

Great Indian Hornbill

The Great Indian Hornbill, also known as Great Pied Hornbill, is one of the larger members of the hornbill family.

Its magnificent size and superb colour has made it an integral part of many tribal cultures and rituals in Northeastern India.

This article will give details about the Great Indian Hornbill within the context of the IAS Exam.

Details about the Great Indian Hornbill

A prominent feature of the Great Indian Hornbill is the bright yellow and black casque on its bill. The casque is U-shaped while seen from the front

The males have a black casque at its back and front underside, while it is reddish in colour for the back casque in females.

A sound produced by the wing beating of the Great Indian Hornbill can be heard from a long distance. Its flight consists of stiff flaps followed by glides enabling them to fly at great heights over forests.

They are referred to as 'engineers of the forests' as they play a crucial role in dispersing seeds of the tropical forests, thus preserving its ecological balance.



Details of the Great Indian Hornbill	
Length	95-130 cm
Latin Name	(<i>Buceros bicornis</i>)
Wingspan	152 cm
Weight	2 to 4 kg
Habitat	India, Bhutan, Nepal, Mainland Southeast Asia and Indonesian island of Sumatra
Diet	Frugivorous, but also will prey on small reptiles, mammals and birds if and when the opportunity is right

Cultural Significance of the Great Indian Hornbill

The great hornbill is the state bird of Kerala and Arunachal Pradesh in India. The Great Indian Hornbill is also considered sacred among the tribal cultures of Nagaland. To commemorate this,

the Hornbill Festival is celebrated every year from December 1 to 10. It was first celebrated in 2000.

But it is this reverence that has threatened the population of the Great Hornbill. The beaks and heads of these birds are used as head-dresses and charms while its flesh is believed to possess medicinal properties. Tribesmen in Nagaland and other parts of Northeast India also wear feathers and skulls as decorations. There are other festivals among the tribes of Nagaland which are considered incomplete without a hornbill feather.

Additionally illegal logging is also cause for its declining population

To preserve the vulnerable population of the Great Indian Hornbill, conservation efforts have attempted to provide feathers from captive birds and ceramic casques to substitute the actual ones.

Frequently Asked Questions about the Great Indian Hornbill

What is the roosting pattern of the Great Indian Hornbill?

The same roost sites are used everyday and the birds arrive at sunset on time following a predetermined route

How do the Great Indian Hornbill behave in captivity?

A Great Indian Hornbill consumes fruits and meat while in captivity. Although few have been tamed in captivity, its behaviour has been noted to be largely nervous.

What is the present conservation status of the Great Indian Hornbill?

Due to poaching and habitat loss the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) has listed the Great Indian Hornbill as vulnerable in the Red List of Threatened Species. Its status was uplisted from near threatened in 2018.