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## Teknaf Wildlife Sanctuary

Teknaf Wildlife Sanctuary (TWS), renamed thus in 2010 from the former Teknaf Game Reserve covers an area of 11,615 ha. The sanctuary is an elongated hill range that runs towards southern tip of the country and bounded by the Naf River in the east and the Bay of Bengal in the west.

### Local communities :

Villages surrounding the forest were set up during the mid 1980s by Forest Department who leased small areas of land to a certain number of households within the Reserve Forest area. In return, the villagers are expected to help the Forest Department in raising the plantations and undertake other duties like regular forest patrolling. The number of households is roughly 22,211 with a population of about 149,896.

Most of the people living in the area are involved in agricultural farming and fisheries. Farming is the primary occupation of local people, which accounts for almost 80% of the total population. It is evident that more than 50% of the population, especially the young and inexperienced is unemployed and there are opportunities to introduce them to short term vocational training. Villagers are provided with hands-on training in constructing nursery, cow farming, fish culture, sewing, furniture building, rickshaw pulling and poultry farming.

### Biodiversity :

Teknaf Wildlife Sanctuary is broadly classified as a tropical evergreen forest. The vegetation of this sanctuary originally consisted of tall mixed evergreen trees, which primarily occur in deep valleys and shaded slopes dominated by unique Garjan (*Dipterocarpus spp*) trees. Now the hills are mainly denuded, dominated by sun grass, herbs, shrubs and brush woods.

The sanctuary harbors a wide diversity of tropical semi-evergreen flora and fauna. TWS contains 55 mammals like the Slow Bengal Loris *Nycticebus bengalensis* and the Masked Palm Civet *paguma larvata*; 286 birds including the White-Bellied Seagull *Heliaeetus leucogaster*, White-Browed Piculet *Sasia ochracea* along with some Kingfisher and Bittern species; 56 reptiles, 13 amphibians, and 290 species of plants. Currently, Asian Elephants *Elephas maximus*, Eurasian Wild Boar *Sus scrofa*, Clouded Leopard *Neofelis nebulosa*, and Deer are found in plenty.

### Sanctuary Threats

Overall, the sanctuary is still suffering from encroachment, illegal removal of forest produce, and unplanned cultivation. Climate change refugees from the neighboring Arakan (the Rohingyas) have migrated to the area around TWS imposing an even greater threat to its sustainable maintenance. Lack of adequate employment and the ever increasing populations of surrounding villages have also added their affect on the TWS. More stringent law enforcement is thus vital as well as the continued efforts of the local communities to work collaboratively with the concerned departments and ministries to conserve the sanctuary.

### Nishorgo Network :

TWS is a valued member of the Nishorgo Network, Bangladesh's growing group of forest and wetland 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.



The captivating Naf river



Kudum cave at Teknaf





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## Co-Management & Teknaf Wildlife Sanctuary

Teknaf Wildlife Sanctuary is a leader of co-management for effective conservation, beginning in 2004 with USAID's Nishorgo Support Project 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 TWS include the following:

- Formation and re-election of a co-management platform including Co-Management Committee and Council (CMC); Village Conservation Forums (VCFs) and a Peoples' Forum (PF).
- Establishment of Community Patrol Groups (CPGs) engaged in regular Joint Patrols with Forest Department field staff.
- Development of eco-tourism support for TWS, including training a cadre of eco-guides from local communities as well as initiating the potential establishment of eco-cottages near the Sanctuary.
- Entrance Fee Revenue collection and implementation of sharing mechanisms, ensuring 50% of tourism fees accrue to the CMC.
- Alternative Livelihoods Development training and support for TWS-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 TWS 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 TWS including:**

- Training forest dependent communities on different AIGAs including weaving, bamboo craft making (where the intricate weaving of the Khareng baskets by the community women is gaining popularity), fish farming and nursery plantation,
- Eco-tourism efforts in the area include setting up signboards, availability of eco-guides, eco-rickshaws and raising adequate awareness regarding eco-cottages.
- A Nature Interpretation Centre constructed through private-public partnership also functions to aid visitors to gain a deeper understanding of co-management and conservation.
- Currently 18 eco-tour guides and 52 eco-rickshaw pullers have been trained and 419 CPG members to help with the protection of TWS.
- Introducing Improved Cooking Stoves (ICS) for reduced indoor pollution via a partner organization.
- Development of 3 CMCs and 3 Peoples Forums to overlook the Sanctuary's management
- Organizing 114 VCF members to increase environmental consciousness and promote conservation focused actions.
- 114 Nishorgo Sahayak (facilitators) have been trained to execute conventions and administer co-management activities, while 9 clubs involving youth have been created to raise conservation awareness that are presently active in the area.

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Department of Environment



Visitor center at Teknaf



Dorsal-striped opposite-fingered Treefrog

