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Save Hornbills, Save Tropical Forests

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Why in News

Scientists from two organisations studied **how fruiting plants and hornbills influenced each other's distribution** in the **Namdapha Tiger Reserve, Arunachal Pradesh**.

The study strengthens the argument that **hornbills are gardeners or farmers of the forest**, demonstrating that they farm their own food-rich patches **through their seed dispersal**.

Key Points

- **About the Study:**
 - Hornbills have a **symbiotic relationship** with several canopy trees in **tropical forests. In the longer term, this likely creates orchards that** continue attracting hornbills.
 - The study shows that forest patches that have **rare trees like Canarium**, attract hornbills in large numbers (for food). In turn, hornbills end up **dispersing seeds of a diverse array of plant species** in higher numbers in these patches.

- **Hornbills:**

- **About:** The hornbills (Family Bucerotidae) are a family of birds **found in tropical and subtropical Africa and Asia.**
- **In India:** India is **home to nine species** of hornbills.
 - The **northeastern region has the highest diversity** of hornbill species within India.
 - They are the cultural symbols of some ethnic **communities in the northeast**, specifically the **Nyishi of Arunachal Pradesh.**
 - The **Hornbill festival** celebrated in **Nagaland** is named after the bird – Hornbill which is the most revered and admired bird for the Nagas.
- **Threats:**
 - Hornbills are **hunted for their casques - upper beak - and feathers** for adorning headgear. They are also **poached for their meat and medicinal value** of their body parts.
 - A **conservation programme promoting the use of fibre-glass beaks** for headgear instead of real hornbill casques has helped reduce some threat to it.
 - **Illegal logging i.e. cutting of tall trees** where the hornbill birds nest and feed has led to destruction of its natural habitat.

India's 9 Hornbill Species

The Great Hornbill



- **Habitat:** Western Ghats and Himalayas. **Largest of all hornbills in India, state bird of Arunachal Pradesh and Kerala.**
- **IUCN Red List:** Vulnerable
- **CITES:** Appendix I
- **Wildlife Protection Act (WPA), 1972:** Schedule I

Rufous-necked Hornbill

- **Habitat:** It has the Northernmost extent. Whole of North-East India to Mahananda Wildlife Sanctuary in West Bengal.



- **IUCN Red List:** Vulnerable
- **CITES:** Appendix I

Wreathed Hornbill



- **Habitat:** North-East India.
- **IUCN Red List:** Vulnerable
- **CITES:** Appendix II

Narcondam Hornbill



- **Habitat:** Endemic to the Indian island of Narcondam in Andamans.
- **IUCN Red List:** Vulnerable
- **CITES:** Appendix II
- **WPA, 1972:** Schedule I

Malabar Pied Hornbill



- **Habitat:** Evergreen and moist deciduous forests in India and Sri Lanka.
- **IUCN Red List:** Near Threatened
- **CITES:** Appendix II.

Oriental Pied Hornbill



- **Habitat:** Subtropical or tropical moist lowland forests.
- **IUCN Red List:** Least Concern
- **CITES:** Appendix II

Austen's Brown Hornbill



- **Habitat:** Forests of North East India, majorly in Namdapha National Park, Arunachal Pradesh.
- **IUCN Red List:** Near Threatened
- **CITES:** N/A

Malabar Grey Hornbill



- **Habitat:** Western Ghats.
- **IUCN Red List:** Least Concern
- **CITES:** N/A

Indian Grey Hornbill



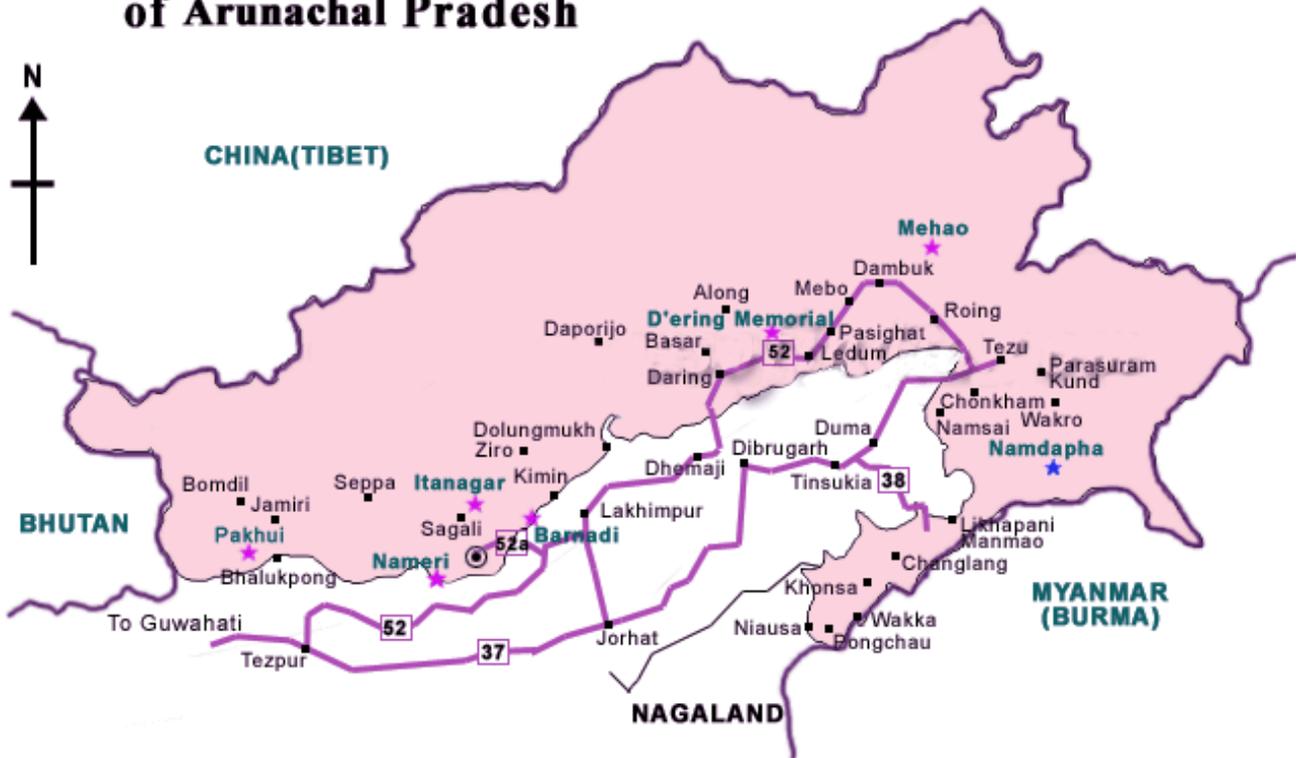
- **Habitat:** Foothills of Southern Himalayas.
- **IUCN Red List:** Least Concern
- **CITES:** N/A

Namdapha National Park

- **About:** It was declared a National Park in 1983. In the same year, it was also declared as a Tiger Reserve.

- **Geography:**
 - It lies at the international border **between India and Myanmar** in the **state of Arunachal Pradesh**.
 - Namdapha is surrounded by the **Patkai hills to the south and south-east** and by the **Himalaya in the north**.
 - Namdapha is in fact the **name of a river** originating in the Park and **it meets Noa-Dehing river**. The **Noa-Dehing river, is a tributary of the Brahmaputra** and flows in a North-South direction in the middle of the National Park.
- **Climate:** Enjoys the **sub-tropical climate**. The **mountainous part has a mountain type of climate** while the **low lying plains and valleys experience tropical climate**.
- **Vegetation:** The **vegetation** is characteristic of **tropical evergreen forests** (Tropical Rain Forests).
- **Fauna:**
 - It is the **only park in the World** to have the **four species of big cat** namely the **Tiger, Leopard, Snow Leopard and Clouded Leopard**.
 - A number of primate species such as **Assamese macaque, pig-tailed macaque, stump-tailed macaque**.
 - **Hoolock Gibbons**, the **only 'ape' species found in India** is found in this National Park.
 - Of the many other important animals are the **elephants, black bear, Indian Bison**, and a variety of arboreal animals.
 - Among the **bird** species, most notable are the **White winged Wood Ducks, a rare and endangered species**. It is also **home to 5 out of 9 species of Hornbill including the great Indian hornbill**.

National Parks & Sanctuaries of Arunachal Pradesh



Source: DTE