

HOOLOCK GIBBON CONSERVATION IN INDIA

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Over a number of years, dedicated efforts have been made at various levels for the conservation of the Hoolock gibbon, the sole representative of the apes in India. India has two species of gibbon, namely the western hoolock gibbon (*Hoolock hoolock*) and the eastern hoolock gibbon (*Hoolock leuconedys*). The northeast region supports the entire gibbon population in India, where their distribution is limited to the southern bank of the Dibang–Brahmaputra River system. *Hoolock hoolock* is distributed across the seven northeastern states of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Tripura, Meghalaya, Manipur, Nagaland and Mizoram, whereas *Hoolock leuconedys* occurs only in the state of Arunachal Pradesh. Rapid loss of habitat, habitat fragmentation and hunting are the major threats to the hoolock gibbon across its entire distribution in India. Although there have been sporadic studies on the distribution of the hoolock gibbon and other primates in northeast India, the Indo-US Primate Project gave a boost to the study and conservation of primates in general and the hoolock gibbon in particular in Northeast India. Accordingly, with the initiation of different activities like education, awareness, research, training and socio-economic development programmes, hoolock gibbon conservation has gained momentum in the country. With ongoing threats, however, it is critical to reinforce conservation efforts and strategies for the species in future to ensure the long-term conservation of hoolock gibbons and their habitats in India.

Keywords: hoolock gibbon, threats, conservation, India