

PROGRESS REPORT  
OF  
FOREST ADMINISTRATION  
IN THE  
PROVINCE OF ASSAM

FOR THE YEAR

1915-16.

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1-24, 1-55, 1-3

55. In Kamrup a rhinoceros was shot in the North Kamrup Reserve. The case was complicated but finally a suitable fine was recovered from the various persons implicated and the gun was confiscated.

56. In Kamrup Rs. 99 were paid by the Divisional Forest Officer in rewards to subordinates who detected cases and Rs. 7 were awarded by the court.

57. There were 85 cases pending at the commencement of the year, 371 new cases were reported during the year, 101 cases involving 208 persons were taken into court, of which 82 cases involving 175 persons resulted in convictions, i.e., 81 per cent. In 254 cases involving 527 persons compensation to the amount of Rs. 5-11-3 per person was accepted. Ninety-nine cases remained pending at the close of the year. The greater number of the cases were of unauthorised felling or removal of forest produce. Eastern Circle.

There was a considerable increase in the number of cases in the Darrang, Nowgong and Sibsagar Divisions and a large decrease in the Lakhimpur Division which the Divisional Forest Officers attribute to stricter supervision and greater vigilance on the part of subordinates.

58. Divisional Forest Officer, Darrang, reports that "rule 1 (iv), Executive orders relating to forest, page 132, Assam Forest Manual, is a dead letter as far as his division is concerned. The Mauzadars have not reported a single breach of Forest Rules though according to the above rule they are in immediate charge of, and responsible for, the management of and due observance of the rules relating to, Unclassed State Forests within their jurisdiction." These remarks apply equally to other divisions of this Circle, the fact being that the Mauzadars are so fully employed in the collection of revenue and grazing dues that they have but little time to devote to other duties; also but few of them probably take the slightest interest in Forest matters. Wholesale fellings in the Darrang Division of reserved and unreserved trees by cultivators opening up land without *pattas* were reported, but no action could be taken as acquittals would result on the grounds that cultivators were acting 'bonâ fide' and would take *pattas* later. Much wilful destruction of valuable forest results, and in many parts of the division, villagers will soon be unable to obtain any free building material or firewood. The same state of affairs was recorded in last year's report, paragraph 45, as existing in the Sibsagar Division.

The number of cases reported of breaches of the new game laws was absurdly small considering that wholesale slaughter of deer by Assamese and Nepalis is carried out throughout the year and especially in the close season. Without the help of the district officials and police, but little protection can be afforded.

Adequate punishments appear, as a rule to have been inflicted by the court in all divisions.

(b) *Protection from fire—(Forms Nos. 14 and 15).*

59. In accordance with the principles laid down in the Inspector General of Forests' note on the *sâl* forests, protection from fire was abandoned in all the divisions containing *sâl* and evergreen forests, and in almost all the *sâl* forests every effort was made to burn them as completely as possible. The conditions of the year were favourable to the operations as no rain fell from October to April. In spite of the unusual dryness of the season it was found difficult to induce fire to spread to any considerable extent through the undergrowth of evergreens and climbers in the low level forests which it is the object of the burning to destroy. In the high level forests of the western and Guma Ranges of Goalpara the Divisional Forest Officer estimates that 90 per cent. of the area was burnt over. In the drier forests of the Garo Hills 80 per cent. was burnt, while in Kamrup where practically all the *sâl* is of the high level and hill type the whole was successfully burnt. In the low level forests of the Eastern Range of Goalpara only 25 per cent. is estimated to have been burnt. We shall have to wait until next year to ascertain the results of the burning, but it appears certain that little damage has been done to the climbers which are specially harmful in Goalpara and it is probable that many of the evergreens which appear to have been killed will recover and throw up coppice shoots. Western Circle.

60. In Khasi and Jaintia Hills of 33, 841 acres attempted only 645 were burnt. In Kamrup an attempt was made and failed to protect the new Maliata Hill reserve of 1,002 acres. In the Garo Hills 10,610 acres of the reserves were protected from fire.

61. A total expenditure of Rs. 1,513 was incurred. Some of this was spent on clearing lines in the reserves in which protection was abandoned as the new orders did not reach Range officers in time.

62. Eleven fires burning 43,526 acres occurred in forest in which protection was attempted. Of these 3 burning 2,568 acres crossed the lines from outside, 6 burning 43,942 acres were caused by accident and 2 burning 16 acres were started maliciously.