

# People Working to Save Tapirs



The Tapir Specialist Group (TSG) is a scientific organization founded in 1980 as one of the 120 Specialist Groups of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Species Survival Commission (SSC).

The primary goal of the TSG is to conserve biological diversity by stimulating, developing, and executing practical programs to study, save, restore, and manage all four species of tapir and their remaining habitats in Southeast Asia, Central and South America.

Members of the IUCN/SSC Tapir Specialist Group are involved in many different projects to understand tapirs better and protect remaining populations of all four tapir species. TSG members carry out scientific research (both in the wild and in captivity), conduct educational and public awareness programs in local communities near tapir habitats and support habitat protection efforts.

Today, the TSG has approximately 100 members from 25 countries worldwide - including field researchers, educators, veterinarians, governmental agencies, NGO representatives, zoo personnel, university professors and students - who are directly or indirectly involved in tapir field research and/or captive breeding in their respective regions. Over fifty percent of our members hail from tapir range countries.

You can help the TSG by visiting the Tapir Specialist Group website and learning all you can about tapirs. Share what you learn with family and friends and consider making a donation to the TSG to support their conservation efforts.

[www.tapirspecialistgroup.org](http://www.tapirspecialistgroup.org)

Illustrations by Stephen Nash

# Tapirs of the World



**Mountain Tapir**  
*Tapirus pinchaque*



**Lowland Tapir**  
*Tapirus terrestris*



**Baird's Tapir**  
*Tapirus bairdii*



**Malay Tapir**  
*Tapirus indicus*

# About Tapirs

## What is a tapir?

Tapirs are mammals that are sometimes confused with pigs, capybaras, and giant anteaters. Their closest living relatives are odd-toed ungulates, horses and rhinoceroses.

There are four living species - Baird's Tapir, Lowland Tapir, Mountain Tapir, and Malay Tapir.

One of the tapir's most distinguishing characteristics is its fleshy, prehensile nose that it uses to grab leaves. They also eat seeds that are then dispersed in their scat and help with forest regeneration.

Baby tapirs are born with an unusual striped pattern that helps camouflage them. The stripes fade away as they mature.

## Tapirs in trouble

According to the IUCN Red List, both the Baird's Tapir and the Mountain Tapir are Endangered which means the number of individuals left is so low that the species could become extinct in the near future.

The Lowland Tapir and the Malay Tapir are classified as Vulnerable because there may be too few adults to produce enough offspring needed to get the population back to healthy numbers.

Habitat destruction and hunting are the biggest threats to tapirs.

# Malay Tapir

*Tapirus indicus*



Besides being the largest of the tapir species and the only one found in Asia, a striking black-and-white coat pattern distinguishes this tapir from the others. This unusual coloration tends to mask the animal's body outline in the dappled light of its tropical forest home. Fallen fruits, soft twigs, young leaves of bushes and saplings are their main diet.

**Length:** 6 - 8 ¼ feet (1.8 - 2.5 m)

**Weight:** 220 - 1,102 lbs. (100 - 500 kg)

**Status:** Vulnerable

**Range:** S.E. Asia

# Mountain Tapir

# Where Do Tapirs Live?

*Tapirus pinchaque*

Adult



Infant



The Mountain Tapir inhabits cold, high-altitude cloud forests of Colombia, Ecuador and Peru and has a thick coat of brown-black hair that helps keep it warm. The lips and ears are typically fringed with white. This species browses on the leaves and fruits of various dwarf trees and shrubs, typically at dawn and dusk. Like other tapir species, it tends to hide in thickets during the day.

**Length:** 6 feet (1.8 m)

**Weight:** 330 lbs. (150 kg)

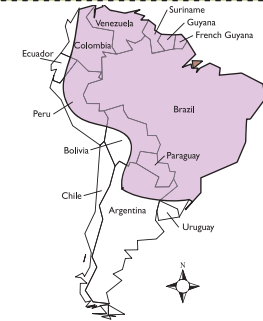
**Status:** Endangered

**Range:** N.W. S. America



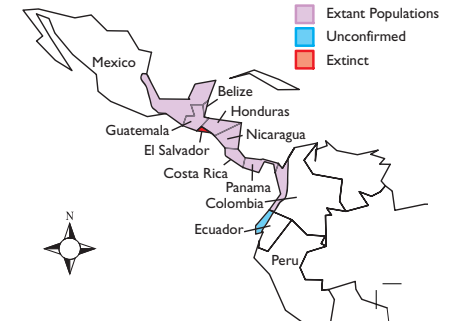
**Lowland Tapir**

*Tapirus terrestris*



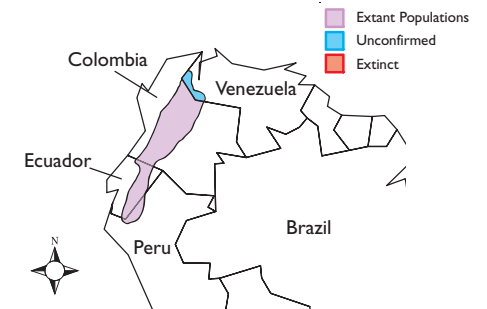
**Baird's Tapir**

*Tapirus bairdii*



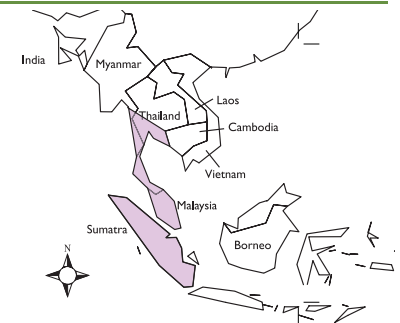
**Mountain Tapir**

*Tapirus pinchaque*



**Malay Tapir**

*Tapirus indicus*



# Lowland Tapir

*Tapirus terrestris*



The Lowland Tapir has a short, narrow mane along its neck, a bristly coat, and white-tipped ears. This species prefers aquatic habitats and can often be seen swimming in rivers. To avoid predators like jaguars and pumas, they can quickly dive into water which provides a safe refuge. Lowland Tapirs tend to browse at night and feed on a wide variety of grasses, leaves, seeds, fruits, and other types of vegetation.

**Length:** 5 ½ - 6 ½ feet (1.7 - 2 m)

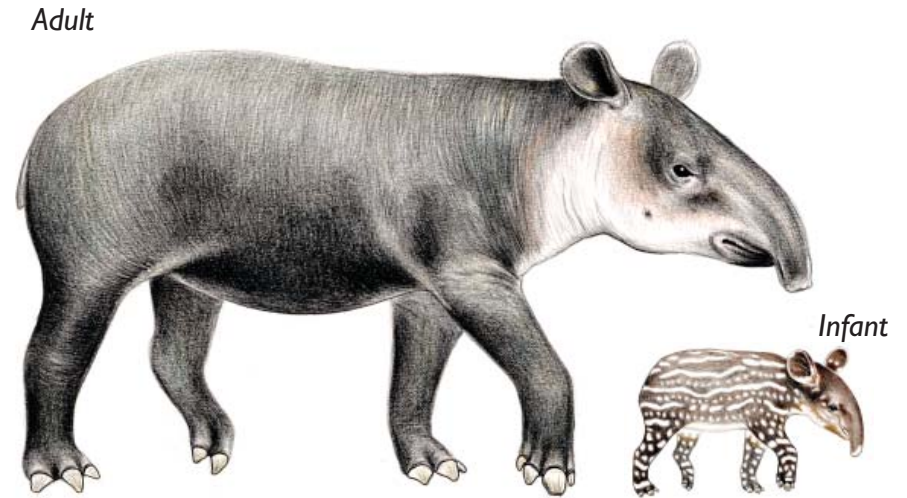
**Weight:** 400 - 500 lbs. (181 - 226 kg)

**Status:** Vulnerable

**Range:** South America

# Baird's Tapir

*Tapirus bairdii*



The Baird's Tapir is the largest of the three tapir species found in Central and South America. Adults are dark brown with white-edged ears, with a pale gray-yellow cheek and throat area. They eat buds, leaves, and fallen fruits from a variety of tropical plants in the humid forests and wetlands where they live. Mother tapirs use shrill whistles to communicate with their young. Adults of both sexes also whistle to warn other tapirs away from their territories.

**Length:** 6 ½ feet (2 m)

**Weight:** 500 - 600 lbs. (226 - 272 kg)

**Status:** Endangered

**Range:** S. Mexico to South America