



E.P. Gee Dedicated Conservationist

Edward Pritchard Gee (aka E.P. Gee) was born in 1904, in County Durham, the United Kingdom. This naturalist and professional tea planter was a dedicated conservationist, whose work was truly inspiring. After India gained Independence, he remained here for some years, and was among the first to address the threats faced by endangered species. He had very firm and rational ideas about which animals could or could not be sheltered in a sanctuary.

E.P. Gee was associated with the Indian Board for Wildlife (the apex body that advises the Union Government on wildlife matters), like his contemporaries Sálim Ali and M. Krishnan. He was in favour of having separate wildlife wardens within the Forest Department, who would be responsible for different fauna-related duties. He wished for cooperation between foresters and the forest ministers of each state, which he believed was needed for successful conservation. He looked upon the central government's role as advisory.

In 1959, the Fauna Preservation Society asked E.P. Gee to undertake a survey of Chitwan, an inner terrain valley in the south of Nepal. Gee recommended creating a national park north of the East Tapti river and a wildlife sanctuary south of the river. In 1963, after he surveyed Chitwan again, this time for both the Fauna Preservation Society and the International Union for Conservation of Nature, Gee recommended the extension of the national park to rhinoceros areas located south of the river. In December 1970, King Mahendra of

Nepal approved the extension, giving Nepal its first national park, the Chitwan National Park.

The news of the discovery of the Golden Langur, an Old World species, was first brought to the western world by E.P. Gee. In his article 'The Distribution and Feeding Habits of the Golden Langur, *Presbytis geei* Gee (Khajuria, 1956) in *JBNHS* [1961 Vol. 58(1)], he provides a short history of the discovery of this langur, tracing its record to Jamduar Forest Rest House on the east bank of the Sankosh river near the boundary of India and Bhutan, where it was noticed by a number of sportsmen and forest officers. "Probably the first...to report it was E.O. Shebbeare in 1907...," he notes in the article. E.P. Gee travelled to Jamduar with his team in 1953 and recorded many sightings of this elusive species little known even to the local people. The langur came to be known as Gee's Golden Langur or *Presbytis geei*. Now it is associated with the genus *Trachypithecus* and its scientific name is *Trachypithecus geei*. This cream and "gold" langur, with a very long tail, is one of the most endangered primate species of India. Along with writing and researching about these langurs, Gee also filmed and photographed them intensively.

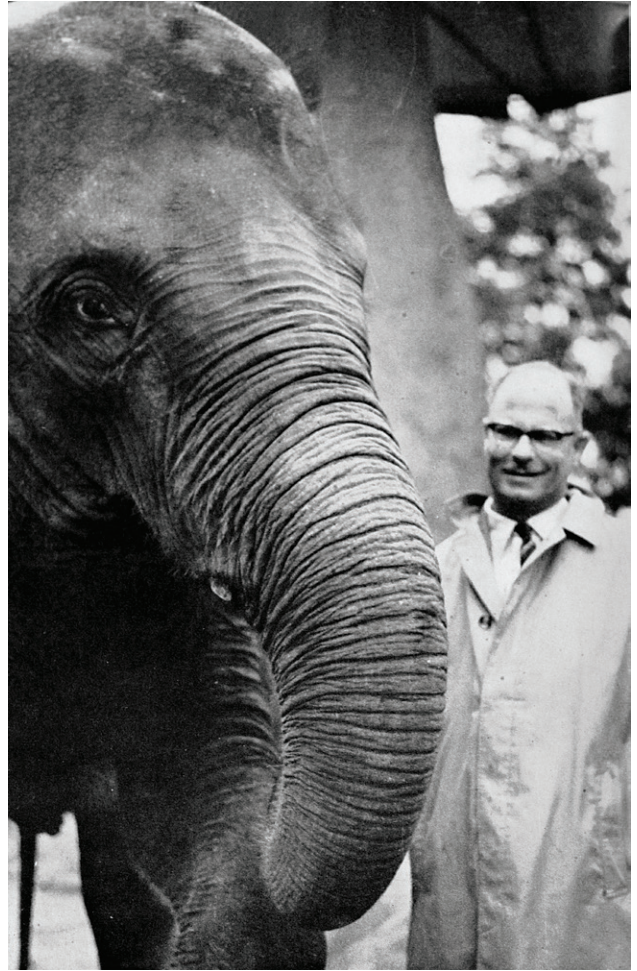
As an active contributor to the early wildlife protection policy of India, E.P. Gee wrote about his experiences and observations in *THE WILDLIFE OF INDIA* published by Collins in 1964. This work makes a good point of comparison with the present day conservation efforts in India. Gee also wrote a 5-part series on 'The management of India's wildlife sanctuaries and national parks' in the *JBNHS* published from 1952 to 1967. Other than these, he wrote several articles for the *JBNHS*. E.P. Gee's contributions brought a new



A pair of Slender Lorises photographed by E.P. Gee, from *THE WILDLIFE OF INDIA*



Adult Spot-billed Pelican and its chick, photographed by
E.P. Gee – THE WILDLIFE OF INDIA



E.P. Gee at the London Zoo with Lakshmi in 1960,
when she was ten years old

energy to the conservation movement in India. His precise notes on wildlife and conservation problems and outstanding photography of animals

and plants bear evidence of his expertise and perfection.

After many years of service in wildlife conservation and protection,

Gee retired in 1959 and moved to Shillong, where he started one of the finest private orchid collections. He believed in ingenious conservation practices, ranging from ancient imperial edicts to village traditions of protecting nesting bird colonies. This cooperative and culturally sensitive style won him recognition from Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru.

E.P. Gee was a member of the Advisory Committee of the BNHS, and was highly interested in all activities of the Society, and contributed much to its fulfillment and success. An altruist by nature, he donated all his books, photographs, films, and other works to the Society, which are a treasure in itself. ■



E.P. Gee filmed and photographed the Golden Langur,
an endangered primate, intensively