



ROYAL MANAS NATIONAL PARK



..... Bhutan's crown jewel.....

up small businesses. Non-formal adult education centers and social forestry programs have also been established and WWF is promoting the production of traditional cane and bamboo handicrafts while helping artisans market their products within Bhutan.

Enhanced health programs are also helping improve the livelihoods of villagers in and around the park, while public education and awareness programs run by the Royal Society for the Protection of Nature are helping them understand how conserving nature can improve the long term outlook for nature and people. Much needed baseline biodiversity research is also being done with the help of WWF, while park staff are actively pursuing well-organized poachers in the park.

Bhutan's Crown Jewel is shining once again, and its people have reason to hope that future generations will be able to enjoy the pure, natural magnificence of Royal Manas National Park — a priceless global treasure.



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The park is home to about 3,000 people clustered in remote, isolated and economically disadvantaged villages. The local population primarily consists of farmers of the Khengpa ethnic group, who use slash and burn methods for shifting cultivation on crops such as maize, millet, rice and wheat. Orange and cardamom also are cultivated. The farmers face a number of major socioeconomic issues, including a lack of clean water, inadequate education and health facilities, crop storage problems and crop destruction by wild animals. Intense fuelwood use and a general lack of conservation awareness add additional pressures on the park.

WWF in Action in Royal Manas National Park:

WWF and Bhutan's Nature Conservation Division, Forestry Services Division and Ministry of Agriculture jointly developed a five-year conservation management plan for Royal Manas National Park. Major projects involve training and equipping park staff, improving park infrastructure, and supporting biological and socio-economic surveys and park monitoring programs. Recently, an improved communications facility was installed in the park, connecting all of the warden posts by radio sets, making a huge difference in monitoring and patrolling the remote corners of the park.

In the communities, WWF is providing financial and technical assistance to alternative, income-generating activities and a rural credit program to help villagers set



Traditional cane and bamboo handicrafts



RMNP

Royal Manas National Park

Bhutan's Crown Jewel

An unparalleled biological treasure in the Eastern Himalayas, Royal Manas National Park represents the largest example of tropical and sub-tropical ecosystems in Bhutan. With its thousands of animal and plant species, many globally endangered, Royal Manas is not only the most diverse protected area in the Kingdom but also one of the world's biologically outstanding sites.

Lying in south central Bhutan, Royal Manas is connected at the southern border with India's Manas Tiger Reserve, a World Heritage Site, as well as with Jigme Singye Wangchuck National Park to the north.

After being maintained as a forest reserve by the Royal Government for many years, Royal Manas was designated a wildlife sanctuary in 1966, making it the nation's oldest protected area. In 1993 the area was upgraded to a national park. Now, it forms the crown jewel of the Bhutan Biological Conservation Complex (B2C2), an extensive system of protected areas and biological corridors covering 35 percent of Bhutan.

The Land and its Climate:

As a conservation showpiece, Royal Manas represents the only area in the country where the mosaic of habitats between the tropical and temperate is contained in a single reserve. An astonishing 92% of its 1,023 square kilometers is under forest vegetation, including extensive areas of tropical monsoon forest interspersed with swaths of Savannah grasslands and wide riverbeds.

Much of the park is characterised by rugged, mountainous terrain with moderately steep slopes. The climate variations are substantial. The May-September monsoons bring up to 5000mm of rain. Thunderstorms are common during this time and rivers often impassable. During winter, however, rainfall is negligible and the temperature may drop by almost 10 degrees centigrade.

Globally Outstanding Diversity:

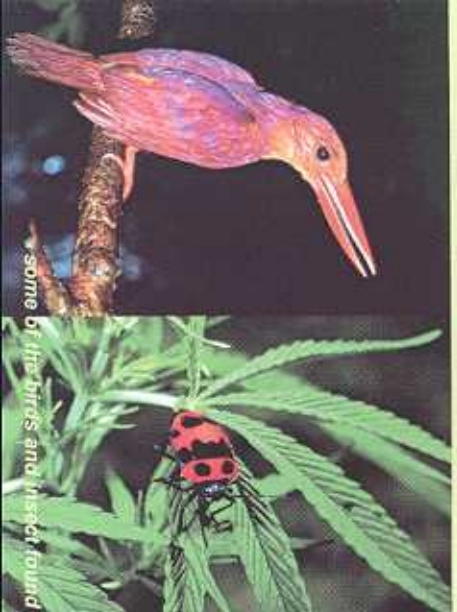
Wildlife species in Royal Manas are extremely rich, including the highly endangered Bengal tiger, Asian elephant, greater one-horned rhinoceros, clouded leopard, Himalayan black bear, Gangetic dolphin and pangolin. Found virtually nowhere else in the world is the especially rare golden langur, a primate of extraordinary grace and beauty with its long, silky blond fur. Several other rare species native to the Eastern Himalayan foothills occur here, such as the pygmy hog and short-eared hispid hare.

More than 365 species of birds have been officially recorded in Royal Manas National Park, with an additional 200 believed to be in residence. Species found here include the globally threatened rufous-necked hornbill, Pallas' fishing eagle, great white-bellied heron, spotted wren-babbler, blue-headed rock thrush and emerald cuckoo.

Many of the park's more than 900 type of plants have commercial, medicinal, traditional and religious significance. These include numerous species of bamboo, rhododendrons, and orchids. Ficus, the dominant canopy tree, provides food for numerous animals, birds and insects. Rauwolfia serpentina, a medicinal shrub, and Aesandra butyracea, a valuable fruit and oil-seed tree are also residents. For all that is known about some species, however, much of the biodiversity remains unknown. Only partial lists exist for park reptiles, amphibians and fish, and completing them will generate a better understanding of the ecosystem for management purposes.

The Threats

Political instability along the border with Assam, India, has been a major problem in managing the southern boundary of Royal Manas National Park. The open border presents easy access to poachers, while a shortage of human resources and lack of roads make patrolling difficult.



some of the birds and insect found at the park



a regular sight at the park



through the foliage



one of the types of amphibian



patrolling