

KOLKATA

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Forthcoming review

Early Historic Tamil Nadu c 300 BCE-300 CE: Edited by K. Indrapala; Kumaran Book House, Chennai

# A lesser-known sanctuary of the North-East

This coffee table book tells the reader about a unique sanctuary and the beautiful and rare living things found in it

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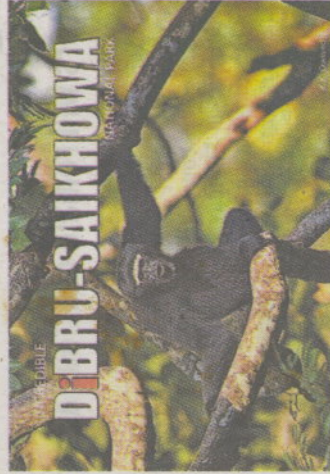
The North-East is a region of heavy rainfall and high humidity. The Brahmaputra floods the area every year, spreading fertile soil. It is warm in the plains, the temperature showing little variation during the year. Thanks to these features, the vegetation is rich and lush, and there are large stretches of contiguous forests. Like the flora, the fauna are also varied, with many of the animals not found elsewhere in India.

The best known wildlife reserves of the North-East are Kaziranga and Manas, where the star attractions are the Indian rhinoceros and the wild buffalo. But there are a number of other sanctuaries that have their own appeal, and there are many other animals, big and small. One of the lesser known sanctuaries is Dibru-Saikhowa. This park, encircled by rivers, is located

in the floodplain of the Brahmaputra. Many wild areas in the country deserve greater recognition. At the same time, while a good number of books are available on the wildlife of India in general, there is a need for publications on smaller locations. *Incredible Dibru-Saikhowa National Park* fulfils both these needs. It is in the coffee table book format, which by its very concept is strong on pictures and weak on text.

## Background

The introductory chapters provide the background and describe the creation of the national park. Different taxonomic groups are covered in the subsequent chapters: large mammals, birds, reptiles and so forth. A few chapters are devoted to human activities in the park. The chapters on plants and animals are heavily visual, whereas in the others the



**INCREDIBLE DIBRU-SAIKHOWA NATIONAL PARK:** Edited by K. K. Dwivedi; Dibru-Saikhowa Conservation Society, Tinsukia, Assam, DC Office, Assam-786125. Rs. 2000.

substance lies in the text. Twenty five people have contributed to the content — text and photographs.

The objective of producing this book, according to the authors, is "to take the reader on a cruise through the sanctuary and point out the beautiful and rare living things that are found here, providing some information on them

and the place while doing so". But they have really gone further. Much of Dibru-Saikhowa is accessible only on foot. To view the wildlife, the visitor will have to trek great distances through sharp-edged grass or over soft alluvial soil or undertake long boat rides along the rivers. Given this setting, the photographs are a great testimony to the enormous

## Exquisite

There are many exquisite portrayals among these. Quite a few of them are brilliantly captured action shots — birds taking off from the river in a flurry of water drop-

lets, birds tossing fish in the air, and so on. Given the extra emphasis on visuals, there is an inevitable bias towards the larger and more spectacular life forms. The species that are found exclusively, or mostly, in the north-eastern region have deservedly been highlighted. Somewhat surprisingly, the chapter on insects has no images of dragonflies, which are particularly photograph-worthy creatures.

The checklists will be of value to the serious naturalist. The mammals list, however, is glaringly devoid of the smaller animals — the bats, insectivores, rats, and mice.

This is a book to possess for different reasons: as a work that tells the reader about a unique sanctuary; one that serves as an enticement to visit it or as a souvenir of a visit; and, simply, as one that is a pleasure to browse through.