

Traditional practices make Bengal slow loris Endangered in southeast of Bangladesh

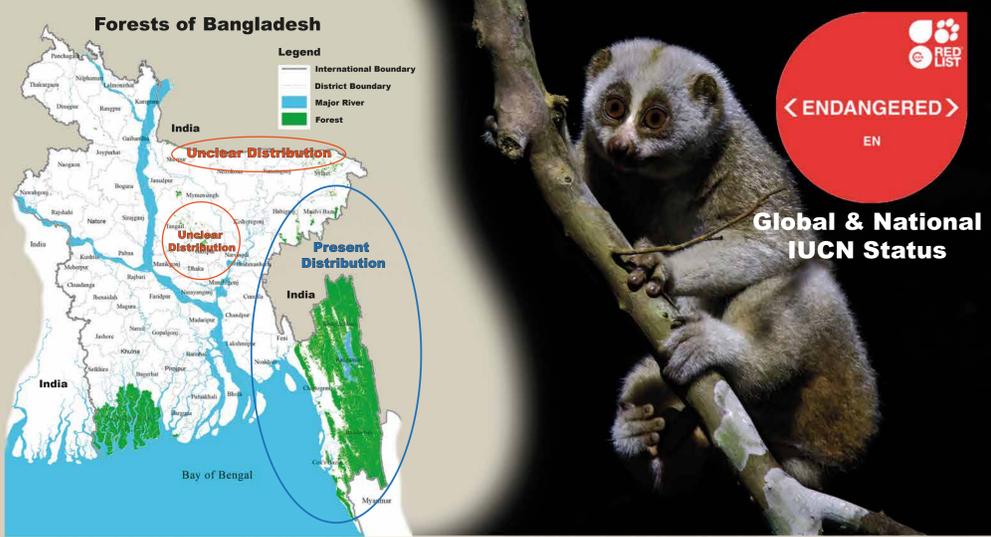
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Background



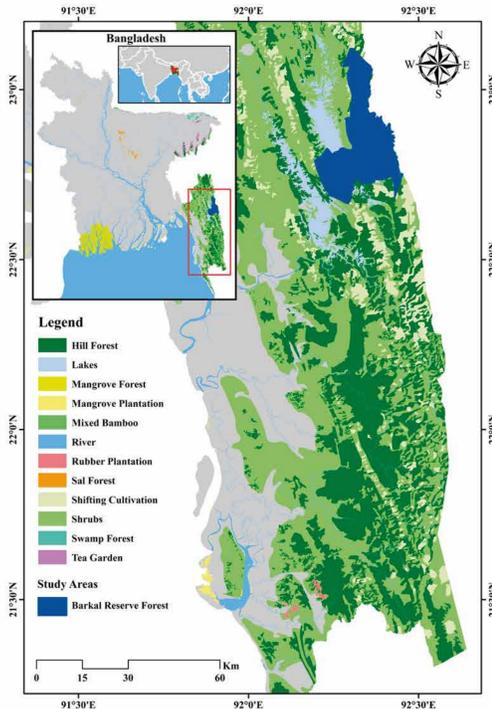
- Bengal slow loris (*Nycticebus bengalensis*) is the only nocturnal primate found in Bangladesh distributed in the eastern forest patches of the country.
- Once lorises were also found in the northern and north-central part and Khan (1987) suggested that they extirpated from these Sal forests over last three decades.
- Few lorises were rescued from northern border areas (Nekaris et al. 2020) and single individual was sighted at northcentral Madhupur forest by Ahmed and Rupom (2021) suggested their presence in the area.
- **According to IUCN (2015) More than 50% population declined over last 20 years because of massive habitat loss, hunting and poaching.**
- The information of human-loris interaction, traditional medicinal use, whether economical and cultural practices affecting loris population are scanty.

Objectives

- 1 To assess the local people's attitudes towards Bengal slow loris.
- 2 To evaluate the human-loris interaction and traditional uses of Bengal slow loris.
- 3 To develop management recommendations of lorises in the landscape.

Study area

- **Study site:** 5 unions, under Rangamati District, Chattogram Hill Tracts.
- Chakma & Marma indigenous community, Bengali people live along with the forest area.
- Most forest patches in the southeast are fragmented and have been cleared for commercial teak plantations initiated at British colonial period (Khan 2015).
- Jhum cultivation is the main occupation of the people responsible for forest destruction.
- Topography: hilly and ranging from 60m to 700m elevations above sea level.
- Threatened and unique wildlife such as *Elephas maximus*, *Ursus thibetanus*, *Panthera pardus*, *Neofelis nebulosi*, *Hoolock hoolock*, *Trachypithecus phayrei* etc. found in this area.



Methods

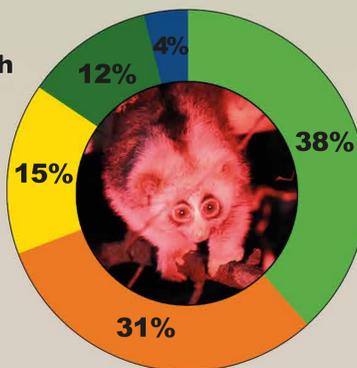
Questionnaire Survey: 27 (Oct 2022)

Focus group discussion (07)

Key informant interviews (15)

Traditional medicine doctors', local hunters, sellers, and traders (05)

Location of Respondent



Ethnicity of Respondent

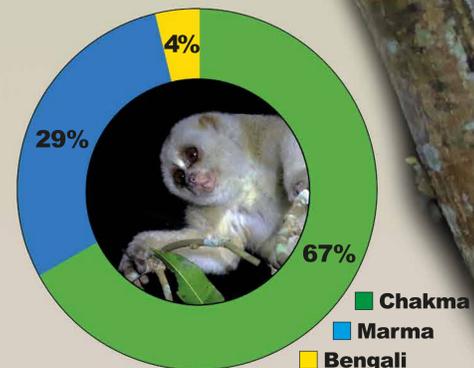
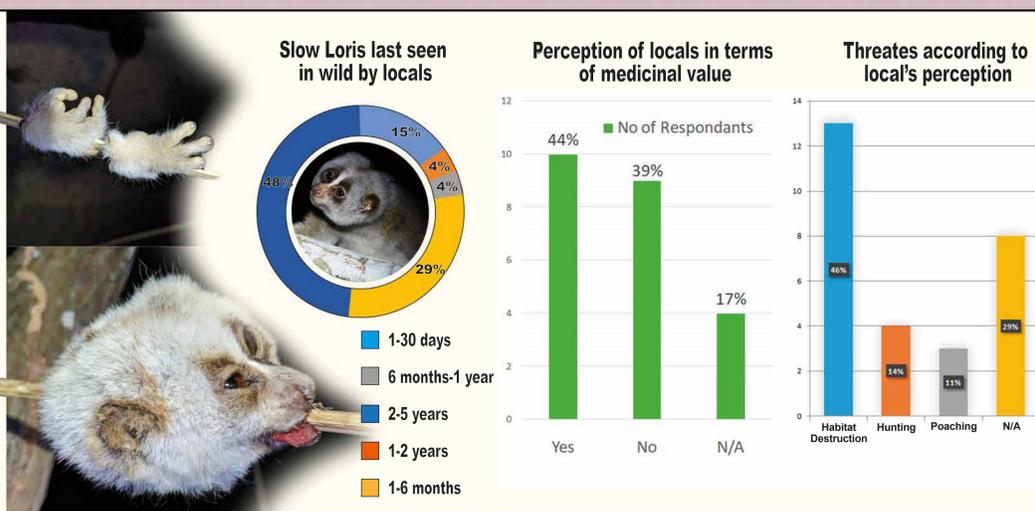


Figure: Location & Ethnicity of locals interviewed during field survey

Result

- Indigenous people hunt lorises for consumption and make traditional medicines using their body parts.
- They believe, lorises can prevent fever, headache, stomach problems, and breathing problems, as well as reduce pregnancy pain.
- Talismans made of fur and muscle is considered effective against pain and ward off ghosts.
- Medicinal value and poachers demand created a high market value (\$20-\$450 USD) of loris.
- 12% of respondents stated that they have hunted and consumed loris, 7% admitted to keeping them as pets, and 11% traded loris at least once.
- According to locals, lorises are extirpated from several patches due to massive hunting.
- Chakma community address them Tiger monkeys ("Bandar bagh") because they believe that lorises attack juvenile monkeys at night to feed on their blood.
- Lorises around the houses of the Marma community are considered as sinister.



Discussion

- Bengal slow loris is well recognized to all indigenous people because of food value, medicinal use, pet trade, sinister and myth.
- The consumption rate of loris and other wildlife decreased because of diminution of their abundance in the wild.
- But the demand of loris is increasing among the poachers.
- Traditional medicinal practitioners reported that the demand of their medicine decreased and people are shifting towards modern drugs.
- Massive habitat destruction for Jhum cultivation, illegal logging and hunting are threatening the lorises in long term survival.
- Lack of knowledge about the importance of forest, wildlife, nature and wildlife laws of indigenous people exacerbating the scenario.
- Specialized nocturnal survey for population estimation, and habitat assessment is required for formulating conservation management plan.

Recommendations

- Long term awareness programs and involving locals in conservation activities.
- Conservation education & outreach activities are carrying needs to coexist indigenous people with nature.
- Local people needs to be appraised about the importance and role of loris in forest regeneration and maintenance.
- Alternative livelihoods and protein sources are required.
- Proper implementation & monitoring of laws & acts against illegal poaching and logging.

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