

PRESS RELEASE

The image of a macaque held on a chain taken by Lucie Čižmářová has placed among the world's best photographs in the Nature Photographer of the Year 2020.

4 January 2021 - Every day, species that we have not yet managed to explore disappear from the wild. This is one of the reasons why The Kukang Rescue Program is fighting against the illegal wildlife trade with a focus on the protection of slow lorises on the Indonesian island of Sumatra. Among animals that live there are macaques which seem to be numerous in many places. Unfortunately, even these most widespread monkeys in Asia are endangered and their numbers are declining. This problem in Indonesia was brought to the attention of the public by the Olomouc Zoo's field zoologist and photographer of the Kukang program Lucie Čižmářová. Her photo "Forced to Live Together" was listed among the 15 best photos in the Man and Nature category in the Nature Photographer of the Year 2020 competition, where a record 19,547 photos from 95 countries competed this year.

During our travels from South to East Asia, we are used to seeing macaques almost everywhere. In Asian cities, they run across roads and power lines, eating discarded leftovers and opening PET bottles in ditches along the roads. In tourist places we can meet whole gangs of these primates, waiting for crowds of tourists, from whom they beg or steal some "treat", sometimes even rob personal belongings. The human population is growing and occupying more and more space, which was previously intended for wildlife. But macaques have adapted to the changing environment and learned how to live close to humans. This has made it easier for them to find food, even though they often come into conflict with people. Feeding, especially from the hands of tourists, is reducing their natural shyness and increasing aggression towards people, which in some places causes major problems. In addition, they become pests in the fields and are killed, end up on a plate as a delicacy, or are kept on a chain. In many parts of Asia, we can also come across so-called "dancing monkeys". These are macaques often dressed in various dresses and suits, with a mask on their head or with a painted face, being forced to dance or do other performances to entertain tourists.

Photographers from all over the world draw attention to these practices, and their photographs often win awards at various international competitions. Lucie Čižmářová, field zoologist at the Olomouc Zoo and photographer of The Kukang Rescue Program, also drew attention to the problem of using macaques with her photo "Forced to Live Together". The image has now become one of the 15 best photos in the Man and Nature category in the international Nature Photographer of the Year 2020 competition, where a record 19,547 photos from 95 countries competed this year. The photo shows macaques forced to live with humans because we have destroyed their natural habitat and driven them out for food in the streets. In the end, we turned them into pets, with dogs and cats moving freely around them, almost as if they mocked the monkeys' suffering. *"In Indonesia, where I have been working for The Kukang Rescue Program for years, I have met macaques used as pets many times. People tie them to their houses, in front of restaurants or have them displayed in a cage. It is actually the same practice as for slow lorises, on which we focus in our work. But slow lorises are protected in Indonesia, so you can do something about it. Numerous species of macaques in Indonesia are not protected by law, and previously used quotas indicating how many macaques can be caught per year for pet or scientific purposes did not make much sense and only concerned the long-tailed macaque (Macaca fascicularis). Therefore, we try to educate people and point out that no wild animal is a suitable pet,"* says Lucie.

Macaques in the wild live in large groups with complex social ties. Those who enter the wildlife market are most often young that were taken from their mother after the hunters killed her. These orphans then end up as pets. However, Indonesians do not hesitate to catch an adult macaque, which they then tie at the house. František Příbrský, director of The Kukang Rescue Program and coordinator of international *in situ* projects in Ostrava Zoo, also confirms that it is possible to meet macaques in many places in Indonesia: *“If this goes on like this, still common macaque species may soon end up like slow lorises and orangutans. In addition to the fact that these animals suffer as pets, their numbers in the wild are also declining. An example of this is the southern pig-tailed macaque (Macaca nemestrina), which was reclassified from the vulnerable to the endangered category this year on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species. That is why we are now trying to respond to this situation and pay attention to macaques in our work.”*

Photographs are one way to draw attention to conflicts between animals and humans and to inform the public about them. Lucie is dedicated to environmental photojournalism and her photographs always carry an alarming message. This is the case also of the photo panels of the Stolen Wildlife, a campaign pointing to the illegal trade in wild animals launched by the Kukang program together with the Ostrava Zoo (the photo panels can be viewed [here](#)). More information about this whole issue and the work of Lucie Čižmářová can be found on her new website www.lcizmarovaphotojournalism.com.

The attached photograph may be freely used for press, Internet and television news purposes.
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