

## NOMINATION TO THE WORLD HERITAGE LIST

Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage

Name: KAZIRANGA NATIONAL PARK

Identification No: 337

Date received by WH Secretariat: 18.4.84

Contracting State Party having submitted the nomination of the property in accordance with the Convention: INDIA

Summary prepared by IUCN (March 1985) based on the original nomination submitted by India. This original and all documents presented in support of this nomination will be available for consultation at the meetings of the Bureau and the Committee.

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1. LOCATION: State of Assam in the northeast of India on the south bank of the Brahmaputra River. Burma monsoon forest biogeographical province.

2. JURIDICAL DATA:

The area has been a national park of 42,996 ha since 1974 and is administered by the State Government of Assam Forest Department under the Wildlife Protection Act of 1972. The area was first established as a Reserve Forest in 1908, a Game Sanctuary in 1916, and a Wildlife Sanctuary in 1950.

3. IDENTIFICATION:

Kaziranga's setting is on the low-lying (40-80m) flood plains of the Brahmaputra River system, characterised by 'jheels' - flat, swampy ground with broad shallow pools fringed with reeds. The river Bhangra flows through the park in an east-west direction. The soils are chiefly of alluvials derived from the river system. The climate is moderate, with a mean annual rainfall of 2500mm falling mainly during the rainy season (May-October). Temperatures range from 10°C-35°C.

The vegetation is mainly of 3 types: (1) wet alluvial grasslands (2) Tropical semi-evergreen forests and (3) Tropical wet evergreen forests. The grasslands occupy nearly two thirds of the park area.

This park is internationally recognized for the large size of the remnant Indian rhino Rhinoceros unicornis population which was 1195 in 1984, some 3/4 of the total world population (the numbers in 1900 had declined to only 12). Other mammals include tiger, elephant, leopard, sloth bear, wild buffalo, gaur, sambar, swamp deer, muntjac, hog deer, wild pig, capped langur, gibbon, and otter. There is a pelican rookery (grey pelican) near Kaziranga village, and the park's wetlands are used by many thousands of migratory birds. The gangetic dolphin is also found in some of the closed oxbow lakes.

4. STATE OF PRESERVATION/CONSERVATION:

The park has a long history of protection reflected in the dramatic recovery of the rhino population. A management plan for the park exists and basic equipment and manpower is provided by the State Government. Kaziranga is a popular tourist destination and a rest house is available.

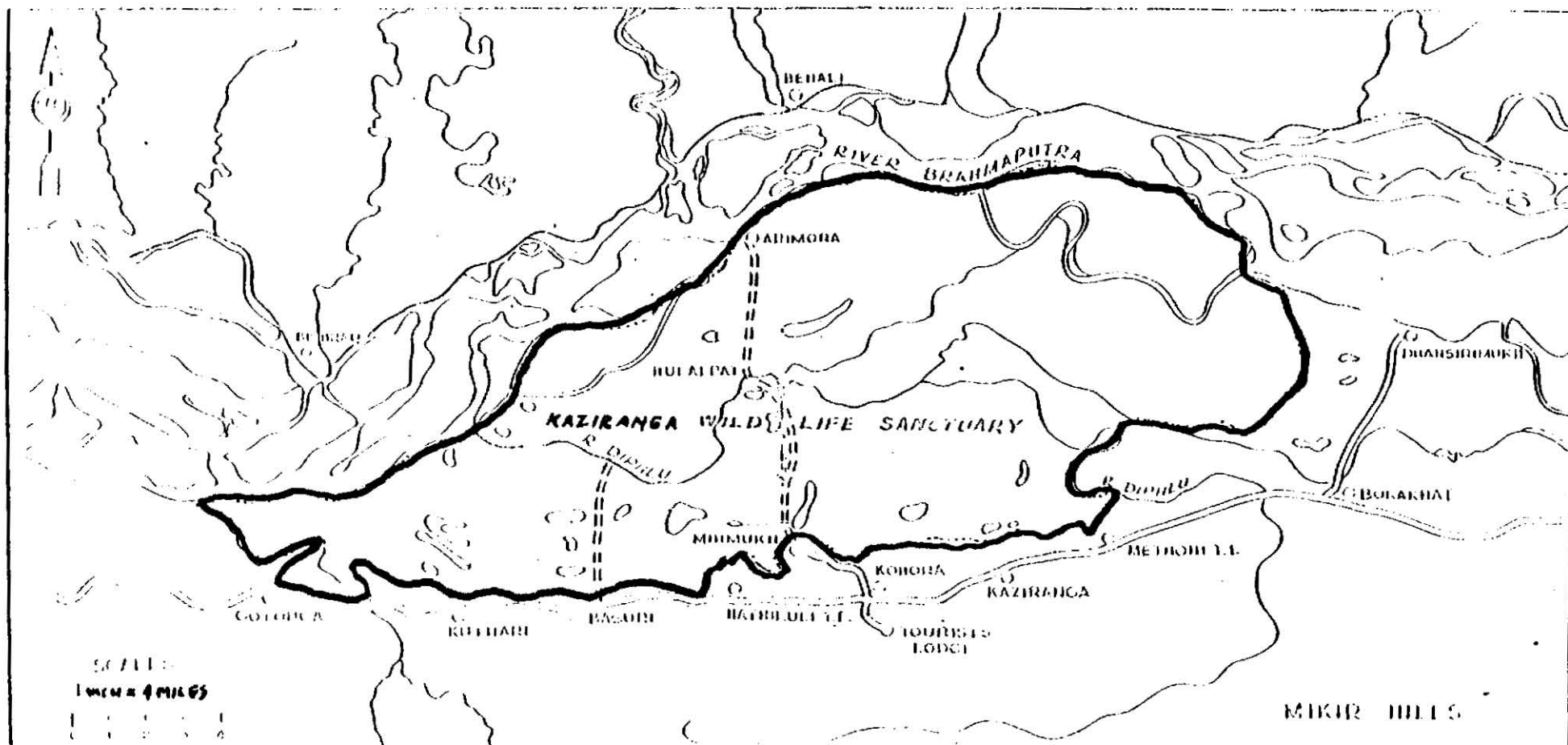
The park is bordered on three sides by human settlement and tea plantations and is only afforded a buffer on the north boundary by the Brahmaputra River. Rhino poaching is a continuous problem with 37 illegally killed in 1983.

A buffer zone to the south in the Mikir Hills and Karbi Plateau has been proposed to allow some protection during the monsoon season when wildlife move outside the park during floods.

5. JUSTIFICATION FOR INCLUSION ON THE WORLD HERITAGE LIST:

The Kaziranga National Park, as presented by the Government of India, provides the following justification for designation as a World Heritage property:

- a) Cultural property -- not applicable
- b) Natural property
  - (iv) Habitats of rare and endangered species. The park is the world's primary area for protection of the Indian rhino.



337 KAZIRANGA NATIONAL PARK (INDIA)

1. DOCUMENTATION:

- (i) Nomination form
- (ii) IUCN Data Sheets
- (iii) Consultations: John MacKinnon, William Oliver, Peter Jackson, Claude Martin, India Government Officials
- (iv) Literature Consulted: India Today, 31 March 1984; WWF-India Newsletter 52, 1985

2. COMPARISON WITH OTHER AREAS

Within the Burma Monsoon Forest Biogeographical Province there are 18 other established protected areas in India and Bangladesh. Kaziranga is the only one of these with national park status and many are too small to provide long term viable conservation. One exception is the Namdapha Wildlife Sanctuary (190,782 ha), a proposed Biosphere Reserve site in the neighbouring State of Arunachal Pradesh. This reserve has only a small portion of its area with similar features and has no Indian rhinos. In West Bengal, Jaldapara Wildlife Sanctuary offers similar attractions including some rhinos (14) but it is only one-quarter the size and has less legal protection than Kaziranga.

Compared to the Manas Wildlife Sanctuary, Kaziranga is quite different, being removed from the hill forests of Bhutan and located on the southern flood plain of the Brahmaputra River. It is also distinctive from Royal Chitwan National Park in this regard, although Royal Chitwan has the second-highest population of Indian rhino.

3. INTEGRITY

Because its perimeter on three sides is adjacent to human settlement, protection of Kaziranga from illegal incursions of poachers and herdsmen has been a difficult task. The introduction of rinderpest and domestic buffalo have had negative effects on buffalo, including hybridization of the remaining wild stock.

Poaching of rhino has been a serious problem (particularly during the recent period of civil unrest) but the overall population levels are steady or rising.

Another factor in the management of Kaziranga is the seasonal inundation of floodwaters which causes many animals to migrate outside the park where they are susceptible to hunting and reprisal for crop damage.

The presence of the busy national highway No. 37 along the southern border of Kaziranga has brought increased settlement which disturb traditional wildlife migration routes. A proposal for a railway line along this corridor is also being considered by the Government.

4. ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

The provision of a corridor and buffer zone to the south of the park would greatly add to the overall integrity of Kaziranga.

## 5. EVALUATION

Although Kaziranga has a range of natural values and provides habitat for a number of threatened species and migratory birds, these are secondary to its major importance as the world's major stronghold of the Indian rhino. For this main reason, it meets criteria (iv) of the Convention. The Brahmaputra River's fluctuations result in spectacular examples of riverine and fluvial processes and the site thus also qualifies under criteria (ii). Concerns over the integrity of the park are, at present, minor but the situation should be monitored as the park represents one of the last unmodified natural areas of this region of India.

## 6. RECOMMENDATIONS

Kaziranga National Park should be inscribed on the World Heritage List. The Committee may wish to recommend that the Assam State Government be encouraged to provide the legal basis for a buffer zone to the south to protect the wet season habitat and to undertake impact studies in connection with the proposed railway along the southern boundary of the park.

INDIA-Kaziranga National Park

INDIA - Assam

NAME Kaziranga National Park

IUCN MANAGEMENT CATEGORY II (National Park)  
X (World Heritage Site - Criteria: ii, iv)

BIOGEOGRAPHICAL PROVINCE 4.09.04 (Burma Monsoon Forest)

GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION Situated in Nagaon and Golaghat districts on the southern bank of the Brahmaputra River at the foot of the Mikir Hills, some 8km from Bokakhat. National Highway No. 37 forms the southern boundary. 26°30'-26°45'N, 93°05'-93°40'E

DATE AND HISTORY OF ESTABLISHMENT Final notification as a national park issued on 11 February 1974, following the first notification in 1969. Originally established as a reserved forest in 1908, a game sanctuary in 1916 and a wildlife sanctuary in 1950. Designated as a World Heritage site in December 1985.

AREA 42,996ha, of which some 5,000ha has been lost due to erosion of the northern boundary by the Brahmaputra River (Kushwaha and Madhavan Unni, 1986). According to official records, the actual land area is 37,822ha. An addition of some 45,450ha is proposed and includes the Brahmaputra River to the north and part of the Mikir Hills to the south.

LAND TENURE State

ALTITUDE Ranges between 40m and 80m. To the south of the park, the Mikir Hills rise to about 1,220m.

PHYSICAL FEATURES Lies in the flood plains of the Brahmaputra River. The riverine habitat consists primarily of tall, dense grasslands interspersed with open forests, interconnecting streams and numerous small lakes or 'bheels'. Three-quarters or more of the area is submerged annually by the flood waters of the Brahmaputra. Soils are alluvial deposits of the Brahmaputra and its tributaries (Spillett, 1966). The wetlands are described by Scott (1989).

CLIMATE Three seasons can be distinguished. Summer, which is dry and windy, extends from mid-February to May with mean maximum and minimum temperatures of 37°C and 7°C, respectively. The monsoon occurs from May to September when conditions are warm and humid. Most of the mean annual rainfall of 2220mm falls during this season. During winter (November to mid-February), when conditions are mild and dry, mean maximum and minimum temperatures are 25°C and 5°C, respectively (Kushwaha and Madhavan Unni, 1986).

VEGETATION There are three main types of vegetation: alluvial inundated grasslands, tropical wet evergreen forests and tropical semi-evergreen

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forests (Jain and Sastry, 1983). Grasslands predominate in the west, with tall 'elephant' grasses on the higher ground and short grasses on the lower ground surrounding the 'bheels'. They have been maintained by annual flooding and burning over thousands of years. Amidst the grasses are numerous forbs and scattered trees of Bombax ceiba, Dillenia indica, Careya arborea and Embllica officinalis. Tropical wet evergreen forests, near Kanchanjhuri, Panbari and Tamulipathar blocks, are dominated by trees such as Aphanamixis polystachya, Talauma hodgsonii, Dillenia indica, Garcinia tinctoria, Ficus rumphii, Cinnamomum bejolghota, and species of Syzygium. Tropical semi-evergreen forests occur near Baguri, Bimali and Haldibari. Common trees and shrubs are Albizia procera, Duabanga grandiflora, Lagerstroemia speciosa, Crateva unilocularis, Sterculia urens, Grewia serrulata, Mallotus philippensis, Bridelia retusa, Aphania rubra, Leea indica and L. umbraculifera. Based on Landsat data for 1986, coverage by different vegetation is as follows: tall grasses 41%, short grasses 11%, open jungle 29%, swamps 4%, rivers and water bodies 8%, and sand 6% (Kushwaha and Madhavan Unni, 1986).

**FAUNA** The park contains about 15 species of India's threatened (Schedule I) mammals. It harbours the world's largest population of Indian rhinoceros Rhinoceros unicornis (E), which has increased from a few dozen in 1908 (Gee, 1964) to some 1,080 in 1984 (Choudhury, 1987), and 1,100 in 1988 (Martin and Vigne, 1989). Other mammals include capped langur Presbytis pileata, a small population of hoolock gibbon Hylobates hoolock, tiger Panthera tigris (E), leopard P. pardus (T), sloth bear Melursus ursinus (I), Indian elephant Elephas maximus (E) (523), Ganges dolphin Platanista gangetica, otter Lutra lutra, wild boar Sus scrofa (3,645), water buffalo Bubalus arnee (V) (677), gaur Bos gaurus (V) (30), sambar Cervus unicolor (358), swamp deer C. duvauceli (V) (756), hog deer C. porcinus (9,872) and Indian muntjac Muntiacus muntjak. Population estimates are based on the 1984 census, details of which are given by Choudhury (1987). Elephants and other animals migrate with the advent of the monsoon and head southwards to the Mikir Hills and beyond to avoid the annual flooding of the national park (Sinha, 1981). A preliminary list of mammals is given by Spillett (1966).

The numerous water bodies are rich reservoirs of food (including fish) and thousands of migratory birds, representing over 100 species, visit the park seasonally from as far afield as Siberia. There is a grey pelican Pelecanus philippensis rookery near Kaziranga Village. Other birds of interest include black-necked stork Ephippiorhynchus asiaticus, lesser adjutant stork Leptoptilos javanicus, Pallas's fish eagle Haliaeetus leucorhynchus, grey-headed fish eagle Ichthyophaga ichthyaetus, perhaps 25-30 Bengal florican Houbaropsis bengalensis (E), swamp partridge Francolinus gularis, grey peacock-pheasant Polyplectron bicalcaratum, great pied hornbill Buceros bicornis, green imperial pigeon Ducula aenea, silver-breasted broadbill Serilophus lunatus and Jerdon's bushchat Saxicola jerdoni. The avifauna comprises over 300 species (Choudhury, 1987). Further details of waterfowl are given in Scott (1989).

The reptilian fauna includes water monitor Varanus salvator, Indian python Python molurus (V), common cobra Naja naja and king cobra N. hannah are

present (Spillett, 1966).

CULTURAL HERITAGE Mikir tribals live in the neighbouring hills.

LOCAL HUMAN POPULATION There are no villages inside the national park but it is bordered on three sides by human settlements and tea plantations. There are 39 villages within a 10km radius of the park, with an estimated population of 22,300 people in 1983-1984 (IIPA/Environmental Studies Division, pers. comm.).

VISITORS AND VISITOR FACILITIES The interior of the park is accessible mostly by elephant back. There are ten tourist rest houses. Some 22,020 people visited the park in 1983-1984; but only with the end of political turmoil in Assam is the full tourist potential of Kaziranga being explored.

SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH AND FACILITIES The first extensive census of the wildlife was carried out in 1966 (Spillett, 1966), since when censuses have been conducted by the Forest Department in 1972 (Lahan and Sonowal, 1973), 1978 and 1984 (Choudhury, 1987). Other work includes preliminary status surveys of the rhinoceros (Laurie, 1978) and Bengal florican (Ali *et al.*, 1985; Narayan *et al.*, 1989). Using satellite imagery, changes in vegetation cover have been monitored for the period 1973-1986 (Kushwaha and Madhavan Unni, 1986) and the suitability of the habitat for a number of important ungulates has been assessed (Parihar *et al.*, 1986).

CONSERVATION VALUE Kaziranga is renowned as one of the finest and most picturesque wildlife refuges in southern Asia (Spillett, 1966). It protects the world's largest Indian rhinoceros population, as well as many other threatened species.

CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT Kaziranga was originally designated a reserve forest in 1908 with the primary objective of preserving the rhinoceros and other large mammals, since when hunting and shooting have been prohibited. No rights or privileges to exploit forest produce are exercised. Limited grazing was permitted up until the final notification declaring the area as a national park. Kaziranga has a long history of management and practices include annual burning of the grasslands by wildlife staff (Lahan and Sonowal, 1973). There is a management plan valid up to 1980-1981 but this has not been updated. The government has proposed a 45,450ha extension to incorporate a section of the Brahmaputra River within the park. This will be handed over to the park administration when ownership rights have been settled. In addition, some 3,200ha in the southern highlands of Karbi Plateau have been purchased by the Forest Department, but the land has not yet been handed over by the local tribal administrative body (Choudhury, 1987).

MANAGEMENT CONSTRAINTS The biggest recent threat was a proposal to build a railway along the southern boundary; this would have adversely affected animal migratory patterns (Choudhury, 1987). However, the proposal has now been dropped (Ranjitsinh, 1988). The national highway on the southern boundary is becoming busier and encouraging settlement on either side, thus



widening the gap between the national park and the southern hills. Seasonal flooding causes many animals to move out of the national park during the rains, leaving them vulnerable to hunting and reprisals for crop damage; hence the need to extend it to include higher ground to the south. Significant losses to wildlife may be sustained during severe floods, as for example in 1973 (Islam, 1974). River migration has resulted in the loss of some 5,000ha of the national park from 1925 to 1986 (Kushwala and Madhavan Unni, 1986). This will be obviated with the enlargement of the national park in the north to include part of the Brahmaputra River. Poaching of rhinoceros remains a serious problem, with some 25-50 animals killed each year. Some 41 animals were killed by poachers in 1986, falling to 27 in 1987. Although the absolute number of rhinoceros has been increasing, the population growth rate has declined in the last ten years (Choudhury, 1987). Rhino poaching markedly declined during 1987-1988. Consequently, the park has been removed from the CNPPA Register of Threatened Protected Areas of the World (Ranjitsinh, 1988). The highest recorded flooding occurred in 1988, with 70% of the park submerged, causing the deaths of at least 38 rhinos, including 23 calves, 1,050 deer, 68 wild boar, three baby elephants, two tigers and numerous smaller species. Steps have been proposed to alleviate losses in the event of future flooding which may occur more frequently due to damage to the watershed upstream (Anon., 1988; Bradley Martin and Vigne, 1989). The illegal presence of domestic water buffalo in the park has contributed to the spread of rinderpest and resulted in hybridisation of the wild stock.

**STAFF** One field director, one divisional forest officer, three range officers, seven foresters, 92 forest guards and 112 other staff (1986)

**BUDGET** Central Government allocated Rs 3,683,000 for 1989/1990 under its rhinoceros conservation scheme.

**LOCAL ADDRESSES** Director, Kaziranga National Park, PO Bokakhat, District Jorhat, Assam 785 612

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DATE October 1985, reviewed July 1988, updated July 1991

DOCUMENT 1043V

## DESIGNATION POUR LA LISTE DU PATRIMOINE MONDIAL

Convention concernant la protection du patrimoine mondial, naturel et culturel

Nom: PARC NATIONAL DE KAZIRANGA

No d'identification: 337      Date de réception par le secrétariat: 18.4.84

Etat Partie contractante ayant présenté la désignation du bien, conformément à la Convention: INDE

Résumé préparé par l'UICN (mars 1985) d'après la désignation d'origine soumise par l'Inde. L'original et tous les documents présentés à l'appui de cette désignation seront disponibles pour consultation aux réunions du bureau et du comité.

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1. SITUATION: Etat de l'Assam, au nord-est de l'Inde, sur la rive sud du Brahmapoutre. Province biogéographique de la forêt de mousson birmane.

2. DONNEES JURIDIQUES:

L'aire est un parc national de 42 996 ha, créé en 1974 et administré par le Département des forêts du gouvernement d'Etat de l'Assam, aux termes de la Loi de 1972 sur la protection de la faune. L'aire fut établie en tant que réserve forestière en 1908, sanctuaire de faune en 1916 et sanctuaire de la vie sauvage en 1950.

3. IDENTIFICATION:

Kaziranga se situe sur les basses plaines d'inondation (40 à 80m) du bassin du Brahmapoutre, caractérisées par des 'jheels' - terres planes et marécageuses présentant des mares larges et peu profondes frangées de roseaux. Le fleuve Bhangra coule dans le parc, dans la direction est-ouest. Les sols sont principalement constitués par les alluvions dérivées du bassin fluvial. Le climat est modéré, avec une pluviosité annuelle moyenne de 2500 mm tombant principalement pendant la saison des pluies (mai-octobre). Les températures vont de 10°C à 35°C.

La végétation se compose de trois types principaux: 1) prairies alluviales humides, 2) forêts tropicales semi-sempervirentes et 3) forêts tropicales humides sempervirentes. Les prairies occupent près des deux tiers du parc.

Ce parc est reconnu sur le plan international en raison de sa forte population de rhinocéros unicorns de l'Inde, Rhinoceros unicornis, dont les effectifs atteignaient 1195 en 1984, soit près des trois quart de la population mondiale totale (en 1900 il n'en restait que 12). Le parc abrite, entre autres Mammifères, des tigres, éléphants, panthères, ours lippus, buffles sauvages, gours, sambars, cerfs des marais, muntjacs, cerfs-cochons, porcs sauvages, Presbytis pileatus, gibbons, etc. Il y a une colonie de pélicans (pélicans gris) près du village de Kaziranga et les zones humides du parc sont utilisées par des milliers d'oiseaux d'eau. On trouve aussi le dauphin du Gange dans certains des bras morts des lacs.

4. ETAT DE PRESERVATION/CONSERVATION:

La protection dont jouit le parc a une longue histoire dont on peut constater les effets dans la reconstitution spectaculaire du peuplement de rhinocéros.

Il existe un plan d'aménagement du parc et le gouvernement d'Etat fournit l'équipement de base et la main d'oeuvre. Kaziranga est un lieu privilégié du tourisme et dispose de logements pour les touristes.

Sur trois côtés, le parc est bordé par des villages et des plantations de thé et la seule zone tampon est constituée, au nord, par le Brahmapoutre. Le braconnage des rhinocéros reste un problème: 37 ont été tués en 1983.

Il a été proposé de créer une zone tampon au sud dans les Mikir Hills et sur le plateau de Karbi, en vue d'assurer une certaine protection à la faune qui quitte le parc pour échapper aux inondations, à la saison de la mousson.

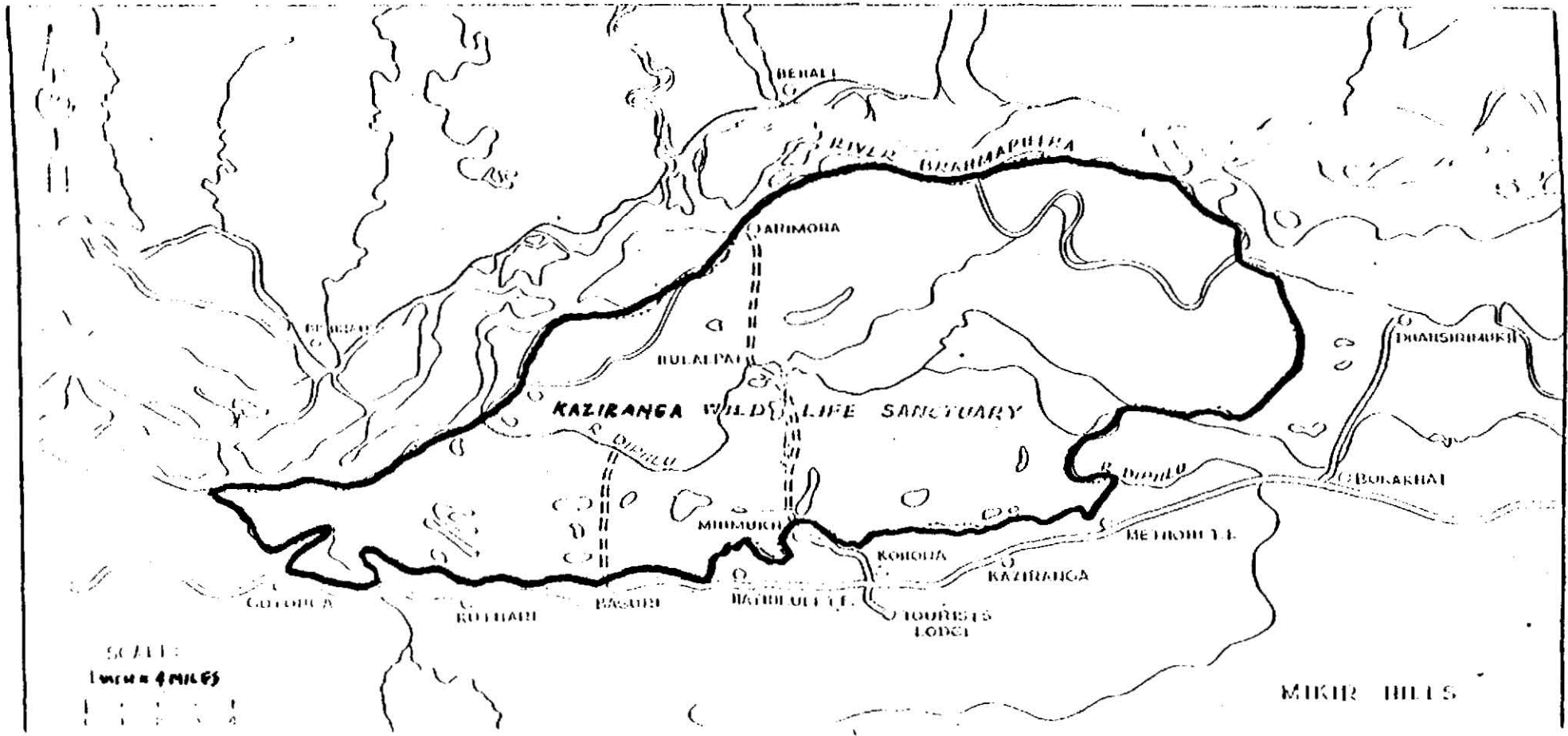
5. RAISONS JUSTIFIANT LA DESIGNATION POUR LA LISTE DU PATRIMOINE MONDIAL:

Pour justifier la désignation du Parc national de Kaziranga en tant que bien du patrimoine mondial, le gouvernement de l'Inde a donné les raisons suivantes:

a) Bien culturel -- non applicable

b) Bien naturel

(iv) Habitats d'espèces végétales ou animales rares ou menacées. Le parc est la principale aire mondiale de protection du rhinocéros unicolore de l'Inde.



337 PARC NATIONAL DE KAZIRANGA (INDE)

1. DOCUMENTATION:

- a) Formulaire de désignation
- b) Fiches de données de l'UICN
- c) Consultants: John MacKinnon, William Oliver, P. Jackson, C. Martin, représentants du gouvernement de l'Inde
- d) Littérature consultée: India Today, 31 mars 1984, WWF-India Newsletter 52, 1985.

2. COMPARAISON AVEC D'AUTRES AIRES:

Dans la province biogéographique de la forêt de mousson birmane, il existe 18 autres aires protégées établies, en Inde et au Bangladesh. Kaziranga est la seule qui ait le statut de parc national et bien des autres sont trop petites pour garantir une conservation viable à long terme. La seule exception est le Sanctuaire de faune de Namdapha (190 782 ha), site proposé comme réserve de la biosphère, dans l'Etat voisin d'Arunachal Pradesh. Seule une petite partie de cette aire présente des formations similaires mais n'abrite pas de rhinocéros unicolore. Au Bengal occidental, le Sanctuaire de faune de Jaldapara présente des formations semblables et a quelques rhinocéros (14) mais sa superficie n'est que le quart de celle de Kaziranga et l'aire ne bénéficie pas d'une protection juridique aussi stricte que Kaziranga.

Kaziranga est très différent du Sanctuaire de Manas car il est très loin des forêts de collines du Bouthan et situé dans les plaines d'inondation australes du Brahmapoutre. A cet égard, il se distingue aussi du Parc national royal de Chitwan, bien que ce dernier possède la deuxième population mondiale du rhinocéros unicolore.

3. INTEGRITE

Du fait que le parc jouxte des villages sur trois côtés, il a toujours été difficile de le protéger contre des incursions de braconniers ou de bergers. L'introduction de la peste bovine et des buffles domestiques a eu des effets négatifs sur les buffles sauvages, notamment l'hybridation du bétail sauvage restant.

Le braconnage du rhinocéros a toujours été un problème grave (notamment dans les périodes récentes d'émeutes populaires) mais la population globale est stable, voire en augmentation.

Un autre facteur important dans la gestion de Kaziranga est l'inondation saisonnière qui pousse de nombreux animaux à émigrer en dehors du parc où ils risquent d'être chassés ou abattus en représailles des dommages causés aux cultures.

La présence de la route nationale 37 très fréquentée le long des limites méridionales de Kaziranga a favorisé une multiplication des établissements humains qui perturbent les voies traditionnelles de migration de la faune sauvage. Le gouvernement envisage actuellement de construire une voie de chemin de fer le long de ce corridor.

#### 4. COMMENTAIRES ADDITIONNELS

L'établissement d'un corridor ou d'une zone tampon au sud du parc permettrait d'améliorer considérablement l'intégrité de Kaziranga.

#### 5. EVALUATION

Bien que Kaziranga présente un ensemble de valeurs naturelles et soit l'habitat de nombreuses espèces menacées d'oiseaux migrateurs, son importance principale vient du fait que le parc est la première place forte mondiale du rhinocéros unicorne. Pour cette raison, il satisfait au critère (iv) de la Convention. Les fluctuations des eaux du Brahmapoutre déterminent des exemples spectaculaires de processus riverains et fluviaux, de sorte que le site satisfait aussi au critère (ii). Les inquiétudes vis-à-vis de l'intégrité du parc sont actuellement mineures mais la situation devrait faire l'objet d'une surveillance continue, étant donné que le parc est une des dernières aires naturelles non modifiées de cette région de l'Inde.

#### 6. RECOMMANDATIONS

Le Parc national de Kaziranga devrait être inscrit sur la Liste du patrimoine mondial. Le comité pourrait éventuellement recommander d'encourager le gouvernement de l'Etat de l'Assam à prendre des mesures juridiques pour créer une zone tampon au sud, afin de protéger l'habitat de saison des pluies de même que pour entreprendre des études d'impact relatives au projet de construction d'une voie de chemin de fer le long des limites méridionales du parc.