

MISCELLANEOUS NOTES

I.—RIVERS AS BARRIERS TO THE DISTRIBUTION OF GIBBONS.

There is a curious fact about the Gibbon (*Hylobates hoolock*) which I do not think has been placed on record. It is their apparent aversion to water in any large quantities. My observation shows that they seem to dislike having to swim in order to cross a river of any size, or, of course, it may be that it is a dislike of coming to earth from the trees.

In four years experience in an area of the Sadiya Frontier Tract in Assam, bounded on the south by the Lohit River and by the Brahmaputra after the latter's confluence with the Lohit, on the west by the Subansini River, and on the east by the Dibang River, I never came across a single one of these animals. This area is quite suitable for Gibbons to inhabit, as it consists mostly of thick rain forest and, if they had been present, I feel certain I would either have seen or heard them, for I toured there very extensively every year. Immediately south of this area, i.e. on the south bank of the Lohit-Brahmaputra it is possible to see and hear them almost every day in the jungle at Rangdoi and Kenua and particularly on the Rongdoi-Laikoaghat road. Hence this Gibbon is present on the south bank of the Lohit-Brahmaputra System; but not on the north bank! It is apparent that these rivers form a complete barrier to the spread of this animal into the area mentioned.

It is possible that it is also absent east of the Dibang; but I am not sure of this and cannot say anything about the area west of the Subansiri. The tract of country where I found them absent is very large. It extends for over a hundred miles along the Himalayan (Abor) foothills and has an average width of about twelve miles or more. These foothills to the north of this tract are also quite suitable; but here again the animal is absent. The ordinary common reddish-brown monkey is common both inside this area and also on the south of the Lohit-Brahmaputra outside it.

DIBRUGARH,
LAKHIMPUR DISTRICT,
ASSAM, January 9, 1941.

R. E. PARSONS,
Indian Police,
F.R.E.S.

[Rivers when they are wide enough definitely form natural barriers to certain groups of monkeys. Macaques readily take to water, but gibbons and leaf monkeys (*Semnopithecus*) appear to have an aversion to water and are usually baulked by a river. Nevertheless both gibbons and leaf monkeys can swim. Mr. McCann tells us that when on the Chindwin Expedition, he put a baby gibbon on a raft to prevent it becoming a nuisance, but it deliberately jumped into the river and swam ashore.—Eds.]



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