

WHY IS HIMCHARI NATIONAL PARK IMPORTANT?

Declared as a National Park on 15 February 1980, Himchari National Park (HNP) encompasses 1,729 hectares. It is located in southeast Bangladesh just south of Cox's Bazar town (within Ramu and Cox's Bazar Upazilas). It borders on the west the Bay of Bengal and Cox's Bazar-Teknaf Ecologically Critical Area. These once forested hills comprise the watershed of numerous small streams serving the tourism hub of Cox's Bazar. They provide and regulate seasonal water flows in the rainy season and are increasingly vulnerable to flash floods and landslides with deforestation and the effects of climate change.

HNP protects about 550 hectares of relatively undisturbed tropical mixed evergreen forest. The National Park connects with other forests to the east and south, providing important wildlife corridors for Bangladesh's disappearing mega fauna. Small herds of endangered Asian Elephants visit the National Park. Himchari CMC is working with others to conserve elephants and other rare species in a coordinated way. HNP is one of the few forests in Bangladesh where the globally critically endangered Boilam Tree is still found. Most of the other forest dependent wildlife is much reduced or disappeared from the area, but the adjacent beaches are still used for nesting by Olive Ridley Turtles.

Although many of the over 4,000 households living around Himchari NP are Muslim, there are also Hindu and Buddhist communities and ethnic minorities. Local people and large numbers of immigrants and refugees since the early 1990s continue to extract natural resources such as firewood and grasses from the NP, threatening its biodiversity and ecological services. The NP is next to the center of tourism within Bangladesh and Himchari's viewpoints and waterfalls attract large numbers of visitors.

Co-management was established in Himchari NP on 7 July 2010 and is recognized through a Ministry of Environment and Forests Gazette order published in November 2009. Himchari CMC formally works with and includes Bangladesh Forest Department as well as all key local stakeholders including local government and of course representatives of 35 surrounding villages of HNP who are organized into a common forum. The CMC and FD developed a management plan in 2015.

The CMC is active in promoting sustainable diversification of livelihoods away from forest dependence, promoting nature conservation, guarding the forest, and informing local people how to reduce vulnerability to climate change threats in an area of about 9,000 ha around the NP. Within this landscape community groups are protecting marine turtle nesting beaches.

Watershed generates and regulates water flows

Habitat for **globally endangered** Asian Elephant

Notable species include remnant forest canopy Boilam trees, Olive Ridley Turtles, and **127** bird species.

Restoring tree cover could trap an extra **250 tons of CO₂ per hectare** for climate change mitigation

Viewpoints in the NP are **important tourism sites**, as is the **adjacent beach** – part of the longest beach in the country.

The ethnically diverse local people (Muslims, Hindus, and Buddhist Rakhaines) are poor and depend on forest resources, **threatening biodiversity and ecology**

HOW CAN YOU HELP?

Please support our efforts to strengthen conservation. The work of Himchari CMC and associated organizations involves local communities working with Bangladesh Forest Department and local government. These activities depend on support from grants and outside resources.

Himchari CMC has a bank account (No: SND 00000050, Himchari Nishorgo Sangrokkon Sangstha, Bangladesh Krishi Bank, Cox's Bazar) and can receive grants from domestic sources. For international assistance, funds can be channeled through Nature Conservation Management (NACOM) a national NGO which has helped establish the CMC. NACOM is registered with Bangladesh NGO Affairs Bureau, no. 481. NACOM focuses on environment, climate change issues, development of grassroots people and nature protection.

Your donations to Himchari CMC will support:

- Improving protection of forests, and their threatened species, through community patrols and forest restoration
- Reducing conflicts between people and animals, especially elephants (e.g., relocating cultivation, planting habitat attractive to elephants, improving warnings, and a compensation fund)
- Promoting eco-tourism (e.g. improving visitor facilities and publicizing the park)
- Increasing community sustainability (e.g. reducing disaster vulnerability and improving services)

CO-MANAGEMENT HELPS PROTECT
CRITICAL FOREST HABITATS
IMPORTANT FOR A WIDE RANGE OF
CREATURES AND PLANTS, INCLUDING
GLOBALLY THREATENED SPECIES ...

Please support this important work.



Photo: Samiul Mohsanin

Boilam
Anisoptera scaphula

This member of the dipterocarpus family of evergreen forest trees is considered to be the tallest growing tree in Bangladesh reaching up to 45 m. Outside Bangladesh it is found in Southeast Asia where it is rare, it is globally considered critically endangered. Despite loss of much of the former forest in Himchari, a few Boilam still remain, giving hope that future generations may again see tall forest here.



Photo: Sourav Mahmud

Asian Elephant
Elephas maximus

This globally endangered species was once widespread in Bangladesh. It is now restricted to a few Protected Areas in the south-east. A small, but important, population moves within and between sites. Himchari CMC is working with ten other CMCs and the Forest Department to protect elephants and their habitat, restore connecting corridors used in their migrations, and minimize conflicts with local people.

HIMCHARI CO-MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE (CMC) KEY OBJECTIVES:

- Ensure long term conservation of biodiversity
- Mobilize local people as environmental stewards and stakeholders
- Improve the lives and livelihoods of local people, by diversifying livelihoods, improving skills, and reducing vulnerability to hazards and climate change
- Encourage eco-tourism, and provide adequate facilities for visitors
- Provide a forum for discussions, consultations, and conflict resolution.

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Himchari National Park

Sustaining nature, biodiversity,
and local communities



Photo: Samiul Mohsanin

Photo: Sourav Mahmud

Himchari Co-Management Committee
engages with local communities to conserve Himchari National Park and its threatened species, including Bangladesh's last elephants, through climate-resilient natural resources management and diversified livelihoods.

