

through which poachers and others connected with illegal activities can reach the park without any problem. Adding to all these is the status of Tiger population, which is hopeless at present. Even the movement of elephants inside the park is not as frequent as earlier.

Famous ornithologists, late Dr. Salim Ali and S. Dillon Ripley of the Smithsonian Institution of United States visited Namdapha twice, in 1979 and 1981 when I was posted there. Other surveys were done by Zoological and Botanical Surveys of India and own survey team of Silviculture branch of the Forest Department.

So far as I am concerned, I was posted at Miao on two occasions. Once during 1978-80 as Divisional Manager, Miao Project Division

during which I had close link with the area as a supervisory authority. During 1988-90, I was partly Assistant Field Director and then Field Director. Lastly I was D.F.O. Namdapha Wild Life Division. The census of Tiger population was conducted under my direct supervision in 1989 in the districts of Tirap, Changlang and Lohit. All those opportunities had enabled me to observe the issues related to Namdapha. It is to be noted that exploration is yet to be done in Dapha Bum from where more information may come in future. □

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Newsletter and Journal of The Rhino Foundation for nature in NE India (2009) 8: 12-15. ISSN 0973-6530

BRIEFLY

Compiled by ANWARUDDIN CHOUDHURY

Rhino population increased

The latest census of the Great Indian one-horned rhinoceros *Rhinoceros unicornis* carried out in the protected areas of Assam, viz., Kaziranga, RG Orang and Pabitora in March-April 2009 showed 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	2009
Kaziranga	1552	1855	2048
RG Orang	46	68	64
Pabitora	74	81	84

Recent records of Rhinoceros from outside traditional areas

- One animal entered Pani-Dihing Bird Sanctuary via Dikhowmukh (apparently from Kaziranga) in Assam's Sivasagar district on 15 March 2007.
- One strayed from Pabitora Wildlife Sanctuary to near Sonapur in Kamrup (Metropolitan) district in central Assam on 11 February 2008.
- One person was injured while he was trying to photograph a Rhinoceros at Sissimukh Haldhibari near Machkhowa, Dhemaji district in eastern Assam at 7 am on 4 March 2009.

- Carcass of a Rhinoceros was found in Dihingmukh Reserved Forest in Assam's Dibrugarh district, which was killed a few days ago, on 13 May 2009. Its horn was taken away by the poachers. This could be the animal that was in Pani-Dihing Bird Sanctuary since March 2007.

North Bank Elephants enter and depart Kaziranga

What happens when an Elephant population enters a strange or unknown area was aptly demonstrated in Kaziranga. The Elephants in North-east India were divided into several populations and sub-populations by Choudhury (1999). About a hundred of these pachyderms of North Bank population, which was creating havoc in Majuli and Pani-Dihing areas of eastern Assam for more than a decade had entered Agoratoli Range of Kaziranga National Park on 7 February 2008 – a sort of history in recent memory. It could have serious impact on Kaziranga, which already has a large population.

These elephants behaved strangely while in their new habitat. They remained in tight congregation and frequently moved out of the park to the fields creating panic among villagers. Tourism activities had to be stopped in the eastern part of the park.

Ultimately, on 17th February 2008 they left the park towards Majuli and Neamati.

Reference: Choudhury, A. (1999). Status and conservation of the Asian elephant *Elephas maximus* in north-eastern India. *Mammal Review* 29(3): 141-173.

Tiger deaths

- A cub died and another injured after consuming poisoned carcass at Rongagorah Division of Hatikhuli Tea Estate just outside Assam's famous Kaziranga National Park and World Natural Heritage Site on 28 December 2007. The injured cub was shifted to the rescue centre.

- An adult was poisoned through a buffalo carcass (which was killed by the Tiger itself) at Nunsali *Tapu*, in the 6th Addition of Kaziranga National Park in Assam, some time in February 2008. Its bone and skin were reportedly sold by a *Khuti* owner. The bones were reportedly sold for Rs 50,000 and skin for Rs 40,000. With this amount, the *Khuti* owner reportedly bought 10 more buffaloes (Source: *Amar Asom*, 3 March 2008).

- A male and a cub were rescued from a well near Tezpur town in Assam's Sonitpur district on 30 October 2008. Both were later on released in Nameri National Park.

- One found dead with head injury at Pub Ikorani under Kartika Camp of Kohora Range in Kaziranga National Park, Assam, on the evening of 13 February 2009.

- Between 2002 and 15 February 2009, as many as 43 Tigers died in Kaziranga National Park, Assam due to various reasons including natural deaths, in-fighting, killed by Wild buffalo bulls and poaching.

- Nine carcasses were found during the last two months in Kaziranga National Park, Assam (Source: *Amar Asom*, 15 February 2009).

- One more carcass was found on 6 October 2009, which already had maggots on it indicating its death several days ago. There was no attempt to take its skin and bone, which showed that it was not poached.



Carcass of one of the dead Tigers in Kaziranga National Park. October 2009. (Photo: ANWARUDDIN CHOUDHURY)

The Newsletter & Journal of
THE RHINO FOUNDATION
FOR NATURE IN NORTH-EAST INDIA

No. 8 • December 2009

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