

Visit to Kaziranga National Park

My visit to Kaziranga National Park in the month of April, 2018 was memorable and amazing. I am sharing about the visual treat I experienced during my jeep safari. It was evening and I was very excited to capture wild animals with my DSLR camera. Binoculars were mounted to view far off birds and rhinos. The weather was pleasant and the driver was kind enough to stop anywhere seeing my excitement. I was very eager to see a rhino as I haven't seen other than in pics. Just in few yards on my right side I saw flock of pelicans in a lake and chirping sound of all other birds mesmerized me. Then the innocent faced Rhino was grazing on the green pastures. I felt so happy and excited.



Indian Rhinoceros (*Rhinoceros unicornis*)

Once we moved, few meters away, the driver stopped the vehicle. I couldn't believe myself what was happening. A majestic elephant completely soaked in mud, the leader of the herd, was crossing us. The leader, a female elephant, made sure that all of them are following her and are safe. She moved slowly and was alert. Followed by her were all the little ones moving with the herd. Watching the tiny ones playing and moving step by step was so cute!!!. They were happy, joyful and yes of course naughty... Their parenting, caring and protective nature was clearly visible. I got struck for a minute whether to capture, record or just observe them. They were nearly 14 elephants. They knew that they were passing by other species (*Homo sapiens*). They knew that there were people watching them. A very astonishing fact was the last elephant was so cautious. It made sure that entire herd crossed safely and stopped in the middle of the road for few minutes to take further steps.

All the safari vehicles on both sides stopped and did not disturb them. I could hear a lot of people clicking photos and murmuring sound. Yes... At that moment I felt human beings behave so civilized and well mannered. But are we fair to them always? Do all of us think before we hurt them? No.....Not yet!!! Its high time that each one of us realize the importance of nature and other species which are major part of our ecosystem. Every common man need to involve in taking step to conserve nature and do a bit to nurture the natural habitats. Illegal and malpractices happening need to be dealt with highest level of punishment. Pouching of innocent pachyderms and other criminal activities against these animals need to be curbed. Conducting tourist sight seeing by elephant safari and captivating elephants should be banned legally. They are wild...Let them live WILD!!.

Submitted by Visalia Raj, Bengaluru. Email: visaliaraj@gmail.com

The author is a school student based at Bengaluru, Karnataka. She is passionate about wildlife conservation