

South Asian Primate News

South Asian Primate Network

A South Asian Primate Network has been initiated under the auspices of the IUCN SSC Primate Specialist Group and its Asian regional section of which Dr. Ardith Eudey is Vice Chair. The SAP Network was initiated by the Chair of PSG following the South Asian Primate CAMP workshop in which a very good number of primatologists from the region gathered and assessed all 46 taxa of South Asian Primates. The purpose of the network is be a sub-regional "arm" of the Asian section of PSG. The network has been set up under the auspices of Zoo Outreach Organisation which brings to the project its considerable experience in driving IUCN SSC networks as well as the very useful connections of the IUCN SSC Conservation Breeding Specialist Group and the IUCN SSC Reintroduction Specialist Group. Some proposed activities are to

1. Establish a data base of current primate biologists with their complete professional profile including their i) Educational background; ii) Publications (conservation) including Ph.D. thesis; iii) M.Sc. and Ph.D. students guided; iv) Field or Museum Studies conducted; v) Significant achievements; vi) Current projects; vii. Other useful information
2. Expand list of primate biologists by surveying universities, colleges, institutes, projects, NGO's, foresters, list serve, etc. for other interested researchers
3. Compile a Directory of primate biologists and distribute to network members as well as related agencies and institutions abroad; submit to web site manager
4. Using the South Asian Primate C.A.M.P. recommendations as a guide, publicize tasks and encourage members of the network to fill gaps
5. Bring out an occasional newsletter for South Asian primates (might be web based)
6. Organise field techniques training workshops after assessing needs of members
7. Organise taxonomy workshops after assessing needs of members
8. Organise workshop/meeting on confiscated, rescued primates and their disposition; training in reintroduction protocol for primates
9. Organise education workshops for members interested in learning to conduct educational programmes.
10. Organise distribution of South Asian Primate C.A.M.P. Summaries and other materials to policy makers, wildlife agencies, and the public through members of the primate network
11. Assist the PSG Vice Chair for Asia organize compilation, production and distribution of a South Asian Primate Action Plan.
12. Raise funds for field studies for threatened and Date Deficient species as per recommendation by the Funding Working Group, C.A.M.P. 2002, and for network projects.
13. Support the existing Indian primate list serve (run by Atul Gupta) and direct it to more meaningful interaction between members within South Asia.
14. Help support an upcoming South Asian primate web site by feeding material to put up
15. Cooperate with PRC's proposed workshop/conference/seminar/training projects/programs on Indian primatology with the idea of helping to integrate Indian activities with those of other South Asian countries.

16. Assist Douglas Brandon Jones with his field guide to SA Primates lending support from the network to contact members with queries and needs for the work.
17. Monitor surveys, discoveries, new information for updating CAMP data base
18. Lend support to national efforts, such as red list assessments for primates on a national level
19. Nurture the network, assisting members to find a regional identity
20. Provide technical support to S. Asian zoos linking them to expert advice from network members on the identity of their primates, avoiding hybrid breeding, help improve their signage, provide educational material, etc.

All South Asia primate biologists known to ZOO have been contacted. If you are a primate biologist, or know primate biologists who have not been contacted, please inform ZOO at zooeach@vsnl.com & zoocrew@vsnl.net

The 20th Congress of the International Primatological Society

The 20th Congress of the International Primatological Society was conducted in Torino, Italy, August 22-28, 2004 organised by the Department of Animal and Human Biology, Torino University, API (Associazione Primatologica Italiana: Italian Primatological Association) and EFP (European Federation for Primatology). A special "Conservation Day" was organised in the conference by the IUCN SSC Primate Specialist Group. All major topics of Primatology were discussed, emphasizing their interactions with other specialized branches of modern biology with special attention given to implementation of recent discoveries on primate welfare and conservation.

Several primatologists from South Asia attended the Congress and presented papers about their work, e.g. Arun Srivastav, Rajasthan, Jayantha Das and Rekha Medhi, Assam, Jenny Dela, Colombo, Sri Lanka. Sally Walker, Coimbatore, also attended representing the new South Asia network of Ardith Eudey's Asian regional group of the Primate Specialist Group. Several other primatologists from South Asia submitted papers but could not attend, e.g. Atul Gupta, Dehra Dun; Minesh Kumar Ghimire, Kathmandu, Nepal; M.M. Feeroz, Dhaka, Bangladesh. During the Congress Dr. xx Srivastava organised a small meeting of primatologists from low currency countries to discuss the difficulties inherent in attending such important meetings due to finance. There was much discussion of this topic also by conference organisers and other participants as efforts have been made to



address the problem but the obstacles to raising funds for all who should attend are formidable. Some suggestions were given to the officers of IPS for consideration in the next congress.

PHVA and Conservation Plan for Western Hoolock Gibbon (*Bunopithecus hoolock hoolock*)

The Western Hoolock Gibbon has a distribution in India, Bangladesh, Myanmar and China. It is the only ape species found in India, Bangladesh and Myanmar. It is found in a very few good forested habitats and many fragmented localities in South Asia; as such it may be the most vulnerable to habitat destruction among all the species found in South Asia. It is strictly a canopy dweller; they are monogamous, keeping a small group size, and requiring long-term parental care.

In the 2002 South Asian Primate C.A.M.P. workshop, participants from India and Bangladesh listed a total of 126 localities as home to Hoolock, 108 in NE India and 18 in Bangladesh, as stated in Das et al. 2003 and Molur et al. 2003. Although the total number of Hoolocks is 600-700, they are distributed in numbers ranging from a single individual to populations of about 25, with a very few of 30 or 40 in these 126 localities. The Hoolock's numbers and ubiquitousness in many parts of India and Bangladesh have created a false sense of security even in forest officials, who believe that the frequent occurrence of these animals is equivalent to safety for the species. Although there are a total of 126 locations and 97 subpopulations of Hoolock throughout India and Bangladesh, field biologists in the C.A.M.P. workshop reported that these locations were fragmented with continuous decline of 50% in 8 years,

Hoolock Gibbon is not safe as a species. Threats in the forests even where there are significant populations put these populations at risk. According to the CAMP Report, threats include selective logging, firewood and timber collection, jhumming, charcoal production, human settlement, roads, dams, powerlines, fragmentation, soil loss/erosion, deliberate fires, accidental mortality by trapping, unplanned tourism, habitat loss, and poor reproduction. Trade alone includes local, commercial and domestic trade for Hoolocks' blood, bones, fur, meat and phalanges which are eaten and also used as native medicine. There is also a live trade for zoos and pets which, although not extensive, could wipe out or cripple the reproductive potential of a population in a locality.

Moreover the habitat itself is not secure. Field biologists from Bangladesh and India who participated in the CAMP Workshop reported a decrease in area by >30% in the last 10 years and predicted a >30% decrease in the next 10 years, as a result of habitat loss and encroachment and decrease in the quality of habitat due to loss of fruiting trees, sleeping trees & increase in canopy gaps.

It is crucial to convey to the wildlife authorities in the central and state forest departments that ad hoc management cannot be relied upon to secure the continuance of the Hoolock Gibbon as a species. One method of demonstrating this fact is to conduct a population simulation exercise, or a population viability analysis (PVA). Mere numbers and statistics are not sufficient to bring about the required action, however. A participatory exercise such as has been developed by the Conservation Breeding

Specialist Group, in which foresters, wildlife officers, policy makers, field biologists and local people create a management scenario based on scientific principles will bring about the desired result.

Hoolock Gibbon PHVA to be organised in Dhaka. A Population and Habitat Viability Assessment PHVA has been scheduled for 14-17 February 2005 in Dhaka, Bangladesh. Official invitations are being posted and emailed 3rd week of October. The workshop has been initiated by the South Asian Primate Network of the IUCN SSC Primate Specialist Group PSG under the auspices of Zoo Outreach Organisation and CBSG, South Asia. The local organisers and hosts of the workshop is the Wildlife Trust of Bangladesh and the Environment and Forest Department of Bangladesh and their various collaborators. Primary funding for the PHVA is from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Department of Interior Great Ape Fund. Other donors are the Primate Action Fund, MMBF, various zoos and other conservation organisations which supported the South Asian Primate C.A.M.P. or the South Asian Primate Education Programme.

Primate Research Centre Vision 2025

The Primate Research Centre was formed as the Indo-US Primate Project was drawing to a close so that there would be no gap between the activities of this excellent initiative. Dr. S.M. Mohnot, P.I. of the Indo-US Primate Project is also the founder and driver of PRC. PRC is planning an International Workshop on "Primate Research in India: Vision 2025" to be held in 2005 in Jodhpur, India. According to Dr. Mohnot, India is a major primate resource country in the world although showing population decline, and has great primate potential. India's non-human primates-lorises, macaques, langurs and a lesser ape are uniquely important for their contribution to our knowledge of societies and their biological regulations as seen in the wild, and to bio-medical science. Primate studies have increasing relevance to the fate of man.

India was lagging behind the rest of the world in primate studies until 1994 when the Indo-US Primate Project (IUSPP) between the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and JNU University was launched and which continued until 2001. From July 2001 these efforts were taken over by the PRC with field centers at Guwahati, Mysore, Shimla and Kumbhalgarh and Jodhpur HQ. The proposed workshop calls for substantial inputs from Indian, U.S. scientists and scientists from the neighbouring countries especially those who have worked on South Asian species or have participated in the furtherance of primatology in India collaborators, consultants, scholars. PRC wishes to draw up a National Action Plan using deliberations of this International Workshop for Indian primates to develop a vision document 2025. It is envisaged that the National Action Plan for Indian Primates may support International Primate Plan and Asian Primate Plan to complement the global research spectrum and to facilitate compatibility.

PHVA for Golden Langur ?

Jihosuo Biswas, one of the students of Golden Langur has suggested that the species might also be suitable for a PHVA workshop. Jihosuo attended the Endangered Species

Management Training at the ITC Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust last spring and selected "Population Decline in the Golden Langur : Is it Time to run the PHVA" for his project for fulfillment of Diploma in the course. In his project Jihosuo described the plight of the Golden Langur and ran a simulation model using VORTEX.

Golden Langur (*Trachypithecus geei*) is known only on adjacent borders of India and Bhutan and no other locality or country. The seven recognised sub-populations consist of from about 50 up to 4000 individuals or an estimated 5000 individuals in both countries together. Forest destruction, leading to fragmentation and degradation of habitat for this species which, along with political unrest in India, account for its reported decline in numbers and in distribution. The South Asian Primate CAMP Workshop 2002 recommended that there should be a coordinated effort to manage all the small isolated populations so they can breed with other populations to maximize genetic diversity. The species was assessed as Endangered in the CAMP and is listed as Endangered in the 2004 IUCN Red List of Threatened Species.

In the former IUCN Policy Statement on Captive Breeding which was revised relatively recently, it was stated that management actions such as captive breeding should be undertaken while populations were still in thousands rather than waiting until the species is on its last legs, so to speak.

In this case, when compared to the Hoolock Gibbon, Golden Langur is in good shape ! But what if a PHVA workshop had been conducted for Hoolock Gibbon twenty years ago, when some forests still stood between the dozens of tiny isolated populations, and predicted what we know to be true today. In point of fact, the best use of a PHVA is probably as Biswas has envisioned it ... to be done while there is still time to act meaningfully ! Jihosuo has requested CBSG, South Asia to assist him in organising a PHVA and we will do so if he can get the Forest Department of Assam in India on board. Management of small populations should begin before they are too small to save, which may well be the case with Hoolock Gibbon, without very intensive man management indeed. Watch this page.

An overview of the book-Mohan pyare ka safed Dastavej

Anonymous

Mohan pyare ka safed Dastavej is a narrative in Hindi on the life of 'Mohan' the first white tiger to be captured live and put into captivity and later on who went on to become the progenitor of present white tiger population in zoos worldwide.

Author Jugnu Shardey a keen wild lifer and a veteran Hindi journalist has utilised all his creativity in writing this book which can be noted from the first page of the book itself.

Some of the important features of the book are:-
The author has addressed Mohan as the Ambassador for the Tiger species in general and has put before the readers, what contribution this animal has in protection of the ecosystem and overall biodiversity in general. The author has touched upon the current issues like conservation of forests, Project Tiger its success and failures, role of zoos and lastly the interdependence of forests, animals and mankind. He has through his narration has tried to draw the attention of the common masses and the policy makers for ensuring the longterm conservation of the Tigers and the Biodiversity of our country.

The language used is so simple that hardcore scientific materials like the studbook information, which I believe cannot be deciphered by a common man, has been narrated in such a way that even a small school kid can understand the pedigree details produced in the book and of course the total pedigree chart of Mohan and his descendants.

The illustrations used in the book and the overall layout is very eye catching, which I am sure will attract readers from all age classes. It is a must read book for all, even who do not have much command over the Hindi language.



This book has been published by M/s Rainbow Publishers and each copy is priced at Rs.100 (paperback) and Rs.200 for Hand bound. Interested readers can procure it directly from them by placing orders at rainbow_p@vsnl.net