

Declaration of "Aghanashini Lion-tailed Macaque Conservation Reserve"

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The existence of population of lion-tailed macaque with about six to ten groups in the forests of Sirsi-Honnavaara was known from the earlier surveys by Karanth and Bhat (Karanth, 1985; Bhat, 1982). However, during the later study in 2000, revealed that there are about 650 lion-tailed macaques in 32 groups found in the Sirsi – Honnavara region (Kumara and Singh, 2004). During the same study period, we have found that severe decline of the lion-tailed macaques from Brahmagiri Wildlife Sanctuary as well in surrounding reserved forests. Further surveys in Kudremukh NP, Someshwara WLS, and Mookambika WLS, conducted during 2007, with the support from Vijay Ranjan Singh, DFO revealed second largest population which is a part of Kudremukh NP-Someshwara WLS with 24 groups in the Western Ghats of Karnataka (Kumara and Singh, 2008). Later surveys in Talakavari WLS, Pushpagiri WLS, and Sharavathi WLS, with the support from Rufford Small Grants, revealed more than 50% decline in lion-tailed macaques' population in all these parks (Kumara, 2007; Kumara and Sinha, 2009).

A detailed survey along with Vijay Mohan Raj, DFO and Mr K. Santhosh, with the financial support from Karnataka Forest Department, Rufford Small Grants, Primate Action Fund (Conservation International) and Primate Conservation Inc was carried out in 2008. This study confirmed the results of our earlier survey of largest LTM population in this region (Kumara and Singh, 2008) which formed the basis to identify the area as a potential conservation reserve for the lion-tailed macaque. A plan was submitted to Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (Wildlife) in 2008 and also presented to Western Ghats Task Force Committee. It was considered as one of the priority issues by the Western Ghats Task Force Committee during the meeting in 2008 - 09. We have continued to carry out studies on various taxa and conservation related issues of lion-tailed macaques with the help of Karnataka Forest Department and Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund-Small Grants in this region while pursuing with officials to form a lion-tailed macaque Conservation

Reserve for the region adding little more sensitive forests along Aghanashini River and other important fauna and flora of the region to strengthen the fact. In this regard boundary was re-marked with the technical support by Balachandra Hegade and anew proposal was prepared. Manoj Kumar, Deputy Conservator of Forests submitted the proposal to the State Govt. Efforts was made to pursue with the state Wildlife Advisory Board. A GO has been passed to notify an area of 299.52 sq km as "Aghanashini Lion-tailed macaque Conservation Reserve" on 13/06/2011.

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