

Wild fauna of Gorumara National Park, Jalpaiguri, West Bengal.

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Gorumara National Park is one of the largest diversity of mega fauna in West Bengal .This Reserve Forest since 1895 was declared as a National Park in 1994 comprising a total area of 79.999 sq.km having approx. 48 species of Carnivores & Herbivores, 193 species of Birds, 22 species of Reptiles and 27 species of fishes. This is the most important and crucial migratory corridor of the Asiatic Elephant and is also the residence of the Great Indian one horned Rhinoceros and herds of Gaur. Other fauna of the park include leopard, jungle cat, leopard cat, fishing cat, monkeys, different species of deer, the small and large Indian civet, Malayan giant squirrel, wild pigs, turtles, pythons. The Park's biodiversity is reflected in its wonderful avifauna comprising Hornbills, Hoopoe, woodpeckers, Green pigeons, Ibis, Crested serpent Eagle, nightjars, owls, Red Jungle Fowl and Peacock and many migratory birds as Brahminy duck, Whistling Teals.

Introduction

Gorumara National Park, in its present form came under the control of Wildlife Division – II, Jalpaiguri in November 1995. One of the recent introductions to the National Parks Map of India, Gorumara had been a Wildlife Sanctuary (Vide Notification No- 5181 – FOR, dt: 2.08.1949) and a reserve forest since 1895 (Notification No. 3147 – FOR dt:02.07.1895 with correction later) under the Indian Forest Act. (XII of 1878). Later, with the increase in the size to about 80 sqkm and the subsequent Government Notification Gorumara was declared as National Park in 1994 and thus started getting more attention from the Wildlife management point of view.

Approach: The National Park spreads in between the localities of Lataguri, Chalsa and Nagrakata,

by the side of National Highway 31 that runs between Siliguri and Guwahati. Siliguri (Airport – Bagdora) is well connected by flight. The nearest broad gauge station being Chalsa, well connected by rail with all parts of India.

Temperature: - It lies in the moist tropical zone. The average day temperature varies from 10 deg C to 21 deg C from November to February, between 27 deg C to 37 deg C during May to Sept and between 24 deg C to 27 deg C during the rest of the year.

Humidity: - It remains adequately humid throughout the year the relative humidity varying from 80 % to 100%.

Rivers: - Jaldhaka, Murti, Garati, Indong.

National level Significance: - Gorumara National Park belongs to the biogeographical zone 7B (Lower Gangetic plain) as recognized by Rodgers and Panwar 1988 (W.I.I, Dehradun). Major significance of this National Park is that by harbouring number of Schedule –I animals of the Wildlife (Protection) Act 1972 it gives maximum protection to the following fauna:

- 1) Great One horned Indian Rhinoceros – *Rhinoceros unicornis*
- 2) Indian Elephant- *Elephas maximus*
- 3) Gaur (Indian bison) – *Bos gaurus*.
- 4) Tiger – *Panthera tigris*.
- 5) Leopard - (*Panthera pardus*)
- 6) Bengal Florican – *Eupodotis bengalensis*.
- 7) Reticulated python – *Python reticulatus*.
- 8) Giant squirrel - *Ratufa macroura*.

Significance at International level: - Various species of wildlife enlisted in the Red Data Book of IUCN and the Appendices of CITES are provided protection in this park hence it bears immense International significance.

TABLE – I

Sr. No.	Species	RDB Listing	Cites Appendices
1	Rhino	Endangered (E)	I
2	Gaur	Vulnerable (V)	I
3	Elephant	(E)	I
4	Tiger	(E)	I
5	Jungle cat		II
6	Monkey		II
7	Leopard	Threatened (T)	I
8	Python		I
9	Giant squirrel		I

Appendix I =Ban on International Trade

Appendix II =International Trade Permitted with Restriction

Significance at local level: -The National Park has immense significance in view of it being situated in the middle of the migrating route between the river Teesta and Torsa in North Bengal. Gorumara can become one part of Managed Elephant Range (MER) containing and sustaining the wild elephant population of N. Bengal. Especially the Tondu, Gorumara, Panjhora and Indong Blocks serve as major habitat for Elephant population

Scientific significance:-Being one of the few pocket containing natural population of Great Indian Rhinoceros, Gorumara provide an excellent opportunity for studying the habitat, behaviour, food, population genetic and reproductive biology of Great Indian Rhino. Also it provides excellent

habitat study opportunities along with man-animal interaction with respect to the mega-herbivores like the Asian Elephant and Gaur. There is also great scope for scientific study of the listed species.

Vertebrates:-The National Park is very rich in wildlife and contains 12 species included in Schedule-I of the Wildlife (Protection) Act.1972 including Great One horned Rhinoceros.

As per the latest records of 2004 –2005, wildlife census it is estimated that at present in the park there are 26 one horned Indian Rhinoceros, about 12 wild Asian elephants residing at Gorumara National Park while approx. 315 wild elephants are migratory. Approximately 45 leopards move around the park and prefer the adjacent teagardens. A total of about 250 deer comprising of Sambar, Chital, Barking deer & hog deer roam around these forest areas.

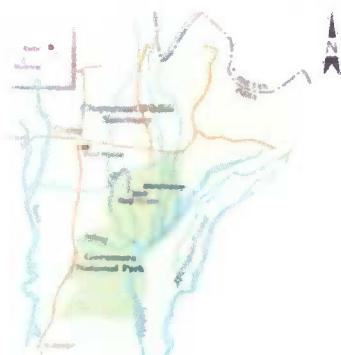
More than one thousand Python reside in this park.

Major forest type wise distribution of animals:-

I) Wet Mixed Forest (Wet Semi evergreen Forest) It has a closed canopy of considerable height and a fully shaded forest floor covered with leaf litter. Grazing and browsing by ungulates are very rare except in some place where canopy is open. Food resources available in this type are mainly under ground corm and tubes of *Costus speciosus*, *Curcuma amada* , *Globa racemosa* , *Hedychium gracile*, *Zingiber goseum*, *Dioscorea bulbifera*, and others. Due to absence of grass, large herbivores usually are not found except wild boars which are capable of digging up underground corms and tubers.

Ehretia acuminata, *Hedychium philippensis* and fleshy fruits of *Syzygium cuminii*, *S. operculatum* and many others that are food for arboreal monkeys and Squirrel are found here.

II) Savannah Grasslands: Includes grassland with Khair-Siris-Simul succession. The riverine grassland and savanah woodland occupy about 20% of the total plant cover of the National Park. This type of vegetation offers best grazing ground for Rhino, Sambar, Hog deer, Chital, Elephant and Gaur.



Pic.1 Location of Gorumara National Park



Pic.2 The 'DOORS' where nature has kept her doors wide open



Pic.3 The mega herbivore of Gorumara National Park - The Indian elephant (*Elephas maximus*)



Pic.4 'Great Indian Rhinoceros' - Flagship species of Gorumara



Pic.5 Herd of Indian Bisons (*Bos gaurus*) - Residents of Gorumara National Park



Pic.6 The most common deer - Sambar (*Cervus unicolor*)



Pic.7 The peafowl (*Pavo cristatus*)

TABLE - II LIST OF MAMMALS OF GORUMARA NATIONAL PARK

Sl. no,	Local or Common Name	Zoological name
1	Bengal (Common) Monkey	<i>Macacus rhesus</i>
2	Tiger	<i>Panthera tigris</i>
3	Leopard/Panther	<i>Panthera pardus</i>
4	Fishing Cat	<i>Felis virerrina</i>
5	Leopard Cat	<i>Felis bengalensis hersfield</i>
6	Jungle Cat	<i>Felis chaus</i>
7	Large Indian Civet	<i>Vivera zibetha zibetha</i>
8	Small Indian Civet	<i>Vivera malaccensis malacencis</i>
9	Indian Palm Civet	<i>Paradoxurus sp</i>
10	Malayan Palm Civet	<i>Paradoxurus hermaphroditus</i>
11	Small Indian Mongoose	<i>Herpestes aurobunctatus</i>
12	Common Mongoose	<i>Herpestes edwardsii</i>
13	Crab Eating Mongoose	<i>Herpestes urva</i>
14	Jackal	<i>Canis aureus</i>
15	Indian Fox	<i>Vulpes bengalensis</i>
16	Indian Marten	<i>Martes flavigula</i>
17	Brown Ferret badger	<i>Helictes orientalis</i>
18	Burmese Ferret badger	<i>Helictes sp</i>
19	Common otter	<i>Lutra lutra monicola</i>
20	Smooth Coated Indian Otter	<i>Lutra perspicillata</i>
21	Clawlers otter	<i>Lutra leptonyx</i>
22	Sloth Bear	<i>Melursus ursinus</i>
23	Short tailed Mole	<i>Talpa Micrura</i>
24	Common flying Fox	<i>Pteropus gigantius</i>
25	Fulvous Fruit Bat	<i>Rousettus Leschensulti Leschensulti</i>
26	Southern Short Nosed Fruit bat	<i>Cynopterus sphinx sphinx</i>
27	Allied Horse-shoe bat	<i>Rhinolophus rouxi rouxi</i>
28	Common Yellow Bat	<i>Scotophilus kuhli</i>
29	Wroughton's bat	<i>Scotophilus temmencki wroughtni</i>
30	Hairy Winged bat	<i>Marpiocephalus harpai lasyunes</i>
31	Wall bat	<i>Myotis mystacinus muricola</i>
32	Assam Giant Squirrel	<i>Ratufa bicolor</i>
33	Common five striped squirrel	<i>Funambulus pennanti</i>
34	Bhutan Duars rat	<i>Rattus ratus bhotia</i>
35	Bengal Mole rat	<i>Bandicoota bengalensis</i>
36	Bengal bandicoot	<i>Bandicoota sp.</i>
37	Crestless Himalayan Porcupine	<i>Hystrix hodgsoni</i>
38	Common Indian hare	<i>Lepus ruficaudatus</i>
39	Hispid hare	<i>Lepus hispidus</i>
40	Indian Elephant	<i>Elephas maximus</i>
41	Great Indian One-horned Rhinoceros	<i>Rhinoceros unicornis</i>
42	The Gaur	<i>Bos gauras</i>
43	The Bengal Barking deer	<i>Muntiacas muntjac vaginalis</i>
44	The Sambar	<i>Cervus unicolor</i>
45	Spotted Deer	<i>Axis axis</i>
46	Hog Deer	<i>Axis porcinus</i>
47	Wild boar	<i>Sus scrofa cristatus</i>
48	Indian Pangolin	<i>Manis crassicaudata</i>

Avifauna: The Park is a birdwatcher's paradise with its rich its avifaunal biodiversity comprising of Hornbills, Woodpeckers, Green pigeons, Cuckoos, Orioles, Babblers, Minivets, Pheasants, Mynas, Ibis, and our national bird - the Peacock.

Many migratory birds including the Brahminy duck, Teals are the regular visitors of this park. The most common water birds are the large and little Cormorant, Indian Shag, Darter, Egrets, Lesser adjutant Stork and Lapwing. Owls and Nightjars are the nocturnal hunters of the Gorumara National Park.

Reptiles: Different species of Tortoises and turtles as *Trionyx hurum*, *Chitra indica*, *Emyda granosa*, *Geomyda indopeninsularis*, *Kachuga tectum* are seen in this park. Monitor lizards, Gecko and other varieties of lizard reside here. *Python molurus*, King cobra, Hooded tree snake, Common wolf snake, Banded krait, Common krait, Russell's Viper are also often encountered in this forest.

Amphibians: *Bufo melanosticus* and *Rana tigrina* commonly found here.

Pisces: *Labeo rohita*, *Heteropneustes fossilis*, *Ophiocephalus marulus*, *Macrones spp.*, *Tetradon spp.*, *Barbus spp.*, *Clarias batrachus*, *B. barna* are the famous fishes of the rivers of Gorumara National Park.

Identified insects and spiders: Beetles, weevils, butterflies, moths, bugs, dragonflies, damselflies, crickets, hoppers, leaf hoppers, aphids, lace wings, spiders are many other insects have been identified from Gorumara.

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