

## GREAT INDIAN HORNBILL: SPICIES IN NEWS (ENVIRONMENT)

**NEWS:** Rare Great Hornbill sighting in Ezhimala sparks hope for biodiversity

### WHAT'S IN THE NEWS?

A male Great Hornbill, typically found in dense forests, was recently spotted near human habitation in Kakkampara, Kerala, raising hopes for improved biodiversity corridors. The species is ecologically vital as a seed disperser and is listed as Vulnerable under IUCN and protected under Indian law.



### Recent Sighting of Great Hornbill in Kerala

- A male Great Hornbill (*Buceros bicornis*) was recently sighted in **Kakkampara near Ezhimala**, Kerala.
- This location lies far from its typical habitat in dense forests, making the sighting rare and ecologically significant.
- The unusual appearance has sparked optimism for **biodiversity restoration and forest connectivity** in the region.

### About the Great Hornbill (Malamuzhakki Vezhambal)

- **Scientific Name:** *Buceros bicornis*
- **Common Name:** Great Hornbill or Concave-Casqued Hornbill
- **Cultural Significance:**
  - State bird of **Kerala** and **Arunachal Pradesh**.
  - Revered in tribal cultures and local folklore, symbolizing grandeur and strength.

### Habitat & Distribution

- Found in **dense evergreen and moist deciduous forests**.

- **Geographic Range:**
  - **Western Ghats:** Kerala, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu
  - **North-East India:** Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Nagaland
- **Common habitats in Kerala:**
  - Silent Valley National Park
  - Aralam Wildlife Sanctuary
  - Nelliampathy Hills
  - Athirappilly and Vazhachal regions
  - Parambikulam Tiger Reserve

### Dietary Behavior

- **Primarily frugivorous:** Consumes figs and other forest fruits.
- Also eats small mammals, reptiles, and insects (omnivorous when necessary).
- **Ecological role:**
  - Critical **seed disperser** for forest regeneration.
  - Serves as an **indicator species** for healthy forest ecosystems.

### Conservation Status

- **IUCN Red List:** Vulnerable
- **Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972:** Schedule I species (highest level of legal protection)
- **Threats:**
  - Habitat loss due to deforestation
  - Hunting for casque (beak) and feathers
  - Nesting site destruction

### Other Hornbill Species Found in India

Hornbill Species	IUCN Status	Region & Habitat
Indian Grey Hornbill	Least Concern	Plains, urban parks, and dry deciduous forests in North and Peninsular India
Malabar Grey Hornbill	Vulnerable	Endemic to <b>Western Ghats</b> in Kerala, Karnataka, and Tamil Nadu
Malabar Pied	Near	Moist deciduous forests of <b>Western Ghats, Central and</b>

<b>Hornbill Species</b>	<b>IUCN Status</b>	<b>Region &amp; Habitat</b>
<b>Hornbill</b>	Threatened	<b>Eastern India</b>
<b>Oriental Pied Hornbill</b>	Least Concern	Found in <b>North-East India</b> , <b>Eastern India</b> , and <b>sub-Himalayan foothills</b>
<b>Rufous-necked Hornbill</b>	Vulnerable	<b>Eastern Himalayas</b> , including <b>Arunachal Pradesh</b> , Assam, Nagaland
<b>Wreathed Hornbill</b>	Vulnerable	Hill forests of <b>North-East India</b> , esp. Arunachal and Assam
<b>Narcondam Hornbill</b>	Vulnerable	<b>Endemic to Narcondam Island</b> in Andaman & Nicobar Islands

### **Significance of Hornbills in Ecosystems**

- Hornbills are **flagship species** for conservation due to their large range and sensitivity to habitat quality.
- Their **cavity-nesting behavior** makes them vulnerable to forest fragmentation.
- They help **maintain forest diversity** through seed dispersal and pest control.

### **Conservation Outlook**

- Ensuring the **protection of old-growth trees** is critical, as these serve as nesting sites.
- **Community-based conservation** (e.g., Hornbill Nest Adoption Programs in Arunachal) is proving effective.
- Enhanced **legal and forest management efforts** are essential to reverse hornbill population decline.

**Source:** <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/rare-great-hornbill-sighting-in-ezhimala-sparks-hope-for-biodiversity/article69787060.ece>