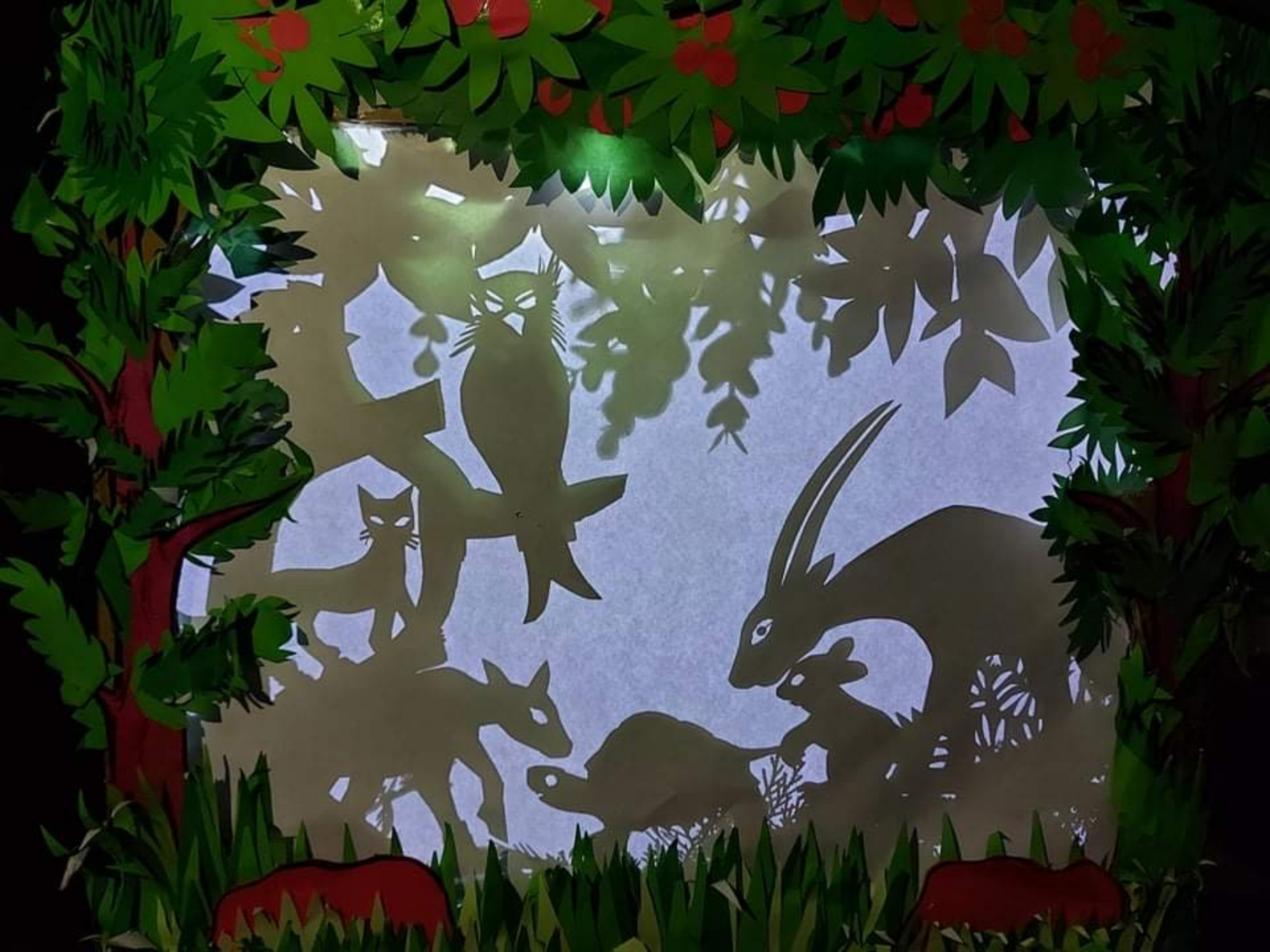
A line of men carrying sticks, snares and ropes, were marching up the track towards him.



'What were they doing?
Where were they going?
What were they looking for?'
The Saola had many questions but he knew to move quickly back into the shadows.
He stayed completely still.
He did not move.
He watched and listened.



As he sheltered amongst the shadows, he sensed little movements in the undergrowth nearby. There were more animals in the shadows with him. They had heard the same sounds that he was hearing. They were all still. No one was moving. They were watching and listening, just like the Saola.





Annamite flying frogs were moving silently to hide behind the rocks.



Annamite striped rabbits crouched under low bushes, watching and waiting.



Marbled cat, as still as a statue, blended into the undergrowth.



Big headed turtle stayed as solid as a stone in the river bank sand.



Slow Loris , watched with his big eyes, from his hiding place in a branch of the tree above the animals.



Hodgson's frog mouth owl and Tawny Fish owl silently watched them all from higher up in the trees. No animal moved...not one little part of themselves. They held their breath. They watched. They listened.



They all knew how to do this.
They were good at being quiet ones in the forest.
They were all thinking:
What were these men doing?
What were they looking for?



In the dappled light of the thick undergrowth, the animals heard the men's footsteps moving closer and closer to the path across the river where they were huddled in the shadows.

They could see the men peering inquisitively into the dense forest. What were they looking for? What did they want?



With a twitch of his spindle horns, Saola signalled to the quiet ones to stay as still as stone.
No one moved.
They scarcely breathed.
They were all frightened.
The noise of the marching men made them fearful.
The sight of men with snares, ropes and sticks made them very worried.



The men paused and talked together after they had passed the undergrowth where the animals were quietly watching them. They were tired and dirty after all their hard work tramping along the forest tracks but they hadn't found anything in the shadows, so they were planning to head further up the mountain into the dense forest.



The men began their climb up the narrow mountain track further and further into the deep forest away from the quiet ones.
The quiet ones watched and remained still until they could no longer hear the sounds of the men's feet crunching up the distant mountain track.

Eventually Saola twitched and signalled to them all that they were free to move about and twist and turn.

They all began to quietly whisper to each other.

'What did they want?' Marbled cat mewed
'What were they looking for?' asked Big headed turtle.

The owls blinked anxiously, looking around them all.

'Do you think they were looking for us?' said Slow loris

'Were they coming to capture us?' chorused the flying frogs

'Why are they doing this?' they all asked.

'We have lived here together in this forest for such a long, long time'



They were clever.
They sat quietly together
and thought long and
hard.
They had heard other
forest creatures talking
about animals being
captured by men with
snares, ropes and sticks.
They had said to them to
be very, very careful.
Now they knew.

This must be what
almost happened.
They had used their
quiet skills to avoid
detection.
They were CLEVER!!

They had to protect
themselves and they had
to always be on alert.
They understood.



Wise Saola suggested that they make some **Quiet one agreements**, so that they would all be protected the next time that they heard the sounds of the men with ropes and sticks and snares moving through their jungle and sensed danger. Every one of the animals liked this idea. They all joined in to give their suggestions. These agreements could protect them all.



Flying frog suggested that they move to safety the minute that they heard a strange noise.

Marbled cat suggested that they find a camouflage space in the undergrowth where they couldn't be seen.

Striped rabbit just said to watch....everything and everywhere.

Hodgson's frogmouth owl suggested that they always, always look carefully.

Deer suggested that they listen and smell what's approaching.

Tawny fish owl suggested that they wait hidden in the undergrowth for as long as they needed to feel safe after the men moved on.

Slow Loris said 'Yes... when the owls say it's safe we can stop being still and silent, then it will be safe to move.'

Big headed turtle suggested that they stay calm, always calm.





Saola liked all of the ***Quiet one agreements*** that were shared.

His final suggestion was that IF they felt that the men were really, really close they should all move silently to the river water and hide behind the undergrowth at the water's edge.

They all agreed. Saola's message was exactly what they all thought, but the Big headed turtle was a little worried about this advice as he moved so slowly. He thought he would just turn to stone.....wherever he was. They all thought that that was the best idea for him. The other animals agreed that they would use the **Quiet one agreements** immediately they heard the sounds of men approaching.





The quiet ones would keep each other safe. They knew how to do this. They could all live their quiet lives this way so that their fellow animals in the mountains would be protected, too.

So this is what they did and they still do.

They all live quietly in the Annamite mountains as they have done for thousands of years following the **Quiet one agreements** living in peace and harmony.





No one knows how many quiet ones live there.
No one knows how they live in the mountains and what they do.
No one knows much about any of them.

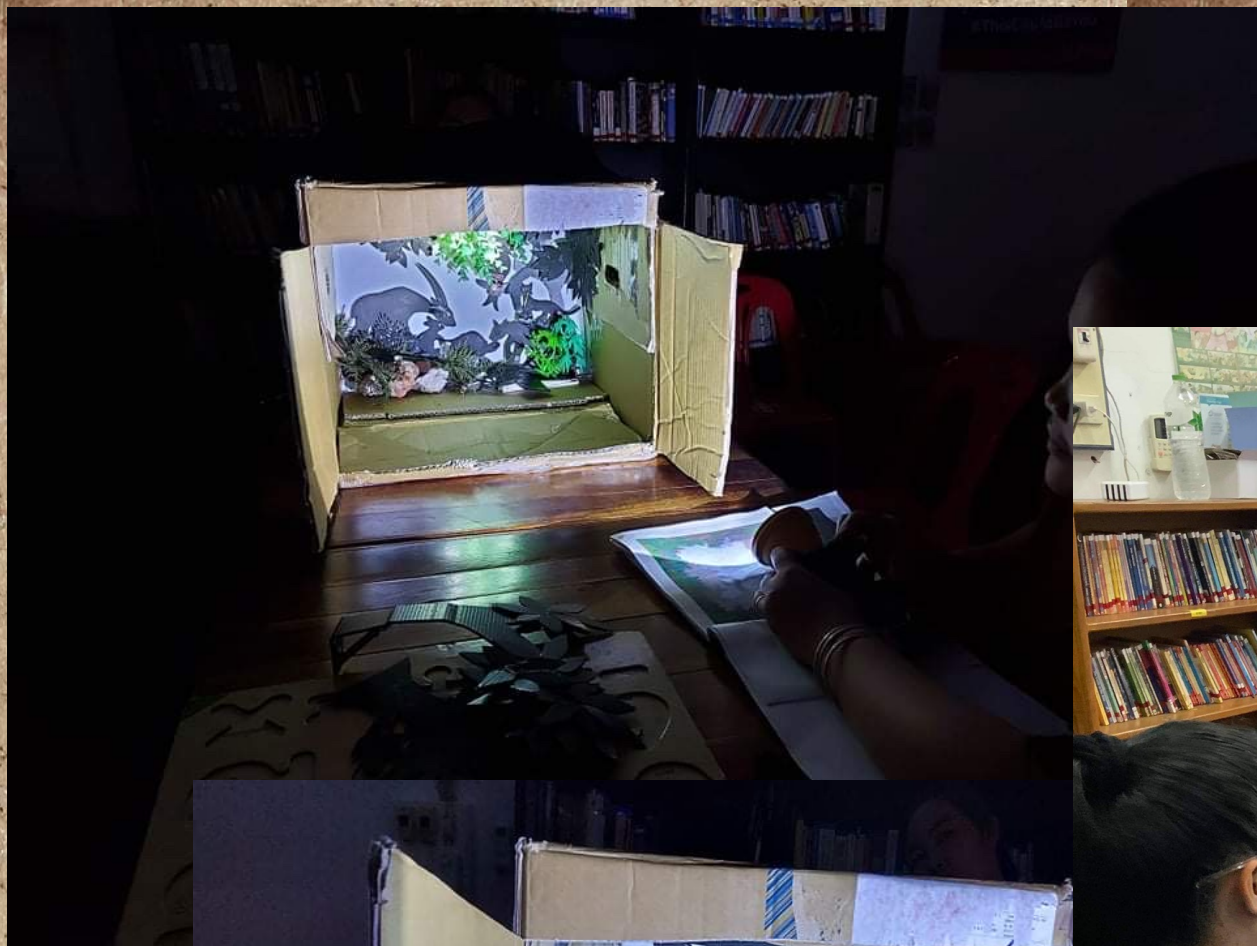
That is just how the quiet ones want it and how it should be.

We do know that the quiet ones can protect themselves so that they can live their quiet lives in the mountains, safely and free from fear.

We also know that we humans need to be the WISE ones who help them to live their quiet lives.

We need to make our own agreement to support them. This must be our job. Our **Quietone agreement** is to do this for them.....forever. We will do this. We will.





The Luang Prabang Library team in Shadow box action!

Fascinating facts about the endangered creatures of the Annamite mountains.



The Annamite mountains are home to over 300 species of birds in which over 50 are endangered. They are the habitat for many large mammals including the Asian Elephant, Giant Muntjacs, Gaur *bos gaurus* and the Saola plus over 100 species of mammals including bats and rodents. There are also over 50 species of reptiles and amphibians..

Globally threatened animals residing in the area include the Pygmy slow loris, Douc Langur, Pale cheeked gibbon, Annamite striped rabbit, Annam flying frog, The marbled cat, The Big headed turtle, The Tawny fish owl and Hodgson's frog mouth owl.

The Saola is only found in one place in the world. It is believed to live in the forests in the remote Annamite mountains. Local villagers from the mountains report that Saola browse on leafy plants, fig leaves and fruits and stems along the rivers and animal trails.

The Saola are critically endangered. Loss of habitat is the main threat to their survival. They are elusive and have rarely been seen and it is unknown how many exist. There may be as few as 100 . The last sighting of a Saola was in 1992 when Forestry workers found the skull of a two horned animal in the mountain home of a local

The Saola's name means Spindle horns in Vietnamese.

It is akin to an antelope, though it is closer to cattle in it's genetic make up.

It's spindle horns can be up to 50 cms high, twice the size of its head.

The Saola have silky short fur, a dark chestnut brown colour and distinctive markings above their eyes, their hooves and their chest.

Their tail is very short and is brown at the top and cream in the middle with a fluffy end. They are about 33 cm high and weigh between 79 to 90 kilograms.

Hodgson's frogmouth is between 24-27 cms high and weighs approximately 50 grams. It's brown and gray plumage resembles tree bark, with soft plumage and mottled feathers , that enables it to be camouflaged as if it was a broken branch.

It has a strong bill with facial bristles that detects insects and protect their eyes. Their large head has two large yellow rounded eyes that help them to navigate in the dark. It can be clearly identified by it's call, which sounds like soft wheezy whistles to harsh tremulous rattles . It survives on a mainly insectivorous diet including moths, beetle and other large insects. It is declining because of habitat fragmentation and loss of lowland forest but is not yet considered vulnerable.

The Pygmy slow loris has a round head, narrow snout, large eyes and a variety of distinctive coloration patterns that are species dependent. Their arms and legs are nearly equal in length and their torso is long and flexible allowing them to twist and extend in the branches of the forest trees.

They have a pincer like grip which enables them to grasp branches for long periods of time.

Their bite is toxic. and is used to deter predators.

They move slowly and deliberately making little or no noise. When threatened they stop and remain motionless. They are known to communicate by scent marking and the males are highly territorial. They are omnivores and eat small animals, forest fruits, seeds, tree gum and other vegetation.

They are highly endangered.

The Tawny fish owl, which has large powerful and curved talons to eat the river fish, frogs and toads that it lives on.

The fish owl is not silent when it flies.

It's wing beats can be heard as it flies through the forests before nightfall, seeking its prey.

They usually hunt by swooping down into the water to capture the fish.

They are highly solitary and territorial and nests include large holes in river banks and caves or the forks of large trees. They lay their eggs where ever they are nesting.

The Marbled cat is a small wild cat where it inhabits the high mountain forests. It is listed as near threatened.

It is similar in size to a domestic cat, but has rounded ears and a very long tail, that is as long as the cat's body.

The colour of its long fur varies from brownish-grey to ochre brown and it is patterned with black stripes on his short and round head, neck and back. On its tail, limbs and underbelly it has solid spots and blotches on its flanks. It has large feet, unusually large canine teeth. They range in height from 45 to 62cms and 35 to 55 cms long. Forest canopies provide the Marbled cat with its prey. It eats birds, squirrels, rodents and reptiles. Snaring poses its major threat and deforestation makes it very easy for the poachers to sight them.

**All of the information presented has been collected from :
WORLD WIDE FUND FOR NATURE IN LAOS (WWF-LAOS)
<http://www.wwf.org.la/>**

The Annam flying frog is famous for its gliding acrobatics. Using the skin flaps between its toes, the flying frog glides from tree to tree in search of food, water and shelter.

It is recognized as one of the largest frog species.

It is a common tree frog in Vietnam BUT is facing habitat loss from deforestation and is classified as endangered in the Annamite mountains

The Big headed turtle can readily climb over obstacles in and around rivers and fast streams, using its tail as a prop to extend the reach of its strong claws. It also uses its beak to assist it with climbing... it does climb trees and bushes.

It is not a strong swimmer.

It eats snails and fish.

It cannot withdraw its head into its shell.

It is readily consumed in Asia and is found at the Village market stalls.

Hunters capture them on baited lines and they are rapidly disappearing

The Annamite striped rabbit has thick striped fur with a red rump

and has only recently been discovered in the Annamite mountains.

It eats weeds, grasses, wildflowers, figs, buds, bark and conifer needles and other green plants.

Threats to the species are hunting, either by snare, dogs or habitat loss which makes it very vulnerable to hunters.

Cultivation at lower altitudes and agriculture throughout, extensive road building which opens undisturbed areas to farmers and timber harvesters, mining and dams.

It is registered as endangered based upon its high level of danger of snaring