



# Silvery Gibbon Fact Sheet

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**SCIENTIFIC NAME:** *Hylobates moloch*

**OTHER NAMES:** Javan Gibbon, Owa Jawa

**IUCN STATUS CATEGORY:** Endangered (IUCN Red List 2010)

**HABITAT:** Silvery gibbons are arboreal and live in primary and secondary tropical rainforest, from sea level up to 1500m above sea level.

**GEOGRAPHICAL SPREAD:** The Silvery Gibbon is found only on the island of Java, Indonesia (circled in map). Previously Silvery Gibbon habitat extended throughout the whole of the West Java and Banten provinces, through the southern half of the Central Java provinces and the whole Yogyakarta area. Current populations are found only in West Java and the western parts of Central Java. They are the only gibbon species found in Java.



Map of Indonesia (Yahoo Maps). Silvery Gibbons are only found on the island of Java (circled) in the central and western areas

**CURRENT POPULATION:** While the exact number of silvery gibbons left in the wild is unknown, it is estimated that less than 2500 gibbons remain, existing in fragmented areas of forest. The funding of accurate and up to date surveys of the current wild populations and the remaining areas of habitat is a priority for the Silvery Gibbon Project. This information is vital in order to determine which areas of forest are of greatest priority for forest protection and education programs.

**REASONS FOR DECLINE:** Previous habitat loss through deforestation, logging and encroaching human population pressures have been instrumental in the decline of the Silvery Gibbon. This dramatic loss of habitat has forced the once continuous populations into isolated fragments of forest that remain within their habitat range. Close to 96% of the previous habitat has already been lost, with the remaining fragments of forest surviving in many areas only because of their inaccessibility. Sharing the island of Java with over 124 million people, the gibbons have been forced into fragmented areas of remaining habitat.

Poaching for the illegal pet trade is currently a major threat to the remaining wild gibbons. Infants are often captured by killing the adult female, leaving the adult male and the other offspring. This male may then threaten and disrupt the other established gibbon families in the area, by searching for a new mate.

**SIZE:** Silvery gibbons have a body length of 44-64cm and weigh between 5-9kg.

**AVERAGE LIFE EXPECTANCY:** Maturity is reached at 6-7 years for both sexes. Single infants are born after a gestation period of 210 days. The interbirth period is about 2-3 years. Lifespan is up to 35 years in the wild, although silvery gibbons have reached the age of 50 years in captivity.

**NORMAL DIET:** The Silvery Gibbon eats fruit, leaves, flowers and occasionally insects. This gibbon utilises about 125 different plant species as a food source.

**NORMAL LIFESTYLE:** The Silvery Gibbon lives in family groups of adult male and female and up to four immature offspring. Silvery Gibbons are territorial and primarily the female defends their territory with loud calling (singing), usually in the early morning. The offspring learn foraging, social and survival skills from their parents. The Silvery Gibbon rarely descends to the forest floor, spending most of its time in the forest canopy. Their bodies are specially designed for this arboreal lifestyle with flexible wrists and

shoulders allowing them to swing its long arms from branch to branch with amazing agility. This unique form of locomotion is referred to as brachiation and is displayed by all the gibbon species.

**SPECIAL FEATURES:** Unlike other gibbon species, the Silvery Gibbon does not sing in duets, the female is the dominant vocalist while the male sings only occasionally. Another feature is the long, thick silver/grey pelage with a dark grey cap. There is no apparent sexual dimorphism.

**CONSERVATION PROJECTS:** The Silvery Gibbon Project is based in Perth, Western Australia. The major focus for the Silvery Gibbon Project is the Javan Gibbon Centre, a rehabilitation centre that receives ex-pet gibbons and aims to rehabilitate and ultimately release these gibbons back into the wild. Initially established in 2002, the centre was relocated in late 2006/early 2007 to a new site bordering the Gunung Gede Pangrango National Park in Bodogol. This new site is much more suitable for the rehabilitation and release of a larger number of gibbons. Relocation required the re-establishment of the entire infrastructure, including enclosures, quarantine area and veterinary clinic, which were completed in early 2008. October 2009 saw the first release of a pair of ex-captive Silvery Gibbons into protected forest near the Javan Gibbon Centre. The pair continue to do well and we are hopeful that they will soon reproduce.



Young silvery gibbon male. Note the dark grey cap typical of this species.

The Silvery Gibbon Project has supplied essential funding for the relocation and construction of the centre, including providing food and veterinary care for the gibbons and providing salaries for the Indonesian staff. With the ongoing expansion of the centre, more funds are required to continue this support and to build new enclosures.

The Silvery Gibbon Project recognises that the key to the survival of this species is ensuring that the remaining wild gibbons are protected from ongoing habitat loss and poaching. Education will also be a critical component to success. We are hopeful that funds generated through the Silvery Gibbon Adoption program will allow us to direct funds into these vital areas of gibbon conservation.



Typical forested enclosure at the Javan Gibbon Centre used for housing gibbon pairs.