

*Wonder Island*  
**BURHACHAPORI**

Assam State Biodiversity Board

Wonder Island  
BURHACHAPORI

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Sincere gratitude to the frontline forest staff, the managers and others associated with the park both in past and present. It is their hard work and dedication that has allowed nature to spread its magnificence uninterrupted.

The Biodiversity Board is grateful to Hon'ble Minister, Environment and Forests-Assam, Shri Rakibul Hussain for his constant support, guidance and encouragement.

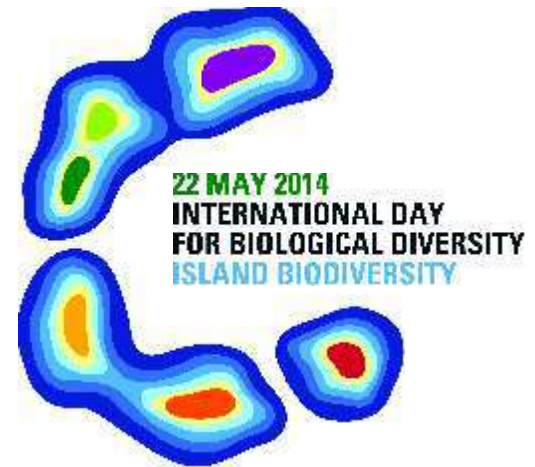
Our Gratitude to Shri S. C. Das, IAS, Chairman-ASBB & Additional Chief Secretary-Assam and to all the Members of the Board.

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Published on the theme of  
**'Island Biodiversity'**  
on  
**International Day for Biological Diversity**  
2014



Indian Elephants in Basabari, Burhachapori



Wonder Island  
**BURHACHAPORI**



**Shri Rakibul Hussain**

Hon'ble Minister, Environment & Forests,  
Panchayat & Rural Development, Assam

The islands of the mighty Brahmaputra River are wonders of nature, harboring unique biological diversity. These ecosystems are fragile yet full of opportunities. Understanding their biological processes can help bring ecological security enabling stability and sustainability in the livelihood of dependent communities. I congratulate the Assam State Biodiversity Board for their initiative of focusing on the biodiversity of Burhachapori Wildlife Sanctuary on the occasion of International Day for Biological Diversity, 2014.



Flowering of Simul (*Bombax ceiba*) Trees in Jhaoni, Burhachapori





**Shri Subhash Chadra Das, IAS**  
Chairman, Assam State Biodiversity Board  
Addl. Chief Secretary, Govt. of Assam

The theme of 'Island Biodiversity' on the occasion of celebration of International Day for Biological Diversity, 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2014, presents an opportunity for us to highlight the magnificence of the Brahmaputra River and its islands. While *Majuli*, the largest river island in the country, is known world-over for its cultural heritage, the *Burhachapori* Island, although a Wildlife Sanctuary, needs more focused attention for its biodiversity. This publication is an attempt to highlight the unique natural wealth of Burhachapori Island.



**Shri Davinder Kumar, IAS**  
Principal Secretary,  
Environment & Forests, Assam

Burhachapori presents a panorama of habitat and associated biodiversity. I am sure this publication would generate awareness and interest amongst society for conservation of this unique island and its flora and fauna. I congratulate the Assam State Biodiversity Board for choosing this place for celebration of International Day for Biological Diversity on the theme of 'Island Biodiversity' on 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2014.



**Shri V. K. Vishnoi, IFS**  
PCCF & HoFF-Assam

Islands exhibit enthralling array of life forms. Burhachapori with its spread of grasslands, fresh-water mangroves, woodlands, sandbanks and wetlands, provides excellent habitat for a variety of birds, reptiles, amphibians and fishes apart from large mammals. It is an ideal place to witness the magnificence of nature and learn from it.



**Shri R. P. Agarwalla, IFS**  
PCCF-Wildlife, Assam

Burhachapori is a biodiversity rich area with huge potential both for conservation and for eco-tourism. Celebration of International Day for Biological Diversity 2014 on the theme of 'Island Biodiversity' at Burhachapori will highlight its significance and give impetus to the ongoing conservation efforts.





## International Day for Biological Diversity, 2014

### *Island Biodiversity*

Islands and their surrounding areas constitute unique ecosystems often comprising many plant and animal species that are endemic i.e. found nowhere else on Earth. The legacy of a unique evolutionary history these ecosystems are irreplaceable treasures.

Islands are home to some 600 million people—one-tenth of the world's population. Many islanders are endowed with unique cultures and derive much of their economic, environmental and cultural well-being directly or indirectly from the rich natural resources in their immediate environment. Islands harbour numerous discrete ecosystems, from mountain forests to wetlands and beyond. These provide food, fresh water, fuelwood, fibre, medicines, timber and other important raw materials, in addition to aesthetic, spiritual, educational and recreational values, that support island livelihoods, economies and cultures. Island ecosystems also contribute to the maintenance of ecosystem functions: they provide defence against natural disasters & diseases, support nutrient cycling besides soil and sand formation; and they contribute to the regulation of climate.

While the same can be said of biodiversity in other settings, the components of biodiversity and the ecosystem services they provide is all the more critical on islands.

Yet island biodiversity is not only of vital importance to island dwellers. Islands are repositories of genetic information whose present day biodiversity stands as a record of millions of years of evolution. This biodiversity has an inherent value to the world in general & mankind in particular.





## Foreword

The mighty Brahmaputra, being a braided river leaves a series of islands on its course, that are often small and temporary. However, two islands namely, Majuli and Burhachapori are relatively large and permanent. Majuli, the world's largest river-island is known for its rich cultural heritage, whereas Burhachapori is considered unique for its rich floral and faunal diversity. Naturally, on the theme of '*Island-Biodiversity*' there could be no better place than Burhachapori for celebrating International *Day for Biological Diversity*, 2014.

Burhachapori and Laokhowa are two adjacent wildlife sanctuaries and together they also constitute buffer area of Kaziranga National Park. The habitat here is vibrant and the atmosphere abuzz with possibilities of Rhino re-introduction. Besides, there are lots of other amazing attractions, prominent amongst them being ground-breeding by the Blue-tailed Bee-eater birds: a real treat for bird lovers. The spread of fresh water mangroves and stages of vegetative-succession in response to biotic pressure are also worth watching.

This publication presents glimpses of biodiversity that thrive on this tiny island of river Brahmaputra. All the photographs are shot within the sanctuary area by the friends of nature who have been promoting the cause of Burhachapori for several years. We gratefully acknowledge their contribution.

Hope this booklet is good enough to tempt your visit.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'A. K. Johari', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

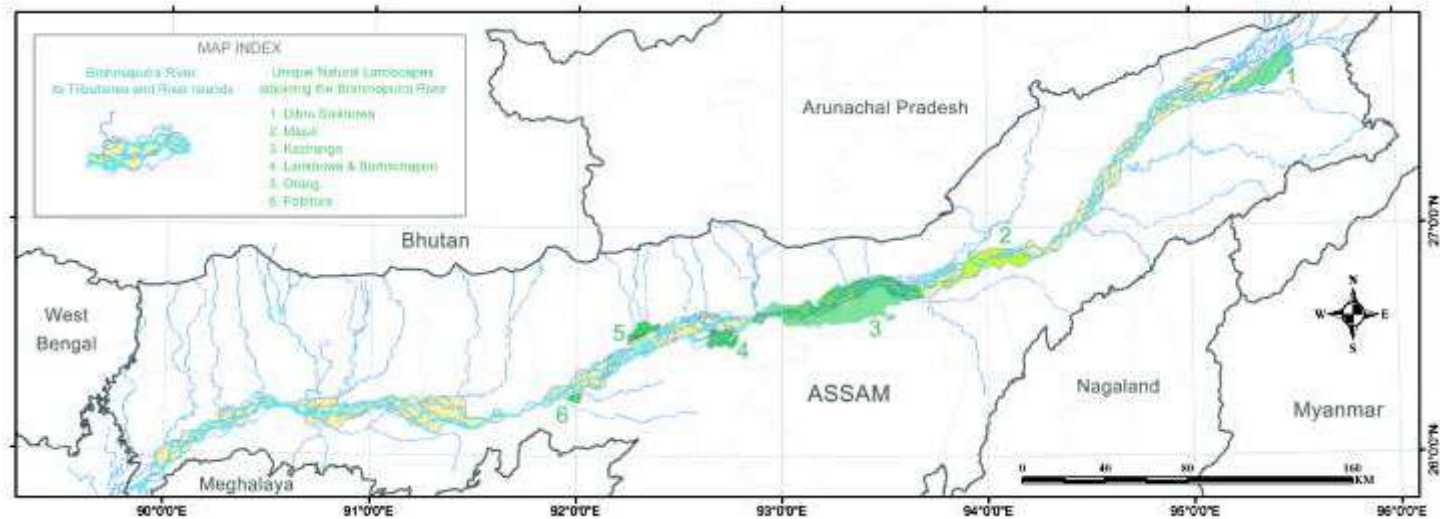
(A. K. Johari)  
Member Secretary, Assam State Biodiversity Board



## THE BRAHMAPUTRA RIVER & ITS UNIQUE NATURAL LANDSCAPES

The Brahmaputra River in Assam flows through a highly braided channel. The river course is marked by the presence of numerous mid-channel and lateral bars and islands, locally known as *chars*. These river islands are characterised by varying degree of permanence and most of them are submerged during the monsoons. The core of the river islands, which are least affected by floods, are characterised by savannah grassland vegetation which also extends along the south bank floodplains of the Brahmaputra River. It forms one of the world's richest and most ecologically diverse habitats for a wide variety of faunal and floral species. The entire landscape is intercepted by numerous wetlands locally known as *beels*. However, frequent changes in the river course has resulted in drastic bankline changes and rapid erosion along its south bank.

**Map:** The Brahmaputra River and its Islands in Assam



## Few unique landscapes of the Brahmaputra River

### DIBRU-SAIKHOWA

Dibru - Saikhowa National Park, located in Tinsukia district of Assam, is also a biosphere reserve. The park is bounded by the Brahmaputra and Lohit rivers in the north and Dibru river in the south. It is the largest salix swamp forest in north east India. Situated in the flood plains of the Brahmaputra and the Lohit, at an altitude of 118 m above sea level, Dibru-Saikhowa is a safe heaven for many endangered species.

Originally created to help conserve the habitat of the rare White-winged wood duck, the park is also home to other rare creatures such as water buffalo, wild horse, the tiger and Capped Langur.

### MĀJULI

Mājuli is the largest river island in the world. The island is formed by the Brahmaputra river in the south and the Kherkutia *Suti*, joined by the Subansiri River in the north. Mājuli has been the cultural capital for the past five hundred years. The *satras* of the island are the abode of the Assamese neo-Vaisnavite culture.

### KAZIRANGA

Kaziranga National Park is in the Golaghat, Nagaon and Sonitpur districts of Assam. A World Heritage Site, the park hosts two-thirds of the world's Great Indian one-horned Rhinoceros population and the highest density of Tigers among protected areas in the world. Kaziranga is a vast expanse of tall elephant grass, marshland, and dense tropical moist deciduous forests, crisscrossed by four major rivers, including the Brahmaputra.

### LAOKHOWA AND BURHACHAPORI

Laokhowa and Burhachapori Wildlife Sanctuaries, in Nagaon and Sonitpur districts of Assam respectively, are part of the Kaziranga-Orang riverine landscape. The two sanctuaries, along with the adjacent islands of the Brahmaputra River, have been identified as a major corridor for straying animals of the protected areas of central Assam. The two sanctuaries are notified buffers of the Kaziranga Tiger Reserve. They are home to fauna like Elephants, Tigers, Wild buffaloes, Deer, Wild boars, Otters, Pangolins, Binturongs, besides rare birds like the Bengal florican and numerous local and migratory birds.

### ORANG

The Orang National Park, also known as mini Kaziranga, is located on the north bank of the Brahmaputra River in the Darrang and Sonitpur districts of Assam. The park has a rich flora and fauna, including Great Indian one-horned Rhinoceros, Pygmy hog, Elephants, Wild buffaloes and Tigers. It is the only stronghold of rhinoceros on the north bank of the Brahmaputra river.

### POBITORA

Pobitora Wildlife Sanctuary is in the Marigaon district of Assam. It covers flat flood plains and a hillock (Raja Mayong) in the south bank of the Brahmaputra River. It has a dense population of the Great Indian one-horned Rhinoceros along with Leopard, Wild boar, Barking deer, Wild buffalo and numerous migratory birds and various reptiles.

## BURHACHAPORI AS A WILDLIFE CORRIDOR

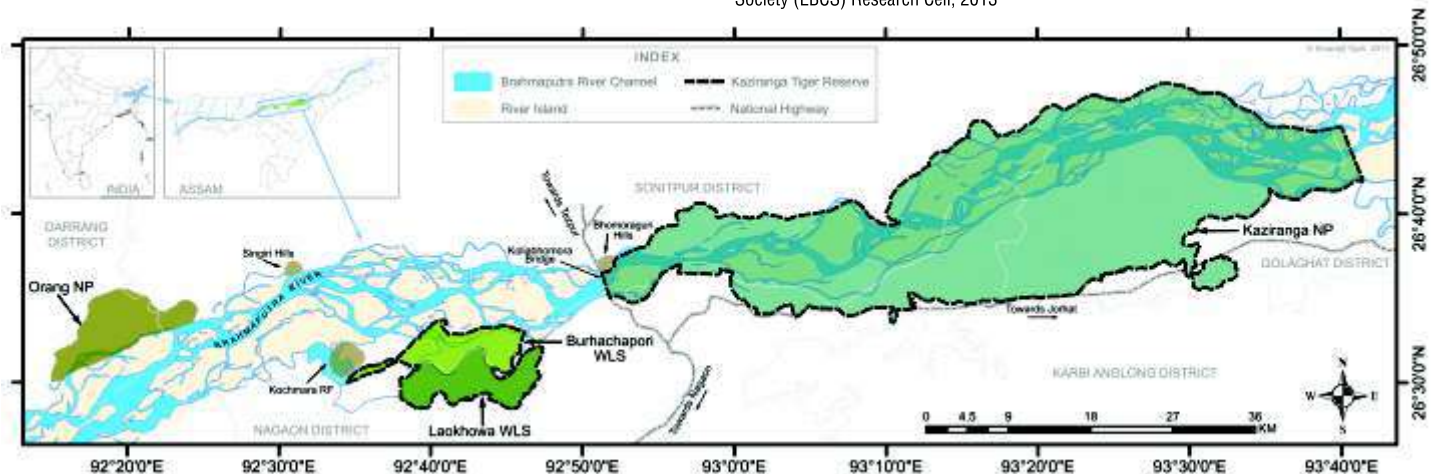
The Burhachapori WLS is a representative area of Brahmaputra flood plain, located in the south bank of the Brahmaputra in Sonitpur district, between latitudes 26°30' N to 26°33' N and longitudes 92°35' E to 92°46' E. The sanctuary is nestled between the Kaziranga National Park to its east, the Orang NP to its west, the Laokhowa WLS to the south and the Brahmaputra to the North. The Burhachapori, along with the adjoining Laokhowa WLS, are notified buffers of the Kaziranga Tiger Reserve.

The islands of the Brahmaputra River act as important corridor of wildlife movement between Kaziranga Tiger Reserve and Orang National Park. The corridor is an extensive riverine landscape along the Brahmaputra covering an area of over 1,500 sq. km. Wildlife such as rhinos, elephants, tigers, asiatic wild water buffaloes, among others, take shelter in the river

**Table:** Number of Islands in the Brahmaputra River adjoining Burhachapori WLS, between Koliabhomora Bridge to Singiri Hills, Sonitpur, where significant faunal presence have been documented between 2008 till 2013

Fauna	Faunal presence in Islands -	
	Direct Evidence	Indirect Evidences
Royal Bengal Tiger	7	11
One Horned Rhinoceros	11	17
Asiatic Wild Buffalo	28	32
Elephants	21	35
Bengal Florican	7	2
Turtles	17	-
Vultures	11	-

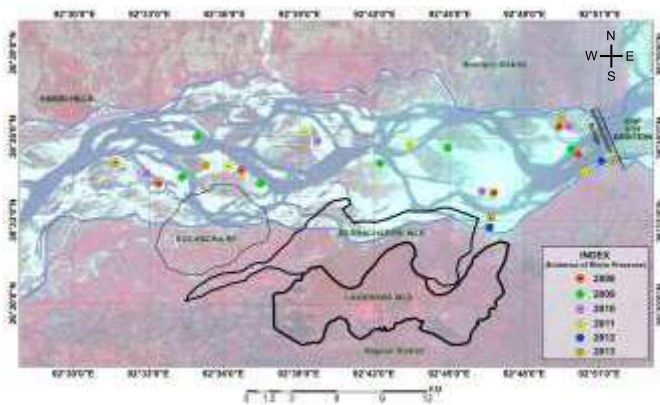
Source: Nagaon Wildlife Division (NWLD) & Laokhowa Burhachapori Wildlife Conservation Society (LBSC) Research Cell, 2013



islands of the Brahmaputra and use them as migratory corridor for movement within the Kaziranga-Orang-Laokhowa-Burhachapori landscape. The Gangetic river dolphins, otters, deer, hare, turtles, snakes etc. and many species of resident and migratory birds, including vultures, are regularly sighted within this corridor.

Frequent changes in the river course of the Brahmaputra have resulted in erosion along the northern side of the Burhachapori resulting in the creation of new *chars* within the PA boundary. In these newly established *chars*, short creeping grass and colonization by *Tamarix dioica* (*Jhaou bon*) is quite prominent. Some of the islands are occupied by nomadic cattle rearers (*khutti* dwellers) and permanent char dwellers. A few river islands are still unoccupied. The prime livelihood activities of the settlers on these islands are agriculture and fishing along with other seasonal activities like boat making and repairing, petty business, wage earning activities, etc.

**Map:** Rhino Presence Map in Brahmaputra River Islands between 2008 to 2013 (Source: NWLD & LBCS Research Cell)



Stray tiger and rhino from Kaziranga NP in Bhurbandha Village near Burhachapori WLS (2013)



This tigress was photographed in Laokhowa Burhachapori WLS Complex on 26 February 2013 by the NWLD and LBCS Research Cell. The same tigress was earlier photographed in the Eastern Range (Agoratoli, Bokakhat) of Kaziranga National Park and identified as KZT\_072\_F. The tigress effectively travelled more than 100 km through the Brahmaputra Riverine

corridor from Agoratoli to Laokhowa-Burhachapori. Such migratory behavior is quite common for wild animals like tigers, rhinos, elephants etc.



## HABITAT OF BURHACHAPORI

Burhachapori is primarily a flood plain representing the ideal alluvial Brahmaputra Valley ecosystem with a unique combination of grasslands, woodlands, wetlands and different riparian forest types. The region falls under the sub-tropical monsoon climatic regime. The entire area of the sanctuary is more or less plain, interspersed with *nallas* and *beels*. The region has a gentle slope from south to north and east to west. The elevation of the region varies from 35 to 60 meters above M.S.L. and most of the low-lying area in the region is prone to flooding during monsoons. Flood is an annual phenomenon and excess water submerges the area, covering 50 to 70 % of the total land mass. Floods bring alluvial as well as sandy deposits into the WLSs, simultaneously creating numerous wetlands.



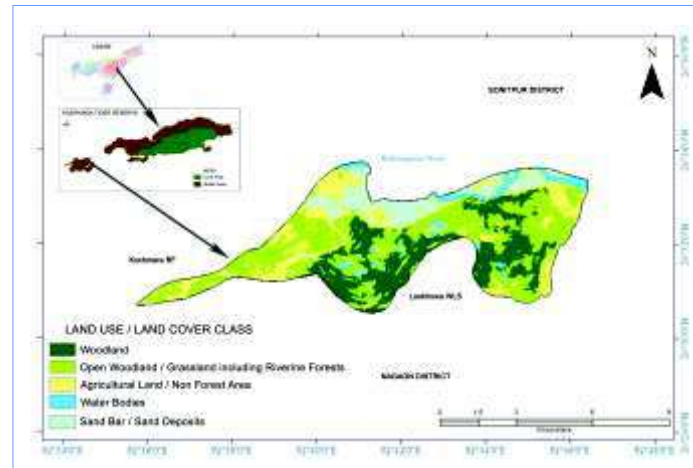
The *Dhania suti*, a channel of the Brahmaputra, flowing between Laokhowa and Burhachopori WLS

**Table:** Land use/Land cover Classification of Burhachapori WLS, 2013  
(Based on IRS-P6 LISS IV Imagery, October 2012)

Land Use/ Land Cover Class	Area (in Hectare)
Woodland	1079.99
Open Woodland/ Grassland including Riverine Forests	1699.82
Water bodies, including Brahmaputra River	246.42
Sandbars & Sand Deposits	443.96
Agriculture/ non forest	958.12
<b>Total</b>	<b>4428.31</b>

Source: Nagaon Wildlife Division (NWL D) & Laokhowa Burhachapori Wildlife Conservation Society (LBCS) Research Cell, 2013

Map: Land use / Land cover map of Burhachapori WLS, Assam



## PAST MANAGEMENT HISTORY AND PRESENT PRACTICES

### Conservation Timeline of Burhachapori WLS

- 1974 Burhachapori was a Professional Grazing Reserve till 1974. In 1974, it was declared a Reserved Forest (RF) with an area of 44.06 sq km, under Dhania Sub-Beat, Tezpur, Darrang Division.
- 1987 Burhachapori RF was brought under the administration of Western Assam Wildlife Division, Tezpur.
- 1989 Burhachapori RF was handed over to the administration of newly created Nagaon Wildlife Division, Nagaon.
- 1992 The RF was handed back to Western Assam Wildlife Division, Tezpur
- 1993 The Dhania Beat was upgraded to the status of Range.
- 1995 The Burhachapori RF was upgraded to a Wildlife Sanctuary.
- 2007 In August 2007, the Burhachapori WLS was brought under the administrative control of Nagaon Wildlife Division.
- 2007 Declared as Tiger Reserve on 3rd August, 2007 and falls under the Kaziranga Tiger Reserve.

**Participatory Conservation in Burhachapori** - Ten Eco Development Committees (EDC) have been established in the fringe villages of Burhachapori WLSs constituted within the Nagaon Wildlife Divisional Forest Development Agency and registered under the Director, Kaziranga Tiger Reserve. Many youths are now actively participating in conservation and protection of Burhachapori. The Nagaon Wildlife Division has constituted a number of 'Local Protection Squads' comprising motivated youths and they are being engaged in active patrolling duties with the frontline staff. One such squad consisting of 7 members is working with the frontline staff of Burhachapori. The Laokhowa Burhachapori Wildlife Conservation Society (LBCS) is a grassroot level organisation working with the Nagaon Wildlife Division for conservation of Burhachapori and Laokhowa WLSs and upliftment of the quality of life of the fringe and forest villagers of the area. The organisation has significant representation from the fringe villages along with a team of researchers and professionals.

Forest Staff of Dhania Range and Local Protection Squad Members, Burhachapori WLS





## MAJOR ECOSYSTEMS

The ecosystems of Burhachapori include Woodlands, Freshwater Mangrove, Wetlands, Grasslands and Sandbanks.



Woodland



Freshwater Mangrove



Wetland



Grassland

Sandbank



## FLORA

Burhachapori falls under the Northeast Brahmaputra valley (9A) Bio-geographic province as the classification of Bio-geographic zone of India (2000). The Protected Areas are primarily constituted by the Tree forest, Grasslands and Wetland biomes.

Classification	Major Species
Low Alluvial Savannah Woodlands	<i>Bombax ceiba</i> , <i>Albizia procera</i> , <i>Trewia nudiflora</i> , <i>Lagerstroemia flosreginae</i> , <i>Dillenia pentagyna</i> etc. associated with tall grassland patches of <i>Phragmites karka</i> , <i>Saccharum procerum</i> , <i>Erianthus rivannae</i> .
Eastern Wet Alluvial Grasslands	<i>Impereta cylindrica</i> , <i>Saccharum spontaneum</i> , <i>Erianthus ravannae</i> , <i>Cynodon doctylon</i> , <i>Phragmites karka</i> , <i>Chrysopogon acciculatus</i> , <i>Arundo donax</i> , <i>Veteveria</i> etc.
Riparian Fringing Forests	<i>Bischofia javanica</i> , <i>Terminalia myriocarpa</i> , <i>Lagerstroemia flosreginae</i> etc.
Barringtonia Swamp Forests	<i>Barringtonia acutangula</i> along with <i>Syzygium cumini</i> , <i>Ficus glomerata</i> , <i>Trewia nudiflora</i> , etc.

Source: Field Data, NWLD & LBCS Research Cell and Buffer Area Management Plan, Kaziranga Tiger Reserve



Long Pepper (*Pippali*)  
*Piper longum*



Unidentified flora



Simul  
*Bombax ceiba*



Ground Orchid species



Water Hyacinth (*Pani Meteka*)  
*Eichhornia crassipes*



Fox-tailed Orchid (*Kopou*)  
*Rhynchostylis retusa*

## THE FRESHWATER MANGROVES

A unique vegetation of Burhachapori is the freshwater mangrove tree (*Barringtonia acutangula*) along with species like *Syzygium cumini*, *Ficus glomerata*, *Trewia nudiflora*, etc. These form the dominant vegetation in the swamps of Thulomukoli, Kasodhora, Jhaoni, Basabari, Baghmari and Guldubi. *Barringtonia acutangula* along with the associated species mentioned above, in gregarious form are also found on the banks of freshwater rivers, the edges of freshwater swamps and lagoons besides seasonally flooded lowland plains within the sanctuary.

*Barringtonia* is a deciduous tree of moderate size, cited in Sanskrit literature as *Hijja* or *Hijjala*. The flowering of the *Hijol* during the pre-monsoon season is a sight to behold. The red flowers are produced on pendulous racemes about 20 cm long and the four sided fruits are produced periodically throughout the year. These freshwater mangroves act as excellent natural barrier against bank erosion and have high medicinal value.



Pre flowering stage of *Hijol*



A flowering *Hijol* tree



A typical *Hijol* tree



A typical *Hijol* forest patch



A flooded *Hijol* patch



Grasslands intercepted by the freshwater mangroves



A Royal Bengal Tiger in the Laokhowa-Burhachapori WLS complex

## FAUNA

Burhachapori WLS is home to large mammals like Asiatic wild water buffaloes, Royal Bengal tigers, Indian elephants, Wild boars etc. The wet alluvial grasslands of the sanctuary sustain a healthy population of herbivores like sambar, barking deer and hog deer along with nocturnal species like pangolins, slow loris, porcupine, binturong, hare etc. Many rare and endangered species of small cats, civets, otters, many reptiles etc. are found in abundance in these two PAs. The highly endangered Gangetic River Dolphins are found in abundance in the waters of the Brahmaputra River adjacent to the Burhachapori WLS.

The region, along with Laokhowa WLS used to be teeming with rhinos majority of them were poached within a matter of days during the civil unrest of the 1980s. Most of the original rhino habitat, however, is still intact. The Indian Rhino Vision 2020 programme envisages the re-introduction of rhinos to the Laokhowa-Burhachapori landscape by the end of 2014.



Flying Snake  
(*Chrysopelea ornata*)



Monocled Cobra  
(*Naja Kaouthia*)



King Cobra  
(*Ophiophagus hannah*)



Burmese Python (Hatching)  
(*Python bivittatus*)



Common Monitor Lizard  
(*Varanus bengalensis*)



Chinese Pangolin  
(*Manis pentadactyla*)



Indian Elephants  
(*Elephas maximus indius*)



Hog Deer  
(*Hyelaphus porcinus*)



Asiatic Wild Water Buffalo  
(*Bubalus arnee*)



Bengal Slow Loris  
(*Nycticebus bengalensis*)



Smooth-Coated Otter  
(*Lutrogale perspicillata*)



Indian Porcupine  
(*Hystrix indica*)

## THE BIRDS OF BURHACHAPORI

Burhachapori WLS and the adjoining Laokhowa WLS, with the expanse of grasslands, woody patches and numerous water bodies, streams, *nallas* and *beels* support rich and varied bird life. Apart from numerous species of resident birds, the region serves as the winter visiting ground of many migratory bird species. The research cell of LBCS has photographically documented more than 200 species of birds till date in this landscape. The *Impereta* grasslands of Burhachapori WLS harbours the Bengal Florican. The sanctuary is a breeding ground for a number of bird species, the most noticeable being the breeding colonies of Blue-tailed bee-eaters, Baya weavers, Open-billed Storks and Bank Mynas, among others.



Greater Racket-tailed Drongo  
(*Dicrurus paradiseus*)



Eastern Grass Owl  
(*Tyto longimembris*)



Common Iora  
(*Aegintha tiphia*)



Alexandrine Parakeet  
(*Psittacula eupatria*)



Northern Lapwing  
(*Vanellus vanellus*)



Baya Weaver  
(*Ploceus philippinus*)

Yellow-footed Green Pigeon  
(*Treron phoenicoptera*)



Common Greenshank  
(*Tringa nebularia*)



Swamp Francolin  
(*Francolinus gularis*)



Black-faced Bunting  
(*Emberiza spodocephala*)



Small Green-billed Malkoha  
(*Phaenicophaeus viridirostris*)



Grey-headed Lapwing  
(*Vanellus cinereus*)



Little Ringed Plover  
(*Charadrius dubius*)



Black-hooded Oriole  
(*Oriolus xanthornus*)



Scaly-bellied Woodpecker  
(*Picus squamatus*)



Citrine Wagtail  
(*Motacilla citreola*)



Black-bellied Tern  
(*Sterna acuticauda*)



Black-necked Storks  
(*Ephippiorhynchus asiaticus*)



Mallards  
(*Anas platyrhynchos*)



Oriental Darter  
(*Anhinga melanogaster*)



Black Storks  
(*Ciconia nigra*)



Ruddy Shelduck  
(*Tadorna ferruginea*)



Common Crane  
(*Grus grus*)



Spot-billed Pelican  
(*Pelecanus philippensis*)

Great Black-headed Gull  
(*Larus ichthyæetus*)





Greater Adjutant Stork  
*(Leptoptilos dubius)*



Indian Longbilled Vulture  
*(Gyps indicus)*



Woolly-necked Stork  
*(Ciconia episcopus)*



Changeable Hawk-Eagle  
*(Nisaetus cirrhatus)*



Common Indian Nightjar  
*(Caprimulgus asiaticus)*



Hoopoe  
*(Upupa epops)*



Spotted Owlet  
*(Athene brama)*



Bank Myna  
*(Acridotheres ginginianus)*



Bar-headed Geese  
*(Anser indicus)*



## NATURE'S MARVEL: THE BLUE-TAILED BEE-EATER BREEDING COLONY

Every year, thousands of Blue-tailed Bee-eaters (*Merops philippinus*) converge on 1.5 sq. km. area of the Koroitoli grasslands of Burhachapori WLS, for breeding and nesting. The Koroitoli grasslands are preferred by these birds for nesting since the region has the highest elevation in Burhachapori and the adjoining Laakhowa WLS and therefore remains inundation free during normal floods.

The compact alluvial sandy soil and the short grasses of Koroitoli permits easy digging of the nesting holes. Dragonflies, their preferred food is found in abundance in the nearby Kasodhora beel and the Laakhowa (Dhania) *Suti*. Besides a large population of butterflies, moths and honey bees are found near Koroitoli due to the abundant herbaceous flora. The birds come to the grasslands by early April, form pairs and start mating. Being cavity nesters, they dig 2 to 3 meter long underground tunnels where they make nests and lay 2 to 9 eggs. The eggs start to hatch by early to end May and by late June the birds fly away just before Burhachapori is inundated by the annual floods.



A mating pair of Blue-tailed Bee-eater



Mating



In Flight



Feeding a Dragonfly



Nest hole of Blue-tailed Bee-eater



## TURTLES OF BURHACHAPORI

The diverse habitat of the Burhachapori WLS is an ideal nesting habitat for freshwater turtle species and holds their sizable population. The Assam Roofed Turtle, (Endangered, IUCN, 2012) can be observed in communal basking with other species like Indian Roofed and Indian Tent Turtles on fallen dead wood along the banks of the Brahmaputra River, especially in the area between *Thulomukoli* to *Jhaoni*. The numerous beels and channels of Burhachapori offer habitat for many turtle species like Spotted Pond Turtle, Peacock Softshell Turtle etc. Besides, the Tricarinate Hill Turtles are often encountered in the grasslands of the sanctuary.



Assam Roofed Turtle  
(*Pangshura sylhetensis*)



Indian Tent Turtle  
(*Pangshura tentoria*)



Spotted Pond Turtle  
(*Geoclemys hamiltonii*)



Tricarinate Hill Turtle  
(*Melanochelys tricarinata*)



Indian Eyed Turtle  
(*Morenia petersi*)



Crowned River Turtle  
(*Hardella thurjii*)



Indian Roofed Turtle  
(*Pangshura tecta*)



Peacock Softshell Turtle  
(*Nilssonia hurum*)

## BURHACHAPORI'S LITTLE HEROES

Like most other ecosystems of the world, the arthropods in Burhachapori constitute almost 70% of its biodiversity. They are important agents of pollination. Among insects the lepidopterans are regarded as indicators of healthy ecosystem. The on-going documentation of the arthropods in Burhachapori reveals a wide diversity with many rare and threatened species. The sanctuary harbours many rare

butterfly species that include Indian Map Butterfly, Common Birdwing, Fivebar swordtail, Common Rose, Green dragontail etc. Among the moths the Atlas moth (*Attacus atlas*), *Cyclosia sp.*, *Dysphania militaris* etc. are most common. This diversity of insects and orthopterans sustains the famous bee-eater colony for around four months in Burhachapori WLS besides providing other ecosystem services.



Spider species



Lantern fly



Leaf grasshopper



Sting Bug



Common Pierrot  
(*Costalium rosimum*)



Common Maplet  
(*Chersonesia risa*)



Indian Map Butterfly  
(*Cyrestis thyodamas*)



Crab Spider



A flooded Burhachapori

## ANNUAL FLOODS

Burhachapori is situated in the flood plains of the Brahmaputra River. During the monsoon season every year the Brahmaputra River system floods most of the sanctuary. Depending on spells of intensive rains, flood may occur a number of times in the same year. On the other hand if the rainfall during the monsoon season is well distributed, then floods do not occur.

The annual floods help in providing sufficient water in water bodies for fish, avifauna and other animals till next rains. Erosion and sand casting are two significant problems associated with the floods. The frontline staff patrol the sanctuary using country boats while the riverine corridor is monitored continuously using mechanised country boats, speed boats and a floating camp. Such patrolling becomes necessary during the annual floods because wild animals such as rhinos, deer, elephants etc regularly move out of the Kaziranga National Park through this corridor.



A 'living ant raft' during floods



Patrolling on foot during floods



Patrolling on country boats



A flooded fringe village of Burhachapori

## THE FRINGE COMMUNITIES

Burhachapori WLS is bordered by fringe villages belonging to diverse communities. In all, there are 13 villages and 14 *chars/chaporis* in the fringe area of Burhachapori. The villagers belong to the bengali speaking muslim community along with nepali and bihari communities.

The nepali community that are mainly settled on the bank of river Brahmaputra are traditionally cattle graziers. The muslim community constitutes major part of the population around the PA. Agriculture and fishing are the means of livelihood of this community. Livestock rearing, firewood collection and fishing form the major dependency pattern of the fringe villages. Almost all the fringe dwellers are small and marginal cultivators. High poverty levels, low literacy and high population growth rate has contributed to a huge population in the fringe areas leading to high dependency on the resources of the sanctuary.

Through eco-development initiatives, the Nagaon Wildlife Division has initiated the process of providing the dependent fringe villagers with alternative livelihoods such as modernized dairy farming techniques and vehicles for eco-tourism.



A girl carrying fodder



*Khutti*



Village school children



Community meeting



A farmer



Fishing



Forest officials interacting with communities



A typical Nepali house



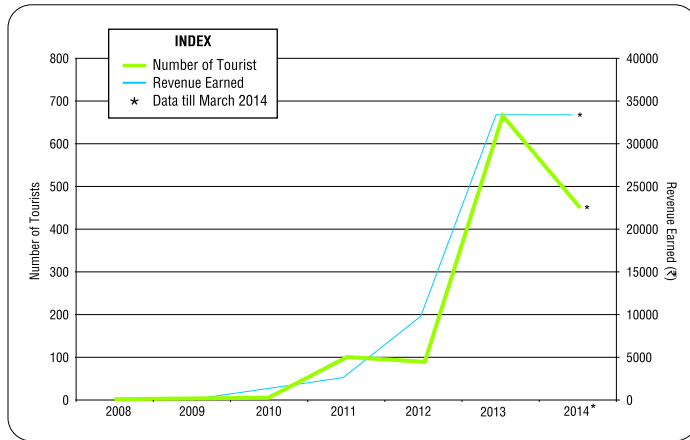
Brahmaputra River Cruise

## TOURISM

Tourist inflow in Burhachapori has seen a significant increase during the last couple of years. Infrastructure for tourism is also coming up rapidly in the sanctuary. There is a heritage Forest Inspection Bungalow next to the Dhania Range, which in itself is a tourist attraction. The departmental Jeep safaris are now proposed to be conducted in association with the fringe village EDCs by providing them with two vehicles. Besides a traditional nepali eco-camp is being constructed in the Dhania village near the range office campus.

The landscape of Laokhowa Burhachapori WLS with grasslands as well as extensive woodlands by the Brahmaputra River, is home to a large variety of butterflies, besides resident and seasonal migratory bird species making the area

ideal for their observation and documentation. Burhachapori offers ample scope for undertaking jeep safaris, nature trails and treks. There is a mechanised country boat which is used by tourists for river cruises in the Brahmaputra. Tourists enjoy the scenic beauty of the Brahmaputra River and the glorious sunsets. The pristine, unpolluted sandy islands are ideal spots for beach sports and other such activities. Further, the diverse landscape of Burhachapori characterised by the scenic beauty and unique flora and fauna offer ample scope for photography. Large number of school and college students regularly visit Burhachapori for study tours, excursion trips and research studies.



Graph: Pattern of Tourists inflow and Revenue earned in Burhachapori from 2008 till 2014.



Students in the Dhania I.B.



Nature trek in Burhachapori



A discussion on the freshwater Mangroves



Children playing on the sands of Jhaoni, Burhachapori



Dhania I.B., Burhachapori WLS



Children playing football



Researchers in the Blue-tailed Bee-eater colony

## APPROACH & ACCESS

Administration  
Divisional Forest Officer  
Nagaon Wildlife Division  
Katimari, Nagaon

Travel  
By Road:  
150 km from Guwahati  
40 km from Tezpur  
180 km from Jorhat

Airports  
Guwahati / Tezpur / Jorhat

Best Season  
Winter (Oct to May) for bird watching  
(Mar-June) for Bee-eaters breeding colony

Accommodation  
Forest Inspection Bungalow  
Tourist Lodge  
Private & Local NGO's Cottages

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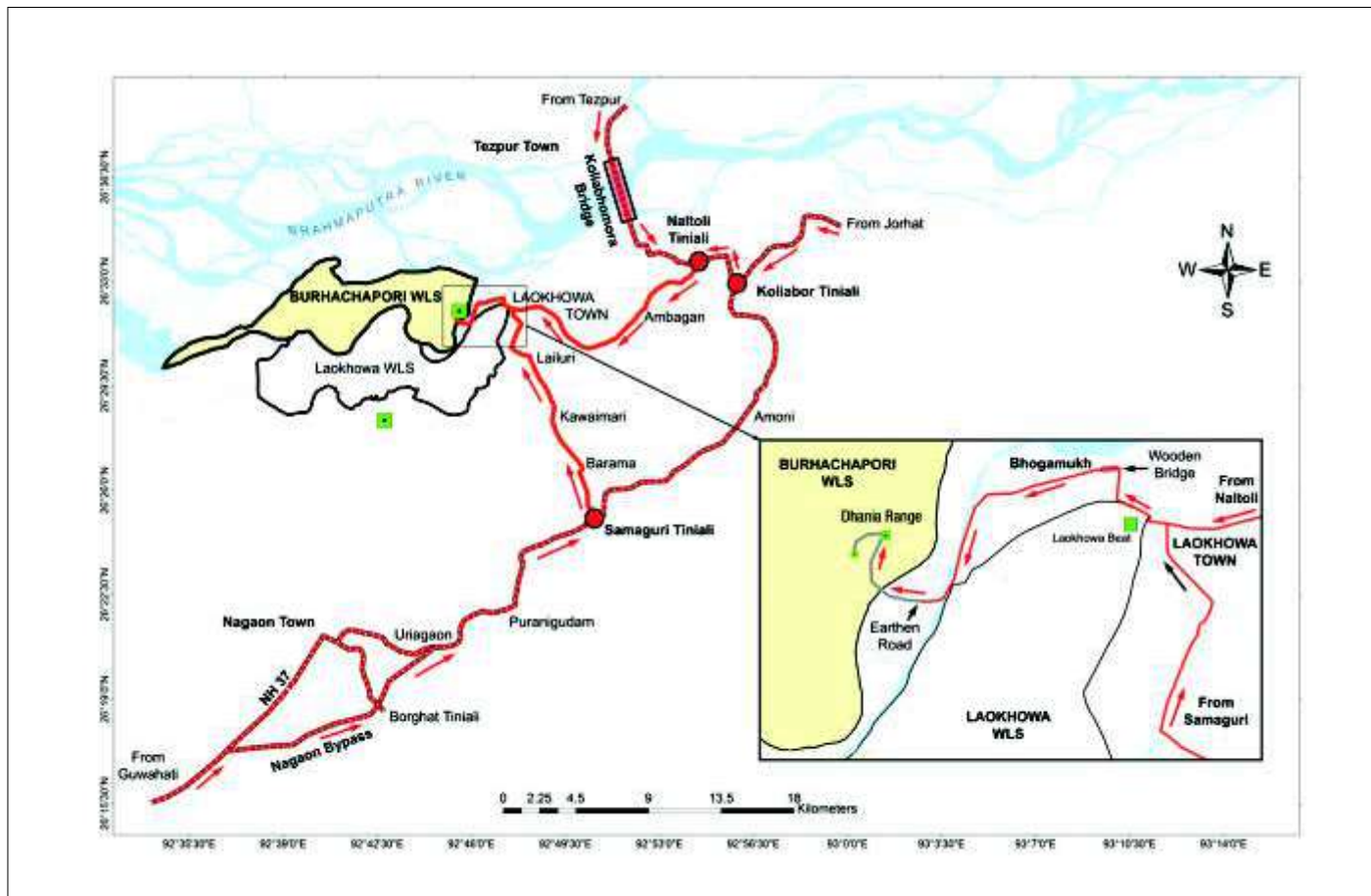
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## Route Map of Burhachapori WLS



Flowering of '*Kahua*' (*Saccharum spontaneum*) at Burhachapori





### Assam State Biodiversity Board

The logo of Assam State Biodiversity Board resembles a 'xorai', which is a sacred symbol of Assamese culture. Here, it represents a Tree-of- Life. The lid of *xorai* is in the shape of a cuckoo bird, whose melodious voice echoes in the hills, heralding spring and *Rongali Bihu* celebrations. It is an icon of the rich faunal diversity. The '*pan*' leaves, widely used for social, religious and medicinal purposes symbolize plant diversity. The stem of *xorai* is a female figure symbolising fertility and creativity of Mother Earth. It also exhibits people's interface with the surrounding biodiversity and environment. A strand of DNA, representing genetic- diversity forms the base for this Tree-of- Life.



### OUR VISION

Bountiful, secured and economically rewarding biological diversity.

### OUR MISSION

Ownership rights to people for conservation and wise-use of local biological resources and equitable sharing of benefits on commercial utilisation.

*"Uniformity is not nature's way; diversity is"*



Blue-tailed Bee-eaters in the *Koroitoli* grasslands of Burhachapori



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