

When the Skies Arrive

The Migratory Birds of Kaziranga

Kaziranga is famous for its rhinos. Ask anyone what they know about this corner of Assam, and they will picture the one-horned giants wading through elephant grass, or perhaps a tiger slipping between the reeds. But there is a quieter spectacle that unfolds here every winter — one that most visitors never think to look up for.

Each year, as the cold tightens its grip across Central Asia, Siberia, and the high Himalayas, thousands of birds lift off and point themselves south. Many of them end their long journey in the wetlands of Kaziranga. When they arrive, the park's *beels* — its shallow oxbow lakes and floodplain pools — come alive with movement, colour, and sound. The rhinos may hold the spotlight, but for a few months the skies quietly steal the show.

A Wetland on One of the World's Great Flyways

Kaziranga sits along the **Central Asian Flyway**, one of the major migratory corridors that birds have followed for millennia. The park's mosaic of wetlands, tall grasslands, and semi-evergreen forest makes it an ideal wintering ground — a place to rest, feed, and wait out the harshest months before the return journey north.

The numbers are extraordinary. Kaziranga is home to more than **480 bird species** in total, and its winter waterbird counts routinely record over **a hundred thousand individual birds**. The 2026 census tallied more than 105,000 waterbirds across 107 species in a single count — a figure that places Kaziranga among the most important wetland sites in all of India, and a genuine milestone for conservation in the region.

Roughly half of the waterbird species recorded in a typical winter are migrants — birds that are simply not here the rest of the year. When they arrive, they transform the landscape.

Who Makes the Journey

Part of the magic of a Kaziranga winter is the sheer variety of travellers that turn up. Some come in great noisy flocks; others are solitary rarities that send birdwatchers into a hush.

Among the **waterfowl**, you'll find bar-headed geese — famous for flying over the Himalayas — alongside ruddy shelducks with their warm orange plumage, northern pintails, common teal, and the greater white-fronted goose that journeys down from Siberia. The park's pools also host graceful waders and the elegant, unmistakable black-necked stork.

For serious birders, it's the **rarities** that make Kaziranga unforgettable. The park is one of the last strongholds for the critically endangered **Baer's pochard**, a diving duck now vanishingly rare across its range. Recent counts have even turned up first-ever sightings of species like the smew, a striking winter duck of the Eurasian taiga whose appearance so far south hints at shifting migratory patterns — a small, feathered signal of a changing climate.

Overhead, the **raptors** patrol. Kaziranga's healthy ecosystem supports an impressive cast of birds of prey, including the majestic **Pallas's fish eagle**, the greater spotted eagle, and the eastern imperial eagle. A sky with this many predators in it is the mark of a landscape still working as it should.

The Best Time to Look Up

Winter is the season. Migratory birds begin arriving as the weather cools, and the park is at its richest for birdlife from **November through April**, with the peak concentrations gathering in the **December to February** window. The mornings are crisp, the light is soft and golden, and the wetlands are full.

Time your visit right and a single early-morning outing can deliver dozens of species — geese and ducks rafting on the water, storks stalking the shallows, eagles wheeling above the grass, and kingfishers flashing between the reeds.

Seeing It Well

Birding in Kaziranga rewards patience and good guidance. The difference between a pleasant morning and a truly memorable one often comes down to knowing where the birds gather, when the light is best, and how to read the wetlands — knowledge that comes from years in the field, not a guidebook.

This is where a well-planned journey makes all the difference.



Travel with Purvi Discovery

At **Purvi Discovery**, we've been sharing the wild and cultural riches of Northeast India for years — and Kaziranga's winter migration is one of our favourite stories to tell. When you travel with us, birding becomes more than an activity. It becomes a journey into migration, resilience, and discovery.

We offer:

- **Expert naturalist guides** who identify species on sight and share the ecology behind the spectacle
- **Private safaris** timed for the best birdwatching light and locations
- **Comfortable eco-lodges and heritage tea bungalow stays** near the park
- **Seamless permits and logistics**, handled entirely by us
- **Curated itineraries** that pair birding with Assam's tea culture, tribal traditions, and Brahmaputra river journeys

Kaziranga's rhinos may capture the headlines, but its skies and wetlands tell stories just as powerful. Each winter, when the migratory birds arrive, the park becomes a living canvas of movement and sound.

Come and witness it with us. Plan your Kaziranga birding journey with Purvi Discovery — and let us show you the Assam that lives above the grass.

Get in touch with Purvi Discovery to start planning your winter birding adventure.