

PROGRESS REPORT
OF
FOREST ADMINISTRATION
IN THE
PROVINCE OF ASSAM

FOR THE YEAR

1932-33.

CHAPTER I.

CONSTITUTION OF STATE FORESTS.

1.—ALTERATION IN AREA—(FORM No. 7).

(i) Reserved Forests.

During the year under report three new reserves were formed comprising 32 square miles, *viz.*, the Rowta Reserve in the Darrang Division and the Ratargool and Laurgarh Reserves in the Sylhet Division. Additions to the extent of 7 square miles were made to certain reserves in Darrang, Nowgong, Kamrup and Garo Hills Division, while 530 acres were disforested in the Cachar Division. These alterations, full details of which will be found in Form No. 7 raised the total area of reserves in the Province from 6,145 to 6,186 square miles at the close of the year.

(ii) Village Forests.

2. The policy of forming village forests has been abandoned and those already created have been cancelled under orders of the Local Government.

(iii) Unclassed State Forests.

3. The area of the Unclassed State Forests increased by 65 square miles. The increase was mainly due to cancellation of village forests and relinquishment of leased land. The total area at the close of the year was 14,882 square miles.

2.—FOREST SETTLEMENTS—(FORM No. 8),

4. At the beginning of the year 62 square miles were awaiting settlement, of which 40 square miles were finally settled; preliminary notification in respect of the proposed Barakhiya Reserve in Sylhet was cancelled. Settlement proceedings in respect of 87 square miles were taken in hand during the year.

3.—DEMARCATIION—(FORM No. 9.)

5. The total length of boundaries increased by 59 miles, and stood at 5,009 miles at the close of the year. Seven miles of new boundaries were demarcated during the year at a cost of Rs. 100, and 1,574 miles of previously existing boundaries were repaired at a cost of Rs. 8,387, exclusive of the value of forest produce given in exchange for labour.

B.—PROTECTION OF FORESTS.

(a) *General Protection—(Form No. 13).*

24. There were 2,140 new cases against 2,160 in the previous year.

Including 94 cases of the previous year 437 cases were tried in Court and conviction was obtained in 256 cases in which 1,810 persons were involved; 75 persons accused in 39 cases were acquitted, and 142 cases remained pending at the close of the year. The percentage of acquittals to the number of cases tried was 9 against 11 in the preceding year.

25. The anti-poaching campaign was vigorously pursued in Eastern Goalpara with every gratifying results. Staging huts have been erected along the previously unpatrolled long stretch of southern boundary, and the situation has been brought under control. The Divisional Forest Officer and the Subdivisional Forest Officer are to be congratulated on the efforts they have made not only to stop active poaching but also to get into touch with the promoters in the back-ground; valuable information has been collected of which use can be made now that rhino horns have been declared forest produce.

It is doubtful if the campaign has been so successful in Western Goalpara, where the forest staff is very small, but poaching has at any rate been reduced.

Conviction was obtained in 4 poaching cases of the previous year as well as in one case of the year. Two cases of the year were compounded. The punishments inflicted were adequate and a number of guns were confiscated, but confiscation should automatically follow conviction in all cases.

No Divisional Forest Officer has toured in the North Kamrup Sanctuary since the Assam Rifles left the vicinity in 1930-31, thus confirming the opinion expressed in 1928 that the real danger to this Sanctuary was that under a Divisional Forest Officer, who was not interested in Game Preservation or who was busy elsewhere, the game might all be quietly poached without the outside world being any the wiser. The Local Government have accordingly decided that an Assistant Conservator of Forests should be placed in charge of anti-poaching operations in North-West Kamrup and North-East Goalpara directly under the Conservator's supervision, thus ensuring some continuity of policy and activity.

26. Definite information regarding the Kaziranga Game Sanctuary is not procurable, and the writer proposes examining this area himself to ascertain what the real state of affairs is there.

27. Very considerable interest is taken in our fauna by scientists and sportsmen all over the world, but the suspicion exists that sufficient precautions are not always taken in India against local apathy; there is no reason why this suspicion should not be removed as far as Assam is concerned.

The writer has expressed his views elsewhere that our real effort to preserve the Great Indian Rhinoceros as a living species might perhaps be best made in the political area in Darrang, but as it is believed that only 7 rhino remain alive in that district, the matter requires some further consideration.

28. A Bill was passed in the Local Legislative Council during the year by which rhinoceros horns were included in the category of forest produce whether found in or brought from a forest or not. The Council did not see its way to include elephant tusks under the same category though this would have greatly strengthened the hand of the law against the smuggling of elephant tusks from the province. It is known that the smuggling of elephant tusks and rhinoceros horns is being carried on regularly and extensively by a professional gang of dacoits and poachers in the Goalpara district; their trade in rhino horns will now be more easily checked, but with the law remaining as it is little can be done to stop the illicit trade in ivory which is carried on in all the more jungly parts of the Province.

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

29. Fire protection was attempted in three Divisions of the Province, *viz.*, Goalpara, Kamrup and Khasi and Jaintia Hills. In Goalpara protection failed in 142 acres out of 2,576. Only 6 acres were accidentally burnt, the balance, *viz.*, 136 having been maliciously burnt by villagers in the vicinity of certain plantations,