

'Save Hoolock Gibbons, Save Nature'- An appeal from the students of Society for Education of the Intellectually Disabled, Bangladesh

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Background: Education and public awareness for threatened species conservation are dependent on the services of the members of a society. Disabled people are members of society and should be given every opportunity to participate in societal activities. So let them join us to serve Mother Nature. They can make a difference and even inspire others to make a difference. We also have a responsibility to inspire disabled people of all ages. Keeping this in mind, Wildlife Trust of Bangladesh (WTB) organised a unique "active-learning" programme for disabled students of all ages. The programme was entitled 'Save Hoolock Gibbons--Save Nature', an appeal from the students of Society for Education of the Intellectually Disabled, Bangladesh.

The workshop theme revolved around the Hoolock Gibbon (*Hoolock hoolock*). A Conservation Assessment Management Plan (CAMP) workshop assessed Hoolock Gibbon as Critically Endangered in Bangladesh and Endangered in India using the Regional and National Guidelines of the IUCN Red List Criteria and Categories.

Hoolock Gibbon is an attractive and funny so it can easily attract visitors. In the workshop we organised all participants got a copy of an educational packet featuring Hoolock Gibbon developed by Zoo Outreach Organization, India and a poster of Hoolock Gibbon prepared in Bangladesh, sponsored by USFWS.

Hoolock Gibbon is a tree-dwelling tailless monkey and one of the nine lesser apes of the world. It has long limbs with elongated index fingers. The male is black with bright, white brows that turn up at the end. The female is yellowish gray with a whitish eyebrow, a white ring around



The Society for Education of the Intellectually Disabled, Bangladesh and Wildlife Trust of Bangladesh Save Nature workshop

the eyes and muzzle, and black fringe on the fingers, toes and hands. Infants have grayish-white fur, which turns to black in juvenile stage. The black coat fades to yellowish gray with set of puberty in the female.

Hoolock Gibbons live in small family groups, each defending a particular territory to feed and sleep together. The family size is 2-5 consisting of a mating pair and 1-3 offspring. They defend their territories against intruders through regular loud morning calls (hoo-u, hoo-yu, hoo-koo-u, etc.).

The present estimated global population of hoolocks is about 3000 individuals. Of these Bangladesh has about 300, individuals today. In the early nineties, Bangladesh only had about 3000 Hoolock Gibbons but habitat destruction has led to this dramatic decline. Hoolock Gibbons are distributed in various states in India, with a current total population of more than 2600 individuals. There are Hoolock Gibbons of a different species occur in southern China and Myanmar and China

The fate of Hoolock Gibbon in Bangladesh depends on how best we can make our people aware of the importance of this threatened species. Hoolock could be an umbrella species of an ecosystem in which other species benefit when Hoolock Gibbon is protected. The people must work together to protect Hoolock Gibbon and nature.

The zoo is an ideal place for conservation education. With this in mind the Wildlife Trust of Bangladesh and Dhaka Zoo jointly organize education programmes in the zoo. Initially students were our primary target group. Then we thought that disabled children might also like to know about their country's wild animals. They turned out to be a very special audience.

Objective: The objective of the programme was to educate the participants about Hoolock Gibbon and other threatened species through learning methods such as games, songs and activities. We also aimed to

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spark enthusiasm among the disabled so that others would feel encouraged by thinking that if disabled people can take interest then why not themselves. Moreover, the disabled would become empowered to work for wildlife.

Activities of the workshop:

1. Introductions : Participants introduced themselves by telling their names. They also got a chance to express themselves as they wished. Prior to the workshop the WTB education team visited the school twice to become familiar with the students.

2. Workshop-theme and materials: The workshop theme was explained to all the participants who all got a Hoolock Gibbon packet and posters. WTB developed a unique and attractive poster - voice of disabled people. The agenda was explained so that the participants would fully understand the programme.

3. Activity - Hoolock Gibbons of Bangladesh: This activity was conducted to attract disabled students of all ages to the living world through such an appealing animal as Hoolock Gibbon. Participants learned about the species, the threats they face, and the importance of saving it.

4. Hoolocks in Song: A song was developed by Gawsia expressing love for Hoolock Gibbon which participants, teachers and parents all sang.

5. Environment and Biodiversity in art: An art competition entitled "Our Animal World and the Hoolock Gibbons" was arranged. Participants came up with their own colourful, creative ideas.

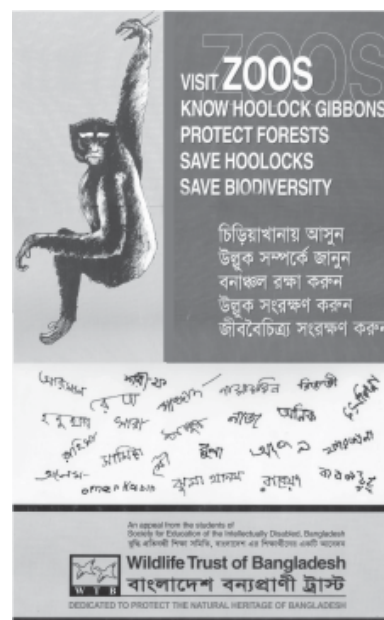
6. Pledge through Poster: WTB's poster was signed by the disabled students who appealed to all for the survival of Hoolock Gibbon. At the end of all the activities, the participants hung the poster in front of Hoolock



Hoolock Gibbon investigates the poster about zoos, Hoolocks and biodiversity, prepared by Wildlife Trust of Bangladesh.

cage and read their pledge at Valedictory.

7.Valedictory: Gifts were distributed to participants who engaged in an activity in which they rang bells to symbolise raising an alarm to let others know that the health of our ecosystems, represented by Hoolock Gibbon, is not doing so well.



Children "sounding alarm" by ringing bells as the Hoolock Gibbons do by their loud and shrill all "Hoo hoo hoo whoop whoop whoop".