

Botanical Field tour to Padmashree Jadhav Payeng Molai Forest, Jorhat Assam On 8th March 2020

Under guidance of the following teachers:

Dr. J Barukial, Dr R Sarmah, and Mr. Phirose Kemprai

Molai Forest is located in Jorhat district of Assam. It is the world's largest single handedly man made forest created by Padmashree Jadhav Payeng. Forest lovers must include this place in their bucket list. From Jorhat one has to reach Kokilamukh first, reserve auto will take 120-150/-. Then a hike of around 2 km to Jadhav Payeng's residence. Better to take his permission before visiting the forest. From his residence at a distance of around 200 m lies Brahmaputra, which need to be crossed. Regular motor boats will take 20/- per person to take you to the other bank known as Aruna Sapor (local language). Again one need to cross a small water body in a boat. In winter this can be crossed without boat also. Now from there at a distance of around 4.5 km lies Molai Forest. So better to start early morning from Jorhat because post 4 pm it will be difficult to get shared auto from Kokilamukh to back Jorhat. The villagers leads simple life associate with nature and Jadhav Payeng's family members are very helpful.

Molai forest is named after Jadav Payeng, Indian environmental activist and forestry worker. After an initial 200 hectare planting by the social forestry division of Golaghat district was abandoned in 1983, the forest was single-handedly attended by Payeng for 30 years and now encompasses an area of about 1,360 acres / 550 hectares. Payeng planted and tended trees on a sandbar of Majuli island in the Brahmaputra River, eventually becoming a forest reserve.

Molai forest now houses Bengal tigers, Indian rhinoceros, over 100 deer and rabbits besides monkeys and several varieties of birds, including a large number of vultures.^[2] There are several thousand trees, including valcol, arjun (*Terminalia arjuna*), Pride of India (*Lagerstroemia speciosa*), royal poinciana (*Delonix regia*), silk trees (*Albizia procera*), moj (*Archidendron bigeminum*) and cotton trees (*Bombax ceiba*). Bamboo covers an area of over 300 hectares.

A herd of around 100 elephants regularly visits the forest every year and generally stays for around six months. They have given birth to 10 calves in the forest.

