



India's Only Ape Species: The Hoolock Gibbon

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Why in News?

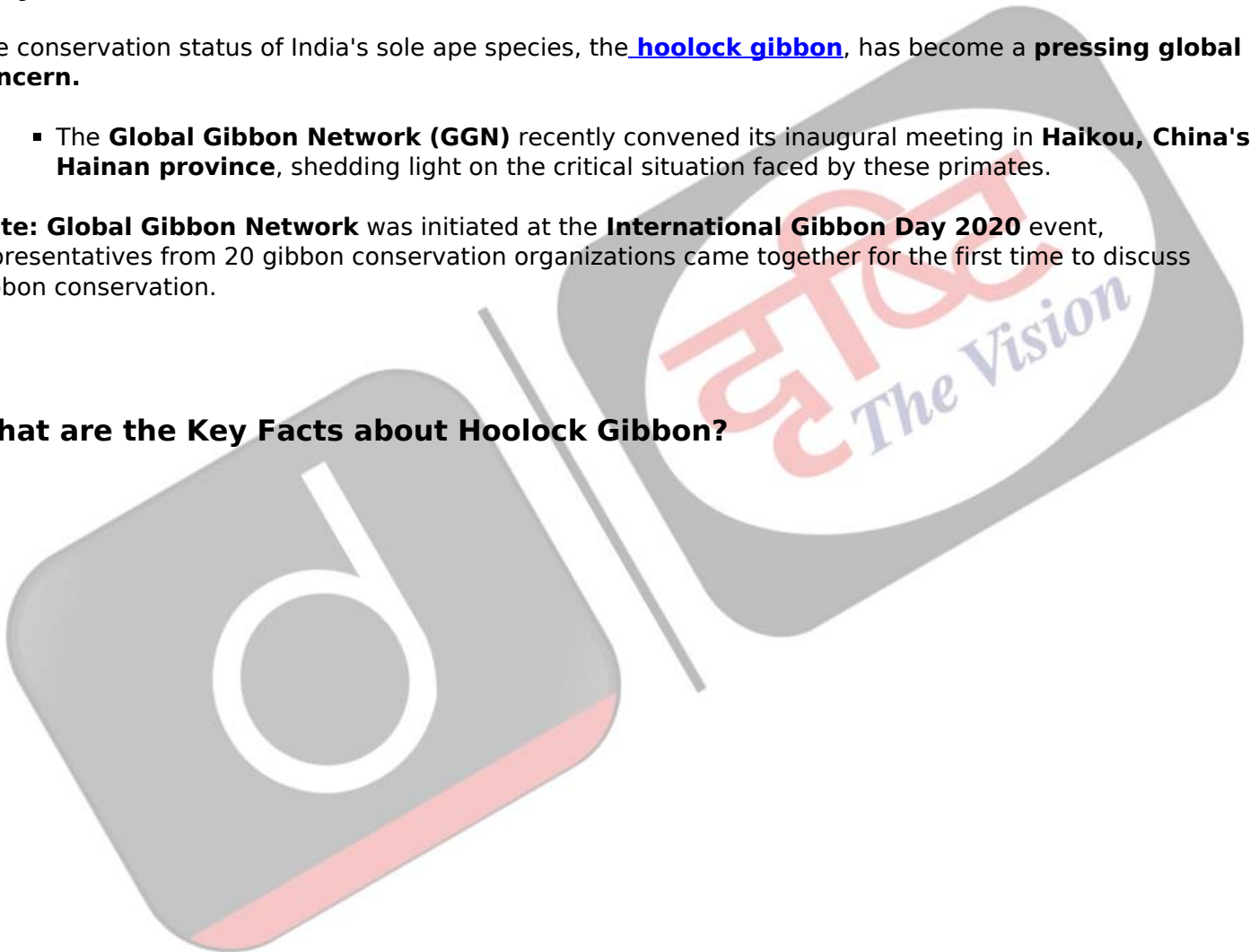
The conservation status of India's sole ape species, the [hoolock gibbon](#), has become a **pressing global concern**.

- The **Global Gibbon Network (GGN)** recently convened its inaugural meeting in **Haikou, China's Hainan province**, shedding light on the critical situation faced by these primates.

Note: Global Gibbon Network was initiated at the **International Gibbon Day 2020** event, representatives from 20 gibbon conservation organizations came together for the first time to discuss gibbon conservation.

What are the Key Facts about Hoolock Gibbon?

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▪ **About:**

- Gibbons, known as the **smallest and fastest of all apes**, inhabit tropical and subtropical forests in Southeast Asia.
 - They have **high intelligence, distinct personalities**, and strong family bonds similar to other apes.
- They represent **one of the 20 gibbon species found worldwide**.

▪ **Population and Habitat:**

- The current population of hoolock gibbons is estimated to be around **12,000** individuals.
- They are found in forested areas of **Northeast India, Bangladesh, Myanmar and Southern China**.

▪ **Gibbon Species in India:**

- **Two distinct hoolock gibbon species** are found in India's northeastern region: the **eastern hoolock gibbon** (*Hoolock leuconedys*) and the **western hoolock gibbon** (*Hoolock hoolock*).
- A recent study by the **Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology (CCMB)** in Hyderabad analyzed the genetics of these gibbons.
 - The study revealed that there is actually **only one species of gibbon in India**, debunking the previous belief of separate eastern and western species based on coat color.
 - The genetic analysis showed that the populations previously thought to be **eastern and western hoolock gibbons diverged approximately 1.48 million years ago**.
 - The study also estimated that **gibbons diverged from a common ancestor around 8.38 million years ago**.

▪ **Threats:**

- All 20 gibbon species, including hoolock gibbons, are at a **high risk of extinction** due to conservation challenges.
- Gibbon populations and their habitats have significantly declined over the past

century, **leaving small populations restricted to tropical rainforests.**

- In India, the primary threat to hoolock gibbons is the **loss of their natural habitat** caused by deforestation for infrastructure projects.

▪ **Conservation Status:**

- **International Union for Conservation of Nature's Red List:**

- Western Hoolock Gibbon: **Endangered**
- Eastern Hoolock Gibbon: **Vulnerable.**

- Also, both the species are listed on **Schedule 1 of the Indian (Wildlife) Protection Act 1972.**

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Questions (PYQs)

Q. Consider the following pairs: (2010)

	Protected area	Well-known for
1.	Bhiterkanika, Orissa	Salt Water Crocodile
2.	Desert National Park, Rajasthan	Great Indian Bustard
3.	Eravikulam, Kerala	Hoolock Gibbon

Which of the pairs given above is/are correctly matched?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 1 and 2 only
- (c) 2 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

Ans: (b)

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