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Primate census in Arunachal

- NGO, govt team up to work in Mouling National Park

A STAFF REPORTER

Jorhat, Feb. 6: Aranayak, Gibbon Conservation Centre, Jorhat and Upper Siang district forest office, are conducting an exercise to identify different primate species and their numbers at Mouling National Park, which is spread over Upper Siang district and parts of East Siang and West Siang districts of Arunachal Pradesh.

The three organisations have also joined hands to conduct a series of awareness programmes to preserve the different species of primates, three of which have been so far identified as endangered in the park.

Mouling National Park, notified in 1986, is the second national park in Arunachal Pradesh next to Namdapha National Park, which was notified in 1972.

It is the home of red panda, musk deer, takin, goral, snow leopard, black panther, tragopon and numerous other rare and endangered species.

The park is commonly called the state's cradle of biodiversity. Primatologist Dilip Chetry, head of the primate wing of Aranayak and executive director of Gibbon Conservation Centre, said given the hunting activities on the fringes of the 483-square km national park, it was necessary to conduct a series of wildlife awareness measures, two of which have been conducted by the district forest offices at Upper Siang and East Siang last month.

"For the first time the primate conservation programme was launched in 2011 by Aaranyak — a society for biodiversity conservation in Northeast — in collaboration with Gibbon Conservation Centre and Arunachal Pradesh forest department. As part of this programme, a primate survey is being carried out in the park and the team led by me have found the existence of three threatened species of primates out of 10 species found in Arunachal Pradesh, namely capped langur, Assamese macaque and slow loris," Chetry said.

"At present, a census is being conducted of the primates and should be over by February end," he added.

Chetry said students and teachers of Royal Siang Academy Jengging, Government H.S. School, Jengging, heads of all department of Jengging circle and the residents participated in the campaign.

The campaign highlighted the different primate species found in the park and their threat of extinction because of hunting in the fringes of the park.

An appeal was made to the student community to come forward for the conservation of primates in particular and biodiversity in general in this locality.

Chetry said shortage of staff is also preventing the park, which covers a geographical area equivalent to three districts, from keeping a check on poachers. This was also pointed out by Upper Siang district forest officer H.B. Abo during the awareness camp.

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