

Genus *Nesolagus* Forsyth Major 1899

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Genus *Nesolagus*, commonly known as Annamite striped rabbits, represents a unique and enigmatic group of lagomorphs found in the dense and remote Annamite Range of Southeast Asia. Comprising two recognized species, *Nesolagus timminsi* and *Nesolagus netscheri*, these elusive rabbits are known for their distinctive striped fur patterns and their preference for inhabiting the montane forests of Vietnam and Laos (Nguyen et al 2021).

The Annamite striped rabbits are medium-sized lagomorphs with a cryptic appearance that aids in their survival in the dense vegetation of their habitat. Their fur is characterized by alternating dark and light stripes (Caro 2009), which provides effective camouflage amidst the foliage and shadows of the forest floor (Figure 1). The evolutionary significance of this unique coloration remains a subject of scientific inquiry, with researchers speculating on its potential role in predator avoidance or communication within the species (Caro 2009).

N. timminsi (Schlegel, 1880), commonly known as the Annamite striped rabbit, was first described in 1996 based on specimens collected in Vietnam (Nguyen et al 2021). Its specific epithet, *timminsi*, pays tribute to the conservationist and biologist Rob Timmins, who has contributed significantly to the study and preservation of southeast Asian biodiversity (Logunov & Averianov 2022). The other species, *N. netscheri* Averianov, Abramov et Tikhonov, 2000, the Sumatran striped rabbit, was initially discovered in Laos and later identified as a distinct species (Averianov et al 2000). Both species share similar ecological preferences, inhabiting the montane evergreen and semi-deciduous forests at elevations between 600 and 1100 meters (McCarthy et al 2012).

The ecology and behavior of these elusive lagomorphs are not well-documented due to their secretive nature and the challenging terrain of their habitat. However, studies suggest that Annamite striped rabbits are primarily herbivorous, feeding on a variety of plant materials, including leaves, fruits, and bark. Their habitat selection in the Annamite Range, characterized by rugged terrain and limited accessibility, poses challenges for researchers seeking to unravel the mysteries of their biology and ecology.



Figure 1. Two camera-trap photographs of the Sumatran striped rabbit *Nesolagus netscheri* from Bukit Barisan Seletan National Park obtained in March (top) and August (bottom) 2011, with enlarged insets (McCarthy et al 2012).

One of the most pressing concerns regarding the genus *Nesolagus* is its conservation status. Both species, *N. timminsi* and *N. netscheri*, are listed as endangered on the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List. The primary threats to their survival include habitat loss due to logging and agricultural expansion, as well as potential impacts from climate change. Given their restricted range and elusive nature, conservation efforts face numerous challenges, making it imperative to prioritize research and protective measures to ensure the long-term survival of these unique lagomorphs.

Conclusions. Genus *Nesolagus*, represented by the Annamite striped rabbits, stands as a testament to the rich biodiversity of the Annamite Range in southeast Asia. These enigmatic lagomorphs, with their distinctive striped fur and elusive behavior, continue to captivate the interest of researchers and conservationists alike. As efforts to understand and protect these species intensify, the story of *Nesolagus* unfolds, revealing a unique chapter in the ongoing narrative of global biodiversity conservation.

Conflict of Interest. The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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