

Ecotourism regions of Chhattisgarh and its effect on wildlife

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Abstract

Ecotourism is a major industry in developing nations. However, its impact on wildlife and indigenous people has become a controversial issue. Ecotourism is: "Responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the well-being of local people." (TIES, 1990). Chhattisgarh is one of the greenest states of India with over 44 % of its total area under lush forests. Chhattisgarh Eco Tourism encompasses a total of eleven wildlife sanctuaries and three national parks. The eco tourism regions of Chhattisgarh are Bilaspur-Achanakmar, Raipur-Turturia and Jagdalpur-Kanger Valley. Having a green stretch of forests land of 44% of the total geographical space, Chhattisgarh encourages eco tourism through protection and preservation of near extinct species of animals and their habitat. Indravati National Park, Kangerghati National Park, Barnawapur Sanctuary, Sita Nadi Sanctuary Sanjay National Park and Udanti Sanctuary are the prominent eco tourism destinations in Chhattisgarh. These wildlife sanctuaries and national parks are home to the state animal (wild buffalo) and state bird (the mocking hill myna) and other endangered species of animals and birds such as spotted deer, four horned antelope, sloth bear, wild boar, wild dog, jackal, wolf, hyena and bison.

Keywords: Eco-tourism, Sanctuary, Chhattisgarh

INTRODUCTION

Eco-tourism is tourism that involves travelling to relatively undisturbed natural areas with the objectives of studying, admiring & enjoying nature and its wild plants & animals as well as any existing cultural aspects, past or present, found in these areas'. Ecotourism is therefore being promoted as a tool for bio-diversity conservation and rural development (Aronsson 2000). The green Indian state of Chhattisgarh boasts a total of 3 National Parks and 11 Wildlife Sanctuaries known for their exceptional natural beauty and the unique and diverse flora and fauna. Eco-tourism is a special feature of the tourism of Chhattisgarh. The state has 12 percent share of India's total forests. The three national parks and 11 wildlife sanctuaries here are perhaps the best bet for all wildlife lovers. Besides these wildlife reserves, Ayurvedic medicines, and exquisite handicrafts produced by the tribes also contribute to the special tourist attractions of Chhattisgarh.

Indravati National Park, Kangerghati National Park, Barnawapur Sanctuary, Sita Nadi Sanctuary Sanjay National Park and Udanti Sanctuary are the prominent eco tourism destinations in Chhattisgarh. These wildlife sanctuaries and national parks are home to the state animal (wild buffalo) and state bird (the mocking hill myna) and other endangered species of animals and birds such as spotted deer, four horned antelope, sloth bear, wild boar, wild dog, jackal, wolf, hyena and bison.

Indravati National Park

Indravati National Park is the finest and most famous wildlife parks of Chhattisgarh. Also the only Tiger Reserve in the state, Indravati National Park is located in Dantewada district of Chhattisgarh. The Park derives its name from the Indravati River, which flows from east to west and forms the



northern boundary of the reserve with the Indian state of Maharashtra. With a total area of approximately 2799.08 sq km, Indravati attained the status of a National Park in 1981 and a

Tiger Reserve in 1983 under the famous Project Tiger of India to become one of the most famous tiger reserves of India. The topography of the Park mainly comprises of undulating hilly terrain with altitude ranging between 177 to 599 m above the sea level. The Park is famous for its unique and diverse wildlife and bird species including some of the most endangered species such as Wild Buffalos and Hill Mynas. A series of beautiful hill ranges with lush green vegetation and unique and varied wildlife make Indravati National Park a must visit for wildlife enthusiasts and nature lovers.

Barnawapara Wildlife Sanctuary

Located in northern part of Mahasamund district of Chhattisgarh, Barnawapara Wildlife Sanctuary is one of the finest and important wildlife sanctuaries in the region. Established in 1976 under Wildlife

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Protection Act of 1972, the sanctuary is relatively a small one covering an area of only 245 sq km. the topography of the region comprises of flat and hilly terrain with altitudes ranging between 265-400 mts. The major wildlife of the Barnawapara Sanctuary include Tigers, Sloth Bear, Flying Squirrels, Jackals, Four-horned Antelopes, Leopards, Chinkara, Black Buck, Jungle Cat, Barking Deer, Porcupine, Monkey, Bison, Striped Hyena, Wild Dogs, Chital, Sambar, Nilgai, Gaur, Muntjac, Wild Boar, Cobra, Python to name a few. The sanctuary also has a sizable bird population with prominent being the Parrots, Bulbul, White-rumped Vultures, Green Avadavat, Lesser Kestrels, Peafowl, Wood Peckers, Racket-tailed Drongos, Egrets, and Herons to name few. Barnawapara wildlife sanctuary tour promises to be an exciting and rewarding experience for all wildlife enthusiasts, bird lovers and nature lovers. The Barnawapara Wildlife Sanctuary is known for its lush green vegetations and unique wildlife.



Udanti Wildlife Sanctuary

Located in Raipur district of Chhattisgarh, Udanti Wildlife Sanctuary is a small but an important wildlife sanctuary in the region. Established in 1983 under Wildlife Protection Act of 1972, the sanctuary covers an area of approximately 232 sq km. the topography of the sanctuary comprises of broken mass of land traversed by innumerable hill ranges intercepted by stripes of plains. The beautiful sanctuary derives its name from the Udanti River flowing from the west to east covering major part of the sanctuary. Udanti Wildlife Sanctuary is famous for its population of the endangered Wild Buffalos. For their survival and growth many steps have been taken by the forest department officials. A large number of man-made tanks have been constructed all across the width and length of the sanctuary.



Sanjay National Park (Ghasi Das National Park)

Located in Surguja and Koriya districts of Chhattisgarh, Sanjay National Park is one of the most important wildlife sanctuaries in central India. Also known as Ghasi Das National Park (in Chhattisgarh), the sanctuary is famous for its rich and diverse



flora and fauna and attained the status of a National Park in 1981. Sanjay National Park covers an area of approximately 2,303 sq km and is well drained by a number of rivers, rivulets and other perennial sources of water, providing enough water supply for the for the wildlife and birds. Sanjay National Park houses a wide variety of wildlife and birds including some of the rare and endangered species and has great potential to emerge as one of the finest wildlife destinations in central India.

Sitanadi Wildlife Sanctuary

Located in Dhamtari district of Chhattisgarh, Sitanadi Wildlife Sanctuary is one of the most famous and important wildlife sanctuaries in central India. Established in 1974 under Wildlife Protection Act of 1972, the sanctuary covers an area of approximately 556 sq km, comprising of highly undulating and hilly terrain with altitudes ranging between 327-736 mts. The major wildlife found in Sitanadi Sanctuary include Tigers, Leopards, Flying Squirrels, Jackals, Four-horned Antelopes, Chinkara, Black Buck, Jungle Cat, Barking Deer, Porcupine, Monkey, Bison, Striped Hyena, Sloth Bear, Wild Dogs, Chital, Sambar, Nilgai, Gaur, Muntjac, Wild Boar, Cobra, Python among many others. The sanctuary also has a sizable bird population with prominent being the Parrots, Bulbul, Peafowl, Pheasant, Crimson Breasted Barbet, Teetar, Tree Pie, Racket-tailed Drongos, Egrets, and Herons to name few. Sitanadi Sanctuary is also being prepared to develop it as an important tiger sanctuary in the region.



Kanger Ghati National Park

Kanger Ghati National Park is another major location of Eco tourism in Chhattisgarh. Being located near Jagdalpur region of Chhattisgarh, the Kanger valley project came in to being in the year 1982. today, the place is enriched with Dandak caves, Bhaimsa and Kanger dhara, Kutamsar caves, tirathgarh waterfalls and hordes of wild species like monitor lizards, cobra, mouse deer, leopard, jackals, chital and several others.

Harassment of Wildlife

Ecotourism has the potential to cause harmful environmental impacts. One issue is the harassment of wildlife. For example, feeding animals can create unnatural behavior, which can be dangerous for the animals. Some birders can attract birds by whistling or playing a tape-recorded song, which brings them out into the open to confront the intruder. Tourists can set fire to the forest, which if they run out of control, may destroy the vegetation and wildlife habitat. When used too often, however, these tactics may cause birds and other animals' undue stress. Another issue is trampling. Tourists often venture off the trail in pursuit of birds and animals, damaging the underlying vegetation and soil in the process. Authorities will need to use caution and expertise in containing such issues.

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