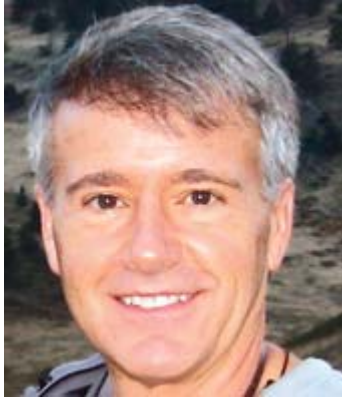


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Gibbon sanctuary to host experts - University of Washington selects primate hub for its uniqueness

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Professor Randall C. Kyes.
Telegraph picture

Jorhat, Jan. 9: The University of Washington is organising a five-day international-level field course on conservation biology at Gibbon Wildlife Sanctuary from February 1 under a collaborative programme.

India is among the 20 countries selected by the university for holding such training programmes on an annual basis.

The training, to have field exercises along with lectures, will be held in collaboration with the Gibbon conservation centre, established within the sanctuary in 2004, Aranyak, an NGO involved in wildlife conservation, and the Assam forest department.

The Gibbon conservation centre was set up to carry out research on hollock gibbons, the only lesser ape found in India.

The executive director of the centre, Dilip Chetry, said the University of Washington had chosen the sanctuary for conducting the training programme for its "uniqueness" in terms of biodiversity and conservation efforts.

He said the sanctuary was the only forest of its size (20 square km) in the country to host seven species of primates. It also provides easy sighting of a variety of wildlife species.

Chetry, a researcher himself, said an MoU for conducting the programme was recently signed between the Gibbon conservation centre and University of Washington.

Professor Randall C. Kyes, head of the Centre for Global Field Study, a core scientist of the National Primates Research Centre (both branches of Washington University) and the president of the American Society of Primatologists, will be main instructor for the course that will cover a group of about 20 wildlife lovers, he added. The trainee group will comprise college teachers, research fellows and NGO members.

Professor P.C. Bhattacharjee of the department of zoology, Gauhati University, will be one of the instructors.

Chetry said the course provides an introduction to the disciplines of conservation biology and global health with respect to the human-environment interface. It is intended to provide participants with an initial understanding of the basic principles of conservation biology and experience with the methods and techniques used in field research.

The field exercises will focus on field observation techniques and equipment and technology, like use of GPS, radio telemetry, camera trapping. Behavioural sampling methods and biological sample collection techniques will also be demonstrated.

The director said training would close with an outreach community programme, aimed at educating local schoolchildren on the importance of conservation.

Kyes said his university had undertaken a global initiative to generate awareness among the upcoming generation about conservation in view of the crisis-like situation emerging globally because of depletion of forests.

Kyes, who had visited the sanctuary last year said it could be termed as "paradise of primates" across the world, as inspite of being a tiny forest, it has lot of biodiversity.

