

CONSERVATION STATUS OF GOLDEN LANGUR IN ASSAM, INDIA

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Golden langur (*Trachypithecus geei*) is endemic to adjacent Indo-Bhutan border between the rivers Sankosh, Manas and Brahmaputra. Its relatively small range, severe habitat loss and fragmentation in Indian side and small number have resulted in its classification as Endangered. After a gap of 12 years, we conducted detailed surveys to enumerate its population and demographic details in India in two phases, using modified line transects in conjunction with all count methods from May to June, 2008 and January to March, 2009. We observed 5,141 individuals in 565 troops from 13 different forests of differing protection status. The average troop size was 9.10 ± 4.86 (range: 2-55) and the overall sex ratio was 2.01 adult females for each adult male. Most of the troops were one-male bisexual (54.4%) and two-male bisexual (31.1%). Out of these, 910 individuals (117 troops) were recorded from small fragmented forests (n=9), constituting a southern population, and 4231 individuals (449 troops) were recorded from large, relatively contiguous forests (n=4) within Manas Biosphere Reserve, constituting a northern population. We found that percentage of immatures in northern population was higher (41.5%) than southern (29.9%) with fewer infants (4.8%) than juveniles (25%), indicating low recruitment rate and infant survival. Group size in all the forests in northern population was invariably larger (9.42) than southern population (7.7), possibly indicating a sink area effect due to peripheral loss and degradation of their habitat. Thus, habitat loss and degradation, many small populations and their relative isolation, low recruitment rate are the major threats.

Keywords: endemic, golden langur, fragmentation.