

High Altitude Nainital Zoo- A Unique Characteristic of Ecotourism

A Concept Paper

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Abstract: The Nainital High Altitude Zoo one and only Zoo in the newly born state of Uttarakhand is situated at an elevation of 2100 m above mean on the hill of Sher- Ka- Danda. Zoo ecotourism is regarded as being more than tourism to natural areas and should be viewed as a means of combining the goals of resource conservation and local development through tourism in a synergistic fashion.

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Introduction

Many wild species both plants and animals have become extinct from their natural habitats, because of destruction of forests as well as the other natural unit areas by the anthropogenic pressure.

Therefore the remaining species are not in a position to cope with the changing conditions of the environment. Expanding human population resulted in to expanding needs of man with the scientific progress and technology development; man started utilizing natural resources at a much larger scale. Man is primarily responsible for destruction of nature's gifts. Conservation and management of wildlife not only preserving the remaining flora and fauna but also helping in promoting economic activities that brings money through tourism. It also contributes towards maintenance of biodiversity of landscape. Many wildlife such colorful birds, animals and other forms of life in the important in maintaining the ecosystem. Destruction of forests or its reduction will cause disappearance of much wild life. Therefore it imperative to conserve and manage the forests as well as wildlife, which are in endangered and threatened condition, this also needs the both the conservation and management programme side by side, due to continuous increase in the number of endangered species of flora and fauna steps have been taken to protect and manage the wild life of the country.

The Ex- situ conservation carried out natural habitat for perpetuating, Sample Population, Genetic Resource Centers, Zoo, Botanicals Gardens, Culture Collection etc. or in the form of gene pools and Gametes Storage for fish, Germless banks for seeds, Pollen, Ova cells etc.

The origin of Zoo may be said to have commenced with the opening of the London Zoo in 1828, most of the older Zoos in North America and Europe were founded in the later part of the 19th century after 1870. During the period animal species were being regularly discovered and the various Zoos were keen to collect as many different kinds of animals as possible for public display or in en - closure having compounds, which did not differ much from the old menageries of the mediaeval times (Sharma, 2000).

The Zoo movement in India is also one of the oldest in the world. The first Zoo was setup in Madaras in the year 1855, which are seen followed by Trivandrum (1857), Bombay (1863), Hyderabad (1959) and Assam state at Guahati (1960). As wildlife biodiversity is an important attribute in the ecotourism with abundance and variety of flora and fauna are attracting the more tourists (Singh, 2002). Ecotourism is viewed as a means of protecting natural areas through the generation of revenues, environmental education and the involvement of local

people. In such ways both conservation and development are being promoted in sustainable forms.

Zoo Ecotourism

Zoo ecotourism is regarded as being more than tourism to natural areas and should be viewed as a means of combining the goals of resource conservation and local development through tourism in a synergistic fashion. This means that care should be taken to ensure that the goal of tourism development do not interfere with the goals of protecting natural areas and biodiversity local population may become advocates for protection of their natural resources and take pride in the unique surrounding which attract outsiders (Kandari & Chandra, 2004).

Increasing income, providing employment, increasing government revenues and earning foreign exchange. Social reasons of encouraging crest cultural exchange using tourism to help achieve environmental and cultural conservation objectives for which resources are not otherwise available(Dixit, 2001).

Tourism in a wildlife area should be subordinate to the main objective of wildlife conservation. The primary responsibility of wildlife tourism should be to promote awareness amongst the general public for wildlife conservation. Our wildlife habitats are comparatively small, having varying degree of protection. For creating awareness among the public, park interpretation centers, guide services, reading material and facilities for conducted trek inside the habitat should be provided (Kandari & Chandra, 2004).

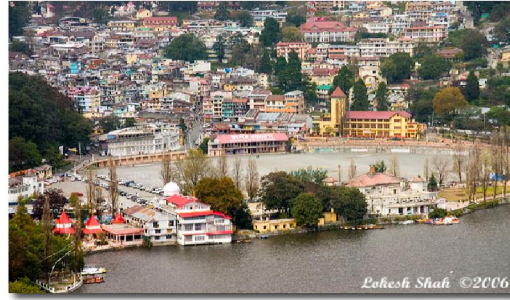
Zoo Ecotourism in Nainital

Nainital is referred to in the 'Manas Khand' of the 'Skanda Purana' as the Tri-Rishi-Sarovar, the lake of the three sages, Atri, Pulastya and Pulaha who were reputed to have arrived here on a penitential pilgrimage and finding no water to quench their thirst dug a hole and siphoned water into it from Mansarovar the sacred lake in Tibet. The Second important mythological reference to Nainital is as one of 64 'Shakti Peeths'. These centres were created wherever parts of charred body of Sati fell, when Lord Shiva was carrying around her corpse in grief. It is said that the left eye (Nain) of Sati fell here and this gave rise

to patron deity of town Nainital. It is said that the lake is formed in the emerald eye shape. Naina Devi temple is located at the northern end of the lake. Thus name of Nainital derived from Naina and the tal (Lake).

Nainital is a glittering jewel in the Himalyan necklace, blessed with scenic natural splendour and varied natural resources. Dotted with lakes, Nainital has earned the epithet of '**Lake District**' of India . The most prominent of the lakes is Naini lake ringed by hills. Nainital has a varied topography. Nainital's unending expanse of scenic beauty is nothing short of a romance with awe-inspiring and pristine Mother nature.

After the British Occupation E. Gardiner was appointed as the commissioner of Kumaun Division on May 8th 1815. In 1817 the second commissioner of Kumaun Mr. G.W. Traill has conducted the second revenue settlement of Kumaun, Mr. Traill was the first European to visit Nainital but he did not popularize his visit in respect for the religious sanctity of the place. In the year 1839 an English businessman from Rosa, Mr. P. Barron a sugar trader and his friend an avid hunter strayed into the hills while hunting they got lost and while finding their way back chanced on the wondrous spot. So enamored was Barron with the vision of the placid lake that he left the sugar business and build a European Colony on shores of the lake. In 1841, Nainital appeared in issue of the 'Englishman Calcutta' announcing the discovery of a lake in the vicinity of Almora. According to the earliest data available on tourist in Nainital by 1847, it had become popular hill resort. On 3rd October 1850, the Nainital Municipal Board was formally constituted. It was the second Municipal Board of North Western Provinces. To catalyze the formation of a town the administration transferred land to the wealthy Sah community of Almora, on condition that they build houses on the land. In 1862, Nainital became the summer seat of the North Western Provinces. After it was made the summer Capital, a remarkable expansion of the town occurred with the growth of magnificent bungalows all around and construction of facilities such as marketing areas, rest houses, recreation centers, clubs etc. together with the secretariat and other administrative units. It also became an important centre of education for the British who wanted to educate their children in the better air and away from the disco formats of the plains.



A Bird Eye View of Nainital

The Nainital High Altitude Zoo one and only Zoo in the newly born state of Uttarakhand is situated at an elevation of 2100 m above mean on the hill of Sher- Ka-Danda, where the mountain quail was last seen in 1876, this is also known as Pandit Govind Ballabh Pant High Altitude Nainital Zoo.

The Nainital Zoo is situated about 2 Km. from Tallital bus Station and connected by motor road. The Zoo was established in 1984 and is spread over in area of 4.693 ha. The Zoo was declared open to public on 1st June 1995 and is managed by “The Bharat Rana Pandit Govind Ballabh Pant High Altitude Zoo Management Society” from 1st March 2002.

The main objectives of Zoo is to conserve the High Altitude Himalayan birds and animals which all endemic and endangered and to create awareness about our rich Himalayan fauna among the general public.

Flora of High Altitude Nainital Zoo

The Zoo has also been created to facilitate the research and coordinate breeding of endemic and endangered Himalayan fauna and flora of many species of trees, shrubs and herbs. Among the flora there are species of trees, shrubs and herbs and grasses. The common tree species are *Quercus leucotrichophora*, *Quercus floribunda*, *Rhododendron arboretum*, *Cupress torulosa*, *Cedrus deodara*, *Populus ciliate*, *Lyonia ovalifolia*, *cornus macrophycla*, *Prunus ceracoides*, *Aesculus indica*, *Litcia ambrosia*, *Machilus odratissima*, *Quercus sirreta*, *Grevillea robusta*, *Arundinaria falcate* and *Rosa moschata*. Besides these tree species, the following under canopy plant species were present in the Zoo area these are *Viburnum colinifotium*, *Thalictrum foliolosum*, *Desmodium tiliaefolium*, *Indigofera pulchelle*, *Crateagus crenulat*, *Rubus elliptic*, *Berberis aristata*, *Pennisetum candestinum*, *Cenchrus ciliasi*, *Saccharum spomtemenum*, *Eriphorum comosum*, *Lolium perenne*, *Roscoea purpure*, *Artemisia vulgari*, *Drosera lunata*, *Arundenaria nepalans*,

Setaria homonyma, *Capillepedium parvifloru*, *Apluda mutica*, *Andropogon tristis*, *Festura gigantean*, *Sporobolus indicus*, *Bromus uniloide*, *Arundinella setasa*, *Cymbopogon distans*, *Themeda triandra*, *Cyprus alopecurides*, *Eragrostes nigra*, *Tripogen filiformis*, *Polypoen pugex*.

Fauna of High Altitude Nainital Zoo

To understand the different characteristics of the Zoo we made a broad outline work for the study to know the diversity of animals in Zoo, management of these animals, people participation and ecotourism activities.

In Nainital Zoo, carnivores, omnivorous, primates, herbivores, birds like pheasants, parakeets, praying birds, and small birds are present. In the category of carnivores Siberian tiger (*Panthera tigris*), Snow leopard (*Panthera pardus*), Leopard cat (*Felis bengalensis*), Tibetan wolf (*Canis lupuschanco*) and Hill fox (*Valpus valpus montana*). In omnivorous category there are Himalayan Black Bear (*Selenarctos hribetanus*), Palm Civet Cat (*Pagumo larvata*), Himalayan Civet (*Martes flavigula*) and Himalayan Yellow Throated Marten. In Primates category Japanese Macaque (*Macaca fuscota*) and Bonnet Macaque (*Macca radiate*). In herbivorous category Sambar (*Cervus unicolor*), Sika Deer (*Cervus Nippon*), Barking Deer (*Muntiacus muntijak*), Goral (*Nemorhaedus goral*), Serow (*Carpriconis sumatraensis*), Rodents and Wild Hare.

Zoo Management

Zoo management is very complicated task, it needs continuous watch and supervision of Zoo animals and birds in the context of their diets and health care and sanitation works. The zoo authority and concerned zoo staff performed all these tasks regularly. For the animals and birds diets, there is a kitchen with all the essential

equipment for cooking, chopping and cleaning works. Apart from this there are some essential works such as cheaking of flesh for carnivores, food material of herbivores and omnivores, sanitation of cages (enclosures), cages of carnivores, cages of herbivores, sanitation of deer cages, and sanitation work for birds, facilities regarding to animal healts etc for animals performed by Zoo staff.

Ecotourism Activities

Among the tourists visited the Zoo children (5-12 years age) and adult (> 12 years) were 20.75% and 79.3% respectively. Total number of tourists visited in the Zoo during 2004-2005 was 94,884. The maximum tourists (26.6%) were visited in the month of June, 2005 and followed by the month May, 2005 (15.9%), however, very small number of tourists came in the month of February 2006.

As far as economy is concerned, Zoo authority earned total rupees seventeen lakhs and one thousand fourteen only (Rs. 17, 01040.00), out of them 88.4 and 11.6% received from adults and children. 26.3% amount earned during June 2005 out of them 29.8 and 25.8% came from children and adult tourists respectively.

Conclusion

It is concluded that the conservation and management of Zoo species needed a proper planning and expenditure. Nainital high altitude Zoo is one of the unique characteristic of Zoo ecotourism in India. This provides us

the information of our nature gift of wild life and promotes the ecotourism activities; this requires new research planning for better management and sustainability.

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