

Publication summarizes the importance of Protected Areas in India

Guwahati 26 June: In her recent book, *The Vanishing*, Prerna Singh Bindra outlines the importance of National Parks and Sanctuaries to the preservation of India's biodiversity, and the threats coming to them from development. Now a review published in the leading international scientific journal *Biological Conservation* by a group of Indian and foreign scientists, led by Mousumi Ghosh-Harihar from the National Center for Biological Science at Bangalore, provides a comprehensive survey of what we know about India's protected areas, and what might be done to ensure they succeed in their primary objective: to preserve a large fraction of India's wildlife. Two of the scientists from Assam, Udayan Borthakur and Dilip Chetry, wildlife biologists working with Aaranyak, are part of this group of authors for the paper titled "Protected Areas and biodiversity conservation in India".

India has been quite successful – so far – in keeping a complete complement of its species, but some have become so rare now that they are likely to be lost. Nevertheless, others, such as the tiger and greater one-horned rhinoceros are stable in numbers or even increasing, and this is largely due to the efficient functioning of Tiger Reserves. While India only has 5% of its land area officially protected, that 5% is important, and magnified by reserved forest around the periphery, which could be internationally recognized as important, provided suitable monitoring goes on. The review highlights the importance and potential of tourism, but also how these benefits must go to locals. And finally, India must look to the northeast, which is one of the most species rich regions of the world. It is there that threats of development and poaching are extreme.

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