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Rema-Kalenga Wildlife Sanctuary

Rema-Kalenga Wildlife Sanctuary (RKWS) in Chunarughat and Madhabpur Upazilas of Habiganj District is located nearly 130 km Northeast of Dhaka. RKWS shares its eastern and southern borders with the Indian state of Tripura. RKWS is governed under the Forest Act 1927 as well as the Wildlife Act 1974. The forest is semi/mixed evergreen with 1795 ha area, is a part of 6232 ha Tarap Hill Reserve Forest. However, the forest itself has dwindled with paddy cultivated in some areas in between the valleys, particularly in the northern part of the sanctuary. Nearly 400 ha of Tea Estate lands border the Sanctuary on the south-west and approximately 50 ha of Government land (khas) border the Sanctuary on north-east and are included in the interface landscape zones which complete a 1 km-wide buffer strip along the entire Sanctuary boundary.

Biodiversity :

The forest is semi-evergreen. About 76% of the forest is still in natural condition. Plantations only cover 9% of the forest. It is home to a magnificent assortment of plants, animals and birds and.. Biodiversity of the PA consist 167 birds, 7 amphibians, 18 reptiles, and 37 species of mammals. Mom Khona *Oroxylum indicum*, Horina *Vitex peduncularis*, Kanak *Schima wallichii* and Tallya garjan *Dipterocarpus turbinatis* are among some of the tree species commonly found. RKWS possibly holds the only population of the Malayan giant squirrel *Ratufa bicolor* in Bangladesh and recently drawn attention for discovery of the Particolored Flying Squirrel *Hylopetes alboniger*. Apart from other common primates a pair of Endangered Hoolock Gibbon *Hoolock hoolock* possibly still occurs there. Asian Fairy-bluebird *Irena puella*, Red-headed Trogon *Harpactes erythrocephalus*, Blue-naped Pitta *Pitta nipalensis*, Hooded Pitta *Pitta sordida*, Scarlet Minivet *Pericrocotus flammeus* and globally Near Threatened White-cheeked Partridge *Arborophila atrogularis* are some interesting resident birds of the WS.

Surrounding Communities :

Four different ethnic communities (Tripura, Shantal, Telugu and Urang) live in and around the forest. A village, inhabited by the Tipra tribe is located within the sanctuary. However, there are other villages on the boundary between the reserved forest and the wildlife sanctuary. Around 9,330 households have been identified nearby RKWS with an estimated population of 23,000. Adjacent land use includes long-rotational reserved forest, tea estate, converted agricultural lands and Khas land. Human pressure on the sanctuary is in fact buffered by the adjacent reserved part of the forest. However, fuel wood and building materials collection by the adjacent households pose a threat to the biodiversity.

Park Threats :

Some major issues which need to be addressed in order to continue sustainable management of the RKWS include, reduced forest regeneration mainly caused due to fuel wood collection, cattle grazing and forest fires; agricultural encroachment leading to habitat fragmentation and causing disturbances to wildlife; unsustainable resource exploitation, collection of fuel wood, bamboo, building materials etc. pose constant threats to the forest resources. A lack of awareness among the local people regarding the importance and long term benefits of biodiversity conservation and need for sustainable management is still a major challenge for the conservation of RKWS. Although the surrounding tea estates and khas lands are not under Forest Department's control, the users of these lands are important stakeholders under the co-management approach.

Nishorgo Network :

RKWS is a valued member of the Nishorgo Network, Bangladesh's growing group of forest and wetland Protected Areas (PAs) being conserved through co-management. Co-management brings together community, government and other stakeholders to work together to conserve Bangladesh's rich natural heritage and eco-system services in a manner that contributes to long-term sustainable development, increased food security, and integrated climate change adaptation and mitigation. Nishorgo Network co-management shares roles and responsibilities between communities and government, demonstrating economic benefits of PA conservation to local communities through eco-tourism and sustainable alternative income generation activities, as well as by actively involving them in conservation management of PAs through participation in co-management organizations and joint patrol initiatives. The Nishorgo Network actively engages women, youth and ethnic minorities in co-management, and provides a foundation of good governance.



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Phayre's Langur in RKWS





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Co-Management & RKWS

Hail Haor is a leader of co-management for effective conservation, with support from USAID's Rema-Kalenga Wildlife Sanctuary is a leader of co-management for effective conservation, beginning in 2004 with USAID's Nishorgo Support Project (NSP) and currently with support from USAID's Integrated Protected Area Co-Management (IPAC) project implemented in collaboration with the Government of Bangladesh's Ministry of Environment and Forests and Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock. Co-management highlights in RKWS include the following:

- Formation and re-election of a co-management platform including 1 Co-Management Council (CMC); 45 Village Conservation Forums (VCFs); and one Peoples' Forum.
- Establishment of 126 Community Patrol Groups (CPGs), including one Women's CPG, engaged in regular Joint Patrols with Forest Department field staff.
- Development of eco-tourism support for RKWS, including training a cadre of eco-guides from local communities.
- Entrance Fee Revenue collection and sharing mechanism in place, ensuring 50% of tourism fees accrue to the CMC.
- Demonstration of community forestry activities based on revised Social Forestry rules, contributing to reforestation of the RKWS landscape and revenue sharing upon harvest of fast rotation tree crops planted near the Park.
- Alternative Livelihoods Development training and support for LNP-dependent communities, including sustainable value chain support and MoUs between local communities and national buyers in both fisheries and handicrafts.
- Training and capacity building as well as leveraging additional financial support to sustain effective co-management of RKWS conservation into the future

USAID's Integrated Protected Area Co-management (IPAC) Project in collaboration with the Ministry of Environment & Forests (MOEF) and Ministry of Fisheries & Livestock (MOFL) has taken significant steps to conserve RKWS including:

- Formation of a CMC to overlook the management of the WS derived from 45 Village Conservation Forums consisting of 2303 members.
- 126 Community Patrolling Groups (CPGs) and 5 Youth Clubs have been formed.
- An eco-cottage at Tarap Hill, 4 eco-tour guides and 37 Nishorgo Sahayaks (facilitators) have also been trained to lend support to the overall management of the sanctuary and its environment.
- Awareness raising campaigns regarding over extraction and illegal extraction of forest resources delivered through local media at community level, targeted at certain times of the year when certain activities leading to the deterioration of forest coverage through human interactions may occur.
- Improved Cooking Stoves (ICS) have been installed in different households to reduce the use of forest resources.
- Alternative Income Generation/Value Chain (AIGA/VC) activities with support from Arannayk Foundation are continuing and 44 ICSs have been installed through GIZ support.
- With support from Arannayk Foundation social forestation by the local communities have started in the buffer zone of RKWS from 2011.
- Improved Cooking Stoves (ICS) to reduce natural resource use in some of the households in collaboration with GIZ.
- Aqua culture where jatka or fry catch is prohibited and fishing with the appropriate gear is encouraged.

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Integrated Protected Area Co-Management (IPAC) Project

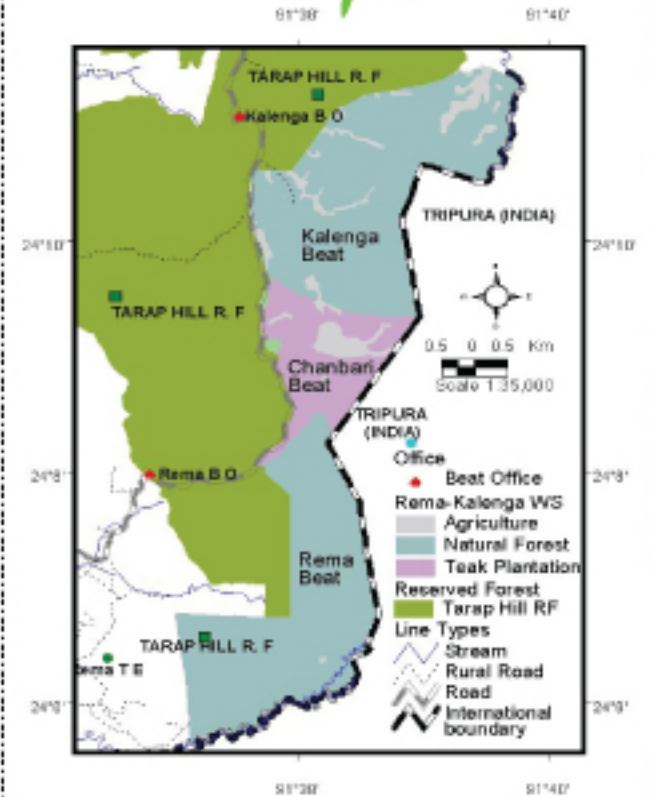
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Malayan Giant Squirrel in RKWS



Eco-cottage at RKWS

