

Ecotourism Prospects and Management: Issues in Hkakaborazi National Park

U Tun Nyo

Deputy Director of Forest Department of Kachin State
Ministry of Forestry of Union of Myanmar

“the expedition found new species of barking deer (called the leaf deer by local hunters)”

Introduction

On 2 March 1997, a biological expedition, which was led jointly by the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) and Myanmar Forest Department, set out to find new species of plants and animals and to investigate their related habitats and the situation regarding disturbed and undisturbed ecosystems.

The expedition found new species of barking deer (called the leaf deer by local hunters) which was tentatively named *Muntiacus pataoensis*. They also observed very rare orchids, including the slipper orchid, *Paphiopedelium wardii*, which was discovered by F.K. Ward in 1920. They collected 500 species of plants and listed 26 species of animals and 125 species of birds as a result of the expedition.

“disturbance of the environment seems to be diminished because of its remote location in the highlands in the far north”

Hkakaborazi, which attracts botanists, zoologists, and ecotourists with both technical and personal interests, faces threats to some of its rare species, for example, very rare and popular butterflies. Disturbance of the environment seems to be diminished because of its remote location in the highlands in the far north.

This paper suggests administrative and departmental procedures from a management perspective that would be beneficial to the park.

Hkakaborazi protected area has been put into the first priority protected area system, ‘National Park’ and there are still some requirements in order to meet its obligations as a national park. These are as follow.

- Paper boundary demarcation
- Implementation of settlement procedures for the inhabitants according to the ‘Forest Rules and Regulations, 1995’
- Implementation of procedures regarding restrictions on and permission for visitors

The Ethnic Groups in the Hkakaborazi Area

“Hkakaborazi protected area has been put into the first priority protected area system”

Considering the area extends over 2,369 sq.km, the population of 1627 seems very small. Eighteen villages were recorded in the census of February 1999. The different ethnic groups are Yawan, Lisu, Htarone, Jimphaw,

and Myanmar-Tibetans. The majority are Christian but some Myanmar-Tibetans are Buddhist. The largest ethnic group is the Yawan.

Information from the census regarding population, religion, households, schools, cultivated land, and crops is given in Table 23.

Culture

Traditionally the inhabitants, who live on the high mountains in small groups, survive by hunting and taungya cultivation. They are honest and fond of the surrounding forests and streams. They lack advanced education, knowledge of modern agriculture, and awareness about the importance of the environment. Nowadays, they have a chance of being educated in these matters by explorers.

Traditional land use and Hunting practices

Shifting cultivation is practised, and wheat, hill rice, corn, and vegetables are grown. Wild animals are hunted and animal skins sold or exchanged to help meet family needs.

Boundary Demarcation

The area of the national park (2,369 sq. km) that was initially marked on the map comprised the upland areas of the northern boundary, including Hkakaborazi Peak (5,881m).

The boundary demarcation of the park, which borders China and India and has a perimeter roughly estimated at 273.5m will be a big task requiring a special project to accomplish it.

The demarcation process will follow Forest Department procedures and will include the following

- Surveying the boundary (its perimeter)
- Setting up boundary pillars, marking blazes, and recording compass bearings
- Marking prominent trees along the boundary (for example, National Park NP/19973)

Putting up signboards reading 'National Park' on trees at a height of 3.65m

- Inspecting paths
- Detailed Records and Traverse Map of the Park

The process will require a survey team and a working schedule of a year. The survey and demarcation work should take place from November to March, which is the dry season. The survey will take about three years.

The cost, the members of the task force, and the field equipment, survey tools, and instruments required will have to be worked out in detail.

The parts of the park boundary bordering China and India are the most important; they are dealt with through international law and mutual agreements.

Weather

Putao Region is 420m above sea level and rainfall is very high – 3.9m per year, on average. Rainfall occurs all year round; the monthly rainfall pattern from 1996 to 1999 is shown in Table 24.

Table 23: Socioeconomic survey in Hkakaborazi National Park (February 1999)

Village	Ethnic group	Population			Religion	No. of households	No. of schools	Cultivated land (ha)	Crops grown
		Male	Female	Total					
Ali Aung	Yawan	62	69	131	Christianity	21	1	16	Rice, corn, wheat, rye
Tasulaung	Yawan	30	33	63	Christianity	10	1	8	Rice, corn, wheat, rye
Cushion (1)	Yawan	25	31	56	Christianity	8	1	7	Rice, corn, wheat, rye
Cushion (2) (MaKkan tract)	Yawan	18	32	50	Christianity	6	1	6	Rice, corn, wheat, rye
YanHtang (MaHkan tract)	Yawan	23	24	47	Christianity	6	1	6	Rice, corn, wheat, rye
MaKhan (MaKhan tract)	Yawan	106	78	184	Christianity	28	1	22	Rice, corn, wheat, rye
Dahon dun (Tsutu tract)	Tibetan	36	32	68	Buddhist	11	1	8	Rice, corn, wheat, rye
Khayoung (Tsutu tract)	Yawan Htarone	71	88	159	Christianity	28	1	19	Rice, corn, wheat, rye
Talar ku (Tasutu tract)	Yawan	43	31	74	Christianity	12	1	9	Rice, corn, wheat, rye
Tasutu (Tsutu tract)	Yawan	94	89	183	Christianity	27	1	22	Rice, corn, wheat, rye
Nga war (Ngawar tract)	Yawan	60	52	112	Christianity	17	1	14	Rice, corn, wheat, rye
Kawaing (Ngawar tract)	Yawan	55	58	113	Christianity	18	1	14	Rice, corn, wheat, rye
Dagon (Dagondan tract)	Yawan	50	55	105	Christianity	11	1	13	Rice, corn, wheat, rye
MaDain (Dagondan tract)	Tibetan	35	40	75	Buddhism	11	1	9	Rice, corn, wheat, rye
Sandan (Dagondan tract)	Yawan	18	20	38	Christianity	5	1	4	Rice, corn, wheat, rye
Taon dan (Dagondan tract)	Yawan	15	12	27	Christianity	3	0	3	Rice, corn, wheat, rye
Pan Nandin (Pan Nandin tract)	Yawan	25	27	52	Christianity	6	1	6	Rice, corn, wheat, rye
Man Ton (Pan Nandin tract)	Yawan	43	48	91	Christianity	10	1	11	Rice, corn, wheat, rye
Total		809	819	1628		238	17	197	

Table 24: Normal and Monthly Rainfall (mm) from 1996 to 1999 in Putao Division, Kachin State

Month	Normal rainfall	1996	1997	1998	1999
January	13	15	16.3	43.9	5.1
February	35.05	44.4	37.6	30.2	--
March	72.90	20.6	163.3	151.9	24.9
April	146.05	104.4	73.9	124.2	40.9
May	169.93	82.3	105.9	243.6	426.2
June	720.60	462	459.2	720.9	1086.1
July	955.04	923	1085.9	1082.5	980.2
August	905	1066.8	1046.7	1023.9	1020.1
September	629.92	306.6	746.5	449.8	1137.4
October	208.03	216.2	20.3	220.5	95.2
November	4.83	61.2	9.1	39.1	--
December	19.05	--	41.1	22.6	--
Total	3896.11	3835.9	3806.4	4147.8	4816.1

Settlement Procedures for the inhabitants according to the 'Forest Rules and Regulations, 1995'

The Forest Settlement Officer has the following authorised responsibilities relating to the inhabitants and villages in a forest reserve or protected area.

- The Settlement Officer is responsible for announcing to the local community the intentions for the area to be legally protected and to ask the people rights and privileges they want to claim.
- The Settlement Officer is responsible for interviewing the applicants who are claiming rights and privileges and granting some rights or privileges with the permission of the Director General and the Minister from the Ministry of Forestry.

There are very sensitive issues to take into account, related to cultural, social, economic, and religious matters. There should be specific instructions and mutual agreements between the Forest Department and the inhabitants that will favour environmental conservation, and some surrounding areas of the villages will be excluded from the national park for cultivation.

A community development plan and programmes for future integrated assessment have to be considered in order to prevent the cutting down of forests and traditional hunting practices.

It is inevitable that the Nature and Wildlife Conservation Section of the Forest Department will have to be acquainted with the local community so that they can provide education about environmental conservation and scientific agriculture.

The degree of fully protected and systematic management of a national park depends on the reflection and reaction of the local community in a protected area.

Recommendations for ecotourism

Putao (Hkakaborazi Peak and its environment), which has a reputation for snow-capped mountains and undisturbed forests, attract visitors (tourists and ecotourists) from different parts of the world.

“the peak season for tourism is from January through to March”

The numbers of tourists from 17 different countries are shown in Table 25. The peak season for tourism is from January through to March. The highest recorded monthly inflow of tourists is 26 in January 1998 (Table 26) and February 1999 (Table 27). In 1998 and 1999 a total of 145 tourists visited Putao.

Table 25: Numbers of tourists from different countries (1998-1999)

Country of origin	Number of Tourists		
	Male	Female	Total
Russia	2	0	2
Japan	24	1	25
Germany	5	1	6
Spain	5	4	9
Taiwan	3	0	3
Italy	14	23	37
Australia	8	0	8
France	7	0	7
Canada	4	3	7
USA	6	3	9
Korea	5	0	5
Singapore	3	4	7
Thailand	7	6	13
Ireland	1	0	1
UK	4	0	4
Denmark	0	1	1
Sweden	1	0	1
Total	99	46	145

“the tourists came with different aims”

Table 26: Monthly Inflow of Tourists in 1998

Month	Number of Tourists		
	Male	Female	Total
January	16	10	26
February	9	3	12
March	7	5	12
April	6	0	6
May	4	1	5
June	7	0	7
July	2	1	3
August	1	0	1
September	0	0	0
October	0	0	0
November	0	0	0
December	6	2	8
Total	58	22	80

The tourists came with different aims, which include hiking, mountaineering, undertaking research on animals and plants, camping, bird watching, and cultural study. Ecotourists have many different specialities such as botany, zoology, mountaineering, hiking, and an interest in butterflies and orchids.

Table 27: Monthly Inflow of Tourists in 1999

Month	Number of Tourists		
	Male	Female	Total
January	15	6	21
February	11	15	26
March	5	3	8
April	5	0	5
May	3	0	3
June	1	0	1
July	0	0	0
August	1	0	1
September	0	0	0
Total	41	24	65

“anybody who wants to visit the Putao area should have knowledge of the proper communication channels”

Anybody who wants to visit the Putao area should have knowledge of the proper communication channels (see suggestions in Figure 13) so that difficulties in obtaining legal permission to visit are not experienced.

Details of visits and itineraries should be given to all authorities concerned in advance. Problems occurred in early 1999 because some visitors could not prove they had the appropriate permission or were unaware of certain restrictions.

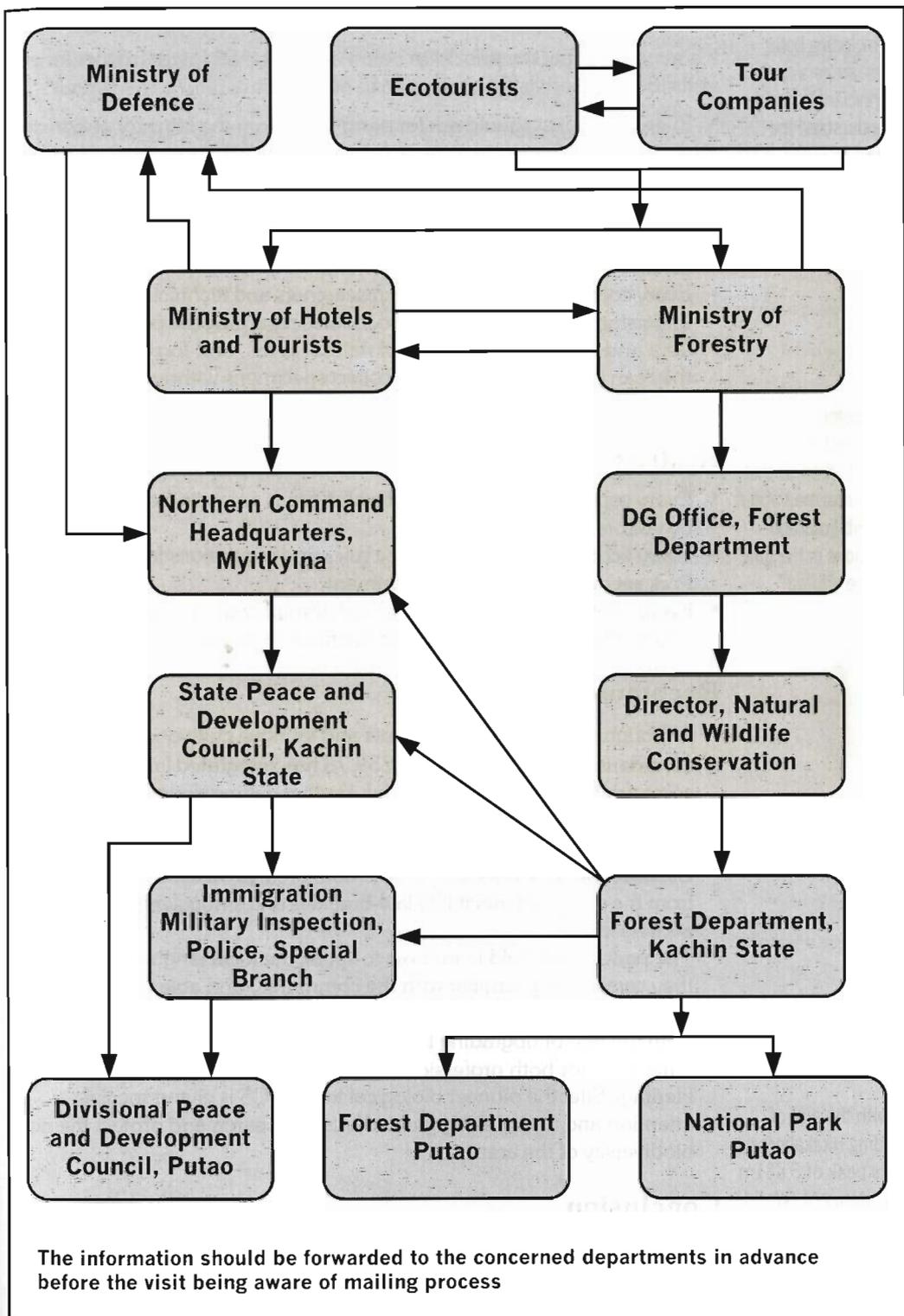


Figure 13: **Suggested Communication Channels for Ecotourism**

“every ecotourist (including both researchers and technicians) should understand the departmental procedures regarding the protection of flora and fauna”

“every ecotourist should contact local administration so that they are informed about prohibitions and permissions in the zone to be visited”

“with the aim of upgrading Hkakaborazi, with its peak of 5,881m to the status of ‘World Heritage Site’”

Permission to visitors

It is suggested that the principles below should be adopted in order for visits to go smoothly.

- Every ecotourist should ask for permission from the Ministry of Forestry to undertake their research or fulfil their intended purposes.
- Every ecotourist should report to the local administration as soon as they arrive in the locality.
- Every ecotourist should have copies of their personal papers that they can show to the authorities concerned.
- Every ecotourist (including both researchers and technicians) should understand the departmental procedures regarding the protection of flora and fauna, conservation of natural areas, and forest law so that they can undertake research or collect specimens without breaking the law.

Restrictions for visitors

- Every ecotourist should find out which areas are restricted from access by visitors.
- Every ecotourist should know the rules and regulations for the National Park set out by the Forest Department.
- Every ecotourist should contact local administration so that they are informed about prohibitions and permissions in the zone to be visited.

Recommendations

- Although the extent of settlements and taungya cultivation seems small considering the park area (381,259.78 ha), integrated land use by the community should be encouraged. Further cutting down of forests should be restricted. The local community should be educated about the importance of endangered species.
- Because the park is located in a remote area, protection of rare species from the danger of inevitable law-breakers and smugglers should be addressed.
- The park staff should learn how to speak the local language so that they can become familiar with the community and able to help change their traditions.
- With the aim of upgrading Hkakaborazi, with its peak of 5,881m and attractions for both professionals and amateurs, to the status of ‘World Heritage Site’ the pioneer biological team WCS is giving special attention and undertaking great efforts to research and protect the rich biodiversity of the area.

Conclusion

The Ministry of Forestry is responsible for encouraging ecotourism, to help fulfil the national plan objectives of welcoming international travellers to our land and promoting the tourist industry. This paper gives general suggestions, which, although not technical, do highlight the management issues.

Bibliography (not necessarily cited in text)

- Ministry of Forestry (1994) *The Protection of Wildlife and Wild Plants and Conservation of Natural Areas Law, June*. Union of Myanmar: Ministry of Forestry
- Rabinowitz, A. (1998) *Trip Report, Myanmar, April-May*. Wildlife Conservation Society
- The State Law and Order Restoration Council (1992) *Forest Law, 3rd November*
- Wildlife Conservation Society (1997) *Myanmar Program Report*