

# โครงการคืนชะนีสู่ป่า Gibbon Rehabilitation Project



104/3 Moo 3, Paklock, Talang, Phuket 83110, Thailand

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## 2016 April, Volunteer Profile:



**1-Name:** Barbora Pucikova / Thomas Halton

**2-Nationality:** Slovak / English

**3-Education/profession:** Marine biologist / Herpetologist

**4-Age:** 29 / 31

**5-Length of Volunteering:** 3 months

**6-Describe your favorite day:**

**Barbora Pucikova:** Honestly, I did not have a favourite work place or a favourite day. Working in the heat at the Rest centre or the Rehabilitation site was physically demanding but I got to see the gibbons and any day like that was somehow relaxing too. Working in the Education centre was demanding mentally but hugely rewarding because education of the public, whether

they are tourists or locals, about the plight the gibbons have been experiencing is the most powerful tool to stop the terrible photo prop trade. One day I would finish the shift exhausted because I talked to a gazillion people about the gibbons and they were all very interested, supportive and keen to spread the word to all their friends. Another day I would barely speak a word but I would spend the day listening to the gibbons singing and watching them doing their antics. Some days we would be trekking the jungle and following the already released families, while other days I would spend in the office helping the staff with whatever they needed doing. The variety made the whole experience much more interesting for me.

**Thomas Halton:** Even though during my time at the project I didn't feel I had a favourite day, as everyday would bring something new, one day definitely stands out. We were fortunate enough that during our stay we were able to see the release of Crystal and Willy. The moment when the staff opened the cage and Willy finally gathered enough courage to venture to the big unknown forest was magical. Crystal took a bit longer to follow her partner but eventually they were both out and about, exploring whatever the forest had to offer. A successful release is the ultimate goal of any re-introduction program and right there and then I was very proud I could contribute to the project with my time and effort.

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## 7-Describe your funniest moment and GRP:

**Barbora Pucikova:** Gibbons are very amusing animals and there isn't a day when they are not naughty or stupidly silly. Watching them trying to catch a lizard that is outside their cage, staring at an ant with intense interest before grabbing it and eating it or swinging in all sorts of ridiculous ways is an endless fun. But the GRP staffs are equally hilarious. They have got bags of personality and stories with them and it is always interesting to listen to their experiences after years of working with wildlife conservation. Teaching them new English words while they are teaching us Thai always gets a lot of laughs from everyone involved.

**Thomas Halton:** There are plenty of funny moments I can think about, whether it involves the gibbons or the other volunteers and staff. One thing is for sure, you will never have a chance to get bored. The three babies currently sharing a cage, so they can learn how to socialise like a true gibbon, never stop playing. They swing around, explore every leaf that falls into their cage, they jump and roll around, play-fight and constantly invent new ways to entertain themselves. As they are still learning how to brachiate properly, sometimes they miss the swing or whatever they are aiming for and what was ment to be a graceful move turns into a hilarious dignity recovery situation. The gibbons are very agile and acrobatic animals that navigate the canopy expertly and confidently. The babies just need a bit more practice and it is certainly a lot of fun watching them learn these skills.

## 8-Describe one of the gibbon characters you feel you got to know a bit better:

**Barbora Pucikova:** Gibbons have characters, just like people, and so once you get to know them, you find yourself pretty fond of some and less fond of others. My favourite ones by far were Jep and Joey. They grew close to my heart because they are such gentle gibbons. While during cleaning cages of other gibbons I had to be very vary of where I am and how close to the cage I am because they would not hesitate to grab my hair and pull very hard. I know this is not necessarily a sign of aggression so I hold nothing against them but it does hurt. Jep and Joey had numerous chances grabbing my glasses or pulling my hair but they never did. Whenever I realised I was 15cm away from the cage, looked up and there they were, staring at me as though they were saying "how very interesting, what are you doing there?". Unfortunately Jep cannot be released due to his digestive problems but Joey and his girlfriend Phi Phi have all the chances to be roaming the forest soon.

**Thomas Halton:** I am a big fan of the only golden-cheek gibbon the GRP is currently home to, called Gibby. She is the biggest and definitely the loudest gibbon on sire and whoever hears her signature call admits that it is pretty impressive. While she sings she often swings in a predictable manner and always ends up in the top right corner of her cage as she draws her call to the end. Unfortunately, Gibby isn't native to Thailand, she was smuggled into the country in the illegal pet trade and so the chances that she will ever be released are slim. I wish there was a way because she deserves to sing her songs in the wild.