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Himchari National Park :

Himchari National Park is a tropical rain forest near Cox's Bazar. The park was established in 1980 and is protected by the Wildlife (Preservation) Act of 1974. The park has high and low altitude forestlands and grasslands. Though the Bay of Bengal is not far from the park, Himchari does not have any inter-tidal habitats.

The Park was created principally to promote ecotourism due to its unique combinations of natural features like the forest, waterfalls and the sea. However, the streams/waterfalls have dried up since 1990 due to loss in vegetation, so the landscape functions primarily as a water-shed.

Surrounding Communities :

With about 8,427 households around the park area, the communities impose a large degree of degradation upon the park resources as encroachment has expanded steadily. As the Rohingya migrants from the Arakan shifted to the park environs, land encroachment, a growing population, illiteracy, poverty and scarce drinking water have become more significant issues. The Forest Department has been maintaining this National Park as a conservation site and the surrounding communities have been increasingly involved in this effort.

Biodiversity :

HNP was once a dense, multi-layered, semi-evergreen forest with a remarkable diversity of flora and fauna. As the forest cover degraded in natural sub-tropical hilly zones, high forests (with more than 70% crown cover of mixed vegetation) gradually shrunk down to low forests (ranging from >30% to 70%), scattered trees (below 30% crown cover) and eventually to brush land. Now the vegetation cover is dominated by herbs, sungrass, shrubs and bushes. Sungrass and scattered groves of natural bamboo are thus remnant non-wood forest products in the Park. However the resident birds like Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica* and Asian Palm Swift *Cypsiurus balasiensis* can still be found along with around 286 species of birds like the Hill Myna *Gracula religiosa* and the Greater Painted-Snipe *Rostratula benghalensis*. Mammals including the Capped Leaf Monkey *Trachypithecus pileatus* and Binturong *Arctictis binturong*; 56 species of reptiles and 13 species of amphibians. A limited number of Asian elephants *Elephas maximus* can also be found

Park Threats :

Once home to a rich display of flora and fauna, HNP has been under threat from over population which has been converting the habitat's land use towards agricultural applications. Of these varied encroachments, illegal logging and betel leaf cultivation are responsible for dramatically decreasing the wildlife habitat. Mammals, birds, reptiles and amphibian species may still be found but their populations have decreased. Furthermore, influx of migrants from Cox's Bazaar relocating to HNP for various reasons has in turn lead to further decrease in the habitat of keystone species like the majestic Asian Elephant. The park houses a water fall that is a popular tourist attraction, which too leads to increased degradation of the parks natural landscape and composition.

Nishorgo Network :

HNP 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.



Himchari National Park



Himchari National Park



Himchari waterfall





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Co-Management & Himchari National Park

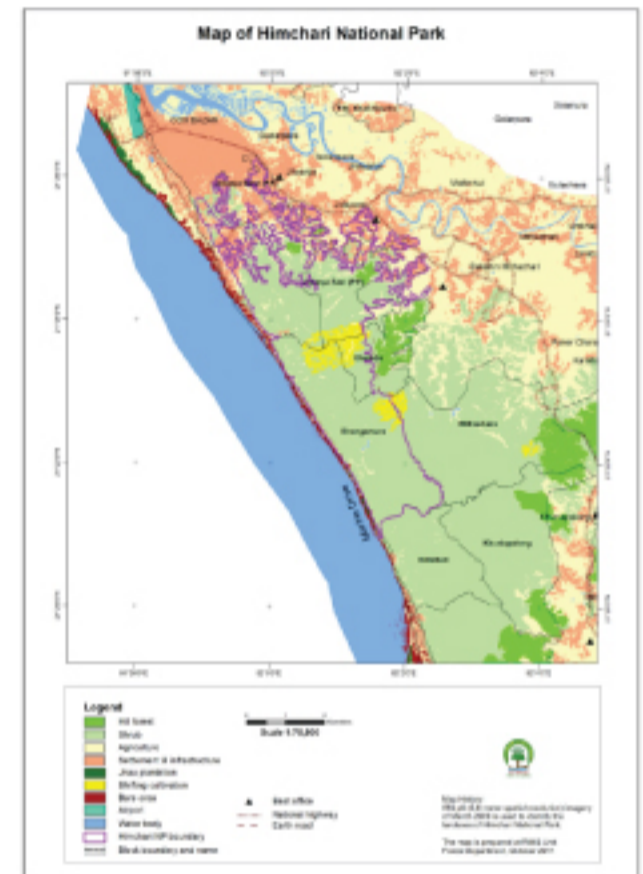
Himchari National Park is a leader of co-management for effective conservation, with support from USAID's Integrated Protected Area Co-Management (IPAC) project implemented in collaboration with the Government of Bangladesh's Ministry of Environment and Forests and the Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock.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

- Formation and re-election of a co-management platform including a Co-Management Committee (CMC) and Council; Village Conservation Forums (VCFs) and 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 HNP, including training a cadre of eco-guides from local communities as well as initiating the potential establishment of eco-cottages near the Park.
- Entrance Fee Revenue collection and sharing mechanism, ensuring 50% of tourism fees accrue to the CMC.
- Alternative Livelihoods Development training and support for HNP-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 HNP 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 HNP including:

IPAC has initiated several interventions to reverse the trends that are degrading the biodiversity of this National Park. Some of these include:

- Initiating alternate livelihoods and income generation (AIG activities) by providing training in agriculture i.e. turmeric planting and aquaculture, to help decrease resource removal for personal use.
- Training communities dependent upon the forest in homestead agriculture
- Development of 1 CMC and 1 PF to contend with the NP's management.
- Arrangement of 35 VCFs to increase consciousness and promote preservation focused actions.
- 4 Youth Clubs where the young genre of students is encouraged to get involved in awareness raising for conservation of HNP.
- 33 Nishorgo Sahayak (facilitators) have been trained to execute conventions and administering co-management activities.
- Training 75 unemployed community people as CPG members to provide extra security for the natural resources, as well as training 13 Eco-Guides to educate visitors on the trail.



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