

# Highlights of the first meeting of the Association of Indian Primatologists

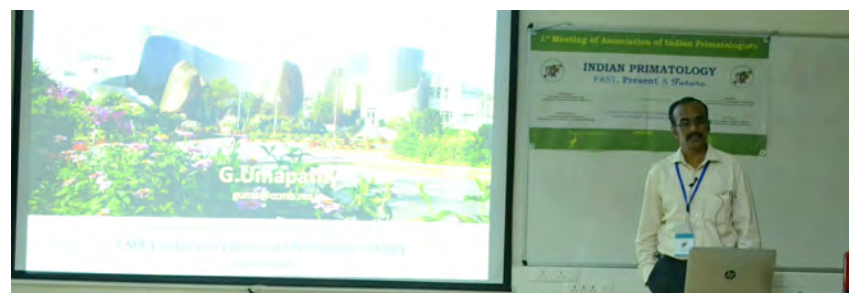
**Organisers** introduced the audience to the aims and objectives for the Association along with the origin story of the association. *Prof. Mewa Singh* from University of Mysore was thereafter invited to speak about the history of Indian Primatology and how the paradigms changed and research kept getting advanced in the country. He also gave advice on how the Association has to be managed and can be kept in motion. Thereafter the session with talks on specific themes was started.

## Ecology

The session had three 30 min talks by *Dr. Govindhaswamy Umapathy*, *Smitha Daniel* and *Dr. Krishna N. Balasubramaniam* and two 5 min speed talks by *S.R. Arun* and *M. Minsa*. *Dr. Umapathy* from The Centre for Cellular & Molecular Biology (CCMB) presented his long-term work on the fragmentation of lion-tailed macaque



**Prof. Mewa Singh** delivering a talk on the history of Indian primatology.



**Dr. G. Umapathy** presenting his long-term study on the fragmentation of lion-tailed macaque habitat.



**Smitha Daniel** familiarizing the audience with slender lorises and the challenges facing them.



**Dr. Krishna Balasubramaniam** presenting his work on the evolutionary understanding of primate sociality.

habitat in Western Ghats and use of molecular techniques to answer the challenges faced by the macaques. Smitha Daniel discussed the distribution of lorises in the Indian Sub-continent and the lack of scientific data available. She also illustrated on the anthropogenic pressures lorises are exposed to due to hunting for black magic by the local communities. The speed talk by S.R. Arjun was on one of the biodiversity hotspots in India, the Western Ghats, highlighting the presence of several primate

groups in the protected areas within Western Ghats. It was followed by M. Minsa's speed talk on the distribution of the primate species belonging to different conservation statuses in the Western Ghats. The last talk of the session by Dr. Krishna N. Balasubramaniam from the School of Veterinary medicine, University of California-Davis, focused on the evolutionary understanding of primate sociality in association with health, social structure and anthropogenic influences on primates through his range of research projects pertaining to the genus *Macaca* as a model species.



**Dr. Praveen Karanth talking on the history of the taxonomy of langurs in India and its current status.**



**Dr. Arijit Pal presenting his work on between-group encounters in Nicobar long-tailed macaque.**



**Dr. S.P. Arun presenting his lab's research work on visual cognition among bonnet macaques.**

## Evolution

The theme of the session was to present research on evolution in primates. The session comprised of 1 hour talk by *Dr. Praveen Karanth* from Centre for Ecological Sciences (CES), IISc, one 30 min talk by *Dr. S.P. Arun* from Department of Neuroscience, IISc, and two 15 talks by *Dr. Arijit Pal* from NIAS and *Kunal Arekar* from CES, IISc.

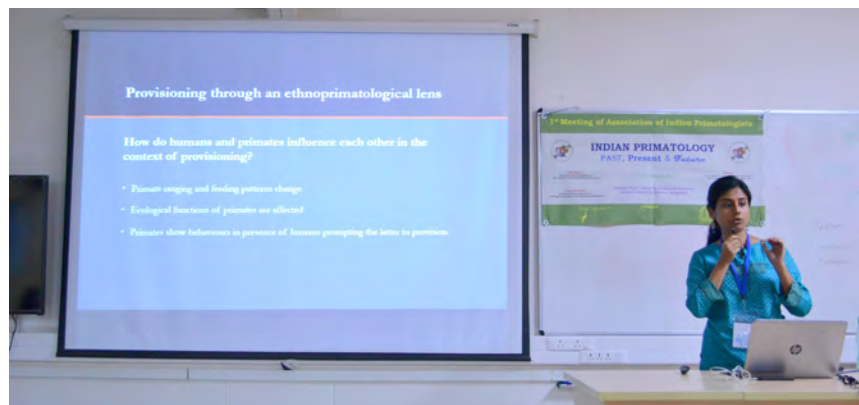
Dr. Karanth narrated the history of confusing

taxonomy in langurs of India and the approaches to resolve it. He also explained current molecular techniques and the way forward in the langur taxonomy.

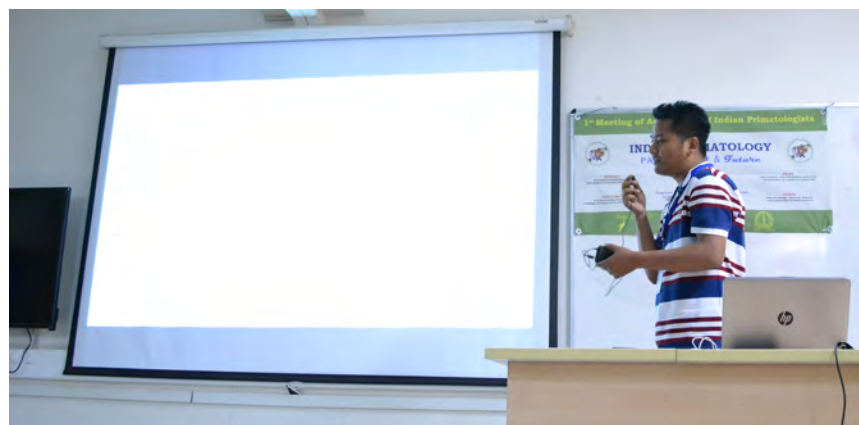
Dr. Arun presented the research work his lab is doing in understanding visual cognition among bonnet macaques using experimental setup. Dr. Pal elucidated his research on between-group encounter in Nicobar long-tailed macaque and various strategies employed by the groups when facing an encounter. Kunal talked about phylogeny and evolutionary origins of capped-golden langur lineage to check whether there was an ancient hybridization which lead to the origin.

## Behaviour

The theme was to present talks on the past, present and future research work on primate behaviour in India. The session comprised of two 30 min talks by *Dr. Malgorzata Arlet* from Adam Mickiewicz University, Poland; *Dr. Joseph Erinjery* from University of Tel Aviv, Israel; *Dr. Asmita Sengupta*, from ATREE, India, and *Taniya*



**Dr. Asmita Sengupta presenting her work on the dynamics of provisioning in macaques.**



**Bidyut Sarania presenting a speed talk on the acoustic characteristics of alarm call in Arunachal macaque.**

*Gill* from University of Delhi and two speed talks of 5 min each by *Bidyut Sarania* from CES, IISc and *Rahim Rashid Shaikh* from Aligarh Muslim University.

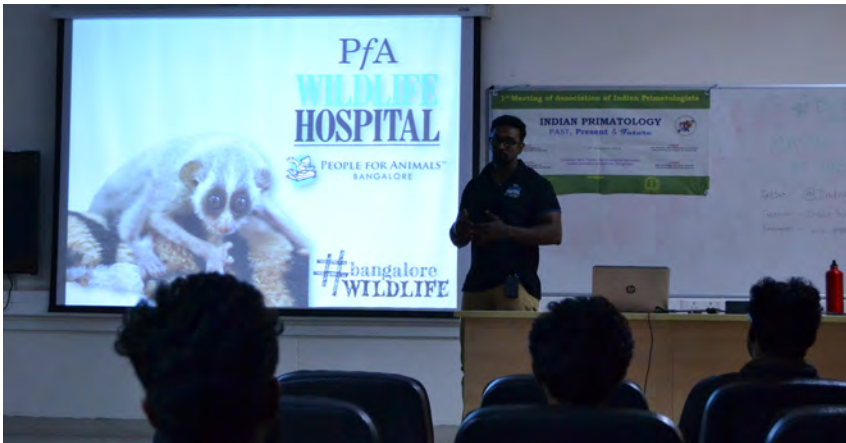
Dr. Arlet talked about the survival of infants in bonnet macaques dependent on female age, group size and anthropogenic activities at Thenmala, Kerala. Dr. Erinjery summarised the challenges faced in studying the spatial distribution of primates and solutions

available. Dr. Sengupta's talk focused on the dynamics of provisioning in the macaques using an ethnoprimateological approach. Taniya Gill presented her research on the behavioural flexibility on the rhesus macaques during human-macaque interaction in Shimla. Bidyut Sarania presented his speed talk on the acoustic characteristics of alarm call in the Arunachal macaque and Rahim Rashid Shaikh presented his work on human-





**Taniya Gill presenting her work on the behavioural flexibility of rhesus macaque during human-macaque interactions.**



**Dr. Karthik talking about the rescue, recovery, rehabilitation and release of primates carried out by People For Animals.**



**Dr. M.S. Ram talking about conservation breeding of primates in India.**



**Dr. Sanjay Molur talking about primate population trends and developments in the process of population assessment.**

influenced differences in behaviour of rhesus macaque in Aligarh, Uttar Pradesh.

## Conservation

The theme was to understand the narratives of primate conservation in India. The session was comprised of 1 hour talk by *Dr. Sanjay Molur* from Zoo Outreach Organisation (ZOO) and IUCN, talked about how the population trends of primates are ascertained by IUCN and current developments in the process of population assessment.

Two 30 mins talk were also presented in the session. First one was presented by *Dr. Karthik* from People for Animals (PFA) where he describes how PFA rescues primates, facilitates their recovery, rehabilitates them and releases them back in their natural habitat. The second talk was presented by *Dr. M.S. Ram* from CES, IISc, who addressed the scenario of conservation breeding in India with case study of lion-tailed macaque.

## Panel Discussion

A panel discussion took place on the first day.

Chaired by Mr. Partha Sarathi Mishra (PhD scholar, SACON) on behalf of AIP, the panel included Prof. Mewa Singh (University of Mysore), Dr. G. Umapathy (CCMB), Prof. Praveen Karanth (CES, IISc), Dr. Sanjay Molur (JoTT) and Mr. Mariswamy from Karnataka Forest Department. A few curated questions were initially posed to the panel and it was thrown open for discussion with participants. A variety of topics were discussed ranging from the future of Indian primatological research and human-monkey interaction to the issues surrounding funding and permissions in Indian wildlife research and the potential role of AIP in overcoming some of the challenges faced by the Indian Primatological community. Several ideas were mooted in the discussion, including the practical role AIP could play in developing a strong primatology network.

On the second day of the meeting, a discussion was held among the participants and delegates regarding the organizational structure and function of AIP. It was decided after much deliberation that the current informal setup will be followed

for at least two years. The second meeting is proposed to take place in February, 2021. The venue is yet to be decided, however it was decided that the meeting venue should rotate between cities as long as some faculty is ready to support it and student organizers available to conduct it. There were requests by several participants to conduct workshops while several others extended their expert support if workshops were to be conducted. The possibility of conducting a workshop arranged by AIP next year is being explored.

Regarding membership of AIP, a fee of ₹2000 for annual and ₹20000 for lifetime memberships respectively has been unanimously agreed upon. Some other functions that AIP is going to perform are: Compiling a bibliography of primate-related research and reports, listing job opening in primatological research, coordinating with forest department to provide training in primatology methods to forest personnel, publishing a curated methodology for conducting primate surveys and to encourage networking among Indian primatologists.

