

HOOLOCK GIBBON CONSERVATION IN BANGLADESH

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The Hoolock gibbon, Hoolock hoolock, is a globally threatened species and in Bangladesh it is critically endangered. At present, the entire national population is estimated to be only around 300 individuals. The species can thus be regarded as being in a crisis situation in Bangladesh and it needs an immediate conservation programme for its survival. This should include carefully planned management, protection of habitats, management of people and their activities, legislation and its enforcement and the training of manpower to implement key actions. Hoolock gibbons are restricted to very few viable forest habitats and are vulnerable to continuing habitat depletion. Throughout the species range habitats are fragmented and due to this fragmentation many hoolock populations are no doubt at significant risk. The small populations (<10 individuals) are on the verge of extinction, but even these could be protected using relatively limited resources and intensive public awareness campaigns. The prospects for some hoolock populations are better, since they occur in areas with better habitat quality. Measures to ensure that these habitats are not degraded further will ascertain their future. The following measures to safeguard remnant populations are recommended: 1) Declare the hoolock areas as protected areas; 2) promote in-situ conservation practices; 3) improve habitat through afforestation programmes in fragmented habitats; 4) develop translocation programmes so that lone hoolocks or the small hoolock groups could have a chance of survival; 5) formulate stricter laws and ensure their implementation; and 6) initiate country-wide hoolock conservation education programmes.

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