

Hoolock Gibbon

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Recently a pair of Gibbons from Assam were on display in Mysuru zoo



About Hoolock Gibbon

- The forests of north-east India support the highest diversity of primates in India, including the only apes found in the country, the western hoolock gibbon (*Hoolock hoolock*) and the eastern hoolock gibbon (*Hoolock leuconedys*).
- **The western hoolock gibbon:** It has a much wider range, as it is found in all the states of the north-east, restricted between the south of the Brahmaputra river and east of the Dibang river. **Outside India, it is found in eastern Bangladesh and north-west Myanmar.**
- **The eastern hoolock gibbon:** It inhabits specific pockets of Arunachal Pradesh and Assam in India, and southern China and north-east Myanmar.
- **IUCN Status:** The western hoolock is listed as **Endangered in the IUCN Red List** and the eastern hoolock is listed as **Vulnerable,**
- **Threat:** Both species' populations have been declining due to habitat destruction of various forms and hunting for meat.

Characteristics of the species:

- With **long and slender arms**, hoolock gibbons are **swift creatures, barely needing to step on the ground.** They swing from tree to tree in a mode of locomotion known as **Brachiation** and can brachiate at speeds up to 55 km/hr., covering up to six meters in just one swing.
- Males and females are of similar size, but can be

differentiated easily by the colouration of their dense hair.

- Males are black with a distinctive white brow, while females are copper-tan with dark brown hair on the sides of their face, and a clear central parting in the head hair. They form monogamous pairs that remain together for years, though mating outside the pair has been noticed in some individuals.
- Hoolocks are **famous for their emotive call** that echoes across long distances in the forest, and is used by individuals to attract mates.
- Females give birth to one offspring every 2-3 years, and it remains within the family group for 7-10 years.
- **Food system:** Their diet comprises **mainly of fruits**, but they sometimes also consume **leaves, shoots and flowers**.

Population and its protection:

- **Populations of western hoolock gibbons have declined by almost 90%** over the last 30 years, and it is now considered to be one of the most endangered 25 primate species in the world.
- **In India, it is listed on Schedule 1 of the Indian (Wildlife) Protection Act 1972.**
- Enhancing protection for the species, the Government of Assam upgraded the status of the **Hoollongapar Reserve Forest in the Jorhat District of Assam to a Gibbon Wildlife Sanctuary in 1997, making this the first Protected Area** ever named after a primate species.