

# Return of Gharials in Assam's Orang National park Expected.

**News:** The government has issued a notification to make Orang National Park more than thrice its existing size which may see a return of Gharials in the Brahmaputra river. [Read The News Here.](#)

## Let's Understand In Simple Language:

Recently, the Assam government had on January 3 issued a notification for adding 200.32 sq. km to the 78.82 sq. km Orang National Park. Much of the area to be added comprises the Brahmaputra river and the sandbars or islands in it.

With this increase in size, the government is pursuing a policy for the reintroduction of the gharial that became locally extinct more than six decades ago. The wildlife experts believe that with better protection, the stretch of the Brahmaputra in the Kaziranga-Orang landscape is ideal for the sustenance of gharials.

The Assam government believes that the Gangetic dolphin can also be a beneficiary of the final notification of the addition to Orang which is expected to take at least three months after the rights and claims are settled.

The government had in September 2021 dropped the 'Rajiv Gandhi' prefix to Orang given by the government in 1992.

## Orang National Park:

- The Orang National Park also known as Rajiv Gandhi Orang National Park is located on the north bank of the Brahmaputra River in the Darrang and Sonitpur districts of Assam and covers an area of 78.81 square kilometers.
- It was established as a wildlife sanctuary in 1985 but was declared as National Park in 1999.
- It has a rich flora and fauna, including great Indian rhinoceros, pygmy hog, Asian elephant, wild water buffalo and Bengal tiger. It is the only stronghold of rhinoceros on the north bank of the Brahmaputra river.
- It is also 49<sup>th</sup> Tiger Reserve of the country, being notified in 2016.
- It is also known as the mini Kaziranga National Park (IUCN site) since the two parks have a similar landscape made up of marshes, streams, and grasslands.
- It is the only stronghold of rhinoceros on the north bank of the Brahmaputra river.

- As per the latest round of Tiger estimation carried by the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) between January to March 2017, Orang's tiger density is 35.44 tigers per 100 sq km and thus can replace 'Kaziranga National Park' as a park with highest Tiger density in the country.
- From 1991, there was a serious threat to the survival of the park and its wild animals due to intense anthropogenic pressure and by insurgency.
- Under an initiative by the World Association of Zoos and Aquariums (WAZA), the Orang National Park was identified for conservation to evolve policies and programmes to protect the Indian rhinos and to assist in the development of the park. WWF India, the Government of Assam and the International Rhino Foundation (IRF), with support from Zoo Basel, (Switzerland) and the IRV 2020, have undertaken this operation.
- WWF and Government of India, under the project titled "Rhino Vision India (RVI)", have also plans to enhance the number of rhinoceros in the park to 300 by 2020, in addition to increasing the number of tigers.

## About National Park:

They are the areas that are set by the government to conserve the natural environment.

- A national park has more restrictions as compared to a wildlife sanctuary.
- Their boundaries are fixed and defined.
- The main objective of a national park is to protect the natural environment of the area and biodiversity conservation.
- National parks can be declared both by the Central Government and State governments. No alteration of the boundaries of a national park shall be made except on a resolution passed by the State Legislature.

## What is allowed and what is not allowed inside National Parks:

- Here, no human activity is allowed.
- Grazing of livestock and private tenurial rights are not permitted here.
- Species mentioned in the Schedules of the Wildlife Act are not allowed to be hunted or captured.
- No person shall destroy, remove, or exploit any wildlife from a National Park or destroy or damage the habitat of any wild animal or deprive any wild animal of its habitat within a national park.
- They cannot be downgraded to the status of a 'sanctuary'.

### Protected Areas of India (July, 2019)

	No.	Total Area (km <sup>2</sup> )	Coverage % of Country
<b>National Parks (NPs)</b>	104	40501.13	1.23
<b>Wildlife Sanctuaries (WLSs)</b>	551	119775.80	3.64
<b>Conservation Reserves (CRs)</b>	88	4356.49	0.13
<b>Community Reserves</b>	127	525.22	0.02
<b>Protected Areas (PAs)</b>	<b>870</b>	<b>165158.54</b>	<b>5.02</b>

**Click here for the list of National Parks in India.**

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Image credit: <https://www.insightsonindia.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/National-Parks.jpg>

## Gharial:

- Gharial derives its name from ghara, an Indian word for pot because of a bulbous knob (narial excrescence) present at the end of their snout. The ghara also renders gharial the only visibly sexually dimorphic crocodilian.

- Possession of a strongly attenuated snout and rows of uniform sharp teeth supported by a relatively long, well muscled neck makes it a most efficient fish catcher.
- Like tigers are the topmost predators in a forest, gharials are the topmost predators in a river. They (gharial) balance the riverine food chain.
- Gharial keeps in check their prey (i.e. fish), which keep in check their prey and so on. The presence of gharials indicates a healthy riverine ecosystem.
- The male gharial has a distinctive boss at the end of the snout, which resembles an earthenware pot known in Hindias. Hence, the name.



<https://www.oneearth.org/species-of-the-week-gharial/>

### **Conservation Status:**

- Critically Endangered— IUCN Red List.
- It is a Schedule 1 species under Indian wildlife act, 1972

### **Habitat:**

- Foremost flowing rivers with high sand banks that they use for basking and building nests
- Gharials once inhabited all the major river systems of the Indian Subcontinent, from the Irrawaddy River in the east to the Indus River in the west.
- Their distribution is now limited to only 2% of their former range

- They are found in Girwa River, Chambal River, Ken River, Son River, Mahanadi River, Ramganga River

**Threats:**

- Hunting for skins, trophies and indigenous medicine and their eggs collected for consumption.
- Decrease of riverine habitat as dams, barrages, irrigation canals and artificial embankments were built; siltation and sand-mining changed river courses

**Conservation efforts in India:**

- Project Crocodile for intensive captive breeding and rearing program began in 1975 (Government of India+ United Nations Development Fund + Food and Agriculture Organization).

## Questions related to the topic:

**Q. In which one of the following categories of protected areas in India are local people not allowed to collect and use the biomass? [2012]**

- (a) Biosphere Reserves
- (b) National Parks
- (c) Wetlands declared under Ramsar Convention
- (d) Wildlife Sanctuaries

**Answer: b)**

**Q. Consider the following statements : [2010]**

1. The boundaries of a National Park are defined by legislation.
2. A Biosphere Reserve is declared to conserve a few specific species of flora and fauna.
3. In a Wildlife Sanctuary, limited biotic interference is permitted.

**Which of the statements given above is / correct?**

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 1 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

**Answer: c)**

**Q. Established in 1936, \_\_\_\_\_ is India's first National Park.**

- a) Bandhavgarh National Park
- b) Indravati National Park
- c) Jim Corbett National Park
- d) Gir National Park

**Answer: c)**

**Q. Kaziranga National Park is in which state?**

- a) Madhya Pradesh
- b) Gujarat
- c) Arunachal Pradesh
- d) Assam

**Answer: d)**

**Q. \_\_\_\_\_ is the state with the highest number of National Parks in India.**

- a) Rajasthan
- b) Kerala
- c) Maharashtra
- d) Madhya Pradesh

**Answer: d)**

**Q. According to the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, which of the following animals cannot be hunted by any person except under some provisions provided by law?**

1. Gharial
2. Indian wild ass
3. Wild buffalo

**Select the correct answer using the code given below:**

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only

- (c) 1 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

**Answer: d)**

**Q. If you want to see gharials in their natural habitat, which one of the following is the best place to visit?**

- (a) Bhitarkanika Mangroves
- (b) Chambal River
- (c) Pulicat Lake
- (d) Deepor Beel

**Answer: b)**

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