

# Bird Watching Tourism in Gaoligongshan National Nature Reserve, China

FOR MOUNTAINS AND PEOPLE



## What is Birdwatching Tourism?

Birdwatching tourism is growing in popularity around the world. Birders, conservationists, and photographers are often among those tourists who travel to foreign destinations with the intention of viewing indigenous birds in their natural habitats.

Bird watching tourism offers an opportunity to integrate development with conservation goals.

## How is it relevant to the Far Eastern Himalayan Landscape?

The areas in which the Landscape Initiative for The Far Eastern Himalaya (HI-LIFE) operate have great potential for birdwatching tourism. There are 490 bird species in Namdapha National Park of India, 311 species in Hkakaborazi National Park of Myanmar, and 525 species in Gaoligongshan National Nature Reserve (GNNR) of China.

The black stork, golden eagle, Sclater's monal, Mrs Hume's pheasant, green peafowl, buff-barred warblers, Yunnan fulvetta, fire-tailed sunbird, red-tailed laughing thrush, and Himalayan bluetail are among the landscape's rare and endangered bird species. Among the other birds found here, many are endemic species or have special aesthetic value.

In GNNR, China, birdwatching has been successfully promoted as high-end tourism. The Namdapha National Park of India also receives a considerable number of birdwatchers each year. In Myanmar, there is potential for birdwatching tourism along the route from Putao Town to the Hkakaborazi Wildlife Sanctuary, as well as along other routes. Birdwatching tourism could provide an effective alternative livelihood option to local communities in the landscape.

The Conservation and Development Strategies of China, India, and Myanmar all identify birdwatching tourism as priority areas of development. With the development of sustainable, socially responsible tourism, the rich bird diversity of the landscape can play significant cultural, aesthetic, and economic roles in the lives of local people.

## Birdwatching Tourism in Baihualing, China

The community forests of Baihualing Administrative Village (BAV), located immediately adjacent to GNNR, form part of the buffer zone separating the administrative village and the nature reserve. BAV is composed of eight natural villages of which we take a closer look at Hanlong Village and Baihualing Village here.

Due to its proximity to GNNR and the rich diversity of bird species found in the reserve, Hanlong has become a popular destination for birdwatchers. International tourists have been travelling to the village to birdwatch for years and the number of Chinese tourists and photographers visiting has rapidly increased in recent years. The local community has been benefitting from birdwatching tourism since 2004. They provide food, accommodation, and transport services to tourists or work as guides, souvenir makers, and local niche producers. The villagers are also innovating to attract tourists, establishing business networks through social media. Associations



Birdwatching in Baihualing

such as Cloud Birders, [www.birdnet.com](http://www.birdnet.com), China Birding Tour, Kunming Birdwatching Association, and Xishuangbanna Wildbird Society support market linkages.

In 2016, BAV attracted 40,000–50,000 birdwatchers from China and abroad. Birdwatching activities contribute anywhere between USD 3,000–20,000 to each participating household annually. These economic returns have motivated locals to engage in the long-term monitoring and conservation of birds, making for an efficient conservation strategy.



Tourists trekking through a traditional birdwatching route

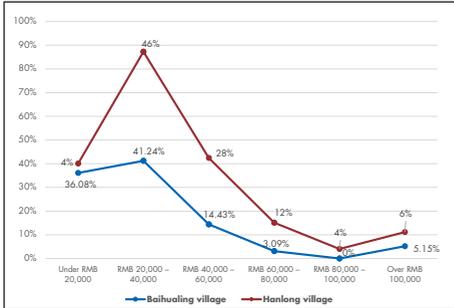
## Birdwatching Tourism Practices: A HI-LIFE Assessment

With Hanlong as the main study village and Baihualing as a contrast village, HI-LIFE assessed birdwatching tourism practices in BAV through multiple dimensions in its case study.

Ecological	Does birdwatching tourism lead to better biodiversity and environmental conservation?
Economic	Do tourism activities increase local household income?
Socio-cultural	Does birdwatching tourism lead to increased community organization/moral conduct/individual behavior? Does bird watching tourism promote traditional culture?
Institutional	Does the self-organizing/regulating mechanism among communities sustainably strengthen birdwatching tourism?
Governance	Do all households/marginalized groups/female have equal opportunity to participate?
Education	Has birdwatching tourism increased awareness/knowledge of participating households?
Technologies	Is the local community able to use new technologies to promote tourism?

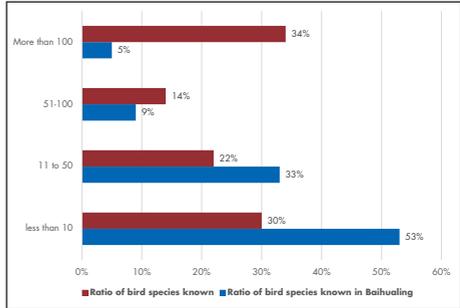


Surveys being conducted as part of the HI-LIFE assessment



Annual household income in Hanlong Village and Baihualing Village

The chart above illustrates the differences in household income in Hanlong Village and Baihualing Village. Birdwatching tourism is integral to the livelihoods of many Hanlong households, and activities related to it strengthen the local economy. Only 4% of families in Hanlong earn less than RMB 20,000 a year whereas in Baihualing, the number is close to 37%. Additionally, 10% of families in Hanlong are in the higher income bracket, earning between RMB 80,000–100,000 or above RMB 100,000.



Villagers' knowledge of bird species in Hanlong and Baihualing

The chart above represents local knowledge of bird species in Hanlong and Baihualing. Villagers in Hanlong, where birdwatching tourism is firmly established, know a lot about birds. Although Baihualing Village itself is not involved in birdwatching tourism, it is interesting to note that some locals in the area also have good knowledge of birds. Over 50% of Baihualing locals can identify at least 10 birds. This figure represents the community's ability and willingness to participate in birdwatching tourism. In neighbouring Hanlong, the 35% of villagers have knowledge of over 100 species.



### For further information contact

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Photos: Gao Senfeng, GNNR, China, Deepa Basnet

ICIMOD gratefully acknowledges the support of its core donors: the Governments of Afghanistan, Australia, Austria, Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Norway, Pakistan, Sweden, and Switzerland.

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