

SOME FIELD OBSERVATIONS ON THE HABITS OF THE CAPPED LANGUR AND THE BARKING DEER IN THE GARO HILLS, ASSAM

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I—INTRODUCTION

During January-February, 1957, when the writer was engaged in field work around Rongrengiri in the Garo Hills, Assam, some hitherto unrecorded habits of the Capped Langur, *Presbytis pileatus pileatus* (Blyth), and the Barking Deer, *Muntiacus muntjak vaginalis* (Boddaert) were observed by him. They are described below.

II—THE CAPPED LANGUR

The only good account of the habits of this langur was given by McCann (1933, p. 626) which was utilized by Pocock (1939, p. 123). The following observations, although differing in details from those of McCann, are not meant to contradict them, because his account relates to the animals in the Naga Hills which may belong to the race *P. pileatus durga* Wroughton.

The capped langur was very common around Rongrengiri. The young ones observed were quite grown up, with perfect adult coloration. They may have been born in autumn as is the case with some other species of the genus, such as *P. geei* Khajuria. More than one adult males were collected from a single troop. The number of individuals composing a troop may vary from about six to about a dozen.

Once the writer with some friends and a good-sized well-fed pariah dog followed a large troop in a thick forest. On noticing the intruders the animals bounded through the forest uttering their usual barks. When, however, two individuals were shot down and the troop was further pursued, an adult male suddenly started descending to the lower branches; and, despite the continuous yelling of the dog and the presence of two armed men some thirty metres away, it jumped to the ground. In so

doing it fractured its femur and had limped only a few metres when it was overtaken by the dog. The fight which ensued was interesting to watch as the langur even with its fractured femur was more than a match for the dog which was so fiercely bitten that it had to run for its life many times. By continuously encouraging the dog, the fight was, however, continued for about fifteen minutes and was then ended by shooting down the langur. The anecdote shows that, although avoiding human beings, the langur, at least the adult male, is by no means a coward or unduly shy animal. Like many other members of the monkey tribe, it may try to escape from the persistent danger by coming down to the ground and hiding itself in the undergrowth (*cf.* McCann *loc. cit.*).

III—THE BARKING DEER

The barking deer was the most common hoofed mammal of the area. The writer was greatly impressed by the gallantry of two adult males whose behaviour is recorded below.

One night at about 9-30 P.M., an adult male was spotted with the light of an electric torch. On being pursued, it entered a thick patch of forest and started barking which it continued even when fully aware of the writer's presence only about five metres away. When a nearer approach was attempted, it produced a heavy thumping sound by striking its front hoofs on the ground and moved a few metres away. It continued barking and each time the writer moved closer, it produced the same thumping sound and shifted by only a few metres to a new position. The animal did not mind a distance of 4 to 5 metres from the intruder. The chase was given up after about ten minutes.

On another occasion at dusk, an adult male at once hurried to an open spot from where a shot had been fired at a bird and where the writer had made some movements to pick up the bird. It was feeding on leaves dropped by a troop of the rhesus monkey some 50 metres away but had remained unnoticed. The writer could see it coming very inquisitively but because of some trees in between, it did not spot him until it was not more than 6 metres away. It then at once stood motionless and attentive with its neck stretched forward and downward and did not move even when the gun was pointed at it and kept so for a minute or so. It was then reluctantly shot down.

Since the animals, because of continuous poaching by the local people and frequent use of firearms by the writer's party for about a month, were quite scared, their behaviour as given above appears interesting. The boldness of these males does not appear to be due to the rutting season, which seemed to have passed, as a female supposed to have been killed by a leopard carried a well developed foetus and because all the animals observed were met with singly.

IV—REFERENCES

- McCANN, C. 1933. Observations on some of the Indian langurs. *J. Bombay nat. Hist. Soc.*, Bombay, 36, pp. 618-628, 2 pls.
- POCOCK, R. I. 1939. *Fauna Brit. India, Mammalia*, 1, pp. xxxiii+463, 31 pls., 1 map.—London (Taylor and Francis).