

TADGARH-RAOLI: DESTINATION WITH IMMENSE POTENTIAL FOR ECO-TOURISM

ANITA SHARMA* and VIBHA KHANNA**

* *Anita Sharma*, Department of Zoology, Government College, Kota.

** *Vibha Khanna*, Department of Botany, Government College, Ajmer.

ABSTRACT

Tadgarh-Raoli Wildlife Sanctuary area is a picturesque spot in the heart of the desert state of Rajasthan. It is of historical and religious importance and has rich floral diversity devoid of intense biological invasions. The stratified vegetation cover provide habitat to varied faunal population ranging from reptiles to mammals. Even the avian diversity can encourage bird-watching activities in the area. The varied topography accompanied by rich ecosystem has made this place a nature's bounty which can be tapped as a destination for Eco-tourism.

KEYWORDS: *Eco-tourism, Tadgarh-Raoli Wildlife Sanctuary, Floral Diversity, Faunal Population, Varied Topography.*

ECO-TOURISM

Ecology is the study of relationship of organisms with one another and with their surroundings. Any term with the prefix 'eco' refers to its links to the interrelationship with organisms and the environment around. One of the major purposes of tourism is recreation and 'Eco-tourism' is meant for recreation in the lap of Mother Nature, with minimum disturbance and interference for the surroundings. Eco-tourism has been considered as a sustainable, equitable, community based endeavour for improving the living standard for indigenous host communities. Sustainability is a multidimensional concept that encompasses not just environmental protection but also extends to economic development and social equity (Cooper, 2002). Organisations associated with the welfare of environment are of the opinion that eco-tourism should be sustainably managed, conservation supporting and environment education promoting. The typical focus of tourism i.e. the commercial aspect ought to be given a back seat as far as eco-tourism is concerned. The International Eco-tourism Society (TIES) defines eco-tourism as 'responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the well being of local people'. Now-a-days, nature tourism and eco-tourism are being used as synonyms. However eco-tourism has a more aesthetical approach and incorporates the following general features:

- Holistic view of ecosystem protection which includes abiotic as well as biotic features. The biotic feature incorporates both biological as well as cultural diversity.
- The available biodiversity use for eco-tourism has to be sustainable. The concept of sustainability means that mankind must live within the capacity of the environment that supports equilibrium and balance. According to Trevor, A. sustainable development refers to the fact that facing the quest of life has an inherent constraint, there is a limit to how much human population and activity our planet can withstand.
- The local communities ought to be made a part and parcel of any eco-tourism concept. The local culture is to be encouraged and local traditions are to be given due importance. All the socio-economic benefits are supposed to be shared with them judiciously. Tourism

industry grows when the people in the industry are directly involved in it by a free mind and feel the enjoyment and rhythm of industry (Shipra & Agarwal, 1985-86).

Thus the concept of eco-tourism takes into account the unspoiled natural and socio-cultural attraction on a sustainable basis.

THE SITE: RAOLI-TADGARH

Rajasthan—a land drenched in hues and history has always been a magical sojourn reverberating with age-old culture and traditions. The state enfolds in its lap a diverse kaleidoscope of nature ranging from shimmering sands to lush green ranges. Most of the potential tourism destinations of this state have been tapped and at times even in detrimental proportions but a few are waiting for their turn. Situated just 110 km. in the south-west of Ajmer, the heart-land of the state, and 150 km. from the lake city of Udaipur, are the lush green valleys of Tadgarh-Raoli Wildlife Sanctuary. This sanctuary is one of the protected area, expressing the entire range of the original Aravalli hues at their zenith. It is an ecotone zone and harbours various habitats viz. dense forests dominated by Dhak-Salar trees, dry-lands, seasonal streams, cascading hillocks, juvenile sand dunes etc. These habitats provide optimum environment for rich growth of varied vegetation incorporating shade trees of immense aesthetic value, innumerable medicinal herbs and shrubs, various lianas and climbers forming thickets etc. Thus the flora of the land, not only provide food and shelter to a range of fauna particularly panthers, boar bears, chinkaras and the avian population but also is a paradise for biology students and environmentalists. The best part of this spot is that till date it is the cradle home of indigenous plant species like *Anogeissus pendula* whose phenology is responsible for the changing hues of Aravali ranges with changing season: copper colour in winters, ash in autumn and green in spring season. The forest area also harbours some of the rare tree species like *Capparis grandis*.

The vegetation of an area governs the health of ecosystem. The Tadgarh-Raoli Wildlife Sanctuary is quite rich in bio-diversity owing to its vegetation composition (List 1), that ranges from ground flora to top canopy, designed naturally to harvest maximum sunlight and the resulting maximised biodiversity. Till date this nature's bounty has not been invaded by biological invaders like *Lantana*, *Parthenium* etc. as is the case with present Mount Abu Ranges of our state. Apart from the availability of good diversity of flora and fauna, various sites of historical and religious importance are also situated inside the sanctuary viz. Dudhaleshwar Mahadev, Kajalwas- Dhuni, Rajoda Talab, Gauridham etc.

RAOLI-TADGARH: AN OPTIMUM SITE FOR BIRD-WATCHING

Visit to any of the nature's paradise can itself be of immense spiritual value. Repeated visits to the area revealed another interesting aspect of this region. This region of Raoli-Tadgarh is an optimum site for bird-watching. The beauty of their forms and colouring, the vivacity of their movements and the sweetness of their song can be indulged in with pleasure and profit not only by ornithologists but also by armatures in the field. Not much careful and rational field work has been pursued on living birds in this natural environment and Raoli-Tadgarh provides an optimum virgin field for any such pursuit in the area. There is a general notion that, a forest, to the inexperienced, is usually a very disappointing place for bird watching. However, a few basic tips as to when and where to look for birds may prove helpful. First and foremost, bird activity is greatest in the early mornings. In the forests, mixed assemblages of various avian species is a common sight at both hills and plains. The trees and bushes in and around water holes is another favoured niche, particularly in and after rainy season. Other common spots include big trees at their flowering and fruiting stage, which are not only a source of attraction but also food and nectar. A pair of good binoculars multiplies the pleasures of bird watching. List 2 includes some of the beautiful and a few rare bird species observed in the Raoli-Tadgarh region.

**RAOLI TADGARH WILD LIFE SANCTUARY RAJASTHAN
LIST OF BIRDS WITH COMMON HABITAT**

Group	English Name	Latin Name	Local Name	Habitat
Francolins	Painted Francolin	<i>Francolinus pictus</i>	Kalda	Scrub & Dry grassland
Pheasants	Indian Peafowl	<i>Pavo cristatus</i>	Mor	Forests bordering habitations
Whistling ducks shelduck, ducks	Ruddy Shelduck	<i>Tadorana ferruginea</i>	-	Water holes
	Spot-billed Duck	<i>Anas poecilorhyncha</i>	-	Water bodies
	Common Teal	<i>A. crecca</i>	-	Water bodies
	Common Pochard	<i>Aythya ferina</i>	-	Water bodies
Woodpeckers	Yellow-crowned Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos mahrattensis</i>	Sutharna	Forest area
	Black Rumped Flameback	<i>Dinopium benghalense</i>	Sutharna	Forest area
Barbets	Coppersmith Barbet	<i>Megalaima haemacephala</i>	Chhoti tatrok	Forest area
Hoopoe	Common Hoopoe	<i>Upupa epops</i>	Sutharia	Open hills & habitations
Kingfisher	Common Kingfisher	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>		Near Water bodies
	White-breasted Kingfisher	<i>Halcyon smyrnensis</i>	-	Edges of forests, often away from water bodies
Bee-eater	Green/Small Bee-eater	<i>Merops orientalis</i>	-	Open forest area, near habitations
Cuckoos	Pied Cuckoo	<i>Clamator jacobinus</i>	-	Sparse jungle
	Asian Koel	<i>Eudynamis scolopacea</i>	Koel	Forest area
	Greater Coucal	<i>Centropus sinensis</i>	-	Scrub Jungles
Parakeets	Plum headed Parakeet	<i>Pittacula cynocephala</i>	Tui	Hilly areas
Doves	Laughing Dove	<i>Streptopelia senegalensis</i>	Holy	Sparse jungle with cultivation area
	Spotted Dove	<i>S. chinensis</i>	Holy	Forest area
	European Collared Dove	<i>S. decaocto</i>	Holy	A
Terns	River Tern	<i>Sterna aurantia</i>	-	Water bodies
Cormorant	Great Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>	-	Near Water bodies
Egret & Herons	Medium Egret	<i>Mesophoyx intermedia</i>	Bagula	Marshes & Swamps
	Indian Pond Heron	<i>Ardeola grayii</i>	Bagula	Water bodies

Group	English Name	Latin Name	Local Name	Habitat
	Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>	Bagula	Water bodies
Ibises	Oriental white Ibis	<i>Threskiornis melenocephalus</i>	-	Water bodies
	Black Ibis	<i>Pseudibis Papillosa</i>	-	Water bodies
Storks	Painted Stork	<i>Mycteria leucocephala</i>	-	Marshes
Pitta	Indian Pitta	<i>Pitta brachyuran</i>	-	Scrubs & Dense forests
Shrike	Longtailed Shrike	<i>Lanius schach</i>	Son-chiri	Open forests
	Great Grey Shrike	<i>L. excubitor</i>	-	Dry deciduous patches
Oriole	Eurasian Golden Oriole	<i>Oriolus oriolus</i>	Peelak	Forests
Minivet	Small Minivet	<i>Pericrocotus cinnamomeus</i>	-	Scrubs & forests
Drongos	Black Drongo	<i>Dicrurus macrocercus</i>	Kangwalia	Open forests & Cultivation
	White -Bellied Drongo	<i>D.caerulescens</i>	-	Scrub & bamboo forests
Flycatchers	Asian Paradise - Flycatcher	<i>Terpsiphone paradisi</i>	Mehpedka -	Dense forests
	Red-throated Flycatcher	<i>Ficedula parva</i>	-	Forest
Chat bush chats, Robin etc.	Oriental Magpie Robin	<i>Copsychus saularis</i>	-	Near habitation
	Indian Robin	<i>Saxicoloides fulicata</i>	Duchki	Stony & dry-land
	Black Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus ochruros</i>	-	Near habitation
	Common Stonechat	<i>Saxicola torquata</i>	-	Scrubbed hill-side
	Pied Bushchat	<i>S.caprata</i>	-	Scrubbed hill-side & marshy grassland
Starling and Mynas	Brahminy Starling	<i>Sturnus Pagodarum</i>	Cabar	Open jungles
	Bank Myna	<i>Acridotheres ginginianus</i>	Cabar	Near water-bodies
	Common Myna	<i>Acridotheres tristis</i>	Cabar	Near habitations
Bulbul	Red vented Bulbul	<i>Pyconotus cafer</i>	Pittola	Scrubs & cultivation
Larks	Red winged Bushlark	<i>Miraфра erythroptera</i>	-	Sparse scrub-jungles
Sunbird	Purple Sunbird	<i>Nectarinia asiatica</i>	Sui	Forests

Group	English Name	Latin Name	Local Name	Habitat
Weavers & Munias	Baya Weaver	<i>Ploceus philippinus</i>	-	Grass fields
	Spotted Munia	<i>Lonchura punctulata</i>	-	Grass fields
	Green Munia	<i>Amandava formosa</i>		Scrubs & Grass fields
Wagtails	White Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>	-	Grass fields near water
	Yellow Wagtail	<i>M.flava</i>	-	Grass fields near water
	Citrine Wagtail	<i>M.citreola</i>	-	Marshes

PRESENT DAY TOURISM STATUS OF THE REGION

Though the forest area was declared a sanctuary on 28th September 1983 but for the past 25 years not much effort have been made to develop it as a destination for eco-tourism. Though the forest department has set up camping sites and eco-cottages which are being operated and managed with the help of Self-help Groups but at present very few people visit the Sanctuary every year. The probable major constraints include:

- Lack of awareness about this wonderful destination among tourists.
- Lack of proper and good connectivity from the two neighbouring tourist destination of Ajmer and Udaipur.
- Lack of holistic, self-sustainable planning for the area.
- Lack of finances pumped for its development.
- Lack of education and initiative among the local residents of the area.
- Lack of research activity on various aspects of this region.

POTENTIALITIES AND POINTS OF CONCERN

The sanctuary area is rich in bio-diversity and is a fabulous representative of the typical Aravali ecosystem. It is a catchment area of many rivers which prove lifeline to the neighbouring regions. Furthermore, the dense vegetation proves to be a major barrier for the western desert to march forth in this direction. The area of wild life sanctuary Tadgarh-Raoli, is a biologically rich area with considerable scientific, educational, aesthetic, tourism and recreational values. Another feather in the cap of this potential destination of eco-tourism is that it is having historical and cultural importance. Hence, development of eco-tourism in the area can not only improve the living standard of the local communities inhabited in villages within limits of the zone of interference of the sanctuary area but will also be of great utility to ward off various threats to wildlife in the sanctuary. The major reasons for threat to wild life of the area include:

- Prevailing ignorance and environmental illiteracy among local people.
- Poor economy with people dependent on natural forest resources for meeting their livelihood demands
- Over-grazing and over-collection of fuel wood, small timber building material etc. leads to deforestation and loss of top-soil.
- Habitat degradation due to soil erosion and silting up of water holes.
- Frequent droughts and decreasing availability of water.
- Disturbed food chain.
- Illegal anthropogenic interference in sanctuary area and lack of basic infrastructure to control it.

INFERENCE

In view of the various facts and observations made, the need of the hour is to progress in a planned manner having a futuristic approach and develop the sanctuary area as a spot for eco-tourism. Not only government efforts but even the educationists, environmentalists and local people should take substantial steps to plan, organise and manage this potential site for eco-tourism in a sustainable manner.

REFERENCES

- Cooper, C. (2002): Sustainability and tourism visions. Paper presented at the VII Congresso Internacional del CLAD sobre In Reforma del Estado y de la Administration Publica, Portugal.
- Salim Ali and S. Dillon Ripley: Hand Book of the birds of India and Pakistan. BNHS Mumbai (Oxford University Press)
- Shipra & Agarwal,R.K. (1985-86): Management of Tourism Industry. Journal of Tourism and Hotel Management. Vol. I 1985-86.
- Trevor, A. :Measuring sustainable tourism problems and achievements. Centre for tourism and hospitality studies, bond university WTO Publications