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THE INFLUENCE OF FEMALE LIFE HISTORY ON REPRODUCTION IN CAPTIVE PILEATED GIBBONS (HYLOBATES PILEATUS)

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Pileated gibbons (Hylobates pileatus) are rated as on high risk of extinction in the wild in the medium-term future (INTERNATIONAL-CONSERVATION-UNION, 2008). The current worldwide studbook lists 107 animals housed at 21 different institutions (ZINGG, 2008). Although most animals are housed in pairs, the major part of the population is not reproductively active. Without improvements in reproduction, the captive population will become overaged and is threatened to become extinct in the near future.

The goal of the current project was to identify problems in reproduction based on the current studbook data. Twenty nine percent of possible breeding females were reproductively active and produced 81 offspring during the last 30 years. In the last 15 years captive pileated gibbons had a noticeable skewed offspring sex ratio that favoured males (26,16). In addition, only 50.4 % newborns reached adulthood and were available for future breeding purposes. Captive born mothers significantly better raised offspring than wild born mothers (p < 0.01). Especially during the first 8 years in captivity wild born mothers had significantly lower survival rate in their offspring in comparison to wild born mothers with over 8 years experience in captivity (p = 0.006). Further preliminary studies did not indicate any pathological alterations in the female or male reproductive tract. The current study has shown that the female life history has a great influence on the poor reproductive success in captive pileated gibbons.

References