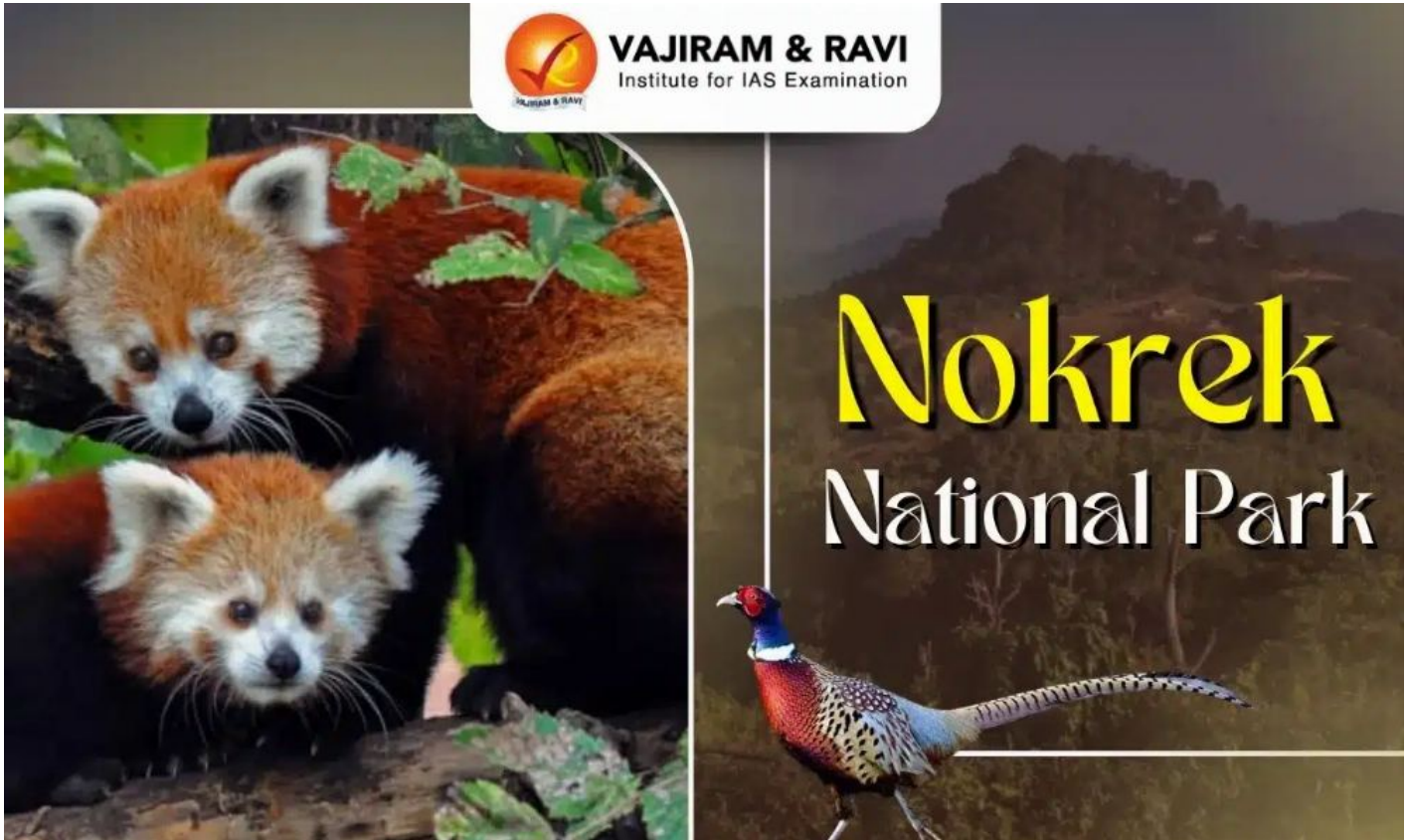


Nokrek National Park, Location, Physical Features, Biodiversity

July 4, 2026 • vajiramandravi.com



Nokrek National Park is a beautiful and peaceful **wildlife area** located in the state of **Meghalaya, India**. Surrounded by **lush green forests** and **hills**, it is known for its **rich biodiversity** and **natural beauty**. The park is home to many **rare plants and animals**, including the famous **red panda** and the unique **citrus fruit species** found only in this region. It is also an important part of the **Nokrek Biosphere Reserve**, helping to protect **nature** and maintain **ecological balance**.

Nokrek National Park Location and Establishment

- Nokrek National Park is situated in the **Garro Hills region of Meghalaya**, and it spreads across the districts of **East Garo Hills, West Garo Hills, and South Garo Hills**, making it an important protected area in northeastern India.
- The park was officially declared a **National Park in 1986**, while the final legal notification was issued later in **1997**, ensuring stronger protection and conservation measures.
- Although the park itself is relatively small in size, it forms the **core area of the Nokrek Biosphere Reserve**, which covers a much larger landscape of about **82,000 hectares**.

- An important feature of this park is that the land was **acquired by the Government of Meghalaya through purchase from local communities**, reflecting cooperation between authorities and indigenous people.

Nokrek National Park Physical Features and Landscape

- The terrain of Nokrek National Park is **completely hilly and rugged**, with variations in slope and elevation that give the area a distinct natural character.
- The **northern slopes are comparatively gentle**, making them less steep, while the **southern side consists of moderate to very steep slopes**, creating a more challenging and uneven landscape.
- The region is marked by **dense clusters of low hills**, and a prominent ridge known as the **Tura Ridge** runs through the park from the northwest to the northeast direction.
- The **Tura Ridge acts as the backbone of the Garo Hills** and is located at the western edge of the Meghalaya Plateau, playing a key role in shaping the region's geography.
- The average elevation of the park is around **1,200 meters above sea level**, and the terrain is often **rocky with very little topsoil in certain areas**, which affects vegetation growth.

Nokrek National Park Rivers and Climate

- Nokrek is the source region for several important **rivers and streams**, which originate in the hills and flow through **narrow, rocky channels** before joining larger river systems.
- These rivers eventually drain into major river basins like the **Brahmaputra and Meghna**, highlighting the park's hydrological importance.
- Key rivers originating from this region include the **Simsang River (the longest in the Garo Hills)** along with **Ganol, Dareng, Nitai, and Bhugi rivers**.
- The climate of the park is **tropical in nature**, characterized by **high temperatures, heavy rainfall, and high humidity**, especially during the **monsoon season**.

Nokrek National Park Vegetation and Forest Types

- The forests in Nokrek National Park are mainly classified as **Tropical Semi-evergreen forests**, according to the classification by Champion and Seth (1968).
- At higher elevations, the forests often turn into **cloud forests**, where the area remains covered with clouds for long periods, especially during the monsoon season.
- The **southern slopes** have limited vegetation, mainly consisting of **patches of moist deciduous forests** along with areas of **secondary scrub vegetation**.
- In contrast, the **northern slopes have very little vegetation**, mostly restricted to narrow stretches of **evergreen forests and semi-evergreen forests along the ridge**.
- The park is especially significant for its population of **Citrus indica**, a rare and primitive wild citrus species believed to be one of the earliest relatives of cultivated citrus fruits.

Nokrek National Park Biodiversity Importance (KBA Status)

- Nokrek National Park is recognized as a **Key Biodiversity Area (KBA)** of international significance, which means it is crucial for the conservation of global biodiversity.
- The site meets important conservation criteria, including those used to identify **Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas (IBA)** and **Alliance for Zero Extinction (AZE)** sites.
- Its classification is based on globally accepted standards such as the **IUCN Red List (2002)**, emphasizing the presence of threatened and unique species.

Flora of Nokrek National Park

- Nokrek National Park, part of the **UNESCO-recognized Nokrek Biosphere Reserve** in Meghalaya, is dominated by **dense tropical evergreen and semi-evergreen forests**, covering nearly 90% of the area.
- This rich vegetation supports a wide variety of plant species adapted to humid subtropical conditions.
- One of the most important features of the park is the presence of **Citrus indica**, locally known as **Memang Narang** or the “orange of the spirits.” It is considered the **primitive ancestor of modern citrus fruits**, which led to the establishment of a **National Citrus Gene Sanctuary** within the biosphere reserve.
- The forest canopy is formed by **tall and well-developed trees**, including species such as **silk cotton tree (Bombax ceiba)**, **hairy sterculia (Sterculia villosa)**, and **golden shower tree (Cassia fistula)**. Other common trees like **champak and white meranti** further add to the dense forest cover.
- The park also contains **extensive bamboo vegetation**, especially in the lower hills and valleys. Species such as **Bambusa tulda** and **Dendrocalamus strictus** grow in thick clusters and play an important ecological role.
- Nokrek is known for its rich diversity of **orchids and ferns**, both epiphytic (growing on trees) and terrestrial. Beautiful species like **Cymbidium elegans**, **Dendrobium densiflorum**, and **Eria reticulata** are commonly found, adding color and variety to the forest.
- The moist and humid environment supports a wide range of **medicinal plants and herbs**, which are traditionally used by local communities. Important species include **Swertia chirata**, **Dioscorea bulbifera**, and **wild lemongrass**, highlighting the park’s ecological and medicinal importance.

Nokrek National Park Bird Diversity (Avifauna)

- Around **150 species of birds** have been recorded in the park, making it an important site for bird conservation and study.
- The park includes **restricted-range species** as well as several species that are specific to particular ecological regions or biomes.
- Due to its elevation range (600-1400 m), Nokrek falls under two major biomes: the **Indo-Chinese Tropical Moist Forest** and the **Sino-Himalayan Subtropical Forest**.
- Species such as the **Oriental White-backed Vulture** and **Slender-billed Vulture** have been observed here, indicating the ecological importance of the park.
- Although local communities report the presence of the **Rufous-necked Hornbill**, more scientific surveys are needed to confirm its status.
- Because of its rich bird diversity and presence of threatened species, the park has been identified as an **Important Bird Area (IBA)**.

- The park is known for its diversity of wild cats, including **Tiger, Leopard, Clouded Leopard, Golden Cat, and Leopard Cat**, which play a key role in maintaining ecological balance.
- Other carnivores found here include the **Golden Jackal, Wild Dog (Dhole), and Himalayan Black Bear**, which are important predators in the ecosystem.
- The park is home to several primate species such as the **Hoolock Gibbon, Capped Langur, Rhesus Macaque, and Stump-tailed Macaque**, highlighting its rich biodiversity.
- Common herbivores include **Wild Boar, Sambar, Barking Deer, Serow, and Gaur**, which form an essential part of the food chain.
- Smaller carnivores like **civets and the Binturong** are also found here, along with a significant population of the **Indian Elephant**, which uses this region as part of its natural habitat.

Nokrek National Park Significance

- Nokrek National Park is an important **biodiversity hotspot** and forms part of a **UNESCO-recognized biosphere reserve**, making it globally significant.
- It is known for rare and endangered species such as the **red panda, clouded leopard, and Asian elephant**, which attract conservation attention.
- The presence of **ancient citrus species** adds to its scientific and ecological importance.
- Overall, the park plays a crucial role in **protecting wildlife, maintaining ecological balance, and preserving the natural heritage** of the region.

Source: <https://vajiramandravi.com/current-affairs/nokrek-national-park/>

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