

First-Ever Sighting of Rare Migratory Smew in Assam

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Why in News?

Assam's Laokhowa Wildlife Sanctuary in Nagaon district recorded its first-ever sighting of the Smew (*Mergellus albellus*), a rare migratory waterbird.

The Smew (*Mergellus albellus*)

- **Taxonomy**- A small species of **diving duck** belonging to the family Anatidae.
- **Location** - Recorded across the sanctuary's key wetland bodies (beels), including **Rowmari, Dondowa, and Muamari**.
- **Ecological Indicator** - Serves as a direct indicator of the health, water quality, and ecological stability of Laokhowa's wetland ecosystem.
- **Breeding Range** - Native to the taiga and boreal forest zones of **northern Eurasia** (Finland, Russia, Scandinavia).
- **Migratory Pattern** - Migrates south during winter to ice-free coastal waters, inland lakes, and river basins in Central Asia, Europe, and occasionally South Asia.
- **Physical Traits** - Recognized by distinct black-and-white breeding plumage in males ("panda-like" facial mask) and a crest on the head.
- **IUCN Red List Status - Least Concern** (globally), though considered a rare winter visitor in the Indian subcontinent.
- **Co-sighting of Endangered Species** - The same waterbird survey also documented the presence of the globally endangered **Bengal Florican**.
- **Conservation Impact**- Highlights the success of anti-poaching, enforcement against illegal fishing, and habitat restoration drives across the Laokhowa-Burhachapori eco-landscape.



About Laokhowa Wildlife Sanctuary

- **Location** - Situated on the south bank of the Brahmaputra River in the **Nagaon district of**

Assam.

- **Ecological Connectivity** - Forms a vital contiguous corridor within the broader Kaziranga-Laokhowa-Burhachapori-Orang landscape.
- Facilitates animal movement across the Brahmaputra floodplain.
- **Habitat** - Comprises alluvial grasslands, semi-evergreen forests, and a complex network of freshwater wetlands (*beels*).
- **Key Fauna** - Historically famous for the Indian One-horned Rhinoceros, wild water buffalo, royal Bengal tiger, Asian elephant, and diverse migratory waterfowl.

Reference

[India Today NE | First-ever sighting of rare migratory Smew](#)

