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Bhawal National Park :

Bhawal National Park (BNP) under Gazipur district, is located 40 km north of Dhaka, on the eastern side of Dhaka-Mymensing high way. The Park was established in 1982 comprising an area of 5,022 ha of reserved forests through the Bangladesh Wildlife (preservation) Order, 1973.

Biodiversity :

BNP is a tropical, moist-deciduous forest that mainly originated from seedlings and coppices with Sal *Shorea robusta* as the dominant tree species. About 10 species of mammals like the Rhesus Macaque *Macaca mulatta*, 6 species of amphibians and 39 species of birds, including the Brown Wood Owl *Strix leptogrammica*, the Indian Pitta *Pitta brachyura* and the Pale Chinned Flycatcher *Cyornis poliogenys* reside in this park. The Government introduced some wildlife e.g. peacock, deer, python and the Fishing Cat *Felis viverrina* at BNP.

Local Communities :

The local communities living around the Park area have been residents for a long time and their dependency upon the Park's resources is also an old one. The Koch and Barman communities constitute some of the ethnic minority groups of the region. The locals extract park resources either for personal use or to sell in the local market.

Park Threats :

Due to its proximity to Dhaka, the park is a very popular tourist site ideal for picnics, hence attracting a heavy inflow of visitors. This impact upon the Park surroundings is further exacerbated by the fact that the government has allowed several industries to be set up in the vicinity of the Park. Coupled with increasing dependency of the locals on the Park due to lack of adequate alternate livelihoods, BNP faces a serious threat of dwindling resources and a loss of habitat for the wildlife it houses.

Also, as the site is considered worthy of a day trip and not an overnight haul, the demand for rest houses, eco-cottages or even restaurants is not very strong. Hence, the locals can explore the prospects of establishing lodging and dining facilities and increase local tourism as well as opportunities for alternative income in the area.

Nishorgo Network :

BNP 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.



Bhawal National Park



Capped Leaf Monkey at BNP





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Co-Management & Bhawal National Park :

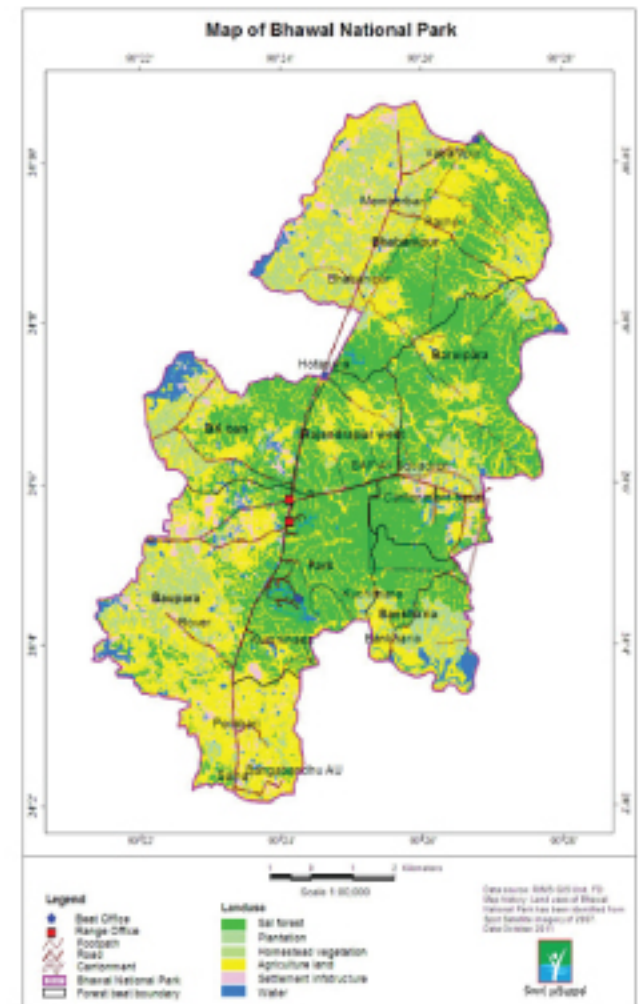
Bhawal National Park is a leader of co-management for effective conservation, with support from USAID's Integrated Protected Area Co-Management (IPAC) project implemented in collaboration with the Government of Bangladesh's Ministry of Environment and Forests and Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock. Co-management highlights in BNP include the following:

- Initiating the formation of a co-management platform with a Co-Management Council and Co-Management Committee, Village Conservation Forums (VCFs) and Peoples' Forum (PF).
- Development of potential eco-tourism support for BNP, including training a cadre of eco-guides from local communities
- Initiation of entrance fee revenue collection and sharing mechanism in place, ensuring 50% of tourism fees accrue to the CMC.
- Alternative Livelihoods Development training and support for BNP-dependent communities, including sustainable value chain support and MoUs between local communities and national buyers in both fisheries and handicrafts.

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- Around 440 households are engaged in Alternative Income Generating activities (AIGs) which include aquaculture and agricultural farming, specifically homestead gardening. IPAC provides support to members of these activities by providing them with training.
- As a continuation of the work done towards reducing the dependency of the locals upon BNP and its resources, Eco-tour guides are being trained to not only provide the locals with a source of income but also boost eco-tourism in the area.
- The potentiality of eco-cottages in the area is being researched with the aim to add this tenet of AIG for the locals while further promoting eco-tourism.
- 17 VCFs function in BNP and focus on encouraging the local populace to engage in various AIG activities to lessen their dependency on the Park.



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