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ABSTRACTS

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Dr. P. K. Singha

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ABSTRACTS

**FEEDING ECOLOGY OF RHINOCEROS UNICORNIS IN
THE ORANG NATIONAL PARK, ASSAM (INDIA)**

***Buddhin Ch. Hazarika and **P. K. Saikia**

* Senior Lecturer, Dept. of Zoology, Mangaldoi College

** Reader Dept. of Zoology, Gauhati University.

The Orang National Park with an area of 78.81 km², lies between 26°30' N - 26°40' N latitude and 92°15' E - 92°30' E longitude. The area is the only Rhinoceros sustaining habitat on the northern bank of river Brahmaputra as the wild status of Rhino population in Manas National Park was not known till date since 1994. The park is presently included under the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC). The present study emphasizes the detailed investigation of food and feeding ecology with special reference to food selectivity of rhinoceros.

Study showed that, altogether 71 plants species were eaten by rhino in Orang National Park, of which 42 species were from grasses, (family Poaceae and Cyperaceae), 11 from tree species, 9 from herbs and shrubs and 9 from aquatic plant species. Besides these rhino also consumed some cultivated crops raided from adjacent villages areas. Again, of the total 71 food plant species, 36 food plants were eaten throughout the year and hence termed as staple food. Out of 36 food plant species, which were consumed throughout the year, 24 were grasses (75.97% of total), 9 were tree species (16.36% of total) and least numbers of 3 aquatic plants species were consumed (7.67% of total). The study also revealed that the consumption of different food plant species were also found to be varies in different seasons of the year. The rhino of Orang national Park consumed a total of 63 plant species during pre-monsoon season, 49 during monsoon, 57 during retreating monsoon and 58 during winter season. Apart from that, the rhino also observed to licking soils in 7 different locations during night hours throughout the year except monsoon season.

Key Words: Orang National Park, Feeding ecology, Grasses, Woodland, Aquatic plants, Soil licking, *Rhinoceros unicornis*