

Evidence of Spotted Linsang *Prionodon pardicolor* post-weaning parental care

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Abstract

This note describes a camera-trap record of a juvenile Spotted Linsang *Prionodon pardicolor* closely following an adult in north-central Vietnam in the Khe Choang area of Pu Mat National Park, Nghe An province, Vietnam. The pup's presumed age and physical ability indicate that this image provides evidence of Spotted Linsang parental care after weaning.

Keywords: small carnivore parental involvement, Vietnam

The Spotted Linsang *Prionodon pardicolor* is distributed in parts of China, South Asia, and non-Sundaic South-east Asia. The species is categorised as Least Concern (LC) on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species, though its population trend is considered to be in decline, with hunting and deforestation defined as its major threats (Duckworth et al. 2016). Spotted Linsang occur mostly in forested areas; however, rapid conversion of forests throughout their range over the past several decades has led to a marked reduction of habitat and the species along with it (Duckworth et al. 2016).

This note presents a record of an adult and juvenile Spotted Linsang photographed together in north-central Vietnam in the Khe Choang area of Pu Mat National Park, Nghe An province, Vietnam, on 6 June 2018 at 19h09, by a camera-trap set at 710 m asl (18°55'28.9"N; 104°35'29.5"E) in a closed canopy broadleaf forest area with thick leaf litter, a couple

of fallen trees and two standing trees with hollows below 1.5 m (Fig. 1).

There is little published information on the Spotted Linsang's natural history and parental involvement in the wild. Parental involvement after weaning was not reported on in captive *Prionodon* (Von Rompaey 1993, 1995). The camera-trap record in this note provides evidence of post-weaning parental involvement.

In the camera-trap image, the pup's eyes are fully open and it is springing after the adult just ahead of it. On the basis of captive observations, linsangs are considered to have two mating periods, one in February and another in August (Von Rompaey 1993, 1995). After a gestation of approximately two months, one or two young (weighing about 40g) are born and are kept in a tree hollow until they open their eyes 18-21 days later (Von Rompaey 1993, 1995). Given that this image was taken in mid-April, and considering the



Fig. 1. A juvenile Spotted Linsang *Prionodon pardicolor* following an adult (presumed to be its parent) through a dense evergreen forest area in Pu Mat National Park, Nghe An province, Vietnam, on 6 June 2018. Murids, squirrels and Tree-shrews (*Tupaia* sp.) were frequently detected at the camera-trap station, indicating that the location may be a prey-rich location for small carnivores such as Spotted Linsang. (Photo: Save Vietnam's Wildlife, Leibniz Institute for Zoo and Wildlife Research, Pu Mat National Park.)

pup's open eyes, size and ability to jump, it is likely that the pup is about 4-6 weeks old or older. This is evidence of adult Spotted Linsangs caring for young after they are mobile.

To conclude, the pup's presumed age, physical ability and following of an adult mean that this image provides evidence of Spotted Linsang parental care after the weaning period. More photographic evidence of this may come to light as the Spotted Linsang appears often in ground-level camera-trap images, in spite of its declining population, caused by loss of habitat and illegal hunting (Fig. 2).

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Fig. 2. A Spotted Linsang *Prionodon pardicolor* seized from poachers on 17 May 2022 in Tung Huong village, Tam Quang commune, Tuong Duong district, Pu Mat National Park, Nghe An, Vietnam. The front-left paw was amputated as a result of severe snare trap injury (indicated by arrows). According to the seizure report and follow-up interview, each hunter was fined 3 million VND (approximately 128 USD) as the animal was misidentified. The Spotted Linsang is listed under Decree 64/2019/NĐ-CP, which includes rare and “precious” species that are considered national priorities for conservation. Hunting wildlife listed under Decree 64/2019/NĐ-CP can result in a jail term following Vietnam's Criminal Code (No. 100/2015/QH13). (Photo: Pham Quoc Hoa.)