

## Report on the Himalayan Langur Project (HLP) Workshop

In late September of this year, the Himalayan Langur Project (HLP) proudly organized a series of informative workshops featuring HLP coordinator, Vishal Ahuja. The workshops took place on the 27th, 29th, and 30th of September in the picturesque locales of Khajjiar (Kalatop-Khajjiar Wildlife Sanctuary), Bharmour (Kugti Wildlife Sanctuary), and Bhandal (Gamgul Siyabehi Wildlife Sanctuary), respectively.

The audience comprised dedicated staff members, including forest rangers and forest guards, hailing from the wildlife division and the territorial division. Additionally, several village heads participated in this enlightening series of workshops.

The settings for these workshops varied, with Khajjiar and Bhandal taking place within the forest rest houses, while Bharmour saw its workshop conducted at the interpretation center.



HLP team in Bharmour. © P. Kritika.



Introduction of the organization and the project by Vishal. © P. Kritika.



Workshop conducted in Khajjiar. © P. Kritika.



**Vishal explaining the human animal negative interaction to Bhandal forest officers. © P. Kritika.**



**HLP team with the forest officers in Khajjiar. © P. Kritika.**

Vishal Ahuja kicked off each workshop by introducing the Himalayan Langur Project and the organization's comprehensive efforts spanning over 11 years. Attendees received an insightful overview of the threatened landscape, its diverse flora and fauna, and an important revelation regarding the local communities' heavy reliance on nearby degraded forest patches for essentials such as fuelwood and fodder. This highlighted the considerable pressure these patches face and the urgent need for restoration, crucial for both the livelihoods of the communities and the conservation of wildlife.

A pivotal outcome of the project was the taxonomic clarification of the species and the popularization of the name – The Chamba Sacred Langur, as the first-ever specimen was described in Chamba by R.I. Pocock. The distribution survey of *Semnopithecus ajax* was introduced, emphasizing the negative interactions

stemming from crop raiding. The project's focus on finding solutions to these issues and conducting outreach programs with local communities was elucidated. Vishal Ahuja elaborated on the extent of crop damage during a season, underlining the need for community awareness regarding the damage caused. Vishal then detailed the vegetation sampling phase in Kalatop-Khajjiar Wildlife Sanctuary, where 247 plant species were identified, including crucial native plant species preferred by langurs and other wildlife.

The suggestion to encourage the cultivation of these vital species in department nurseries was made, as the existing supply is limited. Moreover, the project's nursery setup was introduced, highlighting the necessity of producing more saplings for rewilding degraded and abandoned patches. The significance of mixed broad-leaved forests was emphasized, as they provide seasonal fruits, ensuring an increased and balanced food source for wildlife, thus reducing negative interactions to some extent.



Challenges encountered during the pilot plantation project were discussed, particularly the impact of uncontrolled grazing on natural regeneration. Stakeholder-driven initiatives and protective measures such as fencing were suggested to enhance the success of these efforts. The importance of public outreach was emphasized, encouraging engagement with forest departments, local communities, schools, and the value of past workshops.

In response to questions from the audience, Vishal addressed concerns related to apple orchards, emphasizing the need for

holistic effort for protection of orchards and conservation of langurs & habitats throughout the year due to the absence of territorial boundaries in wild animals' home ranges. The workshops concluded with gratitude expressed for the invaluable support from the forest department and a commitment to continued collaboration for the betterment of both the species and the communities.

**P. Kritika, Zoo Outreach Organisation / Wildlife Information Liaison Development Society, Coimbatore.**

## Celebrating Dr. Srinivasulu: Our Beloved Friend Named Best Teacher

Prof. C. Srinivasulu heads the Wildlife Biology and Taxonomy Lab at the Department of Zoology, Osmania University, and is the Director of the Centre for Biodiversity and Conservation Studies, OU. He has been associated with ZOO for over two decades and is also a research affiliate of ZOO. He has led many major research projects funded by DBT, DST, UGC-UKIERI, DST-UKIERI, and BCI. He has successfully guided 11 PhD scholars. He is the regional IUCN RedList expert on South Asian bats and has contributed to many RedList Assessments.



On 5th September on the occasion of Teacher's Day, he was bestowed the Telangana State Best Teacher Award by the Honorable Home Minister Shri. Md Mahmood Ali, Smt. P. Sabita Indra Reddy the Education Minister, Shri Naveen Mittal Commissioner Collegiate Education, Prof. Limbadri, Chairman Telangana State Council of Higher Education along with VC Osmania University Prof. D. Ravinder, and VC MG University Prof. Gopal Reddy.