

# CHEETAL

A Journal of

Wild Life Preservation Society of India



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# THE CHEETAL

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Birds, apart from being agents for flower pollination, are dispersers of seed. It is said that birds were the chief agents for spreading the lantana weed into India from Ceylon where it was introduced about a century ago.

Circumventing of game birds involves a lot of hard work and because of this reason there are few who are interested in this sport. This does not mean that feathered game should not be offered protection. The great Indian bustard which is a resident and local migrant of our country is almost extinct. There are still a very few of this species left in our state and, if not preserved, they will vanish very rapidly.

Lateef Mehdi,  
M.B.O.U., F.Z.S.

## India's National Parks and Sanctuaries

### ALL ABOUT KAZIRANGA

#### Area and Situation :—

The present Kaziranga Wild Life Sanctuary was originally constituted in 1908 as Kaziranga Game Reserve with 56,544 acres. Subsequently during 1911 an area of 1441.6 acres was de-forested. 13,506 acres in 1913 and 37,529 acres in 1917 were added to make the total present area of 1,06,137.4 acres or 165.84 sq. miles. During 1953 the word "Game" was replaced by "Wild Life" Sanctuary. Also in the same year a Protected Belt of the Sanctuary has been declared covering an area of 210 square miles (approximate) including the Sanctuary area, from Jakhalbandha to Bokakhat, the area lying north of the National Highway. Proposals are afoot to upgrade the Sanctuary into one of the National Parks of India.

The Sanctuary is situated in the Brahmaputra valley bounded by the mighty Brahmaputra, the artery of Assam in the north and the National Highway (South Assam Trunk Road) on the south within the Sibsagar Forest Division of Assam. The snow clad mountains of the Himalayas in the north form the northern background and the ranges of the Mik Hills lying south of the Trunk Road form the base of the Sanctuary. Within this area of panoramic beauty nature with her children unfurls her maiden beauty throughout the year, specially in early spring and winter.

*Kohora:* Head Quarters of Kaziranga is on the 135/7 mile post of the above National Highway.

### Temperature and Rainfall:

The maximum temperature of the place is 94°F and the minimum 45°F.

The average annual precipitation of the last 10 years is shown to be 93.1", maximum being 16" in July and the minimum 0.2" in December.

### Transport Facilities:

The North East Frontier Railways with Jakhalabondha station on the branch line from Chapormukh Junction, approximately 32 miles from Jakhalabondha Station to Kohora, is the rail connection to the place.

*Rowriah:* Approximately 60 miles via Jorhat is the nearest air-port.

The following transport is available:—

- (i) A Tourist Car maintained by the department at Jorhat with charge of 0.50 Naye paise per mile.
- (ii) State Transport Service to and from Shillong/Gauhati/Nowgong/Jorhat/Dibrugarh and
- (iii) Local Taxi.

The road route distances are as follows:—

From Jorhat	...	...	...	55 miles
Nowgong	....	...	...	60 miles
Gauhati	...	...	...	135 miles
Shillong	...	...	...	179 miles

### Accommodation:

(i) The Kaziranga Tourist Lodge (Lachit Bhawan) located on a hillock on 135/7 mile post on the National Highway overlooking the Sanctuary on the north, 5 double-bedded rooms with attached bath and sanitary fittings, one dining room, one lounge, electrified, with catering both Indian and European styles and linen supplied.

(ii) Baguri Inspection Bungalow— 7 miles west of Lachit Bhawan—on the side of the National Highway—2 double bedded rooms with attached bath and sanitary fittings. Oil-lamps provided, catering as under Lachit Bhawan. Provision for electricity is being made. Linen supplied.

(iii) Arimora Inspection Bungalow—approximately 10 miles north of Lachit Bhawn within the Sanctuary on the bank of the Brahmaputra—3 double bedded rooms with attached bath and sanitary fittings. No catering and no linen.

(iv) Tourist Bungalow No. 2 on the side of Lachit Bhawan having 8 double-bedded rooms with all the above facilities, as in Lachit Bhawan with lower rates.

(v) Another V.I.P. Hostel is proposed to meet the increased demand of visitors to be constructed near Beguri during 1962-63.

#### View Season:

All the year round animals can be seen by visitors. But the best season is from October to March. After the grass is burnt in January new shoots come up and during this period visitors can enjoy the best view of rhinos and other animals from far and near. The best time is the early morning from 5 A.M. to 8 A.M. or the afternoon from 3 P.M. to 5 P.M. Visitors are taken from the Bungalows at 4 A.M. in the morning or 2-30 P.M. in the afternoon on departmental trained elephants fitted with enjoyable (sic!) guides. One can see herds of buffaloes from a distance of 50', rhino from 10' and flock of deer from 90' from the elephant's back. They are almost tame now-a-days. The visitors can click their cameras at leisure.

#### Type of Fauna:

The most important species that attract the attention of the world is the famous one-horned Rhino (*Rhinoceros unicornis*) commonly known as the Asiatic or Indian Rhino—the home of the species in the world largely sustained in the Sanctuary. The description of the species is given below.

The great animal reaches a height of over 6' at the shoulder and a length of more than 14'. The weight of a large adult may be as much as 2 tons. There is a single horn thick at the base and often quite blunt at the end, averaging to 8/9 inches in length. The longest horn collected so far in the Sanctuary is 19 inches which is kept for exhibition purposes. But horns upto 2' length are also said to have been collected. A thick hide hangs in great folds at the neck, shoulders and hind quarters giving the appearance of an armoured plate. The fold in front of the shoulder does not continue all the way across the back of the neck, as it does in the slightly smaller Javan rhinoceros. Like the Javan, there are folds continuing across the back behind the shoulder, in front of and across the thigh and around the neck. The legs emerge from beneath the other folds, looking far too slight for the weight they must carry. The legs, the flanks and occasionally the sides of the body are studded with large, round rivet-like tubercles which further add to the armoured appearance. The



Rhinos from a distance of 20' from elephant's back.

—Photo by L. C. Das.



Buffaloes in herd over Water Hyacinth.

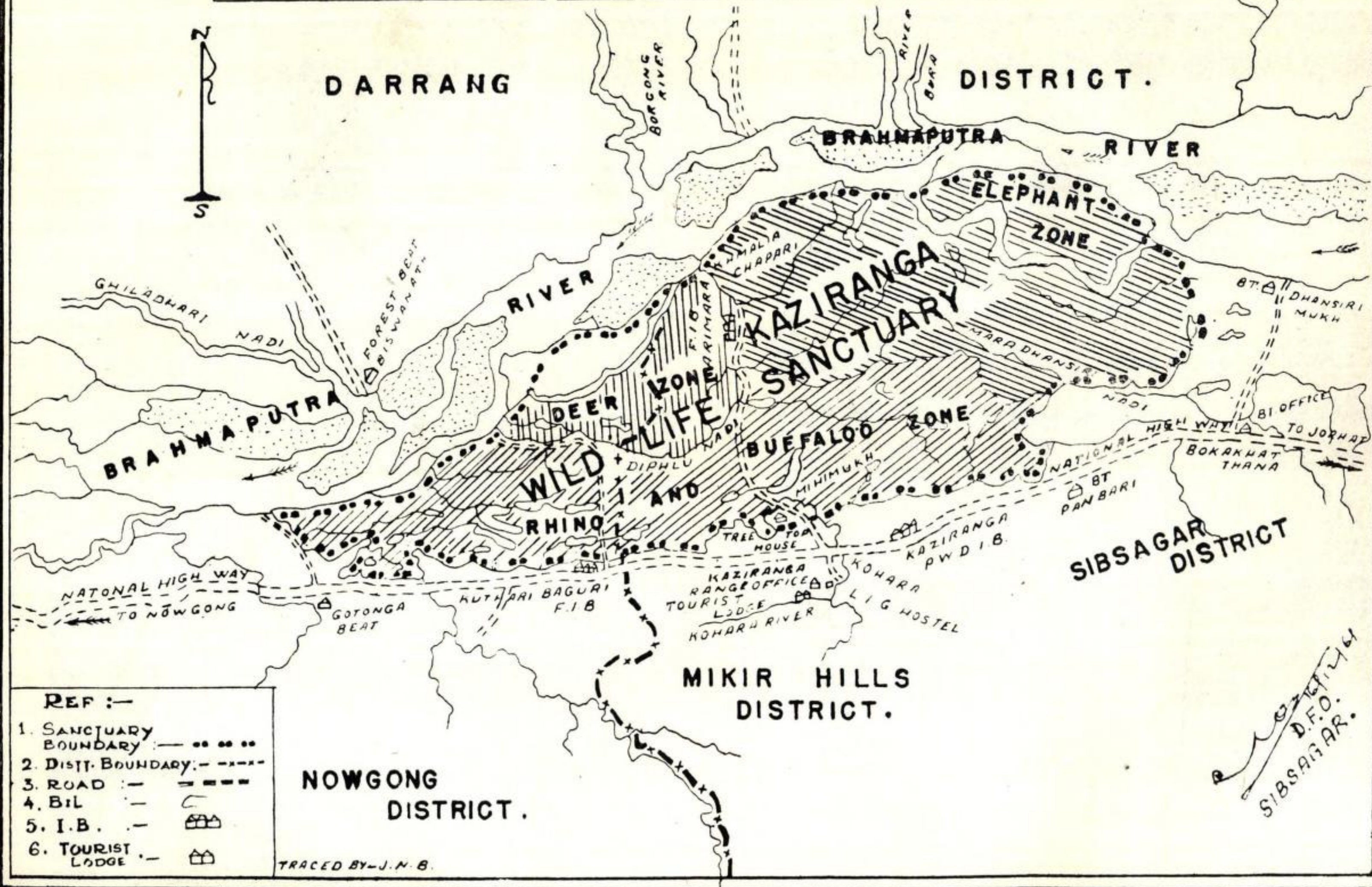
—Photo by Dr. R. N. Banerjee.

**A MAP OF KAZIRANGA WILD-LIFE SANCTUARY**  
 scale: - 4 = 1 INCH = 4 MILES



DARRANG

DISTRICT.



- REF :-**
- 1. SANCTUARY BOUNDARY : - - - - -
  - 2. DISTT. BOUNDARY : - - - - -
  - 3. ROAD : - - - - -
  - 4. B.L. : - - - - -
  - 5. I.B. : - - - - -
  - 6. TOURIST LODGE : - - - - -

NOWGONG DISTRICT.

MIKIR HILLS DISTRICT.

SIBSAGAR DISTRICT

TRACED BY - J. N. B.

SIBSAGAR.  
 D.F.O.  
 1964

skin is hairless, except for a string of hair on the ear-tips and tails. As with other rhinos, the colour is usually determined by the mud of its most recent wallow. The unusual individual that happens to be clean perhaps just having swam a river, is brownish grey with a very slightly pink or reddish tinge to the edges of the skin folds, ear and nostrils. It has got very poor eye-sight, but it is endowed with tremendous power of hearing and for this God has blessed it with the power of rotating the ears according to its will. The presence of a rhino in a submerged state in marshy land is indicated by the number of white egrets sitting over it.

The rhino has religious, medicinal and commercial values. There is a common belief among our people that if one can touch the horn of a living rhino one is assured of Heaven. There are also certain legends about the rhino as God's vehicle. This was the vehicle of Lord Shri Krishna who has left the imprint of His carpet used over the animal which forms the appearance of armoured plate as mentioned above. This was also the vehicle of Lord Buddha while he spread his immortal preaching after the attainment of "Siddhi." The flesh of the animal is considered sacred. Every part of the animal finds place in medicine. Even the hide, hair, skin, nails, offal are not spared. The urine is sold in a place like Calcutta in small bamboo vials. It has got a very good hygienic habit to be imitated by men, that it passes its offal in one place of the forest. Whatever distance it goes, at the time of nature's call it will come to the same place.

The most valuable part of the rhino is the horn. It is a commodity of foreign trade. Many prized articles like buttons, belt plaques, scabbards are made from rhino horn. In China libation cups are curved out of rhino horn for use in religious ceremonies. It is a common belief that poison when poured into such a cup becomes harmless. Still others believe that one becomes immune to poison if one can drink always from such a cup. As medicine the horn is widely used as an aphrodisiac. China provides the biggest market for this. A mixture containing horn powder in coconut oil is widely used for removing thorn from palms, to ease child-birth, shrink lumps, stop infection, close cuts, soothe irritation, and cure many other ailments. In China there are lots of travelling medical men who carry rhino medicines. These medicines are so popular that as soon as such a medical man enters a village the news breaks out within a short time and the villagers rush to the spot to bargain.

It was apprehended that the number of rhino in Kaziranga went on decreasing from the time of its constitution, but no proper assessment could be made till the beginning of the fifties when the total strength was estimated at a little over 200. But the actual census conducted in 1960 revealed that the strength increased to 398. This increase is in the teeth of



poaching activities in the recent past and natural mortality due to bull-fights, hyper-indulgence in mating, natural death due to old age, and babies eaten by tigers. It can be ensured that the number will go on increasing when poaching is completely stopped and the habitat is improved, which is being done. It is estimated that a rhino dies its natural death at the age of 110 years. There is no fixed period of interval for its reproduction. The gestation period is 19 months. It is interesting to observe that a male rhino can go up to kill a female if his sex is not fully matured at the time of mating. An eye witness on 7-3-50 revealed that mating lasts for one hour 20 minutes. This unique animal has a great demand in the world to-day.

People from all over the world come all the way to see by themselves this majestic threatened-with-extinction species of the world. The following statistics reveal the growing popularity showing the annual number of visitors.

<i>Year</i>	<i>Indians</i>	<i>Foreigners</i>	<i>Total</i>
1956-57	631	294	925
1957-58	820	316	1,136
1958-59	1,152	364	1,516
1959-60	1,288	402	1,690
1960-61	<u>1,738</u>	<u>353</u>	<u>2,091</u>
Total	5,629	1,729	7,358

Here are included many V.I.Ps. of the world.

The other species that can be seen are herds of elephants, wild buffaloes, hundreds of swamp deer, hog deer, barking deer; also a few spotted deer, tigers, bears, pigs, and wild dogs. Monkeys are in great number.

Hundreds of varieties of birds are seen such as pelicans, all species of migratory ducks in winter, brahmany duck, florican, pheasant, black partridge, horn-bill, imperial pigeon and other various species.

The monitor lizard and python are also seen.

Large fish of various species are found in plenty in the numerous small beels and jheels of the Sanctuary. The main types are Indian Carps (Rohu-Labeo rohita, Mrigal-Girrhina mrigala, Mali-Catla Catla and Kalbasu-Labeo Calbasu) and murrel (Sal-Ophicephalus marulius, Sal-Ophicephalus, Stria Cheetal-Notopterus Chitala, Boal-Wallago atu etc.), the first being found in those beels with sandy beds and the latter in those with clayey beds.

There are two beels where very large fish in abundance show above the surface of the water during any part of the day and night—a sight worth seeing.

#### Any Other Information:

Watch Towers are there in the sanctuary to have a wide range of vision apart from a number of well trained elephants with comfortable gaddies for service to the visitors to carry them to the midst of herds of rhinos and other animals.

The long continuous snow range of the Himalayas is another glory visible throughout the winter from the lodge.

An artificial lake tapping the natural Kohora stream is proposed to be constructed in front of Lachit Bhawan during 1961-62 where angling and swimming, boating and swimming facilities will be provided for the visitors.

#### Schedule of Rates:

##### (i) Lachit Bhawan : Accommodation:

- (a) 3 upstairs rooms, Rs. 4.00 per seat or Rs. 7/- per room.
- (b) 2 ground floor rooms, Rs. 3.00 per seat or Rs. 5/- per room.
- (c) Electric light/fan charges, Re. 1/- per diem per seat or Rs. 2/- per room.
- (d) Linen charges, Rs. 2/- per person for not more than 3 consecutive days. (Option of use by visitors.)

##### (ii) Baguri Inspection Bungalow:

- (a) Rs. 2/- per seat per diem plus price of oil for providing lamps.
- (b) Linen Rs. 2/- per person for not more than 3 consecutive days. (Option of use by visitors.)

##### (iii) Arimora Inspection Bungalow:

- (a) Re. 1/- per diem.

**Tourist Bungalow No. 2:—** Rates moderate, less than in Lodge.

#### Visit to Sanctuary:

- (1) Elephant Hire:— (a) Rs. 10.00 per animal for use by a single visitor.
- (b) Rs. 16.00 per animal for use by two visitors.
- (c) Rs. 16.00 per animal for use by three visitors.

**(2) View Fee:**

Rs. 5.00 per diem per person.

Rs. 2.00 per diem per Govt. Official, drawing pay less than Rs. 150.00 per month.

Re. 1.00 per diem per student.

Re. 0.50 per diem per student for a group of students under the auspices of an educational institution.

**(3) Camera Fee:**

(a) Cine Camera Rs. 10.00 per diem for professionals.

(b) Rs. 5.00 per diem for amateurs.

**(4) Road Fee:**

(a) Rs. 3.00 for Jeep or ordinary Car for journey from Mihimukh to Arimor or part and back.

(b) Rs. 7.50 per Truck or Bus for journey from Mihimukh to Arimora or part and back.

**Conveyance:**

Tourist Car stationed at Jorhat Rs. 0.50 per mile (Minimum Rs. 10.00 per single visitor or Rs. 13.00 per trip or more.)

**How to obtain Reservation:**

Intending visitors should address the Divisional Forest Officer, Sibsagar Division, P.O. Jorhat, Assam, India (Phone No. Jorhat 8.)

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