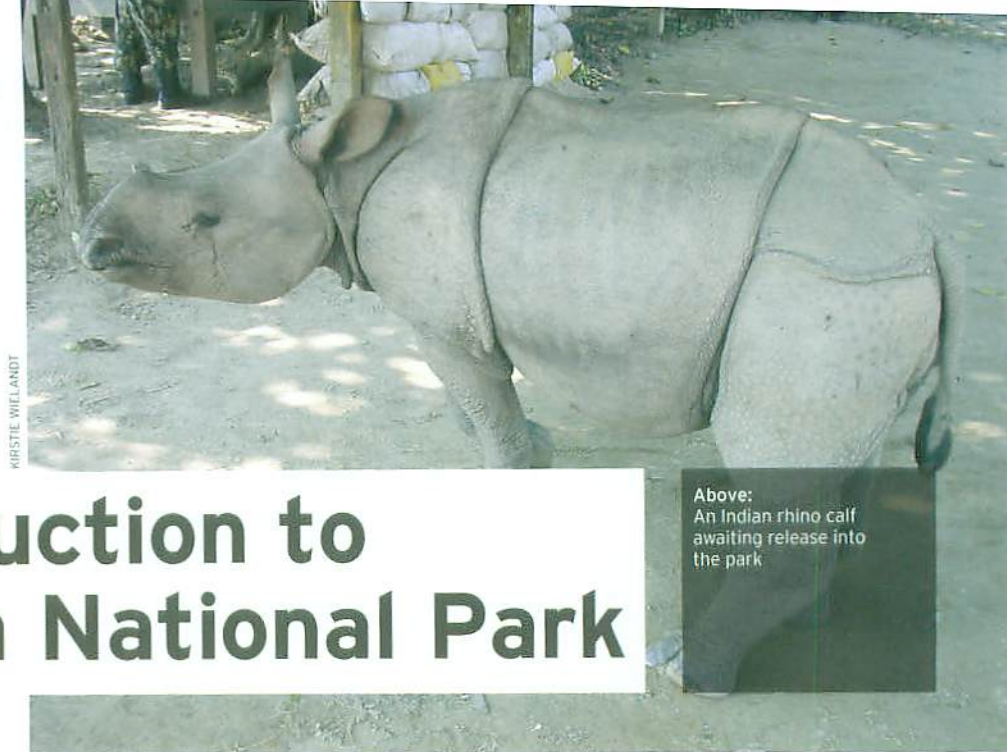


India:



Above:
An Indian rhino calf
awaiting release into
the park

An introduction to Kaziranga National Park

Cathy Dean
Director

Name

There are many stories about the origin of the name, "Kaziranga." Its floodplains are visible from the Karbi Anglong hills to south of the Park, and in the Karbi language, "kazi" means goat, and "rangai" means red, so, land of red goats (or deer). There is another legend saying that Mahapurush Madhabdeb, the close disciple of the founder of the Vaishnava religion, Mahapurush Sankardeb, camped near Narmora Beel (Lake) presently inside Kaziranga National Park. An old couple, namely Kazi and Rangai, along with other devotees approached the saint and expressed their grief for not having children. The saint consoled them, advised to dig a big pond and blessed that their name will be known for generations. Then Ahom king Swargdeo Pratap Singh was offered fish while passing through the area and was very pleased with the taste. The king enquired about the origin of the fish and subsequently the area was named Kaziranga after the names of this couple.

Location

Kaziranga National Park lies between latitude 26°34' N to 26°46' N and longitude 93°08' E to 93°36' E. It is spread over the civil jurisdictions of Nagaon and Golaghat districts in Assam with the mighty Brahmaputra river to the north and the Karbi Anglong hills to the south. The total area of Kaziranga National Park is 429.93 km².

Landscape

The entire Kaziranga National Park area is formed by the alluvial deposits of the

Brahmaputra river and its smaller tributaries, which carry a great amount of silt during the rainy season every year. The riverine area thus formed is colonised by *Saccharum* and other grass species as soon as the landmasses are stabilised. Landmasses are frequently eroded before other pioneer tree species can become established. Numerous channels of the Brahmaputra River criss-cross the entire area and in the course of time, silt depositions and changing course of the River form into the "beels" (water bodies or lakes) of various sizes and depth. This process of erosion and deposition is still going on along the Northern Boundary of Kaziranga National Park.

Pressure on space

With the establishment of tea plantations, villages and agricultural activities on the southern boundary of the Park, it has now increasingly become difficult for the wild animals to move across to the Karbi Anglong hills during high flood season, and the animals are vulnerable to poaching and to the heavy traffic on National Highway no 37.

Compounding the lack of space is the significant increase in populations of the megaherbivores: rhinoceros, elephant and buffalo. In the mid 1980s the Government of Assam proposed a number of additions to Kaziranga NP, to secure corridors for migrating wild animals, and escape routes in case of high flooding. In total six proposed Additions have been notified, of which three are pending finalisation due for legal, administrative and financial reasons.

World Heritage List

Kaziranga's biodiversity earned it inclusion on the World Heritage List's "Convention concerning the protection of the world's cultural and natural heritage" in 1985. It is an outstanding example, representing significant ongoing ecological and biological processes in the evolution and development of natural ecosystems consisting of several communities of plants and animals.

Kaziranga:

- Has the largest undivided and representative area of Brahmaputra Valley flood plain grassland and forest with associated large herbivores, avifauna and wet land values
- Is home to the world's largest population of the Greater one-horned rhinoceros, wild buffalo and swamp deer
- Has a high ecological density of tigers, and a significant population of Asiatic elephant
- Provides an entire range of habitat from the floodplains to grassland to hilly evergreen forest communities
- Offers considerable research, education and recreation opportunities

Thanks

With thanks to N K Vasu, Director of Kaziranga National Park, for providing the information on which this summary is based.