

## SAVING THE HOOLOCK GIBBONS OF BANGLADESH, PROTECTING FORESTS AND CONSERVING BIODIVERSITY THROUGH AWARENESS BUILDING

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There are about 300 hoolock gibbons in Bangladesh spread across 35 sites that are fragmented and unconnected in the northeast and southeast. Only two sites have greater than 30 individuals. The rest contain mostly two - five individuals and are deemed genetically doomed. All known populations are under threat from habitat destruction. Better dissemination of knowledge through awareness programmes, may help generate public support to conserve this species. Making governments accountable to conventions they have signed, such as the Convention on Biological Diversity, may stimulate them to take a more serious approach to wildlife conservation. The Wildlife Trust of Bangladesh (WTB) has had considerable success with its awareness campaigns that have become an important part of all its projects. Schools, colleges, universities, local governments, local people and indigenous people have become involved in WTB's activities, resulting in greater awareness and stewardship of forests and nature. WTB has provided training and equipment for Forest Department (FD) officials, local leaders, local conservationists etc. and hope that they may continue to be engaged in conservation activities. The Trust also engages the FD in habitat restoration through the planting of mixed species of trees in selected protected areas. The WTB group, in collaboration with Global Science Productions, has produced the first documentary on hoolock gibbons in Bangladesh to help increase awareness and leverage funds. WTB's researches have resulted in publications in peer-reviewed journals and have produced technical manuals (in English and Bengali) to help researchers, conservationists, and FD staff to better document ecological variables in hoolock gibbon habitats.

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