Chapter - 1

INTRODUCTION

“Those who have never seen a leopard under favourable condition in his natural surroundings can have no conception of the grace of movement, and beauty of colouring, of this the most graceful and the most beautiful of all animals are in our Indian jungles- Jim Corbett”

The rich and varied wildlife of India became part of the popular culture. The importance of wild animals could be observed since ancient period, however, in those days protection to wild animals was provided by means of religious practices. The protection of animals and birds was considered a sacred duty. It is evident from the ancient literature that Indian sages lived in forests and their ashrams were seats of learning, where birds and animals also provided shelter. Jain and Buddhist literatures also gave a considerable importance on the religious sanctity of various animals and birds. The hunter moved around in the jungles to kill and capture birds and wild animals. Though hunting was practiced by the rulers of ancient India they also revered wild animals. Ashoka prohibited hunting on some days. During medieval period, Akbar, for instance forbade hunting on certain days. Even Kashmiri Sultan, Zain-Ul-Abidin gave up meat eating and tried to dissuade his nobles from hunting. Hunting in Mughal time was not only confined to royal families. Akbar was passionately fond of hunting and pursued the noble sport. His favourites hunting were tiger hunting, leopard hunting and elephant catching. Akbar’s hunting parties were extravagant and headed by the minister Mir Shikar (Master of Hunting). In the succeeding British period, the British officials and rulers being highly influenced by the Mughal style of living and started embraced local customs and mores of the Mughals.

1 Corbett, Jim, (1959) Man-Eaters of Kumaon, Bombay: OUP, (First Published 1944), P. 74
2 Rangarajan, (2001), M., India’s Wildlife History: An Introduction, New Delhi: Permanent Black, P. 19
such Mughal practice emulated by British officials. All these facts reveal how wild animals were integral part of the socio-cultural practices of Indian people.

The common name for wilderness in India is jungle, which was adopted into English language. The word has been also made popular in *The Jungle Book* by Rudyard Kipling. The stories of the wild animals were heard by almost all of us during our childhood. Children still love to listen these tales of birds and animals and derive much inspiration to build up their character. Wildlife of India has been the subject of numerous Stories and tells such as the *Panchatantra*, *Hitopadesh*, and the *Jataka* tales. Varieties of wild animals and birds such as lion, tiger, bull, jackal, tortoise, crow, mouse, monkey, crocodile, camel, elephant, crane, cat, serpent, owl, and sparrow have been characterising in these books. The British rule in India led to the start of a different phase in the history of wildlife. Hunting became a symbol of masculine identities for British officials. British official realized that wildlife could also be exploited for economic benefit. This led to the commodification of wild animals under the British Empire which resulted in the killing of a large number of wildlife. Some of the species rhinoceros, lion, cheetah, were brought to the verge of extinction and others like elephants and leopards wiped out from the areas in which once they were numerous.

The British annexation of Assam in 1826, by the treaty of Yandaboo brought the exploitation of its timber for railways. Elephants were captured for administrative purpose. Though game hunting by the British officials was not unknown in this Province but the discovery of tea in 1836 in Assam led to the clearance of huge area of jungle for its cultivation. This caused the increasing human-wildlife conflict and eventually the destruction of wild animals and vice-versa. The killing of wild animals brought some of the species like elephant and rhinoceros on the verge of extinct. The nineteenth century fauna preservation movement in the world led to the preservation of wildlife in India as well as in Assam. The need was felt to preserve rhinoceros, a harmless herbivore and elephant for which game reserve were proposed in 1905 to provide an asylum to these species for saving them from total extinct. However, the complete protection of wild animals started only after 1930s, the issue of the protection of flora and fauna were discussed in various conferences in the world forums and simultaneously in India. The present study tries to understand how the British expansion led to the wildlife-human conflict and how far British policies aggravated the extinct of various species of wild animals.
1.1 Review of Literature

The Imperial expansion of Europeans had huge ecological consequences across the world. The access of natural resource like forest, minerals and land for meeting the growing needs of industries and railways had affected the climate, water, flora and fauna.

According to Crosby the pathogens, plants and animals introduced by European settlers helped them to overwhelm and displace local peoples and ecologies to other parts of globe. Imperial success has been explained in term of biological advantages that the colonist had over the indigenous inhabitants. Similarly, Cronon argued that the utilitarian nature of European settlers introduce new forms of property in far way regions that led to environmental changes. The ecological change caused conflicts over human choices between new settlers and indigenous inhabitants. The new system of control over the natural world led to the emergence of geographical ideas. Historical works of Ranger and Beinart on Africa examines the evolution of European and indigenous attitude towards game-hunting and protection. In exploitation of nature, as explained by Beinart in his words, “British and other European consumers and manufacturers sucked in resources that were gathered, hunted, fished, mined, and farmed in a great profusion of extractive and agrarian system: sugar from the Caribbean; furs and cod from North America; ivory and Cocoa from Africa; spices, cotton, tea, and timber from India; wool from sheep of the Antipodes; rubber from South-East Asia; gold from South Africa; oil from the Middle East.” This shows how much space and labours it took to fuel European Consumption. Beinart further explores the evolution of such programmes by the European settler to control soil erosion and stock management. The rise of conservation in Africa aimed at the efficient use of soil, vegetation, and water that sharpen the conflicts between European settlers and the indigenous system of production particularly in case of hunting and animal husbandry.

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4 Crosby, A., (1993), *Ecological imperialism, the biological expansion of Europe 900-1900*, New York: Cambridge University press
8 Ibid.
1.1.1 Environmental History in India: A Debate

Comparatively the study of environmental history is a late phenomenon in India. Colonial writings like Ribbentrop’s “Forestry in British India” argued that scientific forestry under imperial aegis marked the end of a ‘war on the forest’ and projected the pre-colonial and early colonial phases as a destructive period. Similarly, Stebbing argued that it was under the colonial period that the private interests were brought under the scientific supervision. He recommended that the careful management of forest under the experienced hands derived considerable profit for the government. British officials, being not much experienced of the forest conservancy induce German experts to India to assist the management of woodlands. Environmental historian like Ramachandra Guha challenges the central premises of these colonial historians and their historical propositions. Guha argued that the practices of colonial forestry largely an outgrowth of the revenue and strategic needs of the empire. The colonial period is seen as an ecological watershed because it disrupted the relationship of forest based communities with the land. He argued that the creation of forest department in 1864 was for the need of supply of timber for the construction of railway lines. The colonial need for timber led the forging of legal mechanism to debar the village communities from the exercise of their rights over forest. The customary restraints on the use of trees had earlier ensured renewal but colonial land control and commercialization led to deforestation. State monopoly over forest was safeguarded by stringent provision of the Indian Forest Act of 1878. Guha argued that the forest laws restricted small-scale hunting by tribal peoples, but facilitated more organized shikar expeditions by the British which led to the a large scale slaughter of animals, in which White Shikariees at all levels, from the Viceroy down to the lower echelons of the British Indian army participated. Similarly, Gadgil also sees the period up to 1800 as a time of equilibrium between people and nature. Grove questions the key assumption made by

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9 Ribbentrop, B., (1900), Forestry In British India, Calcutta, Office of the Superintendent of Government Printing, , pp 37, 61
10 Stebbing,E.P., (1921), The Forest of India, London: John lane the Bodley Head Limited, , P. 532
11 Stebbing,E.P., op. cit., P. 532
15 Ibid., 149
Guha regarding the character of colonial conservation. Grove argued that the colonial conservation plan was based on more humanist ground which was motivated by growing deforestation and drought in colonies. The desiccationism promoted the idea of forest conservancy. This resulted in soil erosion, water shrinking and agricultural productivity. Official of the European trading company took note of it wherever they travelled and sought state intervention in the protection of forest. Though some official has played their materialistic interest still there were some colonial officials who have the credit to start the process of systematic forest conservation in India. Grove focused more on the contribution of colonial official towards conservation which was more humane but plays down the capitalist greed behind the forest policy. He further argued that the commitment of a section of colonial officials to conservation was more than significant than narrow materialist concerns. While comparing both Guha and Grove’s stand, Mahesh Rangarajan identified the differences in their chronological focus of their research. Grove focuses on early colonial period while Guha focuses on late nineteenth century. There is also another difference between them. While Guha observes the broad unity of imperial interests, Grove examined the differences among colonial officials. Mahesh Rangarajan took a moderate stand and argued that the process of conservation was fostered under the imperial supervision and control but with the compliance of the land users. Rangarajan also agreed that the colonial era marked a watershed; there were new forces at work, with new opportunities and dangers. ‘Fencing of Forest’ marked a divergent line between people and forest. The pattern of settlement, agricultural production and distribution of fauna all changed in a very short span of time. The changes were not always according to the wishes of the officials but they often faced obstacles as the inhabitants often had radically different priorities. He viewed that the forester were the new face of the alien government and the edifice of formal forestry remains a major legacy of the colonial era. Shivaramakrishnan brought a new dimension in historiography of environment. He argued that the modern forest management in Bengal is a form of ‘governmentality’ or ‘government rationality’. The forest management offered a unique and instructive window on process of state-making. The control over forest by the colonial government

18 Rangarajan, M., (1996), Fencing the Forest, Conservation And Ecological Change In India’s Central Provinces, 1860-1914. OUP,
19 Rangarajan, M., (1996) op.cit., p. 207
was an exploration of state-making. The dominant pattern of state-making that emerged in Europe in the nineteenth century influenced the colonial state-making in which forest was also used as a mechanism of colonial control. He considered the forest management as a part of governance and politics.  

The consequences of colonial intervention had huge impact on the forest. As Ranjan Chakarbarti argued that the colonization of India seemed to be incomplete without the pacification of the jungle. To the British Indian jungles alone had the wilderness to match the value of the masculine occident. British intervention in the forest land for various reasons caused increasing conflict between human-wildlife conflicts over their respective habitat. The growing deforestation resulted in immense flood situation and land erosion, never experienced before. All these compel the peasant communities to forcefully assert their claim over government owned forest lands and forest lands were converted into agrarian zones. In this way, the peasant community and their livelihood practice i.e. cultivation became the greatest threat to the forested space including both flora and fauna. On the other hand the enactment of forest acts made colonial state claims legitimated over forest, and hunting, food gathering or cutting trees by inhabitants became illegitimate. The livelihood of the forest dependent communities was totally ignored. All this resulted in the creation of two separate spaces of public debate. One group advocates greater preservation of wild animals and biodiversity. The other advocated for a rational redistribution of forest land amongst community and peasants while a few endorse government supervision over forest resources. Scarcity of agricultural land for an increasing peasant population led the forested land under human occupation but the beneficiaries include not only the peasants but also the industrial-business class.  

A good number of historical writings have drawn attention to the rich flora and fauna of Assam. Tucker viewed that by 1900 British government sieged a large forest areas which was one of the highest percentage of any state in India. However he also pointed

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22 Ibid.  
23 Sakia., A.J., *op.cit.* p.2  
out that the great forest zone of upper Assam was depleted more slowly than most parts of India. Sinha’s ‘Beyond the Trees, Tigers and Tribes’ is the first work which discussed the history of the Eastern Himalayan forests. According to Sinha, the people of North-east region had established relation with the environment and there was not excess use of forest resources as it later happened in case of industrial establishment. The British government drew upon the experience of the German foresters to introduce forestry in India in the second half of the nineteenth century with a view to extract ‘valuable’ timber for the European sponsored industrial enterprise. According to him the traditional rights of the community over land, forests and wild-life, and even water were drastically curtailed. He stated that a ‘bastard system’ of tea cultivation which was neither agriculture, nor an industry was patronised at the cost of local resources and communities.  

A similar view was expressed by Rajiv Handique, he viewed that there was limited use of forest resources before the establishment of British rule. The role of the state before British was limited to the collection of revenue from a few forest products but after the advent of the British forest became a resource to which for the extraction and maximization of revenue. Handique viewed that the British forest policy was primarily formulated to earn as much revenue as possible at the wanton destruction of forest wealth. He viewed that the British forest administration favoured the growth of a few commercially viable species of tress neglecting the ecological context of Assam. 

Arupjyoti Saikia study highlighted the environmental loss which is too painful to record and document. However, he argued that in the pre-colonial period the forest of Assam was not totally untouched and there were also trade in forest resources. The contest over natural resources caused conflicts and frequent clashes between Ahom and Mughal rulers. Revenue was collected on verities of forest produce viz; cotton, elephants and birds. The state exchequer mostly relied heavily on the exploitation of forest resources like elephants and timber for constructing boats. Elephants were procured in large numbers not only to strengthen the military system but also for everyday uses of the royal palaces. He viewed that the forest management during pre-British rule in Assam had little to do with the market economy. According to him the Indian Forest programme undermined the livelihood practices of forest depended communities. Even the peasants lost their cultural rights over land and they

26 Handique, R., (2004), British Forest Policy in Assam, New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company
27 Sakia, A.J., (2011), Forest and Ecological History of Assam, P.1
were pushed away for their inability to become cash-crop producer. British government made policies to have full control over forest to use the forest products for industrial and business purpose and game for hunting purpose. Peasant claimed a share in forest land for agriculture and the rights of the forest dwellers and other forest communities were ignored. In this way the struggle for the control over forest started. The colonial state debarred the local inhabitants from their traditional rights over forest and land and forest was converted into a commercial commodity.

1.1.2 Placing the History of ‘Wildlife’
A rich body of historical literature contributed to the understanding of wildlife as an important part of environmental history. Works based on Africa, America, Zimbabwe suggested that how the fate of wildlife changed because of state intervention. Wildlife reserves were established in the twentieth century where hunting and settlement were prohibited. These reserves were later key sites for preservation and tourism. Mark Stoll agreed that “Although preservationism has left an important legacy of protected biota and natural areas around the world, local people were often removed or prevented from traditional subsistence uses of parkland.” William Beinart and Coates viewed that the colonial governments also tried to reshape African settlements and peasant economies in such a way as to develop sustainable agricultural practices. Such intervention often met with hostility by rural people because they were seen as attempts to undermine indigenous people role over natural resources. In many countries, these conflicts fed into anti-colonial struggles particularly in Africa and South America. This remained an important feature of rural politics in the region.

28 Sakia, A.J., op.cit, pp. 1-13
29 Sakia, A.J., op.cit, pp. 1-13
A few works in India on wildlife history discussed by linking the aspects of the forestry, shifting cultivation, tea cultivation, timber, issue of tribes, conservation etc.\textsuperscript{33} But when talk about wildlife it not only means the conservation policies but also the existence of wildlife, wildlife hunting and its consequences and human-wildlife conflict in the past. Mahesh Ragarajan’s ‘India’s Wildlife History’ is the first seminal work to discuss the wildlife history of India. According to him wild animals during the British rule in India was supposed as curse to be wiped out during British rule. The Practice of eradicating wild animals was new to India; no previous rulers were ever attempted to eradicate any species. According to him the idea of the British government was to push back the jungle land and to extend the area under cultivation so as to earn more revenue for British exchequer. The need of timber to meet the requirement of sleepers for railway lines led to the reservation of forest by the British. The prime motive behind the reservation of forest by the British government had little to do with fauna and in turn it had much to do with the changing significance of forest wealth in the empire’ scheme of things.\textsuperscript{34} Mahesh Rangarajan further argued that game protection of was not a top priority of the Government of India and much depended on the official on the spot.\textsuperscript{35} Similarly, Valmiki Thapar argued that by the end of the nineteenth century a bunch of men whom he called a wild bunch not only put down their hunting records but also saw the rich natural history and because of their efforts that many of the first laws on forest and wildlife conservation were founded and amended. The hunters started to protect their wilderness and some even considered giving up the gun to save wildlife. Sanderson, Forsyth and Sterndale were the forest officers who recorded the richness of wildlife that too even without knowing if they were playing a vital role in what would


\textsuperscript{34} Rangarajan,M.,(2005), India’s Wildlife History, An Introduction, New Delhi: Permanent Black.

\textsuperscript{35} Ibid. 57
happen in the next century. The British intervention in forest has huge impact on tribes and created the conflict between state and tribe. As Ranjan Chakarbarti argued that British were the real poachers but they used the game laws to brand the indigenous forest people as ‘poachers’, who earned their livelihood from forest. The indigenous people being deprived of the age-old forest rights, often refused to recognize the validity of government’s claims and continued to cultivate at their own will. They cut trees, burnt forest floors as they had been doing since time immemorial. Animals having been destroyed the European hunters later emerged as self-styled conservationist and also went out to romanticize the tropical rain forest and its animals.

Sinha argued that the Pre-British hill economy was village based. They used to catch wild animals for games, trade and exchange. Arupjyoti argued that the concern of historical works over forest has changed over time. Jungle an erstwhile space for wild animals and ghost became turned into ‘ordered forest’. The understanding of forest and the relation of human with the forest has changed over time. Earlier people used to go to the jungle very much as they pleased, hunted and fished but gradually it mostly restricted to forest based communities. The nineteenth century brought a new concept of forest; earlier ignored forest products became saleable. The journey of forest from jungle to a scientific forest has passed from ignored place to petty trade in forest products like timber, bamboo, and tusk, skin of wild animals etc., and from petty trade to brisk business in international market. This led to the emergence of the concept of forest management. The main purpose of the British government was to get maximum profit from trade of forest produce on the one hand and on the other to generate revenue from expansion of cultivation as much as they could.

Primarily wild animals were seen as a threat to the expansion of agriculture and the extinction of carnivores was the main aim of the forest department to safeguard the paddy fields, cattle and human lives. With the killing of the wild animals for game, hunting and for its tusk or skin, the fate of several wild species became deplorable. The

36 Thapar, V. (ed.), (2003), *Battling for Survival, India’s Wilderness over Two Centuries*, New Delhi: OUP, p.9
nineteenth century environmental consciousness led to the emergence of some wildlife protection policies. Hunting and sports for trophies and game came under regimented control since the first few decades of the 20th century and this supervision over the uncontrolled destruction of wild animals laid down the principle of the establishment of the game sanctuaries. Though the protection of forest took much earlier but the protection of wildlife is a much later phenomena, it was only in 1912 the first wildlife protection act came which attempted to protect wildlife. However, the discussion on wildlife protection started in 1887; it was the Madras government who realised the need of putting some restrictions on the destruction of birds and wild animals. But the Provincial government of Assam felt that there was no need of any such rules to be implemented in the province.

The British conquest of India brought about the plunder of natural resources together with a complete indifference towards environmental protection. The early environmental legislation reveals that apart from the forest laws, nineteenth century legislation also partially regulated two other aspects of Indian environment water pollution and wildlife. However, these laws had a narrow purpose and limited territorial reach. In the field of wild life protection, early legislation was limited to specific areas and particular species, there by aiming at the conservation of biodiversity. Despite the fact that these measures were made with secret motives, British enacted legislations contributed significantly to the growth of environmental jurisprudence in India. During the colonial period human presence in the forest for fuel, grazing, the collection of minor forest produce was a departmental concern or related with the department’s function. At most humans were instrumentally used to help increase the output of commercially valuable forest products. Human activities were harshly confined within hunting reserve of princely kingdoms in various parts of India, and within which the royalty and the British Officials were assured of the availability of adequate ‘sport’. Thus, within the British India many reserved forests were divided into shooting Blocks where hunting for sport for a few people was allowed though under strict regulations. Many of these Reserves set up in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, have

41 (NAI) Home, Public-A, 1886, November, File No, 34/61, Sub: Preservation of game Birds and Animals in India
42 Ibid.
been converted to national parks and sanctuaries. Among them in Assam are the Kaziranga, Laokhowa and North Kamrup game reserves.

The Colonial understanding and the international fauna preservation movement led to the establishment of various game reserves and wildlife sanctuaries in India. A Small section of the planters took the leading role in the preservation of the rich fauna of Assam. There was rampant killing of rhino and the threat of rhino killing had assumed frightening proportions. Forest officials noticed the declining population of rhinoceros and decried the killing of the animal. It was the time when the hunters from Bengal arrived in large number to have an experience of killing the animals resulting in reckless and indiscriminate destruction of the all game in the province. By 1905 it was found that the rhinoceros had completely disappeared from North Lakhimpur. J.C. Arbuthnott as the Officiating Commissioner of Assam Valley had written to the Chief Commissioner about the rhino and said about the decreasing number of rhino and other animals in the area. He also said that in case of rhinoceros, the killing of females and immature animals had brought the species on the verge of extinction. He suggested putting some kind of restriction on the killing of animals. This led the government to seriously take up the measure of protection of game. The commissioner admitted the necessity of banning the killing of rhino but for that a sanction of the legislative council was necessary. This forced the government to consider the formation of an asylum, which would help the rhino to take shelter during the times of crisis. This consideration of creating an asylum for the rhino led to the proposal of game reserve at Kaziranga, Laokhowa and North-Kamrup in 1905.

The history of Kaziranga National park in the Golaghat and Nagaon district of the state of Assam can be traced back to the beginning of the 20th century, when Baroness Mary Victoria Leiter Curzon, wife of Lord Curzon, the Viceroy of India, first visited the Kaziranga area in 1904. Concerned about the dwindling numbers of rhinoceros, she asked her husband to take the necessary action to save the rhinoceros. Lord Cuzon proposed for the creation of a reserve in Kaziranga. Thus, the Kaziranga proposed reserve forest was created on 57,273.6 acres (232 km²) of land, on June 1, 1905 by notification of the Chief Commissioner of the area. But Kaziranga was formally declared as a game reserve only in 1908. It was home for a good number of animals.

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like one-horned Asian rhinoceros, wild buffalo, elephant, wild boar, gaur, royal Bengal tiger, leopard, swamp deer, sambar, hoolock gibbon, pelican, horn bill, white throated brown horn bill, swamp birds and a few varieties of monkey. Laokhowa wild life Sanctuary located in the northern part of Nagaon District, on the southern bank of Brahmaputra to the West of Silghat declared as the game reserve 1907. The reserve provided shelter to numerous mammals and bird species such as rhino, wild boar, Asiatic water buffalo, leopard cat, civet cat, hog deer, black deer, elephant and tiger etc. North-Kamrup or Mannas wildlife sanctuary as it came to be known lies in the north western corner of Barpeta District below the Bhutan foothills on the eastern bank of Manas river was declared as North Kamrup forest reserve in 1907 which was previously preserved as royal hunting ground. The park had a great variety of wildlife including many endangered species such as tiger, the pygmy hog, the Indian rhinoceros and elephant.

Through this research work an attempt has been made to study the wild life situation and British policy towards wildlife in Assam. The present study is justified on the point that, the wildlife consist of an important part of our environment and its preservation is important for saving the world from environmental degradation and the study of conservation practice in colonial Assam will help the environmentalist, botanist and policy makers in the formulation of policies related to wildlife for maintenance of environmental balance.

The period chosen for this work is from 1826 till the year of 1947. This has been made considering the fact that the British took over Assam from the Burmese in the year 1926 by the treaty of Yandaboo till the end of the British rule.

1.2 Objectives

- To study the wild life situation in colonial Assam.
- To examine the colonial hunting practices.
- To study the conflicts between agrarian practices and the games.
- To explore the nature of colonial policies of wildlife conservation.
- To study the establishment of game reserves and wildlife sanctuaries in different parts of Assam viz: Kaziranga, North Kamrup, Sonai Rupa, Orang and Laokhowa reserve etc.
1.3 Methodology

1.3.1 Study Area

The area of study of this proposed research will cover the study of wild life in the colonial Assam i.e. the present state of Meghalaya, Nagaland and Mizoram besides Assam, Comprising the two valleys of Brahmaputra and the Barak along with the surrounding mountain range. All these areas are within the geographical limits of Assam in the context of this research work.

1.3.2 A Note on Sources

The present study involves the empirical and analytical method of research on the basis of both primary and secondary sources which contains the colonial archival materials, and published and un-published government records, government proceedings, legislative proceedings, census reports, manuals, Forest Acts, administration reports of the province of Assam, forest administration reports and Indian National Congress proceedings, memoirs, related books and journal articles.

The primary sources like government proceedings papers, government reports, government records, government files of various departments viz. Home, Education, Health & Land, Forest, Finance and military etc., have been collected from National Archive of India, New Delhi; Directorate of West Bengal State Archive, Kolkata; Directorate of Mizoram State Archive, Aizole; Directorate of Assam State Archive, Guwahati; Assam Legislative Assembly, Guwahati; Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi; National library, Kolkata; Central Secretariat Library, New Delhi; and Library of the principal Chief Conservator of Forest Office, Guwahati; Secondary Sources contains published books and journal articles collected from various libraries viz., Nandatalukdar Library, Guwahati; Nabin Chandra Puthibharal, Guwahati; ICHR library, Guwahati; District library, Guwahati; Department of Historical and Antiquarian Studies, Guwahati; Asiatic Society Library, Kolkata; Director of Assam Institute of Research for Tibals and Schedule Caste: Guwahati; Omeo Kumar Das Institute of Social science and Development: Guwahati; Assam Administrative Staff College Library: Guwahati; Kamrup Anusandhan Samiti, Guwahati; Kalakhetra library, Guwahati; Baptist Mission Library, Guwahati; Indian Institute of Technology Library, Guwahati and Assam University Library, Silchar. Apart from these, Rajiv Gandhi National Park, Orang was visited and interviewed Chakrapani Ray, Forest Ranger, Rajiv Gandhi National Park and Dependra Dev, Field Assistant, Eco System India in April, 2013.
1.4 Chapterisation

The introductory chapter discusses the debates on environment history and contextualised in the broad wildlife historiography. It also discusses the environmental historiography of Assam. This chapter identifies wildlife as an important issue to be study as a part of environmental history. It also includes the objectives, methodology and chapterisation of the thesis.

Second chapter explores the pre-1874 condition of wildlife as till this period Assam was a part of Bengal presidency so attempt has been made to study the pre-1874 condition of wildlife and the British policies towards it.

Third chapter examines the human-wildlife conflict. It has been attempted to study various causes that led to the depletion of wild animals- hunting, extension of cultivation, increase of human population and trade. It discusses how all these causes led to the deforestation of wildlife habitat that caused massive conflicts between human and wildlife. The chapter discusses the destruction caused by wild animals on human life and property including the statistical study of the number of people and cattle killed by wild animals. It also discusses flood that cause more conflicts between people and wildlife.

Fourth chapter studies the destruction of wildlife as a result of human-wildlife conflict. It discusses the British policy towards wildlife. It studies various methods like reward giving, appointment of professional *shikarees*, and issue of gun licenses and guns that led to massive destruction of wild animals of the province. It studies the statistical records of the number of wild animals killed during the British rule. It also discusses the destruction of wild animals in various districts of the province.

Fifth chapter reveals the elephant hunting as it was different from other wildlife hunting because of its administrative use. It studied the importance of elephant catching, elephant hunting under kheddah department, private lease system of elephant hunting, revenue from elephant hunting, conflict over elephant etc. It studied the starting the elephant protection polices which later led to the starting of the wildlife protection policies.

Sixth chapter analyses the protection polices for the wildlife. It reveals the circumstances under which British government adopted various polices towards the protection of wildlife. It discusses British legislation towards the protection of wildlife through which the right of the tribal people over forest were curtailed. The curtailment of their rights over forest led the tribal people to go against forest rules. They often
killed wild animals for tusk, horn and hide. The British government thus blamed the tribals for the act of poaching and tried to establish themselves as protector of wildlife. This chapter also discussed wildlife conferences of 1930’s for the preservation of wildlife and their impact in Assam.

Seventh chapter discusses the formation of game reserve as an attempt to provide an asylum to the wild animals and games preserved in sanctuaries. It also discussed the conservation of wildlife in game reserves and how it led to the commercialisation of the wildlife sanctuaries.

The last chapter is the concluding part of the thesis. It discusses the findings of the thesis.