



THE KAZIRANGA NATIONAL PARK: ECO-TOURISM AND ITS PROBLEMS

Piku Doley
Dept. of Education, Kamargaon College
Golaghat, Assam

Abstract

“Responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the well being of local people”- is Ecotourism (TIES-1990). The Kaziranga National Park is the title of remarkable success in the field of ecotourism. It is inhabited by the world’s largest population of one horned rhinoceroses as well as mammals, including tigers, elephants, panthers and bears and thousands of birds. Though the national park has been giving good opportunities to the stock holders, but they are unable to protect the inhabitants of the park. The rhinoceroses are threatening day by day as well as the other inhabitants also. In this paper, it is tried to find out the causes of such problems and tried to provide some recommendations regarding those problems.

INTRODUCTION

Ecotourism is a new form of tourism based on the idea of sustainability. The concept of ecotourism came into force in the mid 1980’s as a strategy for conservation of local species (such as the rhinos in Assam) in ecologically rich areas. Conservation of natural resources prevents the degradation of environment. Therefore, ecotourism has received global importance. It is currently recognised as the fastest growing segment of the tourism market (Yadav2002). The World Ecotourism summit held in Quebec City, Canada, from 19th to 22nd May 2002, declared the year 2002 as the International Year of

Ecotourism. Presently, ecotourism comprises 15-20% of international tourism. The growth rate of ecotourism & nature based activities is higher than most of the other tourism segments (Kandari & Chandra, 2004).

OBJECTIVES

The objectives or problems of this study are as follows-

- ➔ To find out the causes threatening to the world famous one horn Rhinoceros and other inhabitant.
- ➔ To provide some recommendations for solving the existing problems in the Kaziranga National Park.
- ➔ To make awareness among people about eco-tourism and eco-friendly living.

METHODOLOGY

In this paper, the researcher follows the basic research methodology. The researcher has collected all the information from earlier abstracts, articles, and encyclopaedia and from other books related to ecotourism. The researcher follows the observation and interview methods for collecting the data. Some data are collected from local newspaper and journal also.

HISTORY OF ECOTOURISM

The term ecotourism was first coined by Hector Ceballos Lascurian in July 1983 to describe nature based travel. Some others claim the term was in use earlier: Claus-Dieter (Nick) Hetzer, an academic and adventurer from Forum International in Berkeley, CA, coined the term in 1965 and ran the first ecotour in the Yucatan during the early 1970s.

CONCEPT OF ECOTOURISM

Ceballos Lascurism (1987) defines Ecotourism as, “travelling to relatively undistributed or uncontaminated natural areas with specific objectives of studying,

admiring, enjoying the scenery and its wild plants and animals, as well as existing cultural manifestations(both past & present) found in these areas.”

The International Ecotourism Society defines Ecotourism as, “responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the well-being of local people” (1990).

The definition means that those who implement and participate in ecotourism activities should follow the following principles-

- ➔ Minimize impact
- ➔ Build environmental and cultural awareness and respect
- ➔ Provide positive experiences for both visitors and hosts
- ➔ Provide direct financial benefits for conservation
- ➔ Provide financial benefits and empowerment for local people
- ➔ Raise sensitivity to host countries’ political, environmental and social climate.

Ecotourism is defined for preserving and sustaining the diversity of the world’s natural and cultural environments. It focuses on local cultures, wilderness adventures, volunteering personal growth and learning new ways to live on our vulnerable planet. It is typically defined as travel to destinations where the flora, fauna and cultural heritage are the primary attractions. Responsible ecotourism includes programmes that minimize the adverse effects of traditional tourism on the natural environment and enhance the cultural integrity of local people. Therefore, in addition to evaluating environmental and cultural factors, initiatives by hospitality providers to promote recycling, energy efficiency, water reuse and the creation of economic opportunities for local communities are an integral part of ecotourism.

THE KAZIRANGA NATIONAL PARK

Kaziranga is the title of a remarkable success in the field of conservation of the one horned rhinoceros in the world. It is not only the homeland of the great Indian one horned rhinoceros, but also provides shelter to a variety of wild lives. The Kaziranga National park got her status as a National Park after the final notification issued on 11th

Feb 1974, following the first notification in 1969. Originally, established as a reserved forest in 1908, a game sanctuary in 1916 and a wildlife sanctuary in 1950.

It is one of the significant natural habitat for in situ conservation of biological biodiversity of universal value. The values and criteria made Kaziranga National Park to get inscribed in the World Heritage Site List in December 1985 (Source: Advisory Body Evaluation). The Kaziranga National Park area consists of 429.93 sq.km with an additional area of 429.40 sq.km and situated in the two districts of Assam, namely Golaghat and Nagaon.

MAJOR WILDLIFE ATTRACTIONS OF KAZIRANGA WILDLIFE SANCTUARY

Besides the great one horned Indian Rhino, the other major wild attractions include a large population of Indian Elephants, Indian Bison, Swamp Deer or Barasingha, Hog Deer, Sloth Bears, Tigers, Leopard Cats, Jungle Cats, Otters, Hog Badgers, Capped Langurs, Hoolock Gibbons, Wild Boar, Jackal, Wild Buffalo, Pythons, Monitor Lizards etc.

The Kaziranga National Park is a birding paradise too; the grasslands are a raptor country that can be seen on safari makes a remarkable experience. These include the Oriental Honey Buzzard, Black-Shouldered kite, Black kite, Brahminy kite, Pallas's Fishing Eagle, White Tailed Eagle, Grey-Headed, Fishing Eagle, and Himalayan Griffon etc. Huge numbers of migratory birds descend on the parks lakes and marshy areas during winters, including Greylag Geese, Bar-Headed Geese, Ruddy Shelduck, Gadwall, Falcated Duck, Red-Crested Pochard and Northern Shovell.

PROBLEMS

The researcher, from her observation and from the newspapers, has found some problems which are existing in the Kaziranga National Park.

- Killing of Wild Animals especially the world heritage Rhinoceros. I have given a list of rhinoceros which are killed by the poachers in the passing years.

| Year | No. Of Rhinoceros |
|---------------|-------------------|
| 1974-1980 | 25 |
| 1981-1990 | 289 |
| 1991-2000 | 166 |
| 2001-2010 | 64 |
| 2011-2012 | 24 |
| 2013-till now | 33 |

Source: Eastern Assam wildlife Division Bokakhat.

- During the rainy season, the flooding causes most animals migrate to elevated and forested regions outside the southern border of the park, such as the Mikir Hills, 540 animals, including 13 rhinos and hog deers perished in unprecedented devastating floods of 2012.
- Lack of adequate level of veterinary surgeon within the National Park. Huge amount of wildlife passes away due to lack of proper treatment.
- Lack of trained and skilled security personnel. Due to this cause the poachers able to go inside the National Park.
- The another most important issue is the NH-37. The number of motor vehicles crossing the park increases as drivers search for rare species. By this road the poachers communicates each other.
- Some people say and also observed that illegally migrated people are capturing the land of the park. Somebody also argued that the migrated people are killing the wildlife for their livelihood.
- Sometimes the wildlife faces food shortages. For their food they go out from the park. Sometimes they lose their lives on the hands of human being.
- Through newspaper we come to know that people of the nearby forest go inside the park for the purpose of hunting which is the negative impact for ecotourism.
- Some people are not aware about the proper meaning of ecotourism.

RECOMMENDATIONS

From the above discussion the researcher has tried to provide some recommendations to solve the problems existing in the Kaziranga National Park.

- For protecting the wildlife during the rainy season, the government authority can make some area as a platform for shelter of the wildlife.
- Appointment of more Veterinary Surgeon for treatment of the wildlife. Sometimes we get news that lack of treatment the wildlife died.
- Recruiting of trained and skilled security personnel. And through the training the appointed security personnel may become skilled. So training should be given to them.
- Awareness programmes, street play, documentary films etc. Should be organised by the government initiatives and NGO's.
- If possible then the NH should be closed. Then the poachers cannot arrive the park easily. And also the wildlife will not come in front of the vehicles.
- When the wildlife faces food shortages then the administration should arrange for feeding of the wildlife.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion we can say that if the human beings are not aware about the wildlife, they would not be protected. For the success of ecotourism in the national park the local people, the tourist and the other stakeholder should follow the guidelines or principles of the ecotourism. And the government should also provide necessary assistance to the forest department and the local people. For solving the existing problems of the national park the above mentioned recommendations may follow. If those problems are not solved in time then it may harm the value and criteria of the World Heritage National Park of Assam, India.

REFERENCES

- [1] Devi, Meena Kumari. (2012). Ecotourism in Assam: A promising opportunity for Development. SAJTH : Guwahati.
- [2] Hector Ceballos-Lascurain: Planeta. Retrieved 2010-12-09
- [3] Kamauro, O (1996). Ecotourism: Suicide or Development? Voices from Africa #6: Sustainable Development, UN Non-Governmental Liaison Service, UN, News service.
- [4] The Encyclopaedia of Ecotourism, Cabi Publishing.
- [5] The Assam Tribune, Tuesday, March 29, 2011.