

# GREAT APES OF THE WORLD CONFERENCE 1998

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GIBBON TAXONOMY TO BE UTILIZED FOR RESCUE CENTERS. Mootnick, A.<sup>1</sup> and Sheeran, L.K.<sup>2</sup> <sup>1</sup> International Center For Gibbon Studies, U.S.A. <sup>2</sup> California State University, Fullerton, CA, U.S.A.

Two of the purposes for breeding gibbons in captivity are to retain species and subspecies diversity and to create a viable gene pool, with the ultimate goal of releasing offspring into protected native habitat. Accurate identification of an individual gibbon's species may be complicated within some gibbon species by 1) the variety of coat colors, 2) the existence of different colors for the two sexes, 3) the occurrence of coat color changes at sexual maturity, and in all species by 4) the impact of malnutrition and housing (e.g. indoors only or in full sunlight) on coloration, 5) the ease with which gibbon species' vocalizations are confused, 6) the difficulty with which some gibbon subspecies are distinguished from each other, 7) and a dearth of information on the individual gibbon's origins, as may occur when a gibbon is confiscated. Given these problems, it is not surprising that breeding facilities may encounter difficulties in the identification of gibbons. For this paper, gibbons' specific and subspecific status was determined through the comparison of study skins housed in North American and Southeast Asian museums and live specimens housed at the International Center for Gibbons Studies and zoos.