

BRIEFLY

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Rhino poaching

Killing of seven rhinos *Rhinoceros unicornis* during the first 4 months of 2007 in and around Kaziranga national park of Assam sent alarm bells all around. For the first time in more than a decade that the poachers have shown an organised attack. Use of tranquiliser gun was intriguing. More serious was that the gun belonged to Nagaland's wildlife wing. It is apparent that there is no government involvement; some unscrupulous departmental staff must be involved. The Government of Assam immediately rushed in some additional staff and forces resulting in death of two poachers in an encounter.

Rhino sightings

A rhino was sighted in Batabari reserved forest towards east of Manas national park, Baksa district, Assam in August 2006 and plaster cast of its footprint was obtained.

Four rhinos were sighted near Kolakhowa and Rongdoi *chapori* areas of Dibrugarh district in far eastern Assam in April 2007. The animals apparently travelled from Kaziranga through the Brahmaputra River and its riverine islands (*chapori*).

Rhino population increased

The census of rhinoceros carried out in the protected areas of Kaziranga, Orang and Pabitora in Assam by the Government in March-April 2006 showed a significant increase in the number of animals. The census was carried out by using direct visual count method from elephant-back (see table below).

Year →	1999	2006
Kaziranga	1552	1855
Orang	46	68
Pabitora	74	81

Elephant poaching

A tusker was killed at Chowkajuli area of Ranga reserved forest in Assam's Lakhimpur district in end March - early April 2007. The forest is under Harmoti Forest Range. Many such cases go unreported.

Bear news

Three Asiatic or Himalayan black bears *Ursus thibetanus*, which included one young were killed by villagers in Panbari area of Manas national park, Assam in November 2005. Immediately after killing, the bile and gall bladder of the adult animals were taken away while the meat distributed among the killers. Because of quick removal of body parts for trade, it is suspected that poachers were following the animals in the park and forced them to come out to village where they knew that mob will kill them. One more bear came out near Bansbari area of the park but strict warning issued to village leaders by the district administration of Baksa not to kill it helped the animal return safely.

One unidentified bear came out of Bornadi wildlife sanctuary in Deosunga area of Baksa district and Rajgarh area of Udalguri district (contiguous areas) of Assam where it was killed in July 2006. Its meat was consumed by local villagers.

However, the human greed for bear body parts showed its extremity when a Himalayan black bear was killed inside the zoo located in Aizawl city of Mizoram in north-east India in December 2005.

Gaur news

One person was killed by a Gaur *Bos gaurus* in Trishna wildlife sanctuary of Tripura in north-east India on 17 March 2007. The person was from the nearby Siddhinagar village (also see p. 10).