

Doon Watch Nature Series for Dehradun Live Hindustan Times by Sanjay Sondhi

Published on 2 November 2010

A Langur with Attitude!

Driving back from Mussoorie a few days ago, I noticed a large troop of langurs by roadside. Quickly pulling over, I picked up my camera and walked back to the spot where I had seen the langurs. Langurs are normally very wary, unlike their cousins, the monkeys. Expectedly, the troop of langurs fled as I approached. All, that is, except one, and this is his story.

Even as the rest of the troop scrambled up the trees with their tails between their legs, a large adult male continued to sit on the roadside parapet, unconcerned with my presence. Ever so slowly, I approached the langur, camera in hand. I kept squeezing off one photograph after another, and yet, he remained seated nonchalantly. If anything, he posed for my pictures, making cute faces for me, occasionally scratching his underarms! When I was only about ten feet from the langur, I stopped, afraid that I would disturb him. Of course the langur had other ideas. First he provided me with a few Bollywood style poses, then, exactly like our film stars, he looked away from the camera, as though saying-I refuse to pose anymore. Standing there, camera in hand, I silently urged him to look my way, but had no luck. In fact, he turned his back towards me, letting me know that he no longer wished to be photographed! Every now and then, he would turn back to look at me, but only briefly, before turning away. I stood for ten minutes, but could not get a decent close up photograph of the langur.

Making a sound, he called two other young langurs, who came down to the parapet, and proceeded to groom the adult male. All this while, the langur pretended to ignore me. Then, to rub salt into my wounds, and completely unconcerned about my already bruised ego, he lay down on the parapet, and pretended to go to sleep! In the background, a few people stood watching me. A warning ensued "*Kaat dega, paas mat jao!*" (He will bite, don't go so close!). Little did they know that the langur was probably having fun at my expense. I could visualize the rest of the troop laughing at my plight. After 20 minutes, the langur languorously got up, stretched himself and climbed onto a nearby tree. He sat here, with his back towards me. At this point, I decided to join into the fun. I made a few "*psst-psst*" noises attempting to make the langur look at me. I only got a quick disdainful glance from the langur, and he refused to look into the camera!

Having finally figured out that the langur was only having fun at my expense, I decided that I had had enough. As I prepared to move away, I watched as the langur seemed to grin at me, his pink mouth contrasting his black face! I had finally met my match-a langur with attitude!



Sanjay Sondhi is a Dehradun based naturalist. Feedback on this column is welcome at sanjay.sondhi1@gmail.com

Visit the Popular Writing section on the website www.titlitrust.com to view the entire collection of Doon Watch articles online.

Making a difference: Happy Diwali, readers. I hope you are doing the environment friendly thing by staying away from noisy and polluting crackers! Lets make this Diwali peaceful, safe and pollution free!

Photograph caption: Langur grinning at the author!

© Sanjay Sondhi