

Capacity Building cum Planning Workshop on Ecotourism and Visitor-use Management in Protected Areas

Wildlife Institute of India, Dehradun



8-10 August, 2018



भारतीय वन्यजीव संस्थान
Wildlife Institute of India



Introduction

The NTCA guidelines on ecotourism in Tiger Reserves (TRs) were issued in 2012 and have been under implementation for over 5 years. Meanwhile, the number of visitors continues to increase unabated. Visitor management in TRs is highly context-specific and is governed by local histories and practices. Therefore a review of the current challenges being faced by Tiger Reserves in visitor management in different parts of India is required. Further, this exercise will lead to the identification of opportunities for building institutional and managerial capacity for ensuring well-being of wildlife, providing greater visitor satisfaction and enhancing community participation and benefits from tourism. Understanding of planning frameworks for visitor management is needed for integration of planning and monitoring in the management plans and management. With this backdrop, a capacity building cum planning workshop involving major stakeholders was planned.

The objectives of the workshop were to (a) Increase awareness regarding planning frameworks for visitor use management among stakeholders (b) Develop an outline for a long-term collaborative project for policy, planning, research and capacity building in the area of tourism management. The workshop agenda is placed as Annexure -I and the list of participants as Annexure –II.

Inaugural Session

Dr. Manoj Nair gave a brief introduction and welcome address to the participants, emphasizing the need for this workshop. This was followed by a brief overview of the scope of the workshop, given collectively by Dr. H.S. Pabla, Chairman, WII Training, Research & Academic Council, Dr. V.B. Mathur, Director, Wildlife Institute of India and Shri Rajiv Bhartari, CWLW, Uttarakhand.

Key note address was given by Dr. Keith Bosak, University of Montana, USA, on the topic 'Planning and management of visitor use in an era of complexity of change'. Dr. Bosak emphasized on the various approaches and the inherent complexity in managing ecotourism. He categorized the challenges in terms of population growth, economic implications, increasing international tourism, innovations of technology, effects of climate change on protected areas and rapid land cover changes. Further emphasis was given on the role of protected areas such as ecosystem services, conservation related activities and recreational facilities. Speaking on 'Complex systems – ecotourism management', he emphasized on characteristics of complex systems, 'wicked problems' that generated from past management solutions and old patterns of solving the emerging new problems. He also dwelt upon on the role of critical thinking processes and use of challenging mental models in ecotourism management, which entailed a shift from event-oriented thinking to system-based thinking. Besides, he also added that understanding the

dynamic system, analyzing the trajectory of the system, strategic planning in advance and the implementation of the plan is necessary to effectively manage various challenges arising out of managing ecotourism. Furthermore, adaptive management with value judgments, multilayered, multistage, multiagency approach is required to bridge the current gaps in ecotourism management.

Technical Session I

Tourism in PAs: The National Experience

Technical Session I was chaired by Dr. H.S. Pabla. He initiated the session by stating that conservation and tourism are nothing but two sides of the same coin and added that tourism is one of the major creators of wealth in many PAs. Tourism should be done with conservation in mind and *vice versa*.

Shri Rajiv Bhartari gave an insight into the current scenario of ecotourism in India, with a special emphasis on TRs. Tourist arrivals to Indian Protected Areas (PAs) doubled during the decade of 2005-2015. Average number of visitors to TRs increased from 32,061 to 61,113, representing a 90 % increase. Visitors to TRs comprise one third of all wildlife tourists in India. During 2014-15 there were a total number of 14,66,728 visitors to the Tiger Reserves. Mr. Bhartari stressed that in the absence of proper planning and regulations, mushrooming of tourism facilities around tiger reserves lead to exploitation and misuse of fragile ecosystems. He stressed the nuanced difference between tourism and visitation. While tourism is a purely business activity, visitation is more conservation-oriented. Ecotourism has the potential to enhance public awareness, education and wildlife conservation while providing nature-compatible livelihoods and generating incomes. Ecotourism should invariably include tourism that is community-based and community driven and should be managed with the help of State level Steering committee, Tiger Reserve Foundation and Local Advisory Committee (LAC). He also added that Tourism activities in a tiger reserve should be under the overall guidance of the respective Tiger Conservation Foundations and the LACs. No new tourism infrastructure should be created in the core areas. Existing residential infrastructure inside core or critical tiger habitats should be strictly regulated to adhere to low ecological impacts as decided by the LACs on a site specific basis. Permanent tourist facilities located inside core or critical tiger habitat, which are being used for wildlife tourism should be phased out on a time frame decided by the LAC. He also emphasized on the fact that permitting up to 20% of the core/ critical tiger habitat as a tourism zone, should not bring about an adverse effect on the tiger biology. He hoped the outcomes of this workshop would include review of the planning frameworks of NTCA guidelines on ecotourism and the mechanism for adoption of Limits of Acceptable Change (LAC).

Shri Nishant Verma, DIG, NTCA, HQrs, New Delhi, spoke on 'Role of tourism guidelines of NTCA in maintaining ecological integrity in tiger landscapes'. He emphasized on the core, buffer and corridor/adjoining area plan for Tiger Reserves. He further stated that a Local

Advisory Committee (LAC) should be constituted for each Tiger Reserve by the State Government to formulate and review tourism activities in accordance with guidelines of the NTCA. Further, approving a tourism plan should be part of the overarching Tiger Conservation Plan. It is recommended that a maximum of 20% of the core or critical tiger habitat usage (not exceeding the present usage) for regulated, low-impact tourist visitation may be permitted. Such an area is to be demarcated as tourism zone and there should be strict adherence to site-specific carrying capacity. Forest dwellers that have been relocated from core or critical tiger habitat to the buffer should be given priority in terms of livelihood generation activities related to community-based ecotourism in the tiger reserve. Number of tourist vehicles entering the Tiger Reserve should be restricted as per the carrying capacity which is calculated as per existing norms and is site specific. The Chief Wildlife Warden of the State should ensure that each Tiger Reserve prepares a tourism plan, as part of the Tiger Conservation Plan vis-à-vis the technical guidelines of the National Tiger Conservation Authority. He raised few important issues such as: (a) status of compliance of the guidelines as a part of MoU signed between NTCA, State Government & the Field Director (b) Monsoon Tourism Advisory (closure for a minimum period) & its compliance (c) recent Hon'ble Courts orders vis-à-vis the guidelines compliance (d) endorsement of the guidelines by Hon'ble Apex Court etc.

Shri Amit Verma, Deputy Director, Corbett Tiger Reserve, Uttarakhand, made a presentation on 'Evaluating Ecotourism in CTR – Strategies, Achievements and Way Forward'. While speaking about carrying capacity, he said that the carrying capacity in Tiger Conservation Plan (TCP) is determined in terms of the vehicles allowed for day visit, number of rooms for night stay and also the number of vehicles (Canters) for morning/evening rides. At present there is no carrying capacity assessment carried out in terms of total number of tourists and maximum resorts in the landscape. He mentioned that there is significant shift in tourism management in last five years (e.g., allotment of guides to vehicles by online booking system, compulsory guides-one vehicle/one guide principle). In terms of Community Tourism in CTR, he said there are home stays and a museum operational in Chhoti Haldwani region. He also mentioned about human-wildlife conflict in the Sitabani Zone, with unrestricted number of tourists and vehicles visiting the area. This has led to excessive disturbance to wildlife, degradation and pollution of the environment. Mr. Verma also added that CTR tourism provides significant employment opportunities and concluded by saying that it is a strong driver of economic growth in the area, creating significant employment for the locals.

Shri. AK. Mishra, CWLW, Maharashtra, spoke on 'Tourism in Tiger Reserves in Maharashtra'. He emphasized on promoting buffer area tourism in high demand areas like Tadoba TR. He also stressed on the promotion of ancillary activities in the buffer of Tiger Reserves such as adventure sports, trekking, camping, machan stay, elephant ride, boating & kayaking, butterfly garden etc. He brought out the topic of human-wildlife conflict, and pointed out that tigers are active in the buffer zone of Tiger Reserves leading to conflict with villagers in the area. However, promoting buffer area tourism in high demand areas like Chandrapur adjoining

Tadoba reserve with the help of home stays, trekking etc, help to incentivise the locals to see the wildlife as an asset to their livelihood instead of a nuisance.

Shri Mukul Trivedi, Field Director, Tadoba Tiger Reserve, Maharashtra, spoke on 'Tourism in Tadoba Andhari Tiger Reserve'. He highlighted on the tourism activities of Tadoba Tiger Reserve. He emphasised on tiger-centric tourism and challenges in proper management of huge tourist inflows. Local Advisory Committee (LAC) is in existence there. No tourism is taking place in relocated village sites. With many instances of smaller vehicles cornering animals for close sightings, attempts have been made to limit the number of smaller vehicles. This has led to use of bigger capacity vehicles so that the total number of vehicles can be reduced. He opined that guidelines on electrical vehicles, monsoon tourism, rules for buffer and conservancies etc. should be issued.

Shri Ravishankar, Field Director, Nagarhole Tiger Reserve, spoke on 'Tourism in Nagarhole Tiger Reserve'. He brought out the objectives of Nagarhole Tiger Conservation Foundation and the tourism strategy which included (a) maintaining integrity and connectivity of tiger reserves (b) local community rights, (c) participation and benefit-sharing (d) sound environmental design and sustainable use of indigenous materials (e) Conservation education and training (f) adequate machinery for monitoring and evaluation of the impact of ecotourism activities on wildlife conservation and local communities (g) capacity building of local communities in planning (h) providing and managing ecotourism facilities and (i) development of appropriate land use and water management planning and regulation for maintaining the ecological integrity of landscape in and around tiger reserves. The key performance indicators set for the Nagarhole Tiger Reserve were: (a) effective conservation measures (b) biomass regeneration, and (c) strong community participation.

Shri Rajiv Goyal, APCCF, Ecotourism, Rajasthan, emphasised on 'Ecotourism in Tiger Reserves in Rajasthan'. He said that an Ecotourism Policy has been enunciated by the State Government from 2010. The Policy was framed with a view to attract more eco-tourists to the State, to sensitize the general masses, government departments, NGOs etc. about eco-tourism and also to lay down the framework for its growth in the State in a sustainable manner with involvement of local communities and other stakeholders. The aims of the Policy include empowerment of local communities to manage eco-tourism and generate incentives for conservation through alternate and additional livelihood options. In addition, on-ground tourism management initiative adopted in recent years are as follows: (a) new routes and zones are introduced to divert the pressure of tourists from crowded/preferred zones (b) online booking for registration (c) registered nature guides compulsory (d) GPS provided in vehicles to track the movements of tourists.

This was followed by a group exercise – ‘What is working and what is not working in tourism in PAs?’

As part of the discussions during the exercise, Dr A.K.Bhardwaj, Senior Professional Fellow, WII stated that guidelines for tourism management in the Tiger Conservation Plan (TCP) cannot be general for all reserves, citing the example of Kerala. For effective tourism management, there should be an engagement at political, social and department levels. He also said that the NTCA should intensify interactions with states to understand what policies are working and what are not. Shri RK Singh, DCF from Madhya Pradesh, felt the whole discussion was again leaning towards Tiger Reserves instead of being inclusive of all PAs. He said that Forest Officers are trained to see tourism as a by-product of conservation and hence are unable to dedicate themselves to it. Shri Vaibhav Singh, DFO, Lansdowne Forest Division, Uttarakhand said that there is a need to conduct surveys to study the tourist data of PAs/TRs, in order to determine the type of tourists coming in and cater accordingly to them. This could help in creating new tourism guidelines/ recreations at reserves such as Lansdowne which could act as weekend getaways to young corporate employers and others from the capital, New Delhi. Smt. Mridula Tangirala of Tata Trust spoke about three crucial points for successful community-based tourism: Investments, Skills and Linkages to Market. Dr. Alexandra, Griffith University said that corporates are willing to learn and are entrepreneurial in their outlook, with many ideas and should therefore be included for formulating a successful Tourism Strategy in Protected Areas.

After the discussion, the participants collectively put forward the following key points:

- Set criteria and indicators for effective tourism management.
- Adopt multiagency approach for land use planning around PAs.
- Efforts should be made to disperse tourist pressure across ranges/zones/suitable areas outside PAs.
- Enhance community-based investments, skills and market linkages for promoting participatory tourism.
- Need to reframe the mindset of communities and other beneficiaries through awareness programmes and workshops.
- Innovative practices such as green passports to students (as in Periyar Tiger Reserve) may be encouraged in other Tiger Reserves and Protected Areas.

Technical Session II

Tourism in PAs: The International Experience

In this session Dr. Bosak spoke on 'Tourism Principles and Planning Frameworks'. He stressed on the types of carrying capacity – Ecological or Biological, Social and Psychological, Physical (facility) and Managerial. The importance and applicability of Limits of Acceptable Change (LAC) as an important tool for effective visitor management was dealt with in detail. In addition, he spoke on the implementation of LAC in tourism management. The process requires managers to define desired/ideal goals and take actions to maintain or achieve those actions. He put forward ten steps of LAC which include goals & values, issues & concerns, opportunity classes, indicators, inventory, standards, actions, evaluations, implementation and monitoring. Dr. Bosak specifically mentioned the importance of implementation and monitoring-based resource assessment. He added that the steps of LAC do not have to be in any set order; rather, managers can follow their own paths to fulfill their specific objectives.

This was followed by group discussion and the questions were raised as follows: (a) How is LAC similar or different from the current framework which is being implemented? (b) How could using a visitor use management framework like LAC be beneficial in implementing NTCA guidelines for ecotourism? (c) What might be the limitations in such an approach?

Dr. Bosak explained that development of indicators depends on desired conditions. Depending on one's rationale one could set certain standards for certain indicators, and that there was no specific recipe for development of the same. The manager has to plan an adaptive way to the available the site-specific conditions, to evaluate what is effective and what is not, and move forward. Dr. Bosak also added that LAC helps to meet the desired condition, helps in monitoring and restoring the ideal of the particular site. LAC leads to engagement, better understanding and better technical decisions by the management authority.

Dr. Bhardwaj suggested that LAC is a useful framework. However it should be implemented in a site-specific manner. Mr. Nishant Verma, NTCA suggested to implement applicability of LAC in the PAs of India as a pilot study in a selected PA, before incorporating it into the guidelines.

Technical Session III

Tiger tourism: Review and gaps

Dr. Alexandra Coghlan, Griffith University, Australia, spoke on the current gaps in the systematic engagement of industry into ecotourism. Dr. Coghlan emphasized on several issues like external ownership, keeping locals away from benefits and impacts on resource utilization. The key gaps forwarded were as follows– inadequate dissemination of scientific articles, reactive perceptions of PA managers to the research output, lack of systematic design in studied methods to assess impact of tourism etc. Dr. Coghlan highlighted a few research works on the ecotourism

carried out in India. As per a paper, locals perceive themselves to be bearing the costs of wildlife tourism without reaping many of the benefits. However, a positive point to note was that even with all the issues, locals remain largely supportive of the concept of wildlife conservation and respond well to the concept of ecosystem services. Dr. Coghlan spoke about plotting a tourist matrix which includes demography, behaviour and experience. She highlighted the importance of conservancies, giving examples from Africa and how these would also be viable here in India. Dr. Alexandra concluded her presentation with a set of pointers including how the forest department and tourism sector can work hand in hand. Following this, participants discussed on the general consensus that there needs to be more networking opportunities between PA managers and the tourism industry professionals. Perception of PA managers towards studies done in their respective PAs need to be welcomed and to be utilized for the better management. She said that, Wildlife Institute of India can help in networking with the institutions for sharing of knowledge and find out the key research gap in the ecotourism research. It was also suggested that the subject of effective Tourism Management could be potential add-on in the IFS training curriculum.

Technical Session IV

Capacity building for effective management of tourism

In this session, Dr. Alexandra and Dr. Sejal Worah, WWF carried out a group exercise on 'Recent advances in capacity building for tourism'. Dr. Worah emphasized on the 'Continuum of Ecotourism in PAs'. Dr. Worah explained the process of interlinking chain which included development and promotions, supporting of working with stakeholders, managing visitor use. She stressed on the forest department support towards visitor facility and management taking the example of Kanha National Park. Kanha park management authority works effectively with the local community which has resulted in substantial increase of their revenues. She also raised the concern that managing visitors use is much more dynamic and need continuous involvement both from community and forest departments. A multilayer, multiagency approach is required to build capacity for local communities and forest departments to run sustainable ecotourism in the long run. Dr. Worah reiterated that ecotourism should always be part of the overall management of the park. Also, in terms of revenue sharing, general consensus was that the majority of revenue should go towards community development. People should also be very clear about the role of tourism in enhancing local economies so that there is no antagonism among the communities.

In the group discussion, Mr. Ravishankar highlighted that the Karnataka forest department works in close association with Eco Development Committees (EDCs), and that they need continuous support from forest department to run ecotourism. Dr. Pabla specifically addressed the issue of marketing support required by the communities to run tourism, which requires detailed analysis of marketing strategy. Dr. Mathur added that there should be synergy among forest department, communities and other stakeholders for the management of ecotourism. Ecotourism should be a core part of the management strategy to reinforce awareness, revenue generation and community

participation. Dr. Worah highlighted the benefit that communities were getting to improve their livelihood through ecotourism; however, she also mentioned that tourism is not a silver bullet for alternative livelihood. Dr. Manoj Nair suggested that there was a need for more case studies on effective tourism management from India as there is a major knowledge gap of what works and does not work in our PAs. Therefore there is need for context-specific case study based training. He also added that ecotourism requires clear-cut policy and guidelines. Following this discussion, a group exercise was carried out on 'Identifying capacity needs and developing strategies to address them (SW/AC)'. The key concerns raised were:

- Attitudes as well as knowledge and skills for relevance stakeholders.
- Approaches to capacity building/training (processes).
- More site specific case studies required.
- Research on sites and practices – evidence-based learning and development of case studies.
- Ecotourism still being classified as a 'non-forestry' activity

Synthesis and way forward:

While summing up the deliberations of the workshop, Dr. Pabla underscored the huge potential that ecotourism has, in winning over the single-most important constituency of stakeholders viz. the local people. He felt that the locals should be clearly exposed to the benefits of tourism which would help soften the blow of conflicts with wildlife that many of them face on a daily basis. He also dwelt upon successful models of ecotourism from across the world, especially from Africa. Dr. Worah reiterated the role of tourism sector in terms of benefit sharing to local people and mentioned that we also need to look beyond PAs towards landscape level ecotourism in non-protected landscapes. She also added that private conservancies can be an effective model towards this end. Dr. Bosak described the workshop as a paradigm shift, bringing together different viewpoints towards a common goal, viz. effective management of ecotourism. The participants agreed on 'policy-support' being the biggest requirement for making the various outputs of the workshop become a reality.

The key points highlighted during the concluding session were as follows:

- The need for systems thinking and use of adaptive management frameworks in tourism/visitor management.
- Implementation of Limits of Acceptable Changes – moving from theory to practice.
- Improvement of service skills including soft skills of front line staff, guides, drivers and other stakeholders.
- There should be a fundamental change in mindsets towards tourism in which its values and benefits are understood and appreciated by all stakeholders.
- Sensitise park managers to the value/benefits of tourism as part of their training/capacity building.

- There is an urgent requirement of clear-cut policy and guidelines as well as strengthening governance and appropriate guidelines institutions to manage tourism.
- Improve soft skills for engagement, negotiation and conflict management.
- Need of research on ecotourism and visitor management and analysis of data from field studies need to be ploughed back into informed decision-making.
- Periodic, possibly annual, conferences or workshops, for site managers to meet and discuss best practices on tourism management.

It was agreed that in view of the recent directions given by the Hon'ble High Court of Uttarakhand regarding tourism in and around Corbett Tiger Reserve, a study would be taken up by the Wildlife Institute of India on the visitor management and carrying capacity

Acknowledgements

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Annexure - I

Workshop Schedule



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**Capacity Building cum Planning Workshop on Ecotourism and Visitor-use
Management in Protected Areas
8-10 August, 2018
Wildlife Institute of India, Dehradun**

PROGRAMME

Wednesday, 8 th August 2018	
INAUGURAL SESSION	
1830– 1915 h	Welcome Reception at UNESCO Category 2 Centre, Wildlife Institute of India
1915 – 2000 h	Keynote Address: Dr. Keith Bosak, University of Montana, USA
2000 h	Dinner at WII Guest House
Thursday, 9 th August 2018	
TECHNICAL SESSION – I	
0915 - 1300 h	Tourism in PAs: The National Experience
	Chair: Dr. H.S. Pabla, Chairman, WII Training, Research & Academic Council
0915 – 0925 h	Shri Rajiv Bhartari, CWLW, Uttarakhand Tourism in Tiger Reserves
0925 – 0940 h	Shri Nishant Verma, DIG, NTCA, HQrs, New Delhi Role of Normative Standards for Tourism activities & Guidelines of NTCA in maintaining landscape ecological integrity in & around tiger reserves
0940 – 0955 h	Shri A.K. Misra, CWLW, Maharashtra Tourism in Tiger Reserves in Maharashtra
0955 – 1010 h	Shri Amit Verma, Deputy Director, Corbett Tiger Reserve, Uttarakhand Tourism in Corbett Tiger Reserve
1010 – 1025 h	Shri Mukul Trivedi, Field Director, Tadoba Tiger Reserve, Maharashtra Tourism in Tadoba Tiger Reserve
1025 – 1040 h	Shri Ravishankar, Field Director, Nagarhole Tiger Reserve, Karnataka Tourism in Nagarhole Tiger Reserve
1040 – 1055 h	Shri Rajiv Goyal, APCCF, Ecotourism, Rajasthan Tourism in Tiger Reserves in Rajasthan
1055 – 1300 h	Group Exercise I – <i>What is working and what is not working in tourism in PAs?</i>

1300 – 1400 h	Lunch
TECHNICAL SESSION – II	
1400 – 1600 h	Tourism in PAs: The International Experience
1400 – 1500 h	Dr. Keith Bosak, University of Montana, USA Tourism Principles and Planning Frameworks
1500 – 1600 h	Group Exercise II – <i>Applying the principles of ‘Limits of Acceptable Change (LAC)’</i>
1600 - 1615	TEA BREAK
TECHNICAL SESSION – III	
1615 – 1800 h	Tiger tourism: Review and gaps
1615 – 1645 h	Dr. Alexandra Coghlan, Griffith University, Australia Overview of Tourism Research
1645 – 1745 h	Group Exercise III – <i>Priorities for Future Research (SW/AC)</i>
1745 – 1800 h	Discussions
Friday, 10th August 2018	
TECHNICAL SESSION – IV	
0930 - 1300 h	Capacity building for Effective Management of Tourism
0930-1000 h	Dr. Alexandra Coghlan and Dr Sejal Worah “Recent advances in Capacity Building for Tourism”
1000 – 1100 h	Group Exercise IV – <i>Identifying capacity needs and developing strategies to address them (SW/AC)</i>
1100 – 1115 h	Tea Break
1115 – 1145 h	Next steps, synthesis Dr. Keith Bosak, University of Montana, USA
1145 – 1230 h	Concluding Session
1230 h	Lunch

Annexure - II

List of participants
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Glimpses of the workshop



Introduction and welcome address by Dr. Manoj Nair



Key note address by Dr. Keith Bosak in UNESCO C2C, Wildlife Institute of India



Dr. H.S. Pabla chaired the session
Tourism in PAs: The National Experience



Workshop participants in group discussion



Dr. Alexandra Coghlan presenting
Tiger tourism: Review and gaps



Dr. Sejal Worah presenting Planning & Management
of visitor use in Indian TR



Group exercise: Identifying capacity needs and developing strategies