

PRESS RELEASE

Assam, Arunachal Forest staff undergo capacity-building training to conserve the Hoolock gibbon

Guwahati, February 17: To address the conservation challenges and foster a conservation mindset, Aaranyak, a leading organisation dedicated to research, training, and conservation in Northeast India organised a series of specialised training programmes on Hoolock gibbon conservation in collaboration with Assam Forest Department. The initiative is supported by The Habitat Trust and IUCN Primate Specialist Group.

“The Western Hoolock Gibbon (*Hoolock hoolock*), often referred to as the "Ape of India" inhabits the seven northeastern states of India, primarily on the southern bank of the Brahmaputra River and east of the Debang River.”, Dr Dilip Chetry, head of Aaranyak’s Primate Research and Conservation Division, said.

“Unfortunately, poaching, habitat fragmentation, and encroachment pose significant threats to this endangered primate. Compounding these challenges is the limited awareness of Hoolock gibbon conservation strategies among different sectors of the public, including frontline forest staff.”, Dr Chetry further added.

The week-long residential course focused on equipping forest frontline staff with essential skills and knowledge for Hoolock gibbon conservation.

Key topics included were -- Biodiversity and conservation in Northeast India, Primate conservation with a special focus on the Hoolock gibbon, Gibbon census and population estimation techniques, Data collection, reporting, and habitat monitoring, Floristic studies and habitat restoration, Gibbon rescue and rehabilitation, GPS use in fieldwork, Legal orientation on wildlife laws and their application. Daily lectures were complemented by extensive field exercises, providing participants hands-on experience in conservation research methods.

The seven -day residential training programme on Hoolock gibbon conservation for the 2nd batch in 2025 and 9th batch in 2024-25 at Gibbon Conservation Centre, H.Gibbon Sanctuary, Mariani was conducted from 7th to 13th February.

A total of 20 Forest officials from Arunachal Pradesh and Assam attended the training programme. Out of these 20 trainees 14 were male and 6 female trainees.

Frontline forest staff from Doomdoma Forest Division, Digboi Forest Division, Dibrugarh Forest Division, Sivasagar Forest Division, Jorhat Forest Division, Mehao Wildlife Sanctuary and Kamlang Tiger reserve attended the training.

The inaugural session was held on February 7, chaired by Dr Dilip Chetry, a leading primatologist in India. Hiranya Borah, Beat Officer, Mariani range, Jorhat attended the inaugural session as well.

In the inaugural address, Dr Dilip Chetry welcomed all the trainees and explained the objectives of the seven -day training programme. He also gave an overview of the training and requested to exchange their service experiences with one another, maintain discipline throughout the training period and attend the training sessions and note down observations during field visits.

The training featured lectures and field exercises conducted by distinguished experts including -- Dr. I.C. Baruah from Assam Agricultural University, Ajoy Kumar Das, an Advocate, Gauhati High Court, Gunin Saikia, Former Deputy Conservator of Forest, Jiten Goswami, Former Forest Range Officer, Aaranyak experts -- Avisekh Sarkar, Akshay Kumar Upadhyaya, Nandita Medhi, Dr Pranjal Das, and Dr Dilip Chetry.

Dr. Dilip Chetry also chaired the convocation on February 13. He acknowledged the support of the Assam Forest Department, particularly the Jorhat Forest Division, and the local community for facilitating the programme.

The training concluded with the distribution of study materials, including a training manual, books on Hoolock gibbons, posters, participation certificates, and group photographs by.

Angsuman Bhuyan, Forest Range officer, Mariani Range emphasised the importance of applying the knowledge gained to protect habitats and conserve the Hoolock gibbon. He expressed his appreciation for Aaranyak's continued efforts in capacity building for Assam Forest Department staff, underscoring the critical role such initiatives play in the conservation of this endangered species. The training programme concluded with distribution of the study material like Training Manual, book on Hoolock gibbon, Posters, Certificate of Participation and Group photograph of the trainees.

*(For more information, please contact Dr. Dilip Chetry (9435043892/
dilip@aaranyak.org), Head, Primate Research and Conservation Division, Aaranyak*

***Press statement issued by Bijay Sankar Bora, Publicity Secretary, Aaranyak.
Contact No. 9476692003, Email ID: pr@aaranyak.org***