

IN FRAMES

Relevant for: Environment | Topic: Biodiversity, Ecology, and Wildlife Related Issues

Spread across the floodplains of the Brahmaputra, Kaziranga's forests, wetlands and grasslands are home to tigers, elephants, water buffaloes, swamp deer, Hoolock gibbons and of course, the crowning glory, the Indian one-horned rhinoceroses. These plains are home to the world's largest population of the species.

The 14th rhino census was completed at the Kaziranga National Park and Tiger Reserve on March 28. All eyes are on the rhino population at the UNESCO World Heritage Site as devastating floods had swept Kaziranga since 2018, when the census was held previously. From then to 2022, 400 rhinos died from natural and other causes, though poaching has significantly come down.

In the 2018 census, 2,413 rhinos were found in Kaziranga. But this time, 2,613 were counted. Fifty elephants were deployed for the census with Kaziranga divided into 84 compartments. A total of 252 frontline staffers were directly involved. Experienced forest officers, NGOs, and researchers from the Wildlife Institute of India and WWF-India participated.

Kaziranga is known for its good population of animals, and wildlife conservation initiatives in the park are popular. The park has successfully managed to grow the population of greater one-horned rhinoceros, an endangered species. Overtime, the tiger population has also increased, and that is the reason Kaziranga was declared a tiger reserve in 2006. It now has 121 big cats, according to the latest census.

Text and images by Ritu Raj Konwar

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