



Distribution of Nepal Gray Langur (*Semnopithecus schistaceus*): A case study at Thokal (Shivegarh) of erstwhile district Doda of Jammu and Kashmir.

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ABSTRACT

Grey Langur or Hanuman Langurs the most widespread langur of Indian subcontinent is group of old world monkeys constituting entirely of genus *Semnopithecus*. These are large and fairly terrestrial inhabiting forest, open lightly woody habitat and urban areas of Indian subcontinent. Most species are found in moderate altitude, whereas Nepal gray langur and Kashmir langur is found up to 4000 to 4500m. The present study is case study regarding the distribution of Nepal grey langur in erstwhile district Doda which is located in middle Himalayan chain of North West Himalaya.

Key words: Grey Langur, India, Himalaya, Jammu & Kashmir.

INTRODUCTION

India is a country with rich biodiversity, having 15 species and 39 sub species of non-human primates, distributed all over from Himalayan temperate forests in the north to the tropical forest in the south (Mir *et al*; 2015). Langurs are important group of mammals and are viewed as occupying important position in food chain.

Amongst the langurs, grey langurs are the most wide spread langurs of the Indian subcontinent. They are a group of old world monkeys constituting entirely of the genus *Semnopithecus*. All taxa had traditionally been placed in a single species *Semnopithecus entellus*. Groove 2001 recommended that several distinctive former subspecies should be given species status so that seven species are recognized. (Grove 2005) on the basis of genetic evidence suggests that Nilgiri Langur and purple faced langur which usually are placed in the genus *Trachypethicus* actually belongs to *Semnopithecus*.

The northern plain grey langur is a species of primate in the family Ercopitheidae. It is found in the lowlands north of the Godavari and

Krishna rivers and Ganga. It is thought to be introduced to Western Bangladesh by Hindu Pilgrims on the bank of Jalangi river. Its natural habitat are tropical and sub tropical dry forest shrub land. It is threatened by habitat loss (Mitra's *et al*; 2008).

The Himalyan Gray Langur is distributed from central Nepal to Tibet into area of Bhutan, India and Pakistan. They are present in temperate region and live upto an elevation of 4000m, and their preferred habitat is Coniferous and broadleaf forest, but in general they show flexibility in their habitat and are even found in human dominated area. Nepal gray langur were considered a subspecies of the Northern plain gray langur. They along with seven other langur species are now considered to be separate species of same genus (Sathya Kumar *et al* 2019) used molecular study and morphological data to support the treatment of Nepal gray langur as its own species with no sub species. Nepal gray langurs are larger than most other gray langur species. They have brownish gray body with a black face. The hair framing the face is long and stark white and distant from body.

The demarcation between the head and the body is one morphological feature that makes it different from Northern Plain Langurs. Hand forelimbs tend to be light dark brown or black and bellies and chest tend to be light grey or white. They have long powerful pointed tail and fingers that are used to help move about in trees. This species of langur have tail pointed forward while Southern population tend to carry their tail pointed to the ground.

OBSERVATION AND DISCUSSION



Fig- *Semnopithecus schistaceus*

The present troop of Nepal grey langur (*Semnopithecus schistaceus*), reported from Thokal (Shivegarh) the site being on way from Doda to Jammu on national highway (NH 244B). It is approximately 125 km from Jammu with an altitude of 1520 m and at 33°10'-North to 75°32' E Longitude. This place is approximately 9km from Batote. The troop comprises of 42 members which can be seen around the national highway at this site. This troop being mobile, is observed to move to nearby villages for feeding purpose. Grey langurs are folivores and shows variation in food consumption and food choice depending upon the habitat types and seasons. The reported troop feeds on the leaves, fruits, maize and other cereals grown in that area. Moreover there is temple at the site where this troop is present and also feed on the food items people feed them. They are shy to make it difficult to capture them in lense. They tend to run instead of walk. They are also found to run and walk intermittently.

Such species of langur is not earlier reported in erstwhile district Doda, But Neeraj Sharma and Muzaffer (2017) reported the endangered Kashmir grey langur (*S. ajax*) in Bhandarwah of Jammu & Kashmir and reported 142 individuals in 10 troops up to 3250 m altitude are present. The Kashmir grey langur was also reported by Khaleel 2018. He studied the distribution, ecology and habitat in Dachigam National Park of J&K. This study establishes baseline information for study of distribution, habitat use and feeding ecology of *S. schistaceus* across different habitat and land uses in erstwhile district Doda.

Conflict of Interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest.

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