

Buxa Tiger Reserve, Location, Physiography, Drainage, Biodiversity

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Buxa Tiger Reserve is a strategically important protected area in the Dooars region of West Bengal that forms a critical transboundary ecological landscape with Bhutan and Assam in the Eastern Himalayan foothills.

Buxa Tiger Reserve Location

Buxa Tiger Reserve is one of the most important protected areas of **North Bengal** and the second major tiger reserve in the state.

- Buxa Tiger Reserve is **located in the Alipurduar district of West Bengal** in the foothills of the **Eastern Himalayas**.
- It lies within the **Indo-Malayan biodiversity region**, which is known for high species richness and ecological sensitivity.
- The reserve was **notified under Project Tiger in 1983 as the 15th tiger reserve in India**.
- It occupies a strategic transboundary position by sharing its northern boundary with Bhutan and connecting to Assam through forest corridors.

Buxa Tiger Reserve Physiography and Drainage

- The **elevation** of Buxa Tiger Reserve ranges from about 60 metres in the plains to nearly 1750 metres in the Himalayan foothills.
- It includes Terai, Bhabar and sub-Himalayan ecosystems within a single protected landscape.
- The reserve is drained by rivers such as **Raidak, Sankosh and Jayanti**, which originate in Bhutan. These rivers carry heavy sediment loads, frequently causing flooding and habitat alteration.

Buxa Tiger Reserve Biodiversity

The reserve supports more than 1,000 plant species, including about 450 tree species, 400 herb species, 250 shrub species, and over 150 orchid species

- Buxa Tiger Reserve is covered mainly by **moist tropical forests** with very high species diversity.
- The forest is dominated by **Sal, Champa, Gamar and Simul trees**.
- It supports diverse wildlife including **elephants, gaur, sambar, chital, wild boar, leopards, clouded leopards and dhole**.
- The **avifauna** includes hornbills, vultures and endangered species such as the **Bengal florican**.
- The tiger population in Buxa Tiger Reserve had almost disappeared after 1998 and remained absent for over two decades.
- Camera trap records in 2021 and 2023 confirmed the return of a male tiger to the landscape. In January 2026, another adult male tiger was camera-trapped in the West Rajabhatkhawa Range, confirming continued dispersal. This indicates active connectivity through the India-Bhutan-Assam corridor system.
- The Asian elephant remains a key corridor flagship species, facilitating large-scale migration across international boundaries.

Ecological Corridors and Connectivity

Buxa Tiger Reserve is connected through multiple ecological corridors ensuring landscape continuity.

- The **Buxa-Chilapata Corridor** links it with Jaldapara and supports elephant movement.
- The **Buxa-Titi Corridor** maintains connectivity through forest patches and tea garden matrices.
- The **Buxa-Ripu Corridor** connects it to Assam's forest divisions.

These corridors collectively enable genetic flow across India, Bhutan and Assam landscapes.

Cultural and Historical Significance

Buxa Fort was used by the British as a detention centre during India's freedom struggle. The **Mahakaleshwar temple** is an important religious site, and several indigenous communities such as Rava, Dukpa, and Nepali groups live in the surrounding areas.