

Pygmy hogs

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Captive-bred pygmy hogs, the **smallest and rarest pigs** on earth, were recently released in Assam's **Manas National Park** and Tiger Reserve under **Pygmy Hog Conservation Programme (PHCP)**.



[Ref- Down to Earth]

About the Pygmy hog:

- It is a **suid** native to **alluvial grasslands** in the **foothills** of **Himalayas** at elevations of up to **300 m**.
- Its population is estimated at **less than 250 mature individuals** in Assam and possibly southern **Bhutan** and **Nepal**.
- **Appearance:** It has coats having **blackish-brown bristles** over gray-brown skin and **no** facial **warts**.
 - The **head** is **sharply tapered** and adult males have **visible upper canines** on the sides of their mouths.
- **Habitat:** It is extremely **shy** and **secretive** in the wild as stays hidden in **tall dense grass**, having a mixture of shrubs and trees.
 - The family groups live in **high dome-shaped thatch nests** made of grass and other vegetation, rather than **farrow** like **other pigs**.
- **Diet: (Omnivores)** Roots, tubers, insects, rodents, and small reptiles.
- **Threats:** Habitat loss through human settlement, overgrazing of livestock, commercial forestry, flood control projects, agricultural encroachment and burning of grasslands.

Conservation Status:

- **IUCN:** Endangered (**EN**)
- **Wildlife Protection Act (WPA):** Schedule I

About Pygmy Hog Conservation Programme (PHCP):

- It was started **near Guwahati** in **1996** under which males and females were captured from the Manas National Park.
- The reintroduction of **captive-bred hogs** to the wild began in **2008** and has been **conducted annually since 2020**.

- The target is **to reintroduce 60 pygmy hogs** in Manas, its historical habitat, by **2025**.
- This would **boost the rewilding of Manas** through more investment in the **scientific management of grasslands**.
- It will benefit **grassland-associated species** like Bengal florican, hispid hare, hog deer, and Indian rhino.

About Manas Biosphere & Tiger Reserve:

- It is a protected area located in **Western Assam** at the foothills of **Eastern Himalayas**.
- It was among the **first nine tiger reserves** to be notified when [Project Tiger](#) started in **1973** and inscribed as a **UNESCO World Heritage Site** in 1985.
- **Location:** Royal Manas National Park of Bhutan by the River Manas and its tributaries- **Beki** and **Hakua** in the north.
 - **Buxa Tiger Reserve** of West Bengal by the **River Sankosh** in the west.
- It was notified as a **Biosphere Reserve (1989)** under United Nations Man and Biosphere (**MAB**) Programme, and an Important Bird Area (**IBA**) by Birdlife International (2004).
- **Flora:** Sal, Khair-Sisoo, scrub forests, semi-evergreen and mixed deciduous forests, interspersed with grasslands and riparian vegetation.
- **Fauna:** Indian elephants, Bengal Tiger, Indian rhinoceros, clouded leopards, golden langurs, Assamese macaques, rhesus macaque, slow loris, hoolock gibbons, Indian pangolin, Chinese pangolin, etc.