

Golden langur – distribution confusion

I refer to the item published in *Oryx* (25, 124). The golden langur *Presbytis geei* is found in Bhutan and India's Assam state only. So the Indo-Bhutan or Assam-Bhutan boundary implies the same area. The area in Assam was believed to be in the vicinity of the Bhutan border only (Gee, 1964; Mukherjee, 1978) until Choudhury (1989) collected reports from Bhairab Pahar and Kabaitari Tilla, about 40 and 60 km south, respectively, of the known range. The group located by Saikia *et al.* (1990) is west of Bhairab Pahar and is about 50 km south of the known distribution area, and not 100 km as stated (Figure 1). The sighting in Nepal (Varley, 1985) needs confirmation and further survey. This may be a stray or isolated

case. The possibility of a mistaken identification of a race of *P. entellus* also cannot be ruled out.

It may be mentioned here that until the 1970s the habitat in the new localities was contiguous with the known northern range and the langurs used to move freely between these areas.

References

Choudhury, A.U. 1989. *Primates of Assam: Their Distribution, Habitat and Status*. Ph.D. thesis, Gauhati University.
 Gee, E.P. 1964. *The Wild Life of India*. Collins, London.
 Mukherjee, R.P. 1978. Further observations of the golden langur with a note on the capped langur of Assam, India. *Proceedings Wildlife Workshop*, Zoological Survey of India.

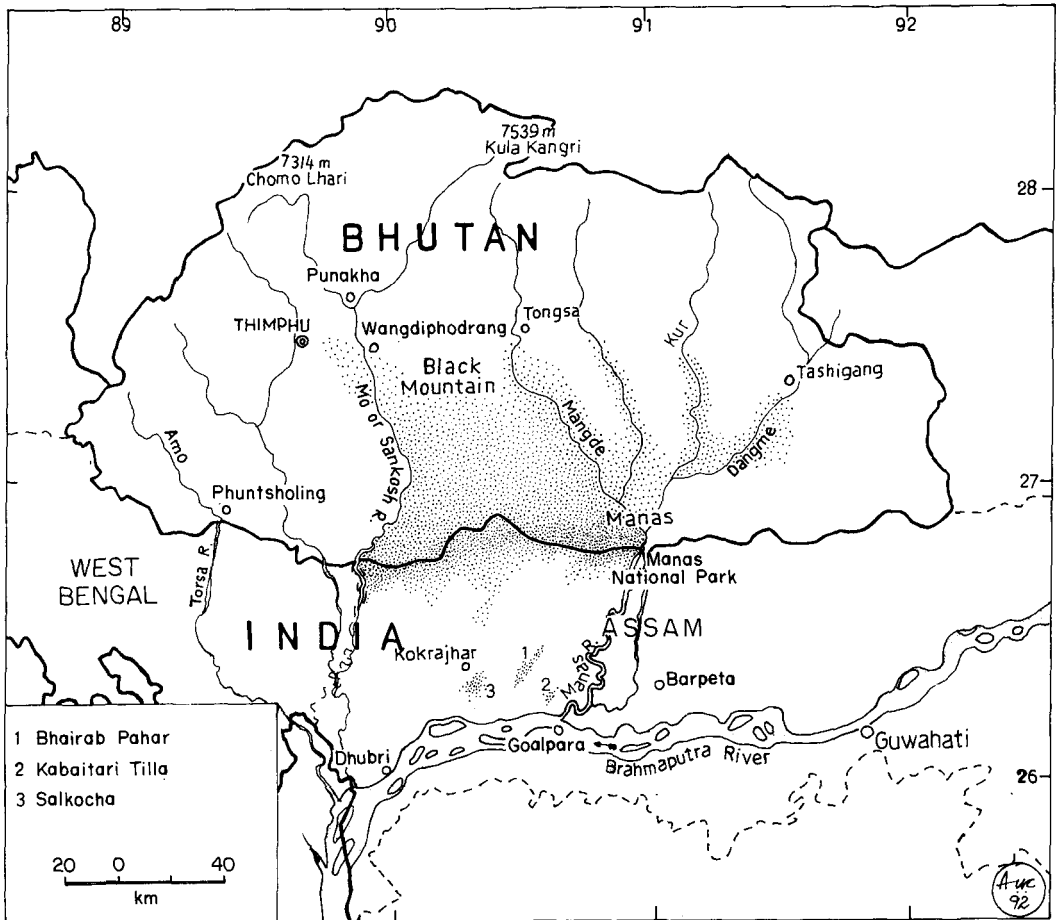


Figure 1. Distribution of the golden langur in Bhutan and India. This is also its world distribution.

- Saikia, P., Raj, M., Deka, J. and Bhattacharjee, P.C. 1990. New golden langur records. *Oryx*, **24**, 194.
- Varley, H. 1985. A rare sighting of the golden langur. *Oryx*, **19**, 196.

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Chek Lap Kok – how important is it?

I write regarding David Dudgeon's letter about Chek Lap Kok (*Oryx*, **26**, 53), site for Hong Kong's proposed new airport. I led teams of professional biologists and field assistants in a 7-month comparative study of Chek Lap Kok and nearby islands during 1990–1991. The island was about 3 sq km and about 20 per cent marshland. The two mangrove swamps, albeit small, were excellent indeed, containing a *Bruguiera* now reduced to extreme rarity this far north.

All mangroves in China are tiny patches. The only two that compare in size are at Mai Po, Hong Kong, and Deng Zhai Kong, Hainan Dao. It is said that no mangrove at all remains in Guangdong or Guanxi Provinces except that at Deep Bay, adjacent to Mai Po.

Not one square centimetre of all South China is free from human impact. Chek Lap Kok, however, supported an amazing diversity of animals – at least three times more non-flying vertebrate species than are known from any other South China Sea island of comparable size. Dudgeon implies that our tally of 32 amphibians, reptiles and non-flying mammals was wrong. Voucher specimens for all 30 reptiles and amphibians are in the Museum of Comparative Zoology at Harvard and both native mammals are in Peabody Museum, Yale. Chek Lap Kok was an amazing place.

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David Dudgeon responds:

Firstly, I did not intend to dispute the count of 32 amphibians, reptiles and non-flying mammals. The original article in *Oryx* (**25**, 192) did not refer to reptiles and amphibians but to ter-

restrial vertebrates. Most of the vertebrates on the islands are birds and these are largely species that are widely distributed in the Territory. Secondly, the Chek Lap Kok mangrove stands are small, and are not the only (nor the largest) stands in the area (Lantau etc.) that contain *Bruguiera*. They could not be described accurately as 'excellent mangrove swamps'. Your assertion that Chek Lap Kok supports at least three times more non-flying vertebrate species than are known from any other South China Sea island of comparable size does not surprise me because of, (a) the proximity to Lantau (cf. island biogeography theory), and (b) the relatively large collecting effort undertaken on Chek Lap Kok compared with other islands in the South China Sea. Once equivalent effort has been put into the other islands we will be in a better position to assess their relative conservation value.

Unlike Lazell, I do not regard Chek Lap Kok as being especially important in the Hong Kong or South China context. There are other sites within the territory that are under threat of development, which are much more diverse biologically. With the exception of its role as habitat for *Philautus romeri*, I believe that Chek Lap Kok has less conservation value than Sha Lo Tung, Luk Keng and other sites scheduled for development.

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To collect or not to collect – a conservation issue?

From their letters (*Oryx*, **26**, 52–53 and 119–121), it would appear that Dr R. Hutterer, Mr W. F. Ansell and Dr W. R. P. Bourne have either not read my earlier letter (*Oryx*, **26**, 52) properly, or else have totally failed to comprehend the point I was trying to make.

While, of course, I accept Mr Ansell's truisms that 'the way to conserve wild animals is to ensure that there is a viable population in a viable habitat' and that 'wildlife conservation requires knowledge of the species occurring and their biology', I strongly dispute his contention that 'collection of study specimens is