

New primate discovered



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Drishana Kalita 22 April 2016 8929 views

A [group](#) of wildlife photographers and biologists from [North East India](#) have reported discovering of a new species of primate to [India](#), the White Cheeked Macaque, in [Arunachal](#) Pradesh!

[Arunachal](#) Pradesh, lying in the Eastern Himalaya biodiversity hotspot, finds itself on the global [map](#) of latest discoveries, with the report of this new species of primate. The White-cheeked Macaque (*Macaca leucogenys*) was first spotted at the Anjaw district, lying in the Eastern corner [Arunachal](#) Pradesh.

This astounding discovery has been made by a team of biologists and wildlife photographers comprising of Dr. [Ranjan](#) Kumar [Das](#), Udayan Borthakur and Dr. Dilip Chetry. The team, accompanied by professional bird guide Binanda Hatibarua was on a birdwatching trip to the easternmost district of [India](#) in March 2015, when they had this sighting. On the basis of photographs of a [group](#) of macaque taken during the trip, it has been confirmed to be the White-cheeked Macaque. The White-cheeked Macaque itself is a species new to science, first reported by Dr. Li Cheng and his [group](#) from the Modog in South-eastern Tibet in China in 2015. The species has been discovered on the basis of photographic records and differs considerably from all potential sympatric macaque species, such [as](#) Rhesus Macaque, [Arunachal](#) Macaque, Tibetan macaque and [Assamese](#) macaque. It exhibits a suite of pelage characteristics including relatively uniform dorsal hair pattern, hairy ventral pelage, relative hairless short tail, prominent pale to white side- and chin-whiskers creating a white cheek and round facial appearance, [dark](#) facial skin on the muzzle, long and thick hair on its neck, and round rather than arrow-shaped male genitalia.

Dr. [Ranjan](#) Kumar [Das](#), renowned bird expert from the region and Associate Professor in the Department of Geography, [Tinsukia](#) College was able to get one of the first few photographs of this species during

the trip. He commented, "I am truly excited to be a part of this discovery and to contribute to the understanding of the species through my photography work."

Dr. Dilip Chetry, primatologist and the Head of Primatology Division at [Aaranyak](#) stated, "On the basis of our observations, the photographs and experts' comments, we have come to the conclusion that the macaques we observed and photographed in Anjaw District of [Arunachal](#) Pradesh is White-cheeked Macaque".

Udayan Borthakur, well-known [wildlife](#) photographer and Head of [Wildlife](#) Genetics Division at [Aaranyak](#) explained that, "Finding of this new macaque species enhances the prospect of biodiversity conservation in the region and gives thrust on more field studies, research and conservation initiatives."

He also added that this discovery demonstrates how wildlife photographers can contribute to the knowledge base of species distributions, which is vital in determining conservation priorities in the region. He expressed his determination to undertake proper scientific studies on this species in the near future.



Drishana Kalita

BY DRISHANA KALITA

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