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Silky Sifaka (*Propithecus candidus*) Conservation and Research

Justification:

Silky sifakas are one of the most critically endangered mammals in the world (IUCN Red List : <http://www.iucnredlist.org/apps/redlist/details/18360/0>). They only inhabit a small region of northeastern Madagascar, have never survived in captivity, and global population size very low (some estimate 100 to 1000 total individuals). They are the flagship species for a World Heritage Site, Marojejy National Park (www.marojejy.com) and have suffered from the recent rosewood logging and bushmeat crisis which erupted in 2009 following a presidential coup d'etat. They are hunted, since there is no taboo against eating silky sifakas as there is for some other lemurs. Silky sifakas are one of five lemurs (out of 100 total types of lemurs) listed by Conservation International as one of the World's Top 25 Most Critically Endangered Primates (<http://www.primatesg.org/T25full07.htm>).

Silky sifakas are the flagship species for one of the most biologically diverse national parks in Madagascar, Marojejy National Park. By protecting the silky sifaka, all of the biodiversity within Marojejy benefits. The local income generated from silky sifaka research and tourism is a strong incentive to protect the forest. Our silky sifaka project is one of the largest employers of people (e.g., porters, permanent research guides, and cooks) around Marojejy. Most tourists visit the park in order to see silky sifakas. Our silky sifaka population surveys identify and reduce habitat disturbance of all kinds which is a great service to the entire park.

Further sources of Information:

Silky Sifaka Research and Conservation Website: www.erikpatel.com

Angels of the Forest Documentary Film: <http://vimeo.com/5894853>

Smithsonian Magazine: Saving the Silky Sifaka:
<http://www.smithsonianmag.com/science-nature/Saving-the-Silky-Sifaka.html>

Dan Rather Reports: Treasure Island. Episode 437.
Purchasable and downloadable on I-Tunes in the United States or DVDs from HD-NET:
<http://hdnet-store.stores.yahoo.net/danrare437.html>

Conservation International article overviewing the silky sifaka:
http://www.erikpatel.com/Patel_2009_25%20Most%20Endangered_Silky%20Sifaka.pdf

Two Projects Which Need Funding:

1) **Lemur survey of the unexplored and unprotected Maherivaratra Forest (See Fig. 1 Map)**

Reliable local reports suggest that the Maherivaratra Forest (an unprotected forest just outside of the north-eastern edge of the Makira Conservation Site) contains silky sifakas and many other lemurs. Substantial human hunting of lemurs has also been reported. There has never been a professional survey or any research whatsoever in this potentially very rich and rapidly disappearing forest. If silky sifakas were found, this forest could become a protected area, and local conservation efforts could be galvanized. In order to improve our estimates of silky sifaka global population size and geographic range, numerous surveys such as this one are needed. This will be a very difficult survey, because it is 5 days/4 nights walking from the nearest road. Dozens of porters (at least 40 going there, 25 coming back) will be needed each way. Fortunately we have most of the equipment needed already but we are short on tents and boots and raincoats when so many people are involved.

Proposed Dates: May 1 to July 1, 2011

Estimated Cost breakdown:

65 porters x \$8/day x 5 days = \$2600usd
5 research guides x \$6/day x 61 days = \$1830usd
2 cooks x \$6/day x 61 days = \$732usd
5 local guides x \$3/day x 61 days = \$915usd
Food for about 12 people x 61 days = \$1500usd
4x4 transport with gas for 2 days = \$200usd
Two 4-man tents x \$300/tent = \$600usd
Five pairs of rubber boots x \$50 = \$250usd
Five waterproof raincoats x \$50 = \$250usd

Total Estimated Cost = \$8877usd

2) Children's library in Manantenina near the Marojejy National Park information center.

We would like to build a new library for hundreds of children who live near the Marojejy National Park information center in the town of Manantenina. Access to books is virtually non-existent. The closest library is more than 40km away (in Andapa). Many research and tourist guides live in this village (and nearby Mandena). Their children are the future research/tourist guides and protectors of Marojejy. Due to their proximity to the park entrance and main information center, children in this village have a unique opportunity to become conservation leaders and gain employment in the national park.

Proposed Dates of Construction: October to December, 2010

Estimated Total Cost for the building with furniture: \$1500usd

Estimated Total Cost of books (with shipping): \$1000usd

Total Estimated Cost: \$2500usd

It will be a simple wooden building approximately 6m x 6m x 4m (ht) with a nice metal roof. It will be similar to our first library (for adults) for the Marojejy Guide Association which is being built right now; so we will have the benefit of that experience. An exact price breakdown will be available soon. Based upon the first library, these expense estimates should be about right. We already have dozens of nice books for children in French, Malagasy, and English, but more will be needed. Ultimately we hope that visitors to the park will consider donating books.

Figure 1. Map of north-eastern Madagascar showing locations of the two projects which need funding within the range of the silky sifaka (red dot = 1 group).

