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A hoolock gibbon family in the Gibbon Wildlife Sanctuary (GWS) in Mariani. Photo: Post photo

Post Bureau, Guwahati (Nov 10): The five-day conservation training programme held in collaboration with the University of Washington at the Gibbon Conservation Centre in Gibbon Wildlife Sanctuary (GWS) in Mariani concluded on Friday with a resolution that the less-charismatic hoolock gibbon needs to be included as a flagship species for its better conservation.

"Hoolock gibbons are treedwellers and hence their presence is a clear indicator of healthy forests and ecosystem. However, since they are less appealing, they do not get importance. Including them as a flagship species or umbrella species would certainly help their conservation," said Dilip Chetry, executive director the *Gibbon Conservation Centre*.

The programme that began on of November 5 aimed to cover the basics of conservation, outlining the complex relationship between environmental health and global health. It included field studies and addressed topics on management and conservation strategies, primate behaviour and ecology, the human-environment interface and translational research.

Fifteen trainees from the Assam University, Gauhati University, Dibrugarh University, Birjora College, Digboi College and Nakachari College participated in the training.

"We have taught them proper field study methods, population assessment in case of tiger conservation, vulture conservation, avian influenza, human-primate interaction, emerging infectious disease, conservation medicine and biodiversity of Assam," Chetry said.

The field exercises focused on field observation techniques, use of global positioning system (GPS), radio telemetry, traps, cameras and behavioural sampling methods, line-transect sampling and biological sample collection techniques.

"Such trainings are very vital for conservation and one should take this training as the beginning of conservation of biodiversity," said professor Randall C Kyes from the University of Washington.

Prof PC Bhattacharjee and IC Baruah of the Assam Agricultural University, Udayan Borthakur of Aaranyak, Sivasagar forest division assistant conservator of forest Cunin Saikia and NK Malakar of Jorhat division were the resource persons in the training. Chetry said that early next year another awareness programme would be held.

The Gibbon Wildlife Sanctuary with seven species of primates, including western hoolock gibbon (Hoolock hoolock), is one of the highest primate diverse areas in the country. Western hoolock gibbon is one of the two apes found in Assam and is distributed only in southern bank of the mighty Brahmaputra.



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