

## Siamang (*Hylobates syndactylus*): A New Mammal Recorded for Thailand

Distinctive sounds come out from the evergreen rain forest. It is “siamang”, a gibbon which has not previously been recorded in Thailand.

The Siamang is the largest gibbon of the genus *Hylobates*. It is found in Peninsular Malaysia and in Sumatra, Indonesia (CHIVERS, 1974). The animal is easily identified by its large size and all black pelage. When it calls, the air-sack from the throat puffs out to make a loud booming sound (CHIVERS, 1974; HAIMOFF, 1981). This animal was suspected to occur in the southern-most part of Thailand by LEKAGUL & MCNEELY (1977, P. 307), but there has been no actual sighting before now.

A group of birdwatchers from the Bird Conservation Society of Thailand conducted a trip to Hala-Bala Wildlife Sanctuary in Amphur Waeng, Narathiwat Province, during 14–23 October 1996. On 17 October, at about 0900 h while we were birdwatching along a road in the sanctuary, we heard a noisy call of a mammal immediately identified (by UT) as a duet call of a group of Siamangs (*Hylobates syndactylus*). The Siamang called from a lower hill of Khao Ba Tu Ta Mong which was about 1.5–2 km from us. They called for about 20 minutes, then stopped. No Siamangs were seen. The next day (18 October), we recruited a guide who knew most of the trails in this forest to take us to see the siamang. At 1020 h, a group of Siamang started calling. Unfortunately, they called from the other side of the hill and stopped before we could find the way to them. On 21 October 1996, at 1115 h while we were birdwatching along the same road, on the left side of Khlong Ai Ka Ding about 3 km before Khao Thong Substation, we heard the Siamangs duet again and the sound was quite close to us. At 1130 h we saw two large black gibbons slowly swinging on a big tree about 200 meters from us. We observed them with 8x32 and 10x40 binoculars and a 30x telescope. We could see the throat air sacks inflate when they were calling. They called for a least 40 minutes before they swung back to the hill and disappeared. These locations are at approximately 101°41'–48' E, 5°48'–49' N. This is the first confirmed record of Siamang (*Hylobates syndactylus*) in Thailand. We would like to coin a Thai name for the siamang—ชะนีดำใหญ่ (*chaneé dum yai*)—or large black gibbon, in English.

The Siamang has been seen regularly by local people who know this forest. They call this large black gibbon with the air-sack as “*ar-may*”. They believe that this animal is very dangerous to people, especially when they walk alone in the forest. They say *armay* would charge and bite any single man in the forest.

In this forest, we also found a good population of Agile Gibbon (*Hylobates agilis*), which is another rare gibbon species found in Thailand (MARSHALL, 1981). MARSHALL (1981) also found the Agile Gibbon in Waeng District, but failed to penetrate far enough south to hear the Siamang.

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