

CHAPTER 3



CHAPTER – 3

WILDLIFE TOURISM IN NEPAL : PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS

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CHAPTER 3

WILDLIFE TOURISM IN NEPAL: PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS



3.1 Introduction

Wildlife tourism is an important component of the international and domestic tourism industry. Overall depending on the region, wildlife tourism accounts for 20 to 40 percent of international tourism (Fillion et al, 1992; Giongo et al. 1993, CEP 1994). The scale of wildlife tourism is even larger if domestic wildlife tourism is taken into consideration. However, statistics are often not available to determine what proportion of wildlife tourism is domestic in origin, but it is likely to be very high in some countries. For example, nationals make up around 15 to 25 percent of wildlife tourists in Canada (Filion et al, 1992), and some 90 percent of visitors to the national park in Thailand, India and South Africa (Ceballos-Lascurian 1996). Wild tourism currently accounts for 10 percent of international tourism (Pleumarom, 1994) with its global value in 1988 estimated as US \$1 Trillion (Filion et,al 1992)

As with tourism generally, wild tourism is likely to increase in importance and scale (Gingo et al. 1993,). Furthermore, it may also attract an increasing market share, as suggested by a number of surveys indicating an increasing interest in wildlife among tourists. A 1994 Gallup survey found that the employment of wildlife was a priority for 90 percent of UK holiday makers, while a 1992 study for the Canadian wildlife service of a variety of destinations found

that wildlife was a prime attraction for 32 percent of tourists to Australia, 80 percent to Kenya and Zimbabwe, 30 to 64 percent to North America; 9 to 60 percent to Latin America (Mexico, Belize, Dominica, Costa Rica and Ecuador) and approximately 50 percent to Europe (Jackson, 1996).

Now, Wildlife tourism has become a valuable asset for many localities. For example, around one of five US residents listed bird watching as one of their recreational activities, and almost forty percent traveled away from their homes to view birds. According to a major survey conducted in the US during 2001 (Tapper,2006) overall the direct expenditure of US residents on wildlife watching in the US was around US \$ 32 billion, including nearly US \$ 7.5 billion on food, transport and accommodation linked to wildlife watching trips. One study has estimated that twenty to forty percent of all international tourists have an interest in some forms of wildlife watching (Ecotourism Statistical Fact Sheet, 1998). In East Africa wildlife watching is one of the attractions for international tourists, and the basis for the majority of their national income from tourism.

In 2000, the Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda received 9, 43,000, 4, 59,000 and 1, 51,000 international arrivals which generated the international receipts of US\$ 304, US\$ 739 and US\$ 149 million respectively. In total, the region received over one and a half million international arrivals and generated more than US\$ 1 billion in foreign exchange receipts from tourism (Tapper, 2006). Much of it is based on wildlife watching tourism. Between 2003 and 2004, an another study found that the number of people watching whales in and around Sydney, Australia doubled, and total expenditure linked to whale watching increased more than four-fold (Ifaw,2005). However, in some areas, growth of wildlife watching may be much greater as for whole watching in Sydney. No doubt, wildlife tourism is a newer attraction that helps diversify tourism and promote community development in remoter areas. The main objective of this chapter is to examine the problems and prospects of wildlife tourism in Nepal, focusing the measures to mitigate the current problem of the national park and wildlife reserve of Nepal.

3.2 Wildlife Tourism as a Concept

According to Malcom Hunter's lively short history, the term, "wildlife" is less than a century old and was not included in major dictionaries before 1961 in the United State and before 1986 in the United Kingdom (Hunter; 1990). Ominously, its first use was in a book published in 1913 called 'Our Vanishing Wildlife' which foreshadowed the conversation crisis apparent during the second half of the 20th century while this work defined wildlife primarily in terms of game species. It also includes vertebrate species not regarded as game but perceives as subject to human harvesting or culling. Later definition of wildlife often emphasizes game animals while other includes all non-domesticated vertebrate and in some cases, invertebrates and plants. In general, it is used in various senses. Strictly speaking, it should denote the entire flora and fauna of the region aquatic as well as terrestrial, including the whole range of plants from fungi to forest trees and invertebrate as well as vertebrate life (H, Julian, 1961).

The tourism industry tends to use the term 'wildlife tourism' rather than wildlife watching tourism. In many cases, the two terms are identical, but wildlife tourism is sometimes used to refer to hunting or fishing tourism and in a few cases to the viewing of captive wildlife in zoos or confined parks where the animals no longer live a wild existence (Tapper, 2006). The terms wildlife watching tourism and wildlife tourism are used interchangeably, and are defined as tourism that is undertaken to view or encounter wildlife in a natural setting. This definition is intended to include wildlife watching on large game ranches such as in Southern Africa where species are able to roam widely over relatively large ranges. In general, wildlife tourism encompasses all forms and scales of tourism that involves the enjoyment of natural areas and wildlife, e.g., bird watching, wildlife viewing, photographic and walking safaris, reef diving, whale watching, trophy hunting and sport fishing. Wildlife tourism may be achieved through many different forms of transport, including on foot, by vehicle, boat or ballon.

It is often based on relatively low levels of tourism in an area and is therefore particularly suited to organised tours for some small groups, and also for independent travelers. Wildlife tourism can also include appropriately operated mass tourism activities. One example is the 'Penguin Parade' on Philip Island, Australia, where over 425,000 visitors a year watch Little

Penguins come up the beach each evening to their nesting sites on the island. Undoubtedly, wildlife watching has links a wide range of different types of tourism and tourist participation is highly dynamic and recent years have seen a blurring between various types of tourism.

3.3 Nepal, a Hotspot in Wildlife

Nepal, a land locked mountain country nestling among the Himalayas, is the lure of tourists and travelers of all kinds. It is located between 26°22' and 30°27' North latitude and 80°4' and 88°12' East longitude. About 77 percent of total land area is covered by mountain hills and, rest 23 percent areas lay in the Tarai region (CBS, 2004). Nepal is one of the richest countries in the world in terms of bio-diversity due to its unique geographical position and latitudinal variation. The elevation of the country ranges from 60m above sea level to the highest point on earth, Mt' Everest at 8,848m all within a distance of 150 km with climatic conditions ranging from subtropical to arctic. The wild variation fosters an incredible variety of eco-systems, the greatest mountain range on earth, thick tropical jungles teeming with a wealth of wildlife, thundering rivers, forested hills and frozen valleys (NTB, 2003).

The country like Nepal has abundant nature based and man made resources to promote wildlife tourism in the country. Though it occupies only 0.1 percent of earth but it shares 2 percent of all the flowering plants in the world; 8 percent of the world's population of birds (more than 848 species); 4 percent of mammals on earth; 11 of the world's 15 families of butterflies (more than 500 species); and the home of 600 indigenous plant families and 319 species of exotic orchids (NTB, 2003). Nepal's bio-diversity is a reflection of its unique geographical position, and altitudinal and climate variations. Nepal's location in the centre of the Himalayas makes it a traditional zone between the Eastern and Western Himalayas, representing the palaeoarctic and the Indo-Malayan biographical regions and the major floristic province of Asia. It is also well-known for its greenery as well as natural habitat which attract a large number of biologists and ecologists for study. Tourism is one of the fastest growing industries in Nepal. It is an important source of foreign exchange earning as well as a source of employment opportunity. It was recorded that tourism sector provided direct employment to 80,000 people in 2001 and was contributed 12 percent and 3.1 percent to the total foreign currency earning and in total GDP respectively in the same year(Tenth Plan,2002-2007).

The history of wildlife conservation though, started since Rana regime (1846 – 1950) in the Chitwan Valley as a privileged class hunting ground but Nepal embarked upon modern era of wildlife conservation with the enactment of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act in 1973. The Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation presently work with a network of sixteen protected wildlife areas including 5 buffer zones around national park covering a total of 26,971 sq. km. of the country's total land. It was established to conserve, restore and manage the rich and varied fauna, flora and the landscape of the mountainous country of Nepal.

Altitudinal variances in short distance give Nepal's biogeography variety that range from lush forests and sparse alpine deserts to luxurious grasslands in lowland Tarai. The Himalayan country also shelters some of the world's rare animals. Sagarmatha (Mt. Everest) National Park and Royal Chitwan National Park with typical natural, cultural and landscape characteristics were listed as World Heritage Sites in 1979 and 1984 respectively. The Koshi, Tappu Wildlife Reserve, a wetland of international significance, was declared a Ramsar site in 1987.

3.4 Forest Resources

The forest is one of the main sources of wildlife tourism in Nepal. It can be classified into three major types on the basis of altitude and composition, which comprises about 29 percent of total land area of the country (CBS, 2007).

3.4.1 Tropical Deciduous Monsoon Forest

This includes the Tarai and the broad flat valleys or Duns found between successive hill ranges. The dominant tree species of this area are Sal, Semal, Asna, Dalbergia spp and other species, and Pinus Roseburg occurring on the higher ridges of the Churia hills, which in places reach an altitude of 1800m. This tropical zone is richest area for wildlife, with gaurs, buffaloes, four species of deer, tigers, leopards and other animals found in the forest areas rhinoceros; swamp deer and hot deer found in the valley grassland and two species of crocodile and the Gangetic dolphin inhabiting the rivers. The principal birds are the peacock, jungle fowl and black partridge, while migratory duck and geese swarm on the ponds and lakes and big river of Tarai.

3.4.2 Subtropical Mixed Evergreen Forest

This includes the Mahabharat Lekh, which rises to a height of about 2400m and comprises the outer wall of the Himalayan range. Great river such as the Karnali, Narayani and Sapta Kosi flow through this area into the broad plains of the Tarai. Among the tree species characteristics of this region are *Castenopsis Indica* in association with *Schima Wallichii*, and other species such as *Alnus nepaiensis*. The variety and abundance of the flora and fauna increase progressively with decreasing altitude and increasing luxuriance of the vegetation. This zone is generally poor in wildlife. The only mammals, which are at all widely distributed, are wild bear, barking deer, serow, ghoral and bears. Different varieties of birds are also found in this zone.

3.4.3 Temperate Evergreen Forest

Northward, on the lower slopes and spurs of the great Himalayas, Oaks and Pines are the dominant species up to an altitude of about 2400m above which are found dense conifer forests including *picea*, *Tusage*, *Larix* and *Abies* spp. The wildlife of this region includes the Himalayan bear, serow, ghoral, barking deer and wild bear, with Himalayan Tahr sometimes being seen on steep rocky faces above 244m. The red panda is among the more interesting of the mammals found in this zone. It appears to be fairly distributed in suitable areas of the forest above 1800m. The rich and varied Avifauna of this region includes several spectacular and beautiful Pheasant, including the Danphe, Nepal's national bird. Nepal, therefore, is unique in being a blend of three distinct types of fauna, which reflects enormous potentiality of wild tourism.

3.5 Protected Areas and Wildlife Reserves

Protected areas are perhaps the prime sites for wildlife tourism since they offer some guarantee of maintaining their attraction in the long term through a strong legislative regime. Nepal's rich bio-diversity renders to deal as an eco-tourism as well as wildlife tourism destination. The 18.33 percent of the country's total land accounts for its sixteen protected wildlife areas across the country. Among these, nine are designated as national parks three are wildlife reserves, three are conservation areas and one is a hunting reserves (NPWC, 2003), which is shown in map 3.1 as under.

Map Protected Areas and Wildlife Reserves



- | | | | |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| ① Shukla Phanta Wildlife Reserve | ⑥ Dhor Patan Hunting Reserve | ⑪ Parsa Wildlife Reserve | ⑬ Koshi Tappu Wildlife Reserve |
| ② Khaptad National Park | ⑦ Mustang Conservation Area | ⑫ Shivapuri Wildlife Reserve | ⑭ Kangchenjunga Conservation Area |
| ③ Royal Bardiya National Park | ⑧ Annapurna Conservation Area | ⑬ Langtang National Park | ✈ International airport |
| ④ Rara National Park | ⑨ Manaslu Conservation Area | ⑭ Sagarmatha National Park | ✈ Major domestic airport |
| ⑤ Shey Phoksundo National Park | ⑩ Royal Chitwan National Park | ⑮ Makalu-Barun National Park | ✈ Domestic airport |

• Royal Chitwan National Park

The Royal Chitwan National Park offers a wilderness of rich ecosystem that includes mammals, birds, reptiles and water animals of several kinds. It is little surprising that this is one of the most popular and most frequented parts of the country. Owing to its rich adornment of nature, the park was declared *UNESCO Natural Heritage Site* in 1979, covering an area of 932 sq.km, the park includes hilly areas of Shivalik range covered by deciduous forests. One fifth of the park is made up of flood plains of the Narayani, Rapti, and the Renu rivers.



There are around 600 plants, 50 mammals, 526 birds and 49 amphibians, reptiles found in the park. The highlights, of course are the 500 Asian one-horned rhinoceros and some 100 nocturnal Royal Bengal tigers that live in the dense forests of the park. Sharing home with these are other animals like

rhesus monkey, grey langur, deer, leopards, wild boar, wild dogs and wild cats, the white Sockinged gaur (the world's largest wild cattle) and many other smaller animals. The swampy areas and numerous oxbow lakes of Chitwan provide a home for marsh crocodile. In a stretch of the Narayani River is found one of the few remaining populations of the rare and endangered fish-only eating gharial, or Gangetic crocodile. A rare attraction is world's fresh water dolphins variety sometimes seen in river Narayani.

- **Shey Phoksundo National Park**

It is the largest national park and covers 3,555 square kms, sitting astride the Dolpa and Magu districts of Western Nepal. The park was established to protect the trans-Himalayan ecosystem found only in few areas of kingdom. The unique park includes the Kanjiroba Himal, with many peaks of over 6,000m, as well as the famous Shey Monastery, the Phoksundo Lake and the Langu Gorge. The wildlife of Shey-phoksundo includes a good population of blue sheep and ghoral, muskdeer, leopard, wild dog, wolf, marmot, weasel, mouse hare, rhesus and langur monkeys. The adjoining Tibetan region is home to such rare animals as the great Tibetan sheep, Tibetan wild ass, Tibetan gazelle and antelope, and wild yak. Bird species of the park include the Impeyan and cheer pheasant, chough, raven, Tibetan snow cock, Tibetan tit, brown dipper, Himalayan griffon and lammergeyer

- **Langtang National Park**

It is one of the most unspoiled national parks of Nepal. Situated to North of Kathmandu, it is the most easily accessible highland sanctuary from the capital. Langtang covers 1,710 sq. km, forming the upper catchment areas of two of Nepal's largest river systems- the Trishuli and koshi. The animals, common to these forests are wild boar, Himalayan black bear, ghoral, grey langur monkey and leopard. The rare Himalayan honey guide has been sighted here and the park is also the home for Impeyan, Tragopan and Kalij Pheasants among others. Larch, a rare deciduous conifer, is also found in the forest of lower Lantang valley. Further-up, Himalayan taur, musk deer and snow leopard are also found in this park.

- **Makalu-Barun National Park and Conservation Area**

It is situated in the Sankhuwasabha and Solukhumbu district in West Nepal. The park covers 2,330 sq. kms and one of the prime attractions for

visitors to the park is its offer to experience the unique Himalayan bio-diversity. There are 47 varieties of orchids, 67 species of bamboos, 15 oaks including Arkhoulo, 86 species of food fodder trees and 48 species of primrose. Over 400 species of birds have been sighted in the Makalu-Barun area, including two species never before seen in Nepal, the spotted wrenbabbler and the olive ground warbler, wildlife includes the endangered red panda, musk deer, Himalayan black bear, clouded leopard and possibly Snow leopard, in addition to more substantial populations of ghoral, thar, wild boar, barking deer, Himalayan marmot weasel, common langur monkey and the serow.

- **Royal Bardia National Park**

It is situated on the Eastern banks of the Karnali River, about 400 kms, west of Kathmandu. The park is 968 sq. kms. in area and extends from the Churia hills Southward to the gentle slopes of the 'Bhabhar'. Bardia is the home of a wide variety of animals, many of which live in and around the phants. The most conspicuous of which is the spotted deer. Other ungulates include block buck, hog deer, samber deer, wildboar and barasingha or swamp deer. The park is famous for its small herds of wild elephants which are rarely seen. The park also boasts a small population of the rare gharial, the marsh mugger crocodile and the Gangetic dolphin. The karnali and Babai rivers attract a large number of wintering waterfowl along with resident species such as herons, kingfishers and wall creepers. More than 350 bird species have been recorded in Bardia, truly a bird watcher's paradise.

- **Sagarmatha Nation Park**

This park was declared a **World Heritage Site** in 1979 which includes Mt. Everest (8,848 M.) and other high peaks such as Lhotse Shar Cho oyu Ama Dablam, Pumori Kangtega etc. Sagarmatha National Park is 1,148 square kms. in area and consists of the upper catchment areas of the Dudh Koshi, Bhothe Koshi and the Imja Khola rivers. Much of the park lies above 3,000m. Sagarmatha is rugged, with deep gorges, glaciers and unnegotiable ice and rock faces. Tree such as rhododendron, birch, blue pine, juniper and silver are found upto an altitude of 4,000 meters. Wildlife most likely to be seen in Sagarmatha is the Himalaya tahr, ghoral, musk deer, pikka (mouse hare), weasel and occasionally jackal. Other rarely seen animals are Himalayan black bear, wolf, lynx and snow leopard, Birds commonly seen are Impeyan

pheasant, blood pheasant, snow cock, snow pigeon, red billed and yellow billed chough, Himalayan griffin vulture and lammergeier.

- **Khaptad National Park**

A newest park area is in the middle hills of the Far-West of the country. The 225 square kms, area of the park is situated where the districts Bajhang, Bajura, Doti and Achham meet. Khaptad is plateau of grassland and forest cover at an elevation of about 3,000 meters. This habitat provides good cover for bear, leopard, barking and musk deer, as well as birds like the Impeyan, Kalij and Kokals pheasants. At the north eastern corner of the park, a small serene lake and swampy area called Khaptad Daha is a religious site where Hindu pilgrims come to worship Shiva on the full moon of July-August each year.

- **Rara National Park**

This is Nepal's smallest and most scenic national park situated about 370 kms, north - west of Kathmandu. It covers the area of 106 sq kms. Lies at an altitude of about 3,000 meters forested by conifers. The biggest lake in Nepal, which is known as Mahendra Tal also lies here. The habitat supports animals like the red panda, black bear, yellow-throated martin, goral, serow and musk deer. The lake attracts migrant wildfowl like teals, Pochards and mallards. Resident birds include the Impeyan, Kalij and blood pheasant as well as others like chukkor partridge.

- **Shivpuri National Park**

The Shivpuri Park (144 sq. kms) is the major watershed supplying drinking water to the capital city of Kathmandu. Lying in the transition between the subtropical and temperate climatic zones, its diverse vegetation is composed of pine, oak, rhododendron and others. The park is rich in wild mushrooms (129 species). The wildlife found in the national park includes Himalayan black bear, leopard, jungle cat and rhesus monkeys. The park is home to over 177 species of birds including 9 threatened species, over 100 species of butterflies including rare and threatened.

- **Royal Sukla Phanta Wildlife Reserve**

The wildlife reserve is situated in the extreme south-west of Nepal. The name of the park is derived from the largest grassland which is known as Sukla-phanta. The park area is 155 sq. kms and would be 305 sq. kms after the completion of its extension. The reserve now shelters almost 2,000 swamphens.

deer, around 50 wild elephant and 30 tigers. Other animals found here are spotted deer, blue bulls, barking deer, hog deer, wild boars, leopards, jackals, langurs and rhesus monkeys. Among the birds the reserve provides habitat to sarus crane, swamp francolin, grass owl and the endangered Bengal Florican. Reptiles' species include marsh mugger, crocodile, cobra and python.

- **Parsa Wildlife Reserve**

The Parsa Wildlife Reserve provides a rare opportunity to experience the nature and culture to Nepal's terai. The reserve covers 499 sq. kms, spread over parts of Chitwan, Makawanpur, Parsa and Bara districts. The vegetation is tropical and subtropical mostly covered with Sal forests while the hills are covered with chir, pine, khar, silk cotton are found along water areas. The reserve provides good habitat for animals like wild elephant, tiger leopard, sloth bear, blue bull and wild dog. Other common animals in the reserve are sambar, chital, hog deer, jungle cat, langur monkey etc. There are 527 species of birds in the reserve; one being the endangered great hornbill found in certain parts of the forest. Other bird species include peafowl, red jungle fowl, and wood peckers. Birds and animals apart the reserve also habitats snakes like king cobra, common cobra, krait and Python.

- **Koshi Tappu Wildlife Reserve**

This wildlife reserve has carved a place for itself as a birdwatcher's paradise. The reserve covers the area of 175 sq. kms and spreads over Saptari and Sunsari districts in East Nepal. The reserve had been recognised as a wetland site from 1987. The vegetation of the reserve is mainly grassland with patches of scrub and deciduous reverie forests. The reserve has recorded around 439 species of bird variety, some of which fly all the way from Siberia during winter. A wide variety of ducks, herons, storks, egrets, and ibis are seen on the riverbanks. Koshi Tappu Reserve also has one of the few elephant statbles of Asia. Other animals found here are wild buffalo, wild boar, hog deer, spotted deer, blue bell and jackals, Gharial Crocodile and Gangetic dolphin are other attraction.

- **Annapurna Conservation Area**

This conservation area has been claimed as one of the best trekking areas in the world. It is also the most visited trekking area in the country. Beginning 790 meters, the area reaches as high as 8.091 meters of Mt.

Annapurna. Ghandruk is the first experience and further down is Ghorepani that provides fantastic panoramic view of the Annapurna ranges. The vegetation in this region includes various species of orchids and rhododendron, wildlife includes around 100 different kinds of mammals including rare snow leopards and blue sheep. The region also boasts of around 478 species of birds including multi coloured Impheyan kokals and blood pheasants. In addition, the region is also home to 39 species of reptiles and 22 species of amphibians.

- **Kanchanjunga Conservation Area**

This conservation area belt lies below Mt. Kanchanjunga. The region with its alpine grasslands, rocky outcrop, and low river valleys, temperate and subtropical forests is situated in Taplejung district that borders with the Tibetan Autonomous Region of China. The KCA has been selected as one of the 200 global eco- regions recognised by world wildlife fund. Ten species among Nepal's 20 indigenous gymnosperms species and 15 among Nepal's 28 endemic flowering plants are found in this region. Wildlife includes endangered snow leopard, Himalayan black bear, musk deer, red panda, blue sheep and rhesus macaw. About 202 species of different birds including impheyan pheasant, red billed blue magpie, are found in the area.

- **Manaslu Conservation Area**

The Manaslu area in Gorkha district is a classic setting to experience pristine mountain nature and culture. The conservation area starts at 600 meters and is crowned by the eight highest peaks in the world Mt. Manaslu at 8,163 meters. The region is home to 29 species of mammals including snow leopard, musk deer and Himalayan Tahr. There are over 20 species of birds and three species of reptiles. Vegetation includes 200 species of plants, more than 50 of which are useful for various purposes.

- **Dhorpatan Hunting Reserve**

It is the only area in Nepal where licensed hunting is allowed. The reserve adjoins Myagdi district and Baglung district, spreading over an area of 1,325 sq. kilometers, the reserve begins at 3,000 meters reaching as high as 7,000 meters. One of the prime attractions for hunters is blue sheep, which is abundant in the area. Hunters also get pheasants and partridges in viable populations for hunting. Other animals found here are leopard, ghoral, serow,

Himalayan black bear, barking deer etc. Endangered animals in the reserve are musk deer, wolf, red panda, cheer pheasant and Danphe (Lophophorous).

3.6 Bird Watching Nepal

Nepal, unlike any parts of the world is considered as a paradise for bird lovers and ornithologists. Nepal only accommodates more than 848 species of the birds in the world. It is more than 8 percent of the world total. The Kathmandu valley and the surroundings, which has historic as well as the cultural value has almost 500 species. The major sites popular for bird watching could be counted as shivpuri conservation area, Nagarkot, Phulchoki area, Godavari area, Nahgarjun area, Bagmati River side, Taudaha among others in Kathmandu valley. Among them, Phulchoki hill, the highest peak of the valley rim situated 20 kms southeast of Kathmandu is the most popular bird watching spot with some 265 species recorded. Regularly recorded species include Besra, Black Eagle, Mountain Hawk-Eagle, Kalij pheasant, common Hill Partridge, Ashy Woodpigeon, Mountain scops owl, Collared owlet, Golden throated Barbet among others and a further 55 species have been known to visit the area as migratory or occasional visitors. Outside of Kathmandu valley, Chitwan National park, Bardia National Park and Makalu Barun National Park & Conservation Area are considered as the best places for the same. Chitwan National Park offers more than 450 species of birds including the endangered birds are the Bengal florican, Giant horn bill, lesser florican, black stork. Moreover, more than 45 species of amphibians and reptiles are visible into park. Chitwan National Park offers many finest lodges for the accommodation inside as well as outside the park area. One can stay as per his requirements to enjoy the bird watching.

Bardia National Park, which is considered as the best National Park after Chitwan National Park is truly a bird watcher paradise. Similarly Makalu-Barun National Park & Conservation Area, Shuklaphanta Wildlife Reserve, Koshi Tappu Wildlife Reserve, Shey- phoksundo National Park are equally rich in many species of birds. Phewa Tal and Begnas Tal and the surrounding areas in Pokhara are highly famous for the bird lovers. Terraced hills and light forest surround the lake. One should spend time on the slopes and wet fields. Birds sighted here are Ducks, Pheasant-tailed jacana, Hoppie Grey Bellied Tesias, common pintail snipe, bulbuls, etc.

3.7 Status of Tourists Visiting Protected Areas

Nepal's National Park and protected areas are the major wildlife tourist destination in Nepal. Table 3.1 shows the number of tourists visited to the protected areas during 2004/2007. A total of 74,010 tourists visited to several national parks and wildlife reserves during 2004. This number has increased to 74.9 (129,429), 13.7 (147,024) and 38.2 (203,275) percent in the year 2005, 2006 and 2007 respectively. Between the years 2004 to 2007, the annual average growth of visitors was recorded to 37.2 percent per year. While observing the data of country-wise visitors, third country visitors recorded 99.9 percent in 2004. Not even a single visitor from SAARC country and Nepal visited any park in the same year. SAARC countries recorded lowest share having fluctuated trend whereas trend whereas third country share was highest of 50.2 percent during 2007 (Table 3.1). Nepal's visitor was recorded highest share of 49.8 percent in the preceding year, 2006.

Table 3.1 Country wise Visitors to National Park & Protected Areas, 2004 - 2007

Year	National Parks and Wildlife Reserves															Share of Visitors %			
	SNP	RCNP	LNP	KNP	SPNP	BNP	RNP	DHR	PNP	KTWR	SPWR	MBNP	KPA	SNP	TOTAL	Growth rate %	Third country	SARC	Nepal
2004	20051	43061	3020	0	275	1004	7	0	0	549	19	131	388	5505	74010	-	99.9	-	-
2005	19522	52512	2735	0	113	1204	29	0	170	3990	43	70	81	48910	129429	74.9	48.9	2.9	48.2
2006	20693	60126	4562	1	159	2415	23	0	55	4342	136	115	365	54032	147024	13.6	47.8	2.4	49.8
2007	26511	86433	8165	9	368	3637	87	27	189	2166	136	261	328	73958	203275	38.2	50.2	2.8	47.1

Estimated

Source: Nepal Tourism Statistics, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, Govt. of Nepal

The Royal Children National Park recorded higher pressure of visitors of 86,433 in 2007, in comparison to other national parks whereas the Shivpuri National Park received second highest number of visitors as 74, 958 in the same year. In terms of visitors' attraction, the Sagarmata National Park (SNP) occupied third highest number of visitors as 26,511 during 2007. It is clear that the visitors' attraction for the parks of Nepal has been increasing day by day in a faster rate which indicates a higher prospect of wildlife tourism development in the country.

3.8 Problems and Challenges

It is obvious from the fact that the wildlife and natural habitats of Nepal are the major sources of wildlife tourism in the country. Its wildlife and natural beauty, unique in abundance and variety, is the wonder of the rest of the world but it was gravely affected in the past due to deforestation which caused soil erosion and landslides. Rapidly growing population with their subsistence socio-economic conditions exerted tremendous biotic pressure in the remaining forests. About 3, 00,000 people live in the 37 villages Development Committee around Royal Chitwan National Park owing to habitat loss and human induces activities, the population of tiger, rhinoceros and elephant has been gravely threatened (National Park, Wildlife Conservation Report, 1998/99).

Despite this, some national parks and wildlife reserves are not fully managed as per the requirements of international standard. Scarcity of trained guide or a tour operator and trained biologist staff etc. are drawbacks in the development of wildlife tourism in Nepal. Such guides who have operated tour for the tourists in different national parks and wildlife reserves are ill trained and less skilled in their activities due to which a few national parks and conservation areas could have marketed (Table 3.1) in Nepal. Since few years back the park of Nepal have been facing a lot of challenges in the preservation and conservation of its natural habitat and wildlife that includes soil erosion, flooding, wild poaching, livestock and crop depredation, pollution, plant succession and invasion by alien species and unregulated tourism etc.

Another major challenges for wildlife tourism as a whole is how to ensure that the protected areas are financially self- sufficient without detracting from their primary function of preserving biodiversity and natural value (Child, 1996). In this regard, Wells (1994) noted that 'there is growing consensus that Nepal's protected areas, despite their high economic value are entering a stage of crisis.

Several of the most important parks are experiencing serious problems as a result of (i) inadequate resources for the poor management, (ii) poor relation between protected areas and local communities and (iii) environmental degradation in and around parks related to tourism.

3.9 Suggestions and Recommendations

- To cope up with the threats and problems of wildlife and natural habitat, first and foremost measure is to check on the process of deforestation. Deforestation destroys the natural beauty, climate, rare animals and birds of the economy and, ultimately it will have bad impact on tourism.
- For the promotion and conservation of wildlife tourism in Nepal, all the National Parks including wildlife reserves, conservation areas and bird watching resorts should have facilitated with all the amenities for visitors. Such as Jungle lodge, safari park and resort and creative enrichment of drinking, feeding, dwelling sites and camping ground and trekking facilities etc. will be helpful to provide wildlife experiences, if possible include photographic darkrooms and information and advice centre is highly desirable. There should have some parks for small animals like reptiles and butterfly that would be a welcome experience for the tourists.
- National parks should provide modern equipments and adequate staff to carry out their function efficiently. The good access road for motorists is an essential feature of a national park. Properly planned and sited, access roads can introduce visitors to new aspects of a country's scenery and natural beauty. The road from the Kenya coast to the Tsavo park was planned to give over the Chyulu hills, with view so beautiful that they aroused enthusiasm among the staff and workers, both African and European(Huxley, 1961). Road system within parks also needs careful planning. It must be adequate to give visitors a good chance of seeing wild animals, but should leave considerable areas roadless and undisturbed.
- All national parks should also have a museum with maps and relief-models, explanatory diagrams and pictorial charts, study collections, exhibition collection of the main interesting animals and plant, fossils, geological specimens and diagrams, meteorological, historical, archaeological material, and a sector devoted to various aspects of conservation. Such museums, if well arranged, and if a curator or a park warden is available to answer questions and give advice, can be of the greatest service to visitors, and can

act as a valuable adjunct to the country's educational and museums system as well as a logical base for research. 'Treetops' venture in Kenya is an excellent example of such a venture where visitors can spend the night in a tree shelter with the certainty of seeing and hearing a variety of wildlife at close quarters (Huxley, 1961).

- A professionally trained guide or a tour operator is also an important ingredient of successful wildlife tour. The tour operator must know how to make detailed records of animals sighted for creating a research database. Such a database will not only be interesting for tourists, but also help for planning and managing wildlife encounters. The tour guides should also be able to highlight the importance of wildlife in terms of conservation and ecosystem function, interesting features of wildlife natural history, conservation threats faced by wildlife, current wildlife management issues for important species and day to day activities. Moreover the guides and tour operators should be familiarised with modern technology as it has enhanced dramatically to our capacity to provide real life experience to the visitors. For all this, at least one centre should be set up within the region to train men and women for such position.
- Similarly, all park systems (and equally all wildlife departments) should have at least one trained biologist on their staff. They should carry out research themselves and should provide research facilities for visiting scientists. A beginning in this direction is being made in Uganda, where the two national parks are being provided with small laboratories as field research centers.
- In addition to the management of the park, the following steps are necessary to be taken into consideration for the protection natural habitat and wildlife from the threats facing by them in different national park of Nepal.
- Special anti- poaching programme should be operated to combat the poaching.
- Live-stock and crop depredation by wild animals are required to be addressed to resolve the park people conflict
- Conduct various studies to understand ecological process or threats.
- Conduct studies to understand visitor's carrying capacity.
- Private sectors' investments as well as local community with a vested interest in wildlife tourism should be encouraged.

3.10 Conclusion

Wildlife tourism, in the context of Nepal is a recent phenomenon. Nepal is fortunate in being endowed by nature the unique resources of its wildlife and natural habitats. It is incredibly diverse, its greenery and biodiversity are of

international importance. The sixteen protected wildlife areas are designated across the country in a view to conserve them so that it can yield profit in the form of foreign currency. But those National Parks and wildlife reserves except few are either ill managed or not in a way to afford accommodation and basic amenities for the visitors due to the lack of financial resources. If the national parks and wildlife reserves of Nepal are efficiently managed and intelligently developed, they could become chosen places of world pilgrimage, where people of every race, creed and colour will come to learn, admire, and enjoy.

CHAPTER – 4

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES OF ADVENTURE TOURISM: THE CASE OF NEPAL HIMALAYA

- 4.1 Introduction
- 4.2 As an Important Market Segment of Tourism Industry
- 4.3 Aims of study and sources of Data
- 4.4 Nature of Adventure Tourism in Nepal
- 4.5 Nepal, a Paradise for Adventure Tourists
- 4.6 Adventure Tourism Potential and Attraction
- 4.7 Tourist Arrival Pattern and Development Trend
- 4.8 Problems and Challenges
- 4.9 Strategic Initiatives
- 4.10 Product Enhancement and Development for Tourism Growth
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