

DIP IN EASTERN SWAMP DEER NUMBERS

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Species at risk: The eastern swamp deer is now distributed to areas beyond the Kaziranga National Park. [File Photo](#)

The population of the vulnerable eastern swamp deer, extinct elsewhere in South Asia, has dipped in the Kaziranga National Park and Tiger Reserve.

Officials attributed the decrease from 907 individuals in 2018 to 868 during the Eastern Swamp Deer Estimation on January 10 and 11 to two high floods in 2019 and 2020. On the brighter side, they said the animal is now distributed to areas beyond the park known as the world's best address of the one-horned rhinoceros.

"The eastern swamp deer is endemic to Kaziranga and is not the primary prey of the park's carnivores, primarily the tiger. But its population is crucial for the ecological health of the tiger reserve and the encouraging sign is the animal has now moved to other areas such as Orang National Park and Laokhowa-Burachapori wildlife sanctuaries," Kaziranga's field director P. Sivakumar told *The Hindu*.

The eastern swamp deer was once concentrated in the central Kohora and Bagori ranges of Kaziranga. The animal had numbered 1,161 in 2011 while the lowest of 213 individuals was recorded in 1966. In the last survey, the female eastern swamp deer outnumbered the males by more than three times. The female of the species recorded 557 individuals compared to 173 males.

The 1,302 sq. km Kaziranga had an uptick in the number of waterfowl species from 112 counted a year ago to 126 during the fourth Wetland Bird Estimation carried out from December 21-27.

The birds were counted in 211 different points in 157 waterbodies involving 35 enumeration teams, including volunteers from local educational institutes, NGOs and officers and frontline staff of the Forest Department.

"The bar-headed goose topped the list with 16,552 birds followed by the northern pintail at 9,493 and the common teal at 5,631. Ferruginous duck, an important species with a count of 2,236, may be regarded as a highlight of this estimation," Mr. Sivakumar said.

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