

Mugger Crocodile (*Crocodylus palustris*)

There are 15 marsh crocodiles (3:12) in different ponds. In 1976, five (2:3) marsh crocodiles were brought from Bhutan Manas. They bred well in the beginning but subsequent from 2004 onwards breeding has been suspended due to space constraint. They laid 200 eggs so far of which 50 hatched and ten (1:9) survived in the last 32 years. Thirty Kg. of beef is feed to 15 crocodiles every 2 days.

In April 2007 Mr. B.P. Dahal from Phuentsholing, a Forest Range Officer who is now the in-charge of the centre took a training at Madras Crocodile Bank in all aspects of captive breeding and care of Gharials. The

centre has another permanent caretaker Mr. Ram Bahadur Chhetri and he has been working here for the past 25 years. Then centre provides accommodation for the caretaker and it has incubation chamber. On an average about 400-500 US\$ are spent per month to feed the Gharials and the marsh crocodiles. This does not include caretaker's salary.

There is no record about visitor number however 70-80 people visit every week. According to the caretaker the centre attracts about 800 people during the month of December and this will include both Bhutanese and Indian nationals. There is no fee for entry.

Death of Young Hoolock Gibbons

J. P. Sati*

The Hoolock Gibbon (*Hoolock hoolock*) which is also known the White-browed Gibbon, is dimorphic in coat colour and monogamous in nature. In India earlier they used to be found in good numbers throughout the northeastern part of India. Due to developmental activities in the past four decades, their habitat has declined and their population has also decreased drastically. Owing to the threat of their survival, the species has been listed under Endangered (EN) category of Red List of Threatened Species by IUCN (2007). The species has been placed under Schedule I of Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act 1972 (Amended up to 2003) by the Government of India for its protection. A survey and census of the Hoolock Gibbon in the West Garo Hills district of Meghalaya, India by Alfred and Sati in 1990.

Recently in the month of March-April after a gap of nearly 20 years the same area of Garo Hills, Meghalaya, India was surveyed to know the current status of those gibbons. On March 25th 2007, while surveying one of the localities called Misimagiri, I came to know through the villagers that the two young gibbons died due to electric shock. During conversation they said that, in the year of 1998 or so, when the electrification of the village came into operation the two young gibbons met an accident with naked electric lines, which are passing through their territory. They further narrated that, during locomotion on these wires, the gibbons suddenly got electric shock and were thrown down on the ground. The unconscious young gibbons were taken away by the village dogs. Villagers also observed the adults muttering throughout the day having become very much upset after this incident. Thereafter the adult pair was not seen in this territory.

This was a real shock to me because this was one of the three groups, whose ecology and behaviour I had studied extensively during the eighties. The villagers were also expressing their feelings as they were closely associated with their times together.

Suggestion:

Environmental experts, planners, managers and scientists working in this field should be consulted before proposing such projects in remote localities where such type of wildlife is found. The electric lines which are being laid through the gibbon habitat should either be rubber coated or laid underground. As the gibbons are arboreal in habit and travel preferably by brachiating during locomotion, the exposed electric lines should be avoided through the forest patches. In case it is unavoidable, the height of the lines should be increased so that it is beyond the reach of the gibbons. If the exposed lines are low in height and pass through the forest it may cause death of the gibbons again and again.

References

Alfred, J.R.B. and Sati, J.P. 1990. Survey and Census of the Hoolock Gibbon in west Garo Hills, NE India. *Primates*. 31(2): 299-306.

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