

Project Update: June 2011

Mouling National Park, which forms the eastern part of the Dihang-Dibang Biosphere Reserve, is distributed over the East Siang, Upper Siang and West Siang districts of Arunachal Pradesh. The park was notified in 1986 with an area of 483 km². It is located between 94°42" to 95°51" E and 28°28"N to 28°43" N. The altitudinal range of the park varies from 550 m asl to 3064 m asl. As far as administrative set up of the park goes, there are two ranges namely – Jengging range and Ramsing range.

In the absence of any systematic report on primate community of the park, the study was initiated to know the primate diversity of park which is still unexplored; firstly by knowing the status of different primate species, secondly by identifying the threats to primates and other wildlife in the park and lastly by sharing the information with scientific communities and policy makers.

The first phase of the study was carried out in the Jengging area of the park. During the study we encountered only one group of macaques and that to from long distance. Before they could be identified, the macaques fled away very quickly.

Secondary information from the local people also indicates the presences of capped langur in the park. There is mosaic vegetation in the park ranging from tropical wet evergreen forest to sub-alpine forest. Some of the important tree species found during the study are *Altingia excels*, *Amoora walichii*, *Arctocapus heterophyllus*, *Altonia scholaris*, *Bischofia javanica*, *Bauhinia varieta*, *Castonopsis indica*, *Canarium strictum*, *Canarium resinifera*, *Castonopsis tribuloides*, *Dalbergia assamica*, *Duabanga grandiflora*, *Dillenia pentagyna*, *Ficus europhylla*, etc.

Again through our interaction with the local inhabitants of the area we came to know that the hunting is very popular among the local tribes and they generally hunt wildlife, including primates, for meat and fun. We also encountered a good number of wildlife trophies in the local households. These trophies were of wild boar, barking deer, musk deer, takin, baral, bear, leopard, leopard cat, macaques etc.

This winter, we will carry out the study in Ramsing area particularly and as well as some part of the Jengging area of the park.

The current phase of the study recorded the following threats:

1. Changing land use pattern:

Conversion of forest land for different agricultural purpose. This changing land use pattern has been found to emerge as a major threat to primate and other wildlife.

2. Hunting:

All the local communities traditionally hunt wild animals and hunting is thus another major threat to wildlife in the park. Survey team recorded several incidences of hunting of different wild animals by different local community.

3. Collection of Non Timber Forest products:

Extraction of non timber product like cane, bamboo and medicinal plants is a common practice among the local community.

4. Communication gap between the forest department and community:

Mouling National Park does not have well marked boundary. A large section of the local community are still at dark about the existence of the park and as well as its boundary.

They still think that these lands belong to their fore father and they have the right to hunt and to carry out activities.

Challenges and lessons learnt:

It was challenging to carry out the survey in the hilly terrain. Weather was another challenge. Moreover, the understaffed forest department failed to provide experience field staff to guide the survey team.

