



STATUS OF ECOTOURISM IN TALACAUVERY WILDLIFE SANCTUARY LOCATED IN KODAGU DISTRICT OF KARNATAKA, INDIA

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ABSTRACT

The term ecotourism was coined by Ceballos-Lascurain in 1983 and was initially used to describe nature-based travel to relatively undisturbed areas with an emphasis on education. The concept has however, developed to a scientifically based approach to the planning, management and development of sustainable tourism and activities. Ecotourism is a form of tourism which aims to be both ecologically and socially conscious. The current study focused on the status of ecotourism currently practiced in Talacauvery wildlife sanctuary. Various ecological methods were used to access the biodiversity and its management inside the sanctuary. Questionnaire method was used as a research instrument to understand the visitors and management views on ecotourism. Talacauvery wildlife sanctuary is known for ecotourism activities and its richness in biodiversity, but more efforts are to be made by the management and society to understand the concept of ecotourism and its advantages.

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INTRODUCTION

Tourism is changing rapidly as nature, heritage, and recreational destinations become more important and as conventional tourism is forced to meet tougher environmental requirements. This presents a challenge to government and private enterprise to develop new approaches to the tourism market. Successful tourism must benefit local populations economically and culturally to give them incentives to protect the natural resources which create the attraction. Strategies must be economically feasible if private investors are to support the projects. Debate on the requirement, nature, and type of local community involvement in ecotourism are still continued (Bangs, 1999). Figure 1, explains the components to be involved in ecotourism. Ecotourism should foster responsible tourist behavior, conservation of the wildlife habitats and ecosystems, appreciation of local cultures and traditional life styles, and provision of sustainable forms of livelihood for people living in remote areas. It was reported that due to the high avian diversity in Bisle Reserve forest, Karnataka, could help in conducting the activities like bird watching and observing which will help ecotourism activity to

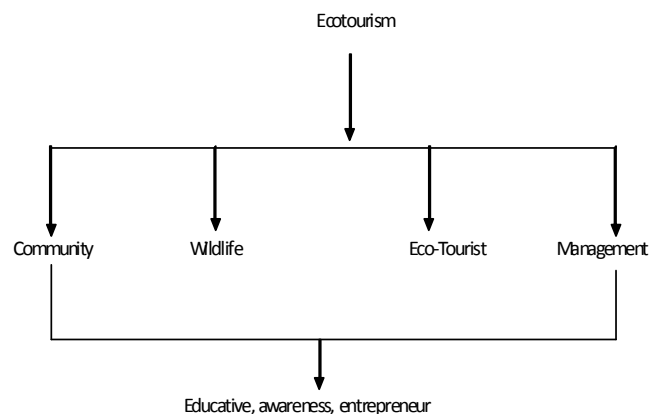


Figure 1. Ecotourism components

educate the importance of birds to eco tourists (Nandagopal *et al.*, 2015). Ecotourism, by one name or another, has traditionally been a mainstay industry in Kenya, land of African savannah and of charismatic flagship mammals such as elephants, leopards, and lions - species upon which to base an entire ecotourism industry. During most of the European colonial period in East Africa, wildlife was plentiful. However,

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by the end of colonial rule in the middle part of the 20th century, continued hunting pressures had severely reduced animal populations. Wildlife was killed with abandon for sport, for trade (elephant ivory, rhinoceros horn, etc.), and simply to clear land to pave way for agriculture and development. By the 1970s it was widely believed in newly independent Kenya that if hunting and poaching were not halted, many species of large mammals would soon be eliminated. The country outlawed hunting and trade in wildlife products, and many people engaged in such pursuits turned, instead, to ecotourism (Lascourain *et al.*, 1991). It was proven to the entire world that the ecotourism is not a destructive tool, instead a conservation tool.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study was undertaken in parts of Talacauvery wildlife sanctuary which is located in Kodagu district of Karnataka, India which lays between $12^{\circ}17'$ to $12^{\circ}27'$ N latitude and $75^{\circ}26'$ to $75^{\circ}33'$ E longitudes. Altitude varies from 64 to 1659 m, the highest point being located on the southeastern edge of the Sanctuary. The River Cauvery originates from the Brahmagiri peak (1355 m) inside the Talacauvery sanctuary, which makes it as a predominant religious center. Temperatures range from 10 to 35°C , and annual rainfall is above 6500 mm. The forests are mostly of the evergreen and semi-evergreen type.

The study in the Sanctuary was a result of work comprising of 6 study sites. One Study site is an observation of 3 randomly selected Quadrates sampling plots + One Belt transect line observation for birds/animals + Questionnaire for Eco tourists and the local Management. Species richness and biodiversity data was recorded by using ecological methods. Around 60 Eco tourists and a total of 20 management interviewee's opinion were recorded using questionnaire method. Interviews have been conducted during the period from October to April during the tourist season to get best results.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Flora and fauna recorded in Talacauvery wildlife sanctuary shows its importance in conservation and the role of ecotourism in conservation. Tree species namely *Canthium dicoccum*, *Sapindus emarginatus*, *Caryota urens*, *Diospyros ebenum*, *Dalbergia latifolia*, *Gardenia gummifera*, *Sesbania sesban*, *Sterculia villosa*, *Litsea deccanensis*, *Casuarina equisetifolia*, *Anacardium occidentale*, *Ficus altissima*, *Alangium salvifolium*, *Artocarpus hirsute*, *Callicarpa lanata*, *Zanthoxylumrhetsa*, *Spondiaspinnata*, *Bambusabambos*, *Glochidion ellipticum*, *Acacia catechu*, *Helicteres isora*, *Cassia fistula*, *Persea macrantha*, *Aponogeton natans*, *Aegle marmelos*, *Mallotus philippensis*, *Syzygium caryophyllatum*, *Mangifera indica*, *Scolopia crenata*, *Strebulus asper*, *Flacourtia indica*, *Toona ciliate*, *Eucalyptus grandis*,

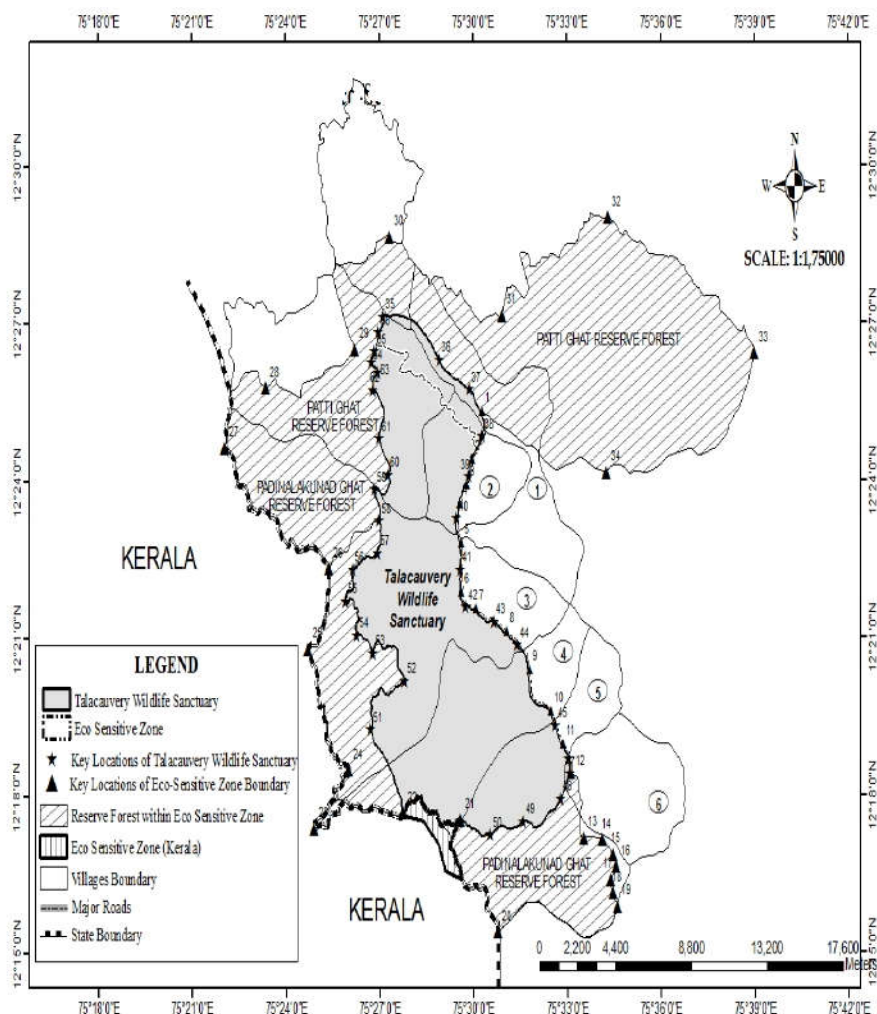


Figure 2. Location map of Talacauvery Wildlife Sanctuary

Salix tetrasperma, *Syzygium cumini*, *Vitex trifolia* and *Terminalia crenulata* were recorded and tabulated. Vegetation parameters like tree density and diversity are most important factors to know the quality and type of forest. The purpose of recording vegetation parameters is to check the relationship between faunal diversity and ecotourism opportunities. Talacauvery wildlife sanctuary has individual low basal area but comprised more number of trees which indicates that the sanctuary is of mixed type of forests i.e., Shola, Deciduous, Moist deciduous, Semi-evergreen and Evergreen type. Faunal diversity has got more impact in attracting Eco tourist's to the destination. Thirty one different faunal species were recorded in a total sixkms of the transect study.

Irena puella, *Terpsiphone paradise*, *Cacomantissonneratti*, *Coracina melanoptera*, *Meropus philippinus*, *Hierococcyx varius*, *Gracula eligiosa*, *Aegithina tiphia*, *Semnopithecus dussumieri*, *Spilornis cheela*, *Surniculus lugubris*, *Chalcophaps indica*, *Chloropsis aurifrons*, *Buceros bicornis*, *Ichthyophaga ichthyaeus*, *Gallus sonneratti*, *Oriolus oriolus*, *Pitta brachyuran*, *Coracias benghalensis*, *Pomatorhinus horsefieldii*, *Corvus macrorhynchos*, *Passer flavicollis*, *Motacilla maderaspatensis*, *Ratufa indica*, *Psittacula columboides*, *Harpactes fasciatus*, *Zosterops palpebrosus*, *Burhinus oedicnemus*, *Dendrocitta leucogastra*, *Dendrocitta leucogastra* and *Lole indica* were the recorded species.

Most of the recorded flora and faunal species were endemic to nature. Animal density and diversity was found to be high in Talacauvery wildlife sanctuary and some activities such as trekking and nature education is being conducted by the management in some of the anti-poaching camps, but needs an improvement in creating awareness on conservation and also in educating the Eco tourists about the importance of wildlife. Socio economic survey for the Eco tourists and the management using questionnaire method was successfully recorded and interpreted. Of the samples surveyed, 60% of tourists were belonging to the age group of 20 – 29 years, 85% of the tourists were employed by corporate companies. The information source of the destination for tourists was more through their family and friends and most of the tourists visited the place for the first time and there were very less members who visited the place for the second time. Majority of the tourists opined that the price spent to reach the destination and spent there was cheap and not so expensive and also opined that the conservation level of nature inside the protected area is well maintained. There were demands from the tourists towards the infrastructure development to visit the place more frequently and to contribute towards conservation. Around 45% of the tourists demanded for the construction of toilets and to lay trash cans all over for waste disposal. 20% of the tourists suggested to open few hotels for food and other basic

needs, also there was a suggestion to open an information center or visitor center and also to construct museum of nature to educate the tourists about the ecology and forest resources. Currently, most of the tourists stay near the small towns located near the sanctuary. Many of the tourists are not aware of Forest department guest house and the tourist department guest houses located near the sanctuary. Lots of home stay culture is being practiced in and around the sanctuary which helps in the development of economic status of the community and also helps in promoting the local culture. With the management, based on their ranks, inputs of the activities undertaken for tourists, local's involvement, facilities to be created for tourists and further actions to be made for a balanced ecotourism was captured. Activities such as visiting to cultural sites, trekking and nature education is being undertaken by Forest department. Also there are few camping sites inside the Wildlife sanctuary which attracts tourists. Management is planning to improve the existing roads. 100% of the management interviewees told that they involve local communities and volunteers in ecotourism activities. But State government should take serious steps for the development of the tourism for this destination. Cooperation between the state tourism department, forest department and local organizations is required for boosting up the ecotourism concept in this area. Forest department should strictly follow the code of conduct of eco-tourism. More focus should be given on publicity at national and international level. Advertisement and press can play a vital role in this sector.

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