

ENDANGERED ANIMALS AND BIRDS IN VIETNAM

An endangered species is a population of organisms which is facing a high risk of becoming extinct because it is either few in numbers, or threatened by changing environmental or predation parameters.

The saola inhabits the Annamite Range's moist forests and the Eastern Indochina dry and monsoon forests. They have been spotted in steep river valleys at about 300 to 1800 m above sea level. These regions are distant from human settlements, covered primarily in evergreen or mixed evergreen and deciduous woodlands. The species seems to prefer edge zones of the forests. Saola stay in mountain forests during the wet seasons, when water in streams and rivers is abundant, and move down to the lowlands in winter. They are shy and never enter cultivated fields or come close to villages. To date, all known captive saola have died, leading to the belief that this species cannot live in captivity.



Image.1 SAOLA

The saola belongs to the family Bovidae and genetic analysis places it in the tribe Bovini; in other words its closest relatives are cattle, true buffaloes, and bison. However its simple horns and teeth and some other morphological features are typical of less-derived or 'primitive' bovids.^[4] Saola are antelopes, in the sense that an antelope is any bovid that is not a cow, sheep, buffalo, bison, or goat. It is not known how many individuals exist, as only 11 have been recorded alive. The saola stands about 85 cm at the shoulder and weighs approximately 90 kg. The coat is a dark brown with a black stripe along the back. Its legs are darkish and there are white patches on the feet, and white stripes vertically across the cheeks, on the eyebrows and splotches on the nose and chin. All saolas have slightly backward-curved horns, which grow to half a meter in length.

Local populations report having seen saola traveling in groups of two or three, rarely more. Saola mark their territories by opening up a fleshy flap on their snout to reveal scent glands. They subsequently rub the underside against objects leaving a musky, pungent paste. The saolas' colossal scent glands are thought to be the largest of

any living mammal. They are reported to eat small leafy plants especially fig leaves, and stems along rivers. The animal seems to have a browsing diet, considering its small incisors.

LIME STONE - A BIRD Scientists have discovered a new species of warbler in the forests of Vietnam and Laos. The small green and yellow bird was first sighted in 1994, but at the time was thought to be a different species surviving 1000km from its usual home. Now, according to a report by BBC News, studies of the bird's morphology, DNA and vocalizations have confirmed it to be a unique species, and scientists have named it the Limestone leaf warbler. The bird was first seen at one place in Vietnam in July 1994 and again at the same place in April the following year, and in one area in central Laos in May 1995," said taxonomist Professor Per Alstrom of the Swedish Species Information Centre, a part of the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences in Uppsala. "Initially, the bird was identified as a Sulphur-breasted warbler, in itself an interesting finding, since it was apparently breeding more than 1000km south of its previously known breeding areas in China," he said. "Later, it was realised that its songs differed markedly from the songs of the Sulphur-breasted warbler, and further studies were undertaken," he added. These studies by Prof Alstrom and colleagues, who included scientists from the Wildlife Conservation Society's Lao Program and Birdlife International in Indochina, confirmed the bird's unique identity. The plumage of the Limestone leaf warbler is almost identical to that of the Sulphur-breasted warbler, though the new species appears to have a colder yellow chest and more grey topside and stripped crown. But, the new species is smaller, with shorter wings, rounder wing tips and a proportionately larger bill.

"Its vocalizations, both song and contact call, are markedly different from those of the Sulphur-breasted warbler," said Professor Alstrom. DNA analyses also suggest that it is more closely related to the Yellow-vented warbler from eastern Himalayas, northern Laos and adjacent part of China, which is quite different in plumage. "Leaf warblers and many other warblers are renowned for being very similar-looking, while having distinct vocalisations, so it is very likely that other new species of warblers will be discovered," said Professor Alstrom. Despite being unknown to science as a new species until now, the Limestone leaf warbler is quite numerous. Professor Alstrom's team believes that the bird inhabits limestone karst habitats in Vietnam and Laos, and may also breed in several locations in southern China.



Image.2 LIME STONE BIRD

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