

Press Communiqué

Assam-based primatologist flags conservation possibilities for Hoolock gibbon, Golden langur in International Primatological Society Conference in Malaysia

Guwahati, September 7: Assam-based senior primatologist Dr Dilip Chetry represented the state at the recently held International Primatological Society-Malaysian Primatological Society (IPS-MPS) Joint Meeting 2023 themed Primates And People: A new Horizon in Kuching, Malaysia.

He is also the head of the Primate Research and Conservation Division of region's leading research-oriented biodiversity conservation organisation Aaranyak (www.aaranyak.org). Over 600 participants from 60 countries attended the grand event and another 150 attended virtually during August 19-25.

Dr Chetry presented a paper under the title "Identification of Knowledge gap for Future Conservation of Western Hoolock Gibbon (*Hoolock hoolock*) in India" at the Gibbon Symposium addressing knowledge gaps and for saving the small apes; lessons from Research, Conservation, and Outreach Part 1. In a presentation to a group of scientists, primatologists, Gibbonologists attending the meeting, he discussed the conservation status and future conservation opportunities for western Hoolock gibbons in India.

During his session at Malaysia's Swinburne University's Global Primate Conservation Talk-Planet of the Primates : A night with the International Primatologists event, he talked on "Hoolock gibbon and its conservation in India" by highlighting the threats and successful conservation initiatives by Government of India and Government of Assam by declaring National Parks where the flagship species is the Hoolock gibbon. He also elaborated about Aaranyak's conservation efforts for this species.

Western Hoolock gibbon is only the ape of India and distributed to the seven northeastern states of India and restricted to Southern Bank of Brahmaputra -Debang river system. It is categorised as an endangered by IUCN and under the Indian (Wildlife) Protection Act 1972, western and eastern hoolock gibbons are listed on Schedule 1.

Dr Chetry also delivered a talk on 'Habitat Corridors of Golden langur (*Trachypithecus geei*) in Bongaigaon district of Assam, India' during a symposium on 'Impacts of Development on Primates: Gaps, Lesson Learnt, and Potential Solutions' during the same days-long event.

Golden langur, is also an endangered species of primate and is endemic to India and Bhutan. It's global distribution is limited to a small area between river Manas in the east, Sankosh in the west and the Brahmaputra in the south and Indo-Bhutan border in the north. Loss of natural habitats well as habitat fragmentation is the primary threats for golden langur in India.

Fragmented habitats resulting from habitat loss are supporting several small isolated populations of the species at present. Rebuilding of the lost connectivity between fragments can only secure the future of these populations. During 2022-2023, the study was carried out in the Bongaigaon district of Assam to identify the existing and potential corridors.

Data were generated based on field study, analysis of satellite images and from questionnaires. The result of the study identified 5 existing and 3 potential corridors in the district and records the death of three golden langurs (one adult male, and two adult females) while crossing the highway and the death of another two langurs (one adult male and one adult female) due to electrocution.

The study also has identified 3 strategic points where the development of a canopy bridge is an ardent need to ensure safe movement of golden langur across the highway. Thus, the study emphasizes on protection and rebuilding of all the corridors in the Golden langur habitats in the district for the long-term conservation of the species. Re:wild, an international organisation dedicated to conserving biodiversity, supported Dr Chetry's conservation awareness trip to Malaysia.

*Press statement issued by Dr Alolika Sinha, Publicity Secretary, Aaranyak.
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