



BORDOIBAM-BILMUKH BIRD SANCTUARY: ENVIRONMENT

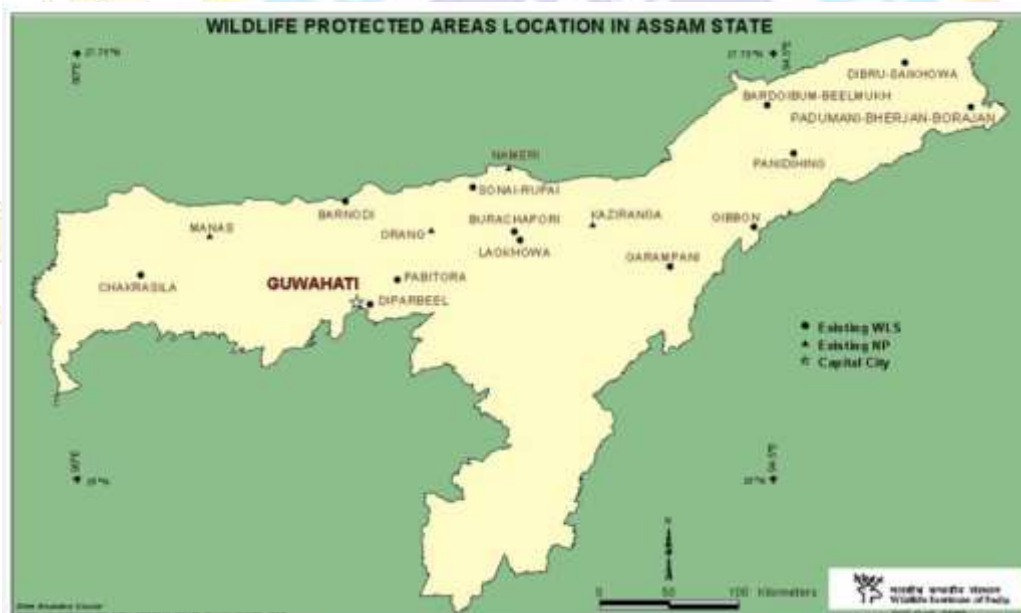
NEWS: Assam bird sanctuary records 72% decline in bird species count in 27 years

WHAT'S IN THE NEWS?

The Bordoibam-Bilmukh Bird Sanctuary (BBBS) in Assam has witnessed a sharp decline in its bird diversity over the last 27 years. A study comparing data from 1997 to 2024 shows that bird species in the sanctuary have decreased by 72%. This alarming trend highlights the urgent need for conservation efforts.

Study Findings

- In **1997**, researchers recorded **167 bird species** in BBBS.
- By **2011**, the number dropped to **133 species**.
- In the **2017–2018 survey**, only **120 species** were found.
- Most recently, in **2022–2024**, the number has plummeted to just **47 species**.



SINCE 2006

Key Causes of Decline

1. Overfishing:

- The wetland supports fish populations that are vital for many bird species.
- Excessive fishing depletes this food source, forcing birds to leave or face starvation.



2. Poaching:

- Birds like the **lesser whistling duck**, **eastern spotted dove**, and **yellow-footed green pigeon** are often targeted for poaching.
- This directly reduces the bird population.

3. Agricultural Encroachment:

- Farming activities around the wetland reduce available habitat for nesting, shelter, and feeding.
- Encroachment also causes pollution and disruption of natural wetland functions.

4. Excessive Harvesting of Aquatic Plants:

- Plants play a critical role in the ecosystem, supporting smaller species that are part of the food chain.
- Overharvesting disrupts this chain, affecting bird populations dependent on these resources.

Conservation Concerns

- **Habitat degradation:** Loss of habitat reduces the sanctuary's ability to support diverse bird species.
- **Disruption of food chains:** A decline in fish and plant populations impacts birds and other wildlife.
- **Declining migratory bird populations:** Migratory birds are particularly vulnerable as they depend on undisturbed habitats for resting and feeding.
- **Reduced nutrient cycles:** Birds play a key role in nutrient cycling within ecosystems; their decline slows this process.

Broader Context: Assam's Bird Diversity

- Assam is home to about **950 bird species**, including **17 endemic species**.
- The state has **55 Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas (IBAs)** that support its avian population.

Source: <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/assam/assam-bird-sanctuary-records-72-decline-in-bird-species-count-in-27-years/article69009618.ece#:~:text=A%20study%20has%20attributed%20the,land%2C%20and%20cultivation%20of%20crops&text=The%20number%20of%20avian%20species,years%2C%20a%20study%20has%20revealed>