

IN THE WILD

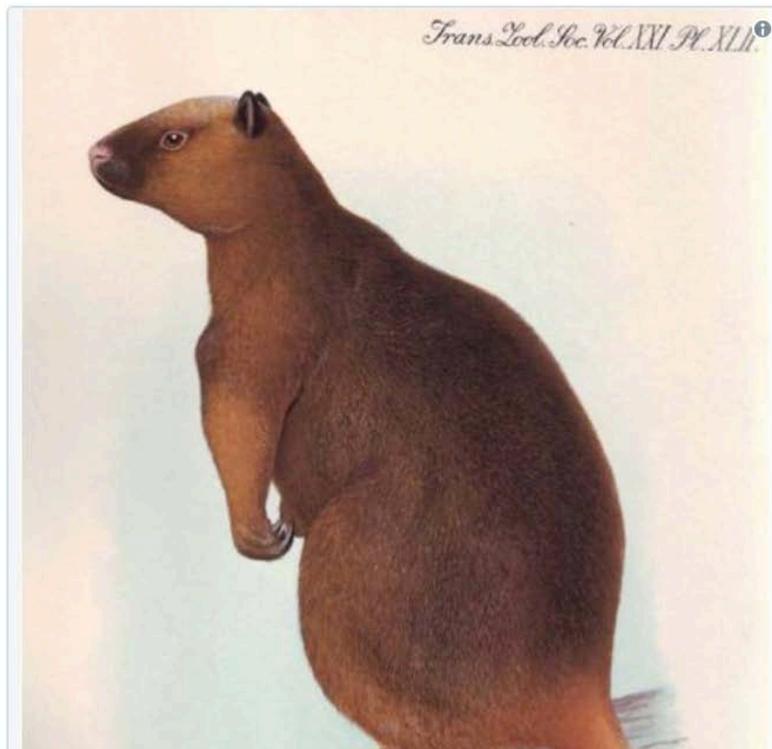
# People Thought This Animal Was Extinct — Until A Tourist Took This Photo

"We started to see these claw marks at the base of tree."

BY SARAH V SCHWEIG

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What a British tourist caught on camera in the Indonesian jungle could be the rediscovery of a critically endangered species that's been considered lost — perhaps even extinct — for a long time.

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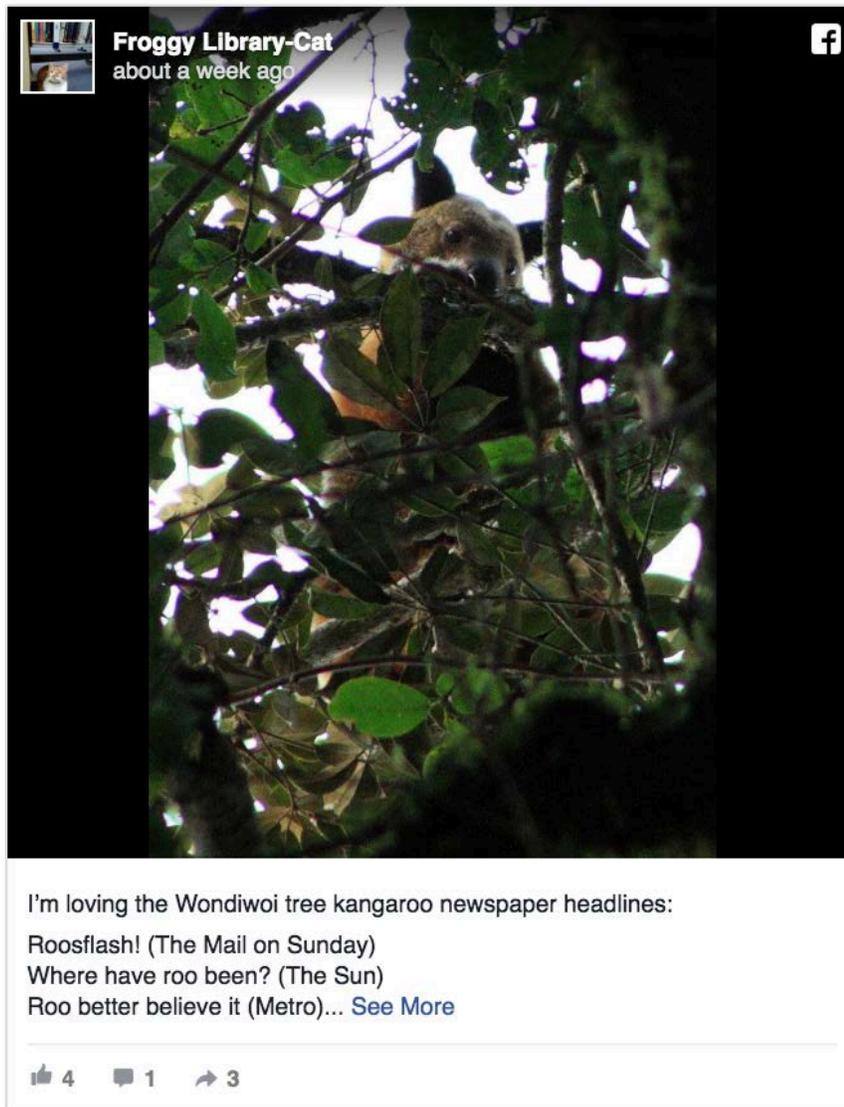
Wondiwoi tree kangaroo found in the wild for the first time in 90 years [bit.ly/2ONeUYj](https://bit.ly/2ONeUYj) was first described in Transactions of the Zoological Society of London, later called Journal of Zoology, based on the Tring museum specimen collected in 1928 [bit.ly/2ORXkT2](https://bit.ly/2ORXkT2)

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"We started to see these claw marks at the base of tree," Michael Smith, who was on the last day of a week-long guided trek through the Wondiwoi Mountains in Indonesia, told The Sun.

Smith had been looking for a rare kind of orchid — but then he turned his sights toward the tree canopy and saw something furry up there. That's when he pulled out his camera and started taking photos.



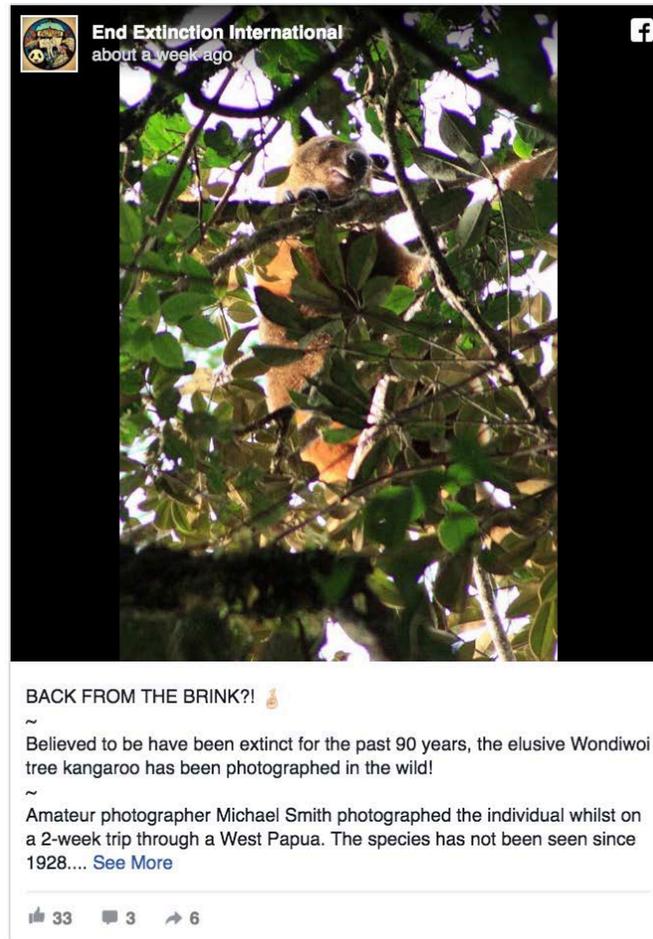
The last recorded sighting of the rare tree kangaroo was in 1928. If any of these critically endangered creatures remained after pressures from hunting, people believed that the population couldn't be more than 50 individuals.

"I was thinking to myself I have to be careful here and not fool myself, but I went through my mental checklist of their features and realized, 'Hang on, this has absolutely got to be the Wondiwoi tree kangaroo,'" Smith said. "I felt like Captain Ahab if he had got photos of Moby Dick."



The tree kangaroo is on a list of lost species that people at Global Wildlife Conservation (GWC) have been trying to track down recently. Since Smith's sighting, they have been hurrying to organize an expedition out to the area to verify that this animal really is the lost species.

"While we are encouraged by these images captured by Michael Smith, we are working to ensure that the appropriate conservation safeguards are in place for the species, and to verify through DNA sampling (with appropriate permits — which take time to secure) that it is indeed the lost species," Robin Moore, director of communications at GWC, told The Dodo.



The hopeful images were well worth the long trip for Smith.

"I felt relieved," he said. "I was starting to think I was going to have to go back home to my long-suffering and much more sensible wife and explain why I had been back to the Wondiwoi Mountains and not found anything."