

Sanctuaries In Bihar

## SANCTUARIES IN BIHAR

BY

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In 1946 by the enactment of the Bihar Private Forests Act the State Government acquired control over some 8,000 square miles of privately owned forests but so far not a single sanctuary has been created in those areas. Those are the areas which have suffered most from a lack of shooting control as the owners and their friends used to massacre game particularly tiger and deer by shooting at night with the help of spot-lights from automobiles. All the existing sanctuaries in Bihar are in the State-owned forests and have been in existence from a minimum of five years to a maximum of over twenty years. At the moment there are five sanctuaries, three in the district of Singhbhum, and one each in the districts of Palamau and Hazaribagh.

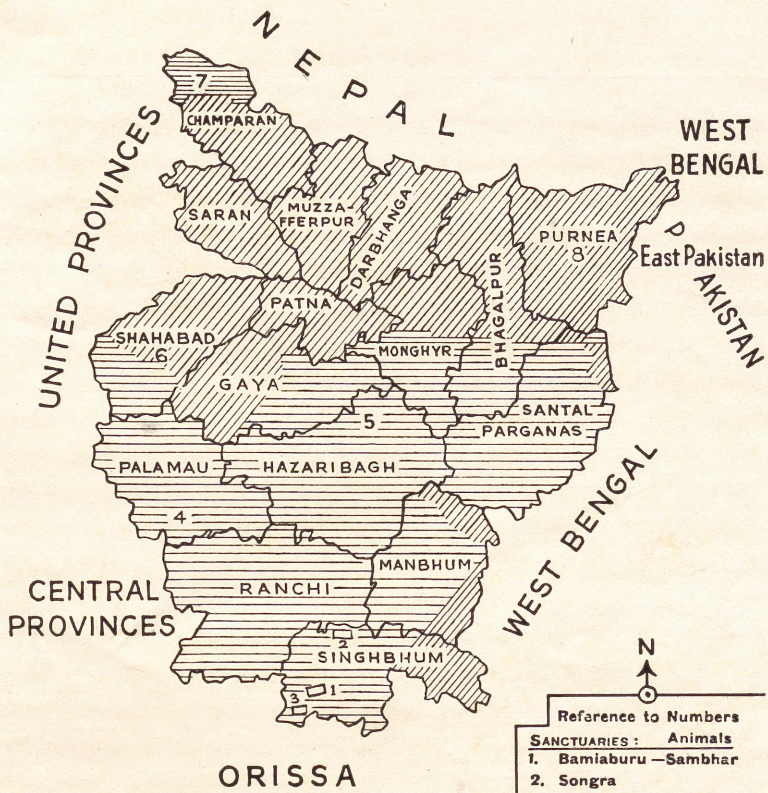
The oldest sanctuary is the Bamiaburu one, located in the Kolhan Forest Division of the Singhbhum District. It is situated at a distance of 10 miles from the Sonua railway station of the main Calcutta-Nagpur line of the Eastern Railway. This station is at a distance of just over 200 miles from Calcutta, and the sanctuary is connected to it by a fair weather road. This sanctuary was created in 1932 and covers an area of about 50 square miles. The crop is mostly Sal, (*Shorea robusta* Gaertn.), poor in places with evergreen patches along streams. It tends to become very dry in the hot weather and in the very hot summer of 1948 there was an acute shortage of water as the only two streams running through it which are normally perennial dried up that year. A fish-pond and a swimming pool have been built by the Forest Department and generally provide water throughout the year. The sanctuary is set amidst sylvan surroundings and from the Forest Rest House which is in the heart of the sanctuary a lovely view is obtained. There is no habitation for several miles around and, apart from the few buildings of the Forest Department there is nothing to disturb the perfect peace that reigns here.

In this sanctuary deer are most plentiful and any night motoring up from Sonua one can come across Sambhar on the road. Tigers have recently begun multiplying and have spread out into adjoining areas where none could be seen formerly. The animal that appears to have benefited the most is the Sambhar, though other deer and Carnivora also occur.



In order that this sanctuary may be of real benefit it is necessary first of all to improve the water supply. For this the swimming pool has to be deepened and its exit controlled by a small sluice gate so that during the dry period the maximum amount of water can be impounded. The fish pond has to be desilted every year so that its depth is sufficient to allow water to remain in it all the year round.

Another scenically beautiful sanctuary is the Sasangdabaru one in the Saranda Division of the Singhbhum district, created in 1936. It is rather small, having an area of only about 36 square miles. It is at an elevation of around 2,000 feet and comprises some of the best Sal forests to be found in India. It is very well watered with a large number of perennial streams and many of the valleys are so moist as to carry evergreen forests. A number of trees like *Michelia champaca* and *Xylia xylocarpa* occur here which are not to be found growing naturally elsewhere in the State. It is real wild country and with proper management can become one of the best sanctuaries in the country. It contains a very fair selection of all kinds of animals and on occasions rare specimens like Black Panthers have been seen. It is also very rich in bird life. The sanctuary has been of great benefit to Elephants and to-day they have multiplied to such an extent that the Forest Department have now to consider means of reducing their numbers. The animals here are comparatively free and it is not unusual to find Sambhar grazing in the compound of the Forest Rest House at Kumdi situated at one end of the sanctuary.

This sanctuary is rather inaccessible, only one fair weather road fringes it and it is 20 miles from the nearest rail-head. The freedom of the animals is probably due to this inaccessibility. However, the area of the sanctuary is too small and as



**Key to Hatching**

-  = Areas with some tree-cover and some shooting control
-  = Areas with no tree-cover and no shooting control

**Reference to Numbers**

**SANCTUARIES: Animals**

- 1. Bamiaburu — Sambhar
- 2. Songra
- 3. Sasangda — Elephant
- 4. Baresana — Bison
- 5. Kodarma — Deer

**AREAS NEEDING**

**SANCTUARIES**

**URGENTLY**

- 6. Champaran — Rhinoceros
- 7. Purnea — Wild Buffalo

# BIHAR

## Showing WILD LIFE RESERVES

Scale 1"=About 90 Miles

This sanctuary has also the main Patna-Ranchi road running through it and the traffic is heavy. The intention behind the creation of this sanctuary is quite different from that of the others. The others have been created to provide centres where animals can breed undisturbed and then spread out into the adjoining areas. But for Kodarma the intention merely is to save whatever animals are left there. Owing to the Mica mines and the main road poaching was so rampant in the area that any control appeared impossible. Therefore, the sanctuary was created and as a result the control is tighter and the poaching is less pronounced than what it was before. But the situation admits of no complacency and much stricter supervision is necessary. To sum up there are five sanctuaries in the State covering an area of 272 square miles out of a total forest area of over 10,000 square miles. Thus the sanctuaries are only some 2.5% of the total forest area and only 0.4% of the total area of the State. These figures reveal how hopelessly inadequate are the sanctuaries for the purpose for which they are meant.

As far as limited improvement of game prospects is concerned these sanctuaries are serving their purpose, but it has to be borne in mind that apart from the creation of the sanctuaries no special measures have been taken to ensure that wild life is really preserved and augmented by them. In addition there are several other factors which militate against these sanctuaries functioning efficiently and serving the purpose for which they have been created. The first and foremost factor is that the general lowering of the standards of honesty that has become so common over the country has corrupted the Forest Department to an extent that was unimaginable in pre-war days. To-day there is no forest rule that cannot be infringed with impunity provided the person infringing it is prepared to pay for it, the amount being commensurate with the magnitude of the offence involved. One of the commonest these days is the desecration of sanctuaries, particularly at night from automobiles. Deer and tigers are the worst sufferers at the hands of poachers. All they have to do is to be well in with the subordinate staff of the area; and in exceptional cases



*Courtesy : Forest Department, Bihar.*

*Photo : W. D. M. Warren, I. F. S.*

*A View of Sasangdaburu Sanctuary.*

with the Forest Officer as well, and then go and shoot in the sanctuaries with impunity at will. Such poachers far from being ashamed very often boast publicly of their "exploits".

The next kind is the person who has influence either by virtue of his position or friendships. While such persons generally leave sanctuaries alone, they do not hesitate at shooting from cars. Amongst them must also be included the army of exempted persons who are not bound to take out a licence before shooting in a forest. This class includes some of the worst poachers known to the State, who abuse their privileged positions and behind this screen commit their dark deeds.

Lastly is the lacuna in the shooting rules which permits District Officers to declare animals as dangerous and issue licences for their destruction; as also the provision that any animal may be shot in self defence. Under cover of these two tigers are the worst sufferers, many being shot on the flimsy excuse of being cattle lifters when they are far from being so, whilst under the second clause animals running away from humans are shot in self defence!

On the whole, it can be said that the shooting rules are excellent as far as they go; but they have to be enforced, and therein lies the rub. All the improvement that can be suggested in the rules themselves is that there should be no exempted persons, carrying of arms inside the sanctuaries should be forbidden, the Forest Officer alone should have powers to declare any animal dangerous; and that all shooting licences should limit the numbers of winged and ground game that can be shot. This last is never done and shooting of such game is permitted to an unlimited extent. This coupled with poaching has resulted in the Red Spur-Fowl (*Galloperdix spadicea*) being practically wiped out from Kodarma. The writer remembers seeing these birds in 1948 even, in the compound of the Forest Rest House at Kodarma which is at the fringe of the forests, but could not see any in the forests on a subsequent visit in 1950! So rapid and apace had been the destruction.

Regarding the sanctuaries themselves, more of them are badly needed. At the moment they are all concentrated in the Reserved Forests of Chota-Nagpur. None exists in any Private Protected Forest, *i.e.*, in those forests that have been taken over under the provisions of the Bihar Private Forests Act, neither is there any sanctuary in the Santhal Parganas which contains some of the oldest State-owned forests. Again, these sanctuaries cater only for animals and such birds as occur in them. No protection is afforded to birds or animals occurring outside the forests, and they stand in sore need of protection. Migratory birds particularly Ducks, Teals and Cranes are slaughtered by the thousands every year. Their winter homes are the jheels and other large stretches of water, mainly in North Bihar, and over them practically no shooting control exists. It is essential that some large jheels and chauras in North Bihar be declared sanctuaries for the protection of our winter visitors. Similarly, the Rhinoceros and Wild Buffalo occur as strays in the remnants of the forests left in the Champaran and Purnea districts. It is necessary that these areas be converted into sanctuaries. The probability is that these animals have become extinct as far as Bihar is concerned, but occasional ones do wander in from the adjoining Nepal forests, and if these areas are made into sanctuaries, there is every chance that they will stay on to breed and multiply. Another good place for a sanctuary will be the forested hills surrounding the lake at Kharagpur in the Monghyr district, and this will also help in the protection of migratory and hill birds. Also it might be a good idea to convert each Forest Division in turn into a sanctuary, say for ten years or so, to give it a chance of rehabilitating itself, before throwing it open to shooting again. As a first choice the Divisions that have been badly shot over like Palamau, Monghyr and Hazaribagh may be so closed. This will give them a chance of recovering from past ravages.

A word about the management of the sanctuaries. So far neither is any staff employed exclusively for wild life protection nor are any special works of improvement to benefit wild life undertaken. To start with, one Forester and two Forest Guards may be employed solely to guard and protect each

sanctuary. The normal Divisional staff is too heavily pressed with Silvicultural duties and wild life protection usually forms a very negligible portion of their duties. This special staff could also be employed to take periodical censuses of the animals in the sanctuary, as also to report any points of interest that they observe. The Forester could submit quarterly reports to the Forest Officer about the state of affairs in his sanctuary, mentioning particularly whether animals and birds are responding to the protection or not. Such staff, however, will have to be given special training about their duties, particularly in the identification of important animals and birds. Such instruction could be given to them at the existing Forester's and Forest Guard's schools by the officers of the department, one of whom could be deputed by turns for this duty. Of course, the ideal would be to have a Game Department devoted exclusively to this work, but failing that, the above could be tried out to see how far it succeeded.

Secondly, steps specially for ameliorating conditions for wild life will have to be taken. The first pre-requisite is the improvement of water supply in areas where it is called for. Amenities so that people can visit the sanctuaries and see the wild life will also be necessary, so that a general interest is created thereby. A small admission fee could be charged and this would provide additional funds for the purpose. So far very little money has been provided for the sanctuaries, it being barely some Rs. 3,500/- out of a total departmental budget of some 50 lakhs. More money is urgently needed if the beautiful and varied fauna of this State is to be saved from ultimate extinction!

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|-------------------------|--------------------|---------------------|---------|
| 1. Hagaribagh Sanctuary | -                  | 24.5.76             |         |
| 2. Bhimbendh w.l.       | " "                | Munghyr - 27.5.76   |         |
| 3. Mahudam              | " "                | Dattagunj - 27.6.76 |         |
| 4. Dalma                | " "                | S'oham - 17.7.76    |         |
| 5. Palaman              | " "                | Dattagunj - 17.6.76 |         |
| 6. Gaultam Budha        | " "                | Gaya - 14.9.79      |         |
| 7. Rajgir               | w. " "             | Patna -             |         |
| 8. Topchanahi           | " " "              | H' bagh - 22.12.69. |         |
| 9. Lawalang             | " " "              | H' bagh - 17.12.69  |         |
| 10. Sanaul              | " " "              |                     |         |
| Madanpur                | } w.l.s. Champaran | - 4.5.78            |         |
| Valmikinagar?           |                    | -                   | 29.8.60 |
| Udai pur                |                    | -                   | 1.7.69  |
| 11. Kaimur              | " " "              | Rohas               |         |
| 12. Tebo                | " " "              |                     |         |
| 13.                     |                    |                     |         |

