

## PRESS RELEASE

# **The team of The Kukang Rescue Program has documented illegal offering of endangered slow lorises to tourists in Thailand.**

28<sup>th</sup> January 2019 – **On the Thai island of Phuket, the members of the team of The Kukang Rescue Program have seen with their own eyes that the issue of using wild animals to entertain people for money concerns endangered and protected slow lorises as well. They are still offered to tourists to take pictures with them for money on local streets, beaches and in restaurants. However, people who support these illegal activities with their money often do not know about the problem and consequences of their actions. This only underlines the key importance of education for protection of slow lorises and other wildlife.**

On their travels, mainly to exotic countries, tourists can often meet with offering wildlife for amusement, such as street shows, cuddling, or taking pictures with animals for money. Nowadays, when social networks are part of daily life of most of the people and when tourism has been experiencing dramatic development, offering of wildlife for taking photos and sharing of these for many people exotic and adventurous photos on the internet is the driving force behind the decline of wild populations. This can lead to extermination of whole species as a result.

That is why the members of The Kukang Rescue Program went to the island of Phuket in Thailand to document current situation of illegal offering of endangered and protected prosimians which are slow lorises to tourist for taking photos for money. It is generally known that this activity is quite common in Phuket, one of Thailand's most popular and most travelled tourist destinations.

*"In addition to making a documentary video and taking photographs, a short survey among tourists who were interested in the offered slow lorises was carried out. The aim of the survey was to find out if the tourists know what kind of animals slow lorises are, that they are endangered and protected animals and that by taking photos with them and by sharing these photos on social networks and anywhere else on the internet people support illegal activities and endanger wild populations of these primates,"* František Příbrský, a director of The Kukang Rescue Program and field zoologist at the Ostrava Zoo describes the course and motivation of the monitoring. According to available information, slow lorises offered by dealers to tourists come from wild nature. *"Most of the respondents admitted that they did not know about the problem of the illegal trade in slow lorises and what it brought, and if they knew they would never take a photo with a slow loris. This only confirms that the effort to educate people and raise awareness is crucial to conservation of slow lorises and other wildlife,"* Lucie Čižmářová, a coordinator of the Kukang veterinary care, field zoologist at the Olomouc Zoo and photographer explains and adds: *"Unfortunately, there were also tourists who knew that slow lorises are endangered and protected, however they were indifferent to the problem, and perhaps with a vision of enthusiastic responses on their Instagram or Facebook account, they took a selfie with a slow loris anyway."*

Slow lorises are nocturnal poisonous animals. Black market dealers tear out or cut their teeth very often so that the slow lorises could not bite future owners or tourists who take photos with them. However, according to estimates, up to 9 out of 10 slow lorises caught in the wild do not get to a final owner as they die during transportation or due to poor conditions of animal markets.

Although slow lorises are wild, nocturnal and the only poisonous primates in the world, especially the illegal pet trade poses a threat to them. The "I Am Not Your Toy!" campaign, which was launched by The Kukang Rescue Program in response to this widespread problem, highlights this issue. This global campaign is focused against popularizing slow lorises as pets on the internet. More on [YouTube](#) or [the Facebook page of the campaign](#).

The Kukang Rescue Program has produced a "Responsible Tourism" flyer as a part of this campaign. It provides instructions on how to avoid the unconscious support of the often-illegal exploitation of wild animals on travels to exotic areas. It is available for downloading on the Kukang Rescue Program website at <http://kukang.org/en/responsible-tourism>. The flyer is also available in printed form, for example in the store of Cestovatelskyobchod.cz or in the Holiday Inn hotel at Vaclav Havel Airport in Prague.

Partners of The Kukang Rescue Program are Ostrava Zoo, Olomouc Zoo, Liberec Zoo, Hodonín Zoo and Wrocław Zoo.

The attached photos and the [video](#) can be freely used for press, internet and television news.  
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