



NATURE TRAIL STUDY AT CHUNATI WILDLIFE SANCTUARY





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1. Introduction

Chunati Wildlife Sanctuary (WS) is one of the pilot sites under Nishorgo Support Project (NSP). Although, NSP is primarily concerned with the biodiversity conservation of 5 Protected Areas (PAs) of Bangladesh, the project also aims at promoting ecotourism in those pilot PAs with a view that Bangladeshi citizens begin increasingly recognize the importance of local biodiversity and its aesthetic values and benefit from it. Importance and benefit from eco-tourism is worldwide recognized and is being considered as an important element in any resource /biodiversity conservation program. Development of ecotourism is also seen as means of partnership building with local people for sustainable management of forest resources. As envisaged in IRG project proposal, development of ecotourism in these PAs is seen as a source for deriving tangible benefit for local people living in and around it.

While there is potential for ecotourism development targeting the local Bangladeshi people in the PAs, unfortunately, at this time, a visitor to the 5 PAs under NSP would have little guidance on where to go or what to see. Even if they did look around the PA, they would have little idea what they are seeing.

Trails are walkways that could be used by the visitors, nature lovers and others for hiking or outings while they visit a forest or any other landscapes. Trailing is considered as an important tool for nature watch that helps awareness building and other conservation efforts.

Considering the above, Forest Department has taken an initiative through the NSP to develop few initial simple and easy trails within each pilot site of the NSP. From the project implementation perspective, development of these initial trails is also seen as a means for demonstrating the importance of biodiversity conservation of the PAs to the policy makers of the country. The policy makers could be taken to inside of these PAs and show them the beauty.

It may be further mentioned that these trails would be of initial trails. A more complete development and mapping of hiking trails will be completed in the context of approved management plans at a later date.

2. Objectives

The overall purpose of the activity is to promote and develop ecotourism in Chunati WS for as part of strengthening conservation effort. The specific objectives of the study were:

- To identify a short, a medium and a long existing trails within the sanctuary for outings and/or hiking to be used by targeted visitors

- To describe each identified trails including its physiography and attractions (ecological and cultural), and produce maps with a view to provide guidance to the visitors
- To initiate the involvement of the local people with ecotourism activity so that they can derive tangible benefit from this
- To make recommendations and suggestions for the development and improvement of the identified trails

3. Methodology

The trail study at Chunati Wildlife Sanctuary was carried out by NACOM with the participation of FD staff, CODEC staff and local stakeholders (Table 1) during 27 to 29 December 2004. Primary discussions were held at Chunati Range Office by involving FD staff, local people and other field staff of CODEC and. A blank forest map of Chunati WS was shown to them and trails were roughly sketched on the map. A long discussion was carried out regarding the ecological and cultural features of the WS. Various participants also shared their experiences while they were walking along the different trails.

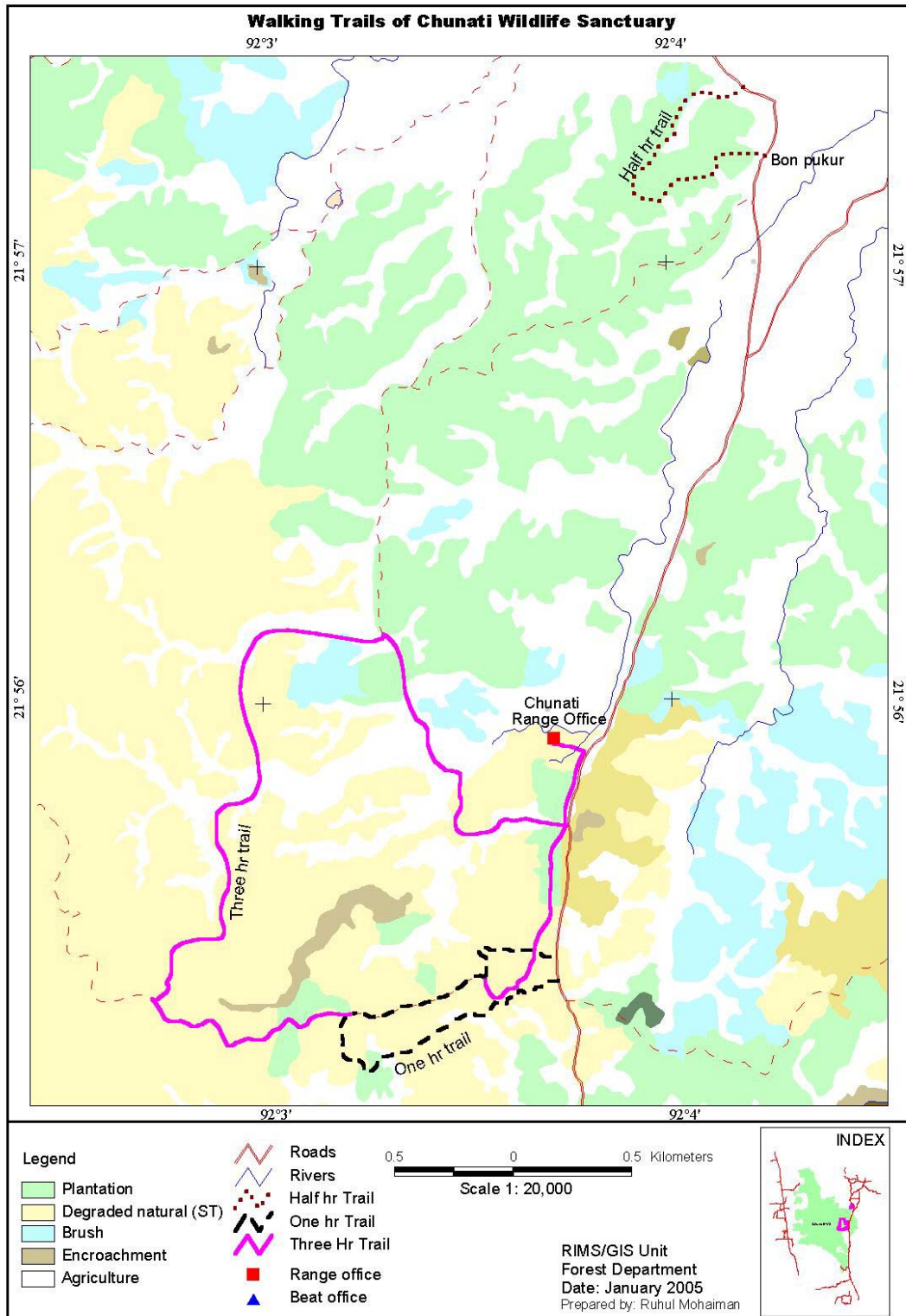
Table 1: Participants of Trail Study at Chunati Wildlife Sanctuary

| Sl | Name | Designation | Organization/ Address |
|----|--------------------|--|--------------------------|
| 1. | Shiba Prasad Kar | Team Leader of the study | NACOM |
| 2 | Shafiqur Rahman | Field Monitoring and Research Specialist | NACOM |
| 3 | Nazmul Abedin | Site Facilitator, Teknaf | CODEC |
| | Md Khorshed Alam | Field Organizer | CODEC |
| 4 | Moazzem Hossain | Range officer, Chunati | FD |
| 5 | Jashim Uddin Ahmed | Beat officer, Chunati | FD |
| 6 | Md. Nuruzzaman | Animal Keeper, Chunati Beat office | FD |
| 7 | Enamul Huq | FG, Chunati Beat | FD |
| 8 | Tofazzal Hossain | Wildlife Scout, Chunati Beat | FD |
| 9 | Md. Makbul Hossain | BM, Chunati Beat Office | FD |
| 10 | Mujibur Rahman | BM, Chunati Beat Office | FD |
| 11 | Didar-E-Huq Shahi | Local stakeholder | Chunati |
| 12 | Nazrul Islam | Local stakeholder | Chunati |
| 13 | Rashidul Huq | Local stakeholder | Chunati |
| 14 | Bhola Mia | Local stakeholder | Chunati |
| 15 | Babul Mia | Local stakeholder | Herbang |

Team members walked through identified trails keeping in view various ecological and cultural attractions. A format was used to note the field descriptions, including the GPS location at different points of the trails. GPS coordinates (way points) were noted in each trail depending on the special

attractions of the particular trail. After identifying the existing walking trails, three trails were identified finally and these were named as Short trail (half an hour walk), Medium trail (one hour walk) and Long trail (three hours walk). Based on fieldwork, the GPS coordinates were later plotted on the GIS map of FD at Banbhaban, Thus trails were plotted on the map of Chunati WS (Map 1).

Map 1: Walking Trails in Chunati Wildlife Sanctuary



4. Description of the Identified Trails

4.1 Short trail (half an hour walk trail)

4.1.1 Specific information on short trail

Location: Starting from the road near Bon Pukur (Baitussalam Mosque) (21.95497 N and 92.06844 E) to the west through the Garjan forest. Returning to the main road near Euro Asia Poultry Hatchery (GPS location 21.95747N and 92.06657 E) (Map 1).

Length: About 1 Km

Width: 0.5 to 1 meter

Type of Path: Earthy

Type of soil: Sandy loamy to silty clay with brown colour

Topography: Undulation with elevated hills

Vegetation: Garjan is the dominant tree species around the trail; other natural tree species include *Goichcha gach*, *Bhait gach* and *Bar Dumur*. The undergrowth of Bamboo, Cane, *Sialkata* and *Putti* is common.

Wildlife: A few birds such as *Myna*, *Bulbuli* and *Tia* are seen around this trail. Fox, Civet and Squirrel are also found in this forest. The reptiles including frogs and snakes could also be seen.

4.1.2 Description of the short trail sights

Starting from the road near Bon Pukur (Baitussalam Mosque) (21.95497 N and 92.06844 E) to the west through Garjan forests (Map 1). Before entering into the forest notice a pond to the right of the trail. Go uphill and the trail gradually moves upward reaching a hill top through the *Garjan* forest (Photo 1). The *Garjan* trees around the trail in this forest are very big and so worth noticing.



Photo 1: A view of the short trail reaching the hill top

While moving along the trail, notice the undergrowth of bamboo, *sialkata*, *putti* and cane. After a certain distance, you will find a trail going towards a house at the foothill. Move forward through the main trail, towards another intersection of trails. A trail at left goes to *Wahid's Ghona* but you have to take the right trail and move through the *Garjan* forest (Photo 2).



Photo 2: The short trail passing through the *Garjan* forest

Walk along the undulating trail you may be lucky to hear nice chirping of birds, Move forward, you will see a open place to your left and to your right there is a valley surrounding the hills. The valleys look very beautiful from the uphill. The Garjan forest on left of the trail is dense and you can enjoy the beauty of a nice forest here (Photo 3). Natural tree species mixed with the Garjan trees are *Goichcha gach*, *Bhait gach*, *Bar Dumur*, Bamboo, Cane, etc.



Photo 3: A view of short trail- rich *Garjan* forest

Turn right and carefully follow the down slopes. You will gradually reach the valley. Some of the fruit bearing trees were planted along the valley by a local doctor (Doctor Ibrahim) here and these are regularly maintained. The main species are *Jalpai*, *Kathal*, *Kamranga*, *Peyara*, etc.

Move along the valley to your right and you will reach a small trail that ultimately reaches the main metallic road. There are a few trees around the hills and some paddy lands around. Follow the trail and you will find some of the villager's houses at your left. Gradually the trail moves beside EuroAsia Poultry Hatchery (Photo 4) and reach the main road. The trail ends at this point. A milestone is seen here on which "Cox'sbazar 81, Chokoria 23" is written.



Photo 4: End of the Short trail (near to Euro-Asia Poultry Hatchery)

4.2 Medium Trail (one hour walk trail)

4.2.1 Specific information on medium trail

Location: Starting from the Arakan road near a signboard (Photo 5), (GPS location 21.92358 N and 92.05847 E), posted at about 1 km to the south from Chunati Range Office, The trail ends at about 20 meter north from the starting point, after a loop through the forests Watch Tower (Map 1).

Length: About 2.5 km

Width: 0.5 to 2 meter

Type of Path: Earthy

Type of soil: Brown in colour, and sandy to sandy clay

Topography: Slightly to highly elevated hills.

Vegetation: Plantations of *Sal*, *Bat*, *Amloki*, *Bahera*, *Horitaki*, *Dumur*, *Kamranga*, *Jalpai*, *Chalta*, etc. Undergrowths include Sun grass, *Putti*, *Asar*, *Fuljharu*, *Assam lata gach*, *Assam lata* and Bamboo.

Wildlife: Elephant is the dominant wildlife species but Small Deer, Fox, Civet, Squirrels, Wild Boar, Jungle Fowl, Dove, *Myna*, Parrot, *Finge*, and *Bulbuli* are also commonly seen.

4.2.2 Description of the medium trail sights

Start from the Arakan road near a signboard (Photo 5) (GPS location 21.92358 N and 92.05847 E), about 1 km along the main road to the south from Chunati Range Office. Enter into the forest to west where the trail is a bit wide (2 meter).



Photo 5: Start point of the Medium trail (on the Arakan Road)

The trail passes through hills leaving bamboo sheaths on both sides and Sal plantations to the left (Photo 6). Wait for a while at this point to enjoy the beauty of nature and birds (*Vimraj*, *Myna*, *Tia*, *Bulbuli*, etc.) chirping around you. It is a charming feeling that you have not enjoyed before.



Photo 6: A partial view of the Medium Trail

Move along the undulating trail and turn left, to reach an intersection of trails. Do not follow the trail to your right that goes to Range Office. Go straight and move along the right side of undulating trail with dense undergrowth including bamboo sheaths in a valley with dense undergrowth. Sound of different birds is common at this place.

Move forward towards another intersection of the trails and follow the left trail that goes through dense bamboo sheaths. To your left you will find a betel leaf cultivation area (*Paner bara*) (Photo 7), where you may stop for a while to know about how betel leaves are grown, harvested and sorted for marketing.



Photo 7: A betel leaf cultivator sorting out the leaves after harvesting

After certain distance, you will find a stream that flows from uphill and sometimes makes the trail wet. Cross the stream and turn right towards a paddy field where elephants come frequently especially during October-December when paddy ripens.

Move forward, towards a valley with some fruit bearing trees and dense undergrowth of Bamboo and *Asam lata gach*. After a certain distance, the sandy trail goes through bamboo sheaths where birds like Dove (*Ghughu*) may be seen singing.



Photo 8: A partial view of the Medium trail- passing through the bamboo forest

The trail becomes sandy ((Photo 8) reaching a stream that you need to cross to have a view of Bamboo sheaths, Sal trees and paddy fields. Go uphill through bamboo sheaths and turn right towards Watch Tower. This portion of the trail is narrow and goes through Sun grass and undergrowth of *Phuljharu*. You may see signs of elephants coming to this place frequently. Move through the steep hilly path through bamboo sheaths and gradually turn right towards the Tower at hill top (Photo 9).



Photo 9: A partial view of the Medium Trail- nearby the 1st Watch Tower

Climb up the tower (about 10 meter high) carefully as some of the stairs are broken and there is no railing. Have 360 degree view of the WS from the top of the tower. The gentle breeze will cool you at the hill top where you can take rest for a while

Start walking again towards the starting point through a different trail that goes along hill ridges and then slopes down. Excreta of elephants spread all around will convince you that this is on Elephant movement corridor. Turn to a new small trail through the bamboo vegetation around. The trail becomes a bit wet afterwards and moves uphill through scrubby vegetation and then slopes down. The trail is a bit broken here but a nice place to hear sound of different birds. After a certain distance the trail reach fodder plantations with some fruit bearing trees that are suitable to wildlife.

As you go through the plantation area, you will reach another intersection of trails where you will follow the straight one with scattered vegetation around. Be aware of not touching *Chai lata* (a kind of climbers in bamboo sheaths) (Photo 10) as it may cause serious itching. Follow the undulating trail through to reach the main road (at about 20 meter north from the starting point).



Photo 10: *Chai lata*, a kind of climbers may cause serious itching

4.3 Long Trail (Three hours walk trail)

4.3.1 Specific information on long trail

Location: Starting from the Forest Rest House (GPS. location 21.93110 N and 92.05927 E) near Chunati Range Office, and Passing through the forest towards western side while touching 1st and 2nd Watch Towers and Returning to the starting point after a loop near main road (Map 1).

Length: About 7 km

Width: 0.5 to 3 meter

Type of Path: Earthy

Type of soil: Silty caly to sandy loamy, sometimes fully sandy. The colour of soil is somewhat brown.

Topography: The trail crosses through many hills with steep slopes.

Vegetation: Scattered trees of *Sal*, *Teak*, *Acacia*, *Garjan*, *Bat* and *Hargoja* and plantation of *Jalpai*, *Amloki*, *Haritaki*, *Bahera*, *Kamranga*, *Kathal*, *Jam*, *Banana*, *Bat*, *Dewa*, *Chapalish* and *Bamboo*. The dominant undergrowths throughout the forest include *Bamboo*, *Assam lata gach*, *Sun grass*, *Ful jharu*, etc.

Wildlife: The wildlife that are commonly found in this site are Elephant, Monkey, Honuman, *Maya Harin*, Wildboar and Sajararu. Among the birds Dove, Drongo, *Katthokra*, Dhanesh, Parrot and *Bulbuli* are common. Several snakes such as *Darash*, *Kalantar*, *Gokhra*, Python and *Laudoga* are commonly found.

4.3.2 Description of the Long Trail Sights

Start from the Forest Rest House (Photo 11) (GPS location 21.93110 N and 92.05927 E) near Chunati Range Office (Photo 12) and reach the main road and turn right along the footpath towards a culvert on *Bogamara chara* (a stream). After about 10 meter walk along the road side footpath, turn right and enter into the forest. The trail slopes down towards an intersection of trails. Follow the left trail with few trees of *Dhaki Jam*, *Acacia* and *Teak* (Photo 13). Walk through towards the elevated land with *Gamari*, *Dumur*, *Bamboo*, *Chapalish*, *Akashmoni* and *Teak* (Photo 14). A portion of the trail is broken here and you may notice a few tropical Pine trees that were introduced in this WS.



Photo 11: Forest Rest House, Chunati



Photo 12: Signboard of Chunati Range Office

Move along, to reach fodder plantations of *Jalpai*, *Amloki*, *Haritaki*, *Bahera*, *Kamranga*, *Kathal*, *Jam*, *Banana*, *Bat*, *Bamboo*, *Dewa*, and *Chapalish*. Afterwards, the trail is sandy and goes up. A trail on left goes to main road but you have to follow the right trail that passes through bamboo sheaths around. On left the valley looks beautiful and the undulating trail passes through Teak plantations.



Photo 13: A partial view of the long trail passing through the plantations



Photo 14: A partial view of the Long trail (one of the beautiful remaining patches of forests at Chunati WS)

As go along you will find an intersection of three trails a small trail going towards Aziznagar Beat. Soil of the trail and the straight trail goes to the paddy field. Go along the left trail uphill and move forward through steep hills to reach the bottom of Watch Tower. Climb up the tower very carefully (Photo 9) to have a nice view

and cool breeze. Move down hill to find few trees of *Hargoja* and *Dumur*, with Sun grass and Bamboo as undergrowth. After a certain distance the area becomes a bit dense with bamboo bushes and Elephants may be seen around, if you are lucky!

Go ahead and reach another intersection: a trail at your left goes to *Herbang chara*, another trail at right goes to *Khair jhiri*. You have to follow the straight trail uphill that gradually reaches the second Watch Tower. Climb up the Tower carefully as its stairs are broken. Enjoy the beauty of nature distant landscapes around the tower. The wildlife that are commonly found in this site are Elephant, Monkey, Honuman, Maya Harin, Wildboar and Sajar. Among the birds, Dove, Drongo, *Katthokra*, Dhanesh, Parrot and *Bulbuli* are common. Among reptiles several snakes such as *Darash*, *Kalantar*, *Gokhra*, Python, *Laudoga* are commonly found here. Signs of elephant movements are frequently seen here and there along the trail such as elephant stools and footprints (Photo 15).

Start walking again, turn right and move downhill through bamboo bushes towards a paddy field, known as *Kachchapia*. As you move along you will find a stream around a lemon garden. Walk along the stream towards another big stream named *Bag khaier khal* (which is 3 km west from this point). Elephants are frequently found drinking water from this stream. However, follow your trail through the small stream and you will find a few fruit bearing trees of Mango and Date palm. Birds are commonly found here making the hike charming with their beautiful sound of chirping.



Photo 15: Footprints of Elephants along the trail

Notice different land use around the trail: lemon garden, betel leaf cultivation, banana plantation and other agricultural practices. *Ram kala* flower is very special to look at besides the hill and also a big Bahera tree just adjacent to the trail. To your right there are paddy fields and betel leaf areas. Move ahead to enter into the hills (photo 16).



Photo 16: The Long trail passing through scrubby vegetation

The trail here is sandy with scrubby undergrowth. Turn left and go through the sandy wide trail towards a place called *Moner jhiri*. There are Jam trees surrounding the trail but the number of the trees is gradually decreasing as you go ahead towards the trail that goes to Chunati Beat Office. Turn left to catch another trail that returns to the main road near Range office.



Photo 17: A partial view of the Long trail
(an old wooden bridge on the trail crossing a stream at Chunati)

5. What to do in the WS

- Wear comfortable and field compatible clothes and shoes
- Use sunglasses and sunscreen,
- Use leech repellent (may be talcum powder)
- Walk silently to observe the wildlife
- Take sufficient water and dry food specially for the long trail
- Take a compass to know the various direction
- Take a camera and a binocular to catch some of the rare scenery

6. What not to do in the WS

- Never throw the litter on to the ground of the WS
- Do not make noise that disturbs the wildlife
- Do not agitate wildlife
- Do not tear or collect any parts of plants
- Do not walk alone and try to form a group to visit the WS
- Do not touch *Chai lata* (a kind of climbers in bamboo sheaths) as it may cause serious itching

7. Suggestions and Recommendations

- Some of the portions of the trails are broken at places. Filling earth and putting gravel on to the ground can improve these portions of the trails that will facilitate easy walk of visitors
- Leeches frequently catch human body while walking along the trails of the Chunati WS. Therefore visitors should use leech repellent before start hiking along the trails
- Some of the places of the trails are very remote and less secure for visitors unless FD staff patrol those areas more frequently
- Some of the trails are too narrow to walk freely and therefore future development of the trails will be essential. These trails could be made wider by trimming some of the adjacent undergrowth of the existing trails.
- Stairs and railing of the Watch Towers need to be repaired for the safety of the tourists.
- Some wooden bridges need to be constructed across a few streams
- Detailed signboards are required to set up along the trails that shows the way to the visitors and provides information concerning the attractions of the trails.
- Brochures describing the attractions of the trails are also important to be prepared for the visitors containing detailed information about the trails. It should be simple, attractive in design and handy so that nature lovers can easily carry during their hikes.
- Local stakeholders who were involved in trail study could be developed as professional tourist guides for the site through appropriate training and support.