

Keibul Lamjao National Park, Location, Flora & Fauna, Floating Park

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Keibul Lamjao National Park is a unique and beautiful national park located in the state of **Manipur** in Northeast India. It is widely known for being the **only floating national park in the world**, as it is made up of floating masses of vegetation called **phumdis** on **Loktak Lake**. The park is especially famous for being the natural home of the **endangered Sangai deer**, which is also known as the “dancing deer.” With its mix of water, greenery, and wildlife, the park offers a rare example of how nature can adapt in unusual ways.

What is Keibul Lamjao National Park?

- Keibul Lamjao National Park is a **very unique and ecologically significant national park located in Manipur**, and it is globally famous for being the **only floating national park in the world**. Unlike typical forests, this park is built on floating land masses, which makes it extremely rare and scientifically important.
- The park spreads over an area of about **40 square kilometers** and is mainly composed of floating vegetation known as **phumdis**, which support a wide range of plant and animal life.
- It is especially important because it is the **last natural habitat of the endangered Sangai deer**, also known as the **dancing deer of Manipur**, making it a key site for wildlife conservation in India.

Where is Keibul Lamjao National Park Located?

- The park is located in the **Bishnupur district of Manipur**, in the **southwestern part of Loktak Lake**, which is the largest freshwater lake in Northeast India.
- Being situated on a lake, the park forms a **unique wetland ecosystem**, where land and water are closely connected and constantly interacting with each other.
- Its location makes it an important part of the **Loktak Lake ecosystem**, which supports both biodiversity and the livelihoods of local communities.

Why is Keibul Lamjao National Park Unique?

- The most special feature of the park is that it is the **world's only floating national park**, formed by thick floating masses of vegetation called **phumdis**, which act like natural floating islands.
- These phumdis are strong enough to support animals, including the Sangai deer, which moves gracefully across them, giving it the name **"dancing deer."**
- The park is also unique because it combines **wetland, terrestrial, and aquatic ecosystems**, creating a highly diverse and dynamic environment.
- Its rare ecosystem and limited habitat make it one of the **most sensitive and important conservation areas in India**.

What is the Historical Background of the Park?

- In the early 1950s, the **Sangai deer was believed to be extinct**, which raised serious concerns among conservationists and authorities.
- However, it was later **rediscovered in Manipur**, which became a turning point for wildlife conservation in the region.
- To protect the species, the area around Loktak Lake was first declared a **protected sanctuary in 1953**, and further steps were taken to restrict hunting and human interference.
- Eventually, the area was officially declared a **National Park in 1977**, ensuring stronger legal protection and conservation efforts under the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972.
- Over the years, continuous conservation work has helped in **increasing the population of Sangai deer**, showing the success of protection measures.

What are Phumdis and Why are They Important?

- **Phumdis** are floating masses made up of **vegetation, soil, and decomposed organic matter**, and they form the foundation of the park's ecosystem.
- These floating structures remain partly above water and partly submerged, creating a **stable yet flexible habitat** for plants and animals.
- Phumdis play a very important role in **maintaining the ecological balance of Loktak Lake**, as they help in nutrient cycling and water purification.
- They also provide **food, shelter, and breeding grounds** for many species, including the Sangai deer, making them essential for survival in this ecosystem.

What Type of Vegetation is Found in the Park?

- The vegetation in the park is a mix of **aquatic plants, grasses, and semi-terrestrial species**, adapted to waterlogged and floating conditions.
- Common plant species include **Saccharum munja, Zizania latifolia (wild rice), Erianthus procerus, Cynodon dactylon, and Discorea bulbifera**, which thrive in wet environments.
- The phumdis themselves are covered with dense vegetation, creating a **green floating landscape** across the lake.
- This vegetation not only supports wildlife but also helps in **maintaining water quality and preventing soil erosion**.

What Flora is Found in Keibul Lamjao National Park?

- The park is home to around **145 to 233 plant species**, including grasses, herbs, aquatic plants, and shrubs.
- Important plant species such as **Phragmites karka, Alpinia galanga, and Erianthus species** contribute to the diversity of the ecosystem.
- Many of these plants are specially adapted to **wetland conditions**, allowing them to survive in floating or semi-submerged environments.
- The rich plant diversity supports the **entire food chain**, from herbivores to predators, making the ecosystem stable and productive.

What Animals are Found in the Park?

- The park supports around **22 species of mammals**, including **Sangai deer, hog deer, wild boar, otters, civet cats, jungle cats, and golden cats**.
- It also has a variety of **reptiles and amphibians**, such as turtles, snakes (cobra, python, viper), and frogs.
- The park is especially rich in bird life, with over **150 species of birds**, including many **migratory birds** that visit during winter months.
- In addition, the lake supports numerous **fish species**, making it an important area for both biodiversity and local fisheries.

What are the Key Facts about Sangai Deer?

- The **Sangai deer (Rucervus eldii)** is an **endangered species** found only in Keibul Lamjao National Park, making it extremely rare and valuable.
- It is known for its **graceful movement on floating phumdis**, which gives it the nickname **“dancing deer.”**
- The deer has **long, curved antlers** and a **reddish-brown coat**, which changes with seasons.
- It is protected under **Schedule I of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972**, and is listed as **Endangered by the IUCN**, highlighting the need for strict conservation.
- It is also the **state animal of Manipur** and holds deep cultural and emotional significance for the local people.

What are the Key Facts about Loktak Lake?

- **Loktak Lake** is the **largest freshwater lake in Northeast India**, and it plays a central role in the park's ecosystem.
- It is famous for its **phumdis**, which are not found in such abundance anywhere else in the world.
- The lake is important for the local economy, as it provides **water for irrigation, drinking, fishing, and hydropower generation**.
- It was declared a **Ramsar Site in 1990** due to its international ecological importance and later included in the **Montreux Record in 1993** due to environmental concerns.
- However, human activities have put pressure on the lake, making conservation efforts even more important.

Why is Keibul Lamjao National Park Important?

- The park is extremely important as it is the **only natural habitat of the Sangai deer**, making it critical for the species' survival.
- It protects a **rare floating ecosystem**, which is highly sensitive and unique in the world.
- The park helps in maintaining **biodiversity, water resources, and ecological balance** in the region.
- It also has **cultural importance**, as the Sangai deer is closely linked to the traditions and identity of Manipur.
- Overall, it is a great example of how **wetland ecosystems and wildlife conservation can work together**, while also supporting local communities.

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

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