



NATURE TRAIL STUDY AT SATCHARI NATIONAL PARK (PROPOSED)





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1. Introduction

The proposed Satchari National Park (NP) is one of the pilot sites under Nishorgo Support Project (NSP). Although, NSP is primarily concerned with the biodiversity conservation of 5 Protected Areas (PAs) of Bangladesh, the project also aims at promoting ecotourism in those pilot PAs with a view that Bangladeshi citizens begin increasingly recognize the importance of local biodiversity and its aesthetic values and benefit from it. Importance and benefit from eco-tourism is worldwide recognized and is being considered as an important element in any resource /biodiversity conservation program. Development of ecotourism is also seen as means of partnership building with local people for sustainable management of forest resources. As envisaged in IRG project proposal, development of ecotourism in these PAs is seen as a source for deriving tangible benefit for local people living in and around it.

While there is potential for ecotourism development targeting the local Bangladeshi people in the PAs, unfortunately, at this time, a visitor to the 5 PAs under NSP would have little guidance on where to go or what to see. Even if they did look around the PA, they would have little idea what they are seeing.

Trails are walkways that could be used by the visitors, nature lovers and others for hiking or outings while they visit a forest or any other landscapes. Trailing is considered as an important tool for nature watch that helps awareness building and other conservation efforts.

Considering the above, Forest Department has taken an initiative through the NSP to develop few initial simple and easy trails within each pilot site of the NSP. From the project implementation perspective, development of these initial trails is also seen as a means for demonstrating the importance of biodiversity conservation of the PAs to the policy makers of the country. The policy makers could be taken to inside of these PAs and show them the beauty.

It may be further mentioned that these trails would be of initial trails. A more complete development and mapping of hiking trails will be completed in the context of approved management plans at a later date.

2. Objectives

The overall purpose of the activity is to promote and develop ecotourism in Satchari NP for as part of strengthening conservation effort. The specific objectives of the study were:

- To identify a short, a medium and a long existing trails within the sanctuary for outings and/or hiking to be used by targeted visitors

- To describe each identified trails including its physiography and attractions (ecological and cultural), and produce maps with a view to provide guidance to the visitors
- To initiate the involvement of the local people with ecotourism activity so that they can derive tangible benefit from this
- To make recommendations and suggestions for the development and improvement of the identified trails

3. Methodology

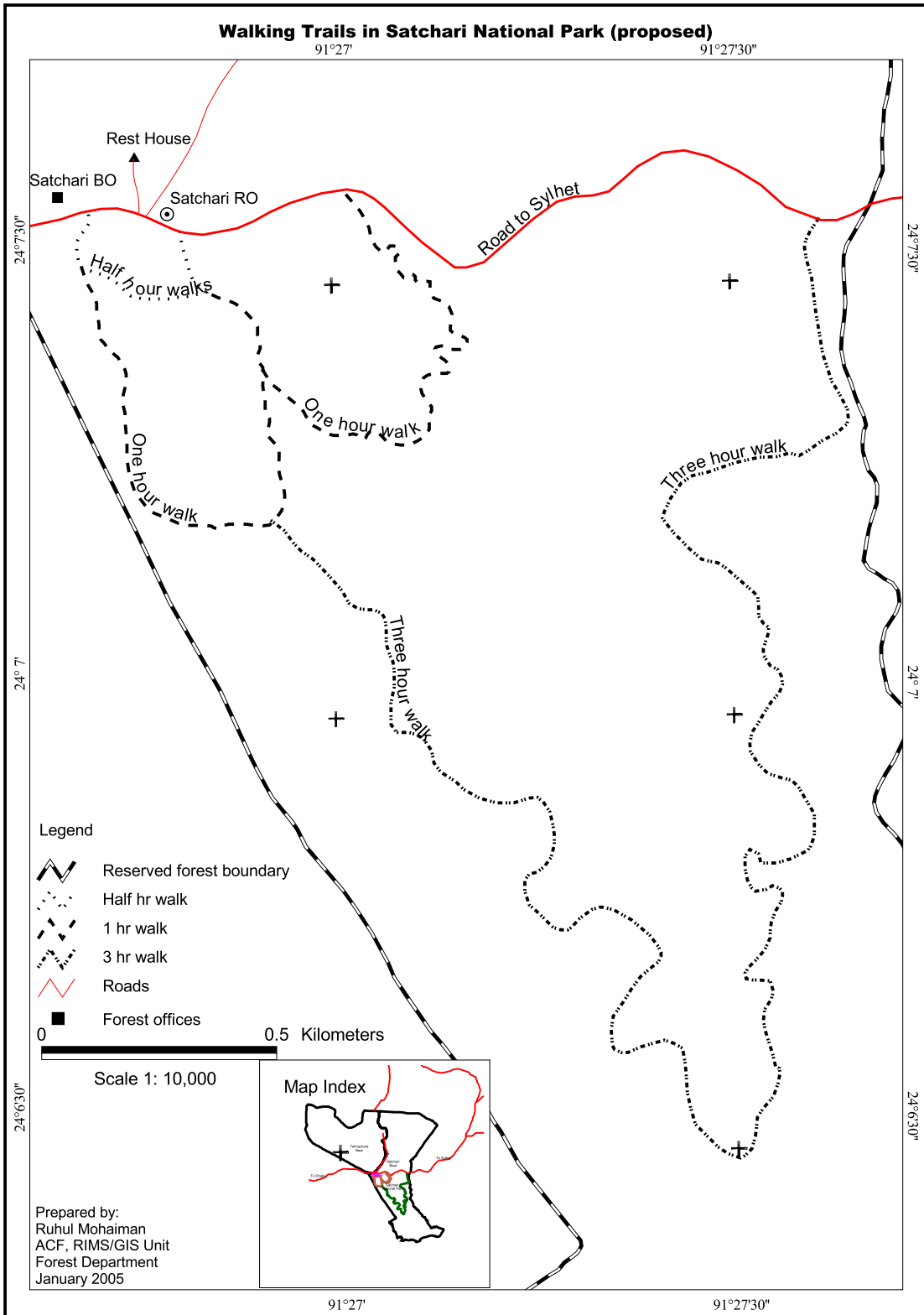
The trail study at Satchari was carried out by NACOM with the participation of FD staff, RDRS staff and local stakeholders (Table 1) during 29 November to 1 December 2004. Initial discussions were held at Satchari Range Office by involving FD staff, local people and field staff of RDRS and NACOM to know about existing walking trails inside the NP. A forest map of Satchari was shown to them and possible trails were roughly sketched on the map keeping in view the ecological and cultural features of the NP.

Table 1: **Participants of the Satchari Trail Study**

SI no.	Name	Designation	Organization/ address
1	Shiba Prasad Kar	Team Leader of the study	NACOM
2	Dhruba Kanta Kundu	Field Monitoring and Research Specialist	NACOM
3	Azizul Islam	Site Facilitator	RDRS
4	Mokhlesur Rahman	RO, Satchari Range	FD
5	Mia Sirajul Haque	BO, Satchari Beat	FD
6	Mohammad Ali	FG, Satchari Beat	FD
7	Asit Debborma	Local villager	Tiprapara, Satchari
8	Samir Mollik	do	do
9	Palash Debborma	do	do
10	Umesh Saotal	do	do
11	Rasel Debborma	do	do
12	Pradip Debborma	do	do

Team members (Table 1) walked through different trails and identified various ecological and cultural attractions. A format was used to note the field descriptions including the GPS location at different points of the trails. GPS coordinates (way points) were noted for each trail depending on the special attractions of the particular trail. After traversing the existing walking trails, three trails were finally identified. These are named as Short trail (half an hour walk trail), Medium trail (one hour walk trail) and Long trail (three hours walk trail). The GPS coordinates were later plotted on the GIS map of FD to produce the trails map of Satchari NP (Map 1).

Map 1: Walking Trails in Satchari National Park (proposed)



4. Description of the identified trails

4.1 Short trail (half an hour walk trail)

4.1.1 Specific information on short trail

Location: Starting point 24.12671 N and 91.44347 E (on the main metallic road, adjacent to the entrance road of Range Office), a signboard is placed with writing on it "Wilderness Area" to the south of the road) and ends at the same point after a loop.

Length: About 1 km

Width: At starting point 2-3 m but after a while it becomes 0.5 to 1 meter

Path type: The earthy trail begins with grass cover, crosses a wide dry stream twice and the rest of the path is earthy with bare soil or grass.

Soil type: Sandy clay to sandy loamy sometimes brown in colour with slight elevated *tila* near Tipra Para village.

Topography: The trail is almost flat in general but near Tipra Para it passes through the valley of the elevated *tila* on which the Tipra Para Forest village is situated. The trail slopes down while nearing the stream which it crosses twice.

Flora: Natural vegetation is worth enjoying on both sides of the trail. The main plant species are *Chapalish*, *Shimul*, *Dumur*, *Sada Belpui*, Bamboo, *Sheora* and *Nowri*. Teak plantations on the left side of the trail can be noticed after 100 meter walk. Bamboo and cane are present as under-storey at many places.

Fauna: While starting the trail hiking from main road, chirping of birds may welcome you to the forest. Macaques and Langur are seen around on the tree branches and Mongoose may appear near to you walking the trail.

4.1.2 Description of the short trail sights

Start from the main road about 100 meters east from Satchari Beat Office (BO). After reaching a signboard (WILDERNESS), turn right to find a *Mini Jarul* tree just behind the signboard (Photo 1). Walk along the trail, and you will encounter a wide (5 meters) stream, which is almost dry in the winter and so not difficult to cross as there is a very little flow of the stream from left to right. Enjoy lush green vegetation on both sides of the stream, notice at left bamboo as undergrowth.



Photo 1 Starting point for the short/medium/long trail



Photo 2: A partial view of the short trail, immediate after the stream at Satchari

Different indigenous tree species include *Chapalish*, *Madar*, *Belpui*, *Asar*, *Putti*, *Sheora* and *Shimul*. There are charming undergrowth with dominant species of bamboo and cane (Photo 2). The beautiful sound of chirping birds such as Myna, Ghugu, Bulbuli will please you.

Turn right to a new trail towards *Tipra Para*, have a look of Teak plantations at the left and natural vegetation with dense undergrowth to right. The trail is a sandy to loamy and narrow in nature at this point. Move forward to find cane vegetation (plantation of 1997) on both sides of the trail and also a small narrow stream across the trail with very little flow.

After a while you will surely recognize fruit bearing trees such as Am, *Kathal*, *Kamranga* and *Chalta* on right. It seems that there was a homestead around which these trees were established. On left dense cane vegetation is worth noticing. After a few footsteps, *Jarul* trees can be seen on the right side of the trail. Go ahead, you will find big mango trees on right side of the trail. Near the open flat land (looks like a playground) a few big trees of *Jam*, *Kathal* can be seen. If you look at left side, there is a lemon garden with refreshing scent and big sized lemons hanging from lemon trees.

After a while, you will cross a concrete culvert over a sharp natural stream. Stand on the culvert for a moment and look back on both sides of the trail to have a beautiful view of natural vegetation and a lemon garden established by Tipra Forest Villagers. Pass through the lemon garden along the foothills and you are now crossing Tipra Para. Keep going, you will find banana and lemon gardens. There are 23 Tipra houses on the top and along the slope of the hill. Watch the homesteads of Tipra people on which they cultivate betel leaves for household consumption but also as cash crop.

Enter a Tipra house (with permission) to know about their house pattern and life style. In the Tipra village, most of the settlements are earthy houses with sun grass thatching. There are many fruit bearing trees around each house. The Tipra people hold their traditional lifestyle, although some are now a days influenced by modern culture. They usually rear cow, bear, goat, hen etc for household consumption and also for partial family income. The simple and delighted Tipra people are very much cooperative and their hospitality will certainly please you. Turn right and go down the hilly trails; to come across again the wide stream that you had earlier left behind.

After crossing the stream, you will find open land with tree species of *Gamari*, *Jam*, *Bat* and *Sissoo*. Rush to the main road to get refreshed in FD bungalow or Nishorgo office (near Satchari Range Office). Have the charming view of Satchari while sitting on an easy chair at veranda of the FD bungalow or at Nishorgo office. Relax and enjoy the beauty of nature in a cool mind.

4.2 Medium Trail (one hour walk trail)

4.2.1 Specific information on medium trail

Location: Starting from the eastern side of road (about 30 meter southeast from of Satchari Range office, GPS location 24.12676 N and 91.44343 E) and ending after reaching the main road to the west of the starting point (GPS location 24.12683 N and 91.44183 E).

Length: About 2 km

Width: At starting point about 2 meter wide; the width varies from 0.5 to 1 meter subsequently

Type of Path: The entire path is earthy with bare soil, sometimes sandy with little grass cover

Type of soil: Sandy clay to sandy loamy forest soil

Topography: Undulating with easy walk

Flora: Main plant vegetation includes *Chapalish*, *Teak*, *Shimul*, *Dumur*, *Sada Belpui*, *Bamboo*, *Sheora* and *Nowri*. Bamboo and cane are found as undergrowth of the main tree species. There are some private lemon gardens and homestead fruit trees especially near to Tiprapara Forest Village.

Fauna: Many types of birds, macaques and langur, squirrels mongoose, frogs and some of the snakes are common in the park.

4.2.2 Description of the medium trail sights

Start from the main road (about 100 meter east from Satchari Beat Office) near a signboard "Wilderness Area" (Photo 1). Turn right towards a Mini Jarul tree just behind the signboard. Walk along the trail to cross a wide (5m) stream, which remain dry in the winter. Notice good vegetation on both with different natural tree species including *Chapalish*, *Dewa*, *Shimul*, *Bhadi*, *Madar*, *Belpui*, *Sheora*, *Asar*, *Putti* and *Ratta*, and undergrowth of cane and bamboo. The other species are cane, and others. Chirping birds will please you; common birds are *Myna*, *Ghugu*, *Shalik*, *Tia* and *Bulbuli*.

Go along the trail but do not follow the small trail that goes towards Tiprapara. On left there are bamboo sheaths and then nice teak plantations. While walking on sands, you will find natural vegetation of Cane, *Gamari*, *Chapalish* and other species on both sides of the trail.

If you move forward, there are scattered Teak trees at left after a nice lemon garden. On your right, observe the beauty of natural vegetation with various forest tree species such as *Chikrassi*, *Ratta* and *Jhiga* with dense undergrowth.

While walking enjoy natural vegetation of the park with diversified forest species. Forest birds will keep you charming with their sweet songs. The vegetations attain a close canopy and the view of the forest is beautiful on both sides. Take a few minutes to stand and observe wildlife including Langur and Hollok Gibbons.

Turn right and enter into a new trail towards Tiprapara. You will find a big *Chapalish* tree in front of you. The trail is a bit grassy here with sandy clay soil. Go along to find a lemon garden at your left and on right some scattered trees up the hills. Walk along the forest trail, a wild *Dumur* tree with fruits in its whole body will welcome you to the wilderness. These fruits are very important fodder for wildlife. There are few hillocks around the trail. If you look towards left, there is a nice lemon garden and after that there is a nice view of natural vegetation. A small stream passes to the left of the trail.

After a while, you will see the contrasting view of vegetated and degraded hills. Move along the sandy trail towards the boundary of NP and you will find Satchari Tea Estate to your left. Walk slowly; enjoy the beauty of tea garden and forest on both sides.

The trail now becomes very narrow and passes through dense cover of herbs and shrubs with few trees. A small trail enters into the tea estate to the left. From this point, look at right to the nice hilly vegetation that will please you. The gentle breeze will make you cool and reduce your tiredness.

Move forward to find that the trail crosses through hilly areas, leaving some banana garden at left and lemon garden to your right. Gradually move towards Tiprapara uphill and you will find the foothill of the Tipra houses with nice lemon gardens. You will find a big Bahera tree to your left when going towards the hill. Climb up the hill and reach the Tipra village (Photo 3). The house and lifestyle of the indigenous people are identical and worth noticing. There is a temple within the village for worship. There are about 22 families of Tipra in this village (Photo 4). Stay for while with the Tipra people and enjoy their simple heartiest hospitality.



Photo 3: A typical Tipra house in Tipra Forest Village

Photo 4: Stairs leading to hill top (Tipra Para)

Go down from the hill of Tipra village towards their houses around the foothill to the north. Cross the wide stream that you have passed through just after the starting point. After crossing the stream you will reach the main road. Refresh yourself at Nishorgo Office or Forest Rest House.

4.3 Long Trail (three hour walk trail)

4.3.1 Specific information on long trail

Location: Start from the main road (about 100 meter east from Satchari Beat Office) near the signboard "Wilderness Area" (GPS location 24.12668 N and 91.44347 E). End after reaching the main road to the east of the starting point near to Chaklapunji Tea garden (GPS location 24.12676 N and 91.45703 E: a big Dumur tree adjacent to the road and a signboard of Agar plantation).

Length: About 6 km

Width: At starting point about 2 meter wide, varying subsequently from 0.5 meter to 3 meter

Type of Path: The entire path is earthy with sandy and grass cover at places. The trail sometimes follows the stream particularly near the end.

Type of soil: Sandy clay to sandy loamy forest soil.

Topography: Undulating but easy for walking.

Vegetation: Main plant species are *Chapalish*, *Dewa*, *Teak*, *Shimul*, *Dumur*, *Sada Belpui*, *Rangi*, *Jarul*, *Malacana*, *Eucalyptus*, *Acacia*, *Mehegony*, *Rangi*, *Bahera*, *Amloki*, *Jalpai*, *Agar*, *Chikrassi Sheora* and *Nowri*, There are some lemon gardens around the trail.

Wildlife: Main fauna includes birds (*Myna*, *Tia*, *Shalik*, *Ghugu*, *Vimraj*, *Bon Morog and Mothura*), Macaques, Langur (*Honuman and Chasma Honuman*), squirrels (including Himalayan giant squirrel), Hollok, Bear, Fox, Civet, Hair, Deer, *Mecho bag*, frogs and snakes (*Cobra*, *Dudhraj*, *Darash*, *Kalantar*).

4.3.2 Description of the Long Trail Sights

Start from the main road to the south of Range Office. There is a signboard written "Wilderness" (Photo 1) to your right and to your left there are dense cane and bamboo plantations around the bank of the stream. If you walk along the trail from the starting point, you will find the wide stream (Photo 5). The trail slopes down to the stream which you have to cross carefully.



Photo 5: A wide dry stream across the long trail

Go up to the trail from the stream and you will find natural vegetation on both sides and also may be luck to hear nice chirping of different forest birds. The trail gradually enters into a valley leaving hills, vegetated with *Chapalish* as dominant tree and cane and other shrubs as undergrowth (Photo 2). Move along to find a small stream that goes parallel to the trail at the right side.

Wait for a while and enjoy the beauty of silent forest here. If you go ahead you will find that a small trail enters through a bamboo bush to your right, and to your left you will see a big *Hargoja* tree within the scrubby vegetation. Move forward and you will reach a hill with more open space. But soon you will encounter good vegetation of mixed tree species. Wildlife such as Monkey, Langur, and squirrel are frequently seen in this area. Stop for while and enjoy the beauty of a virgin forest (Photo 6). Move forward and you will see that a small trail goes towards tea garden.



Photo 6: Wild fruits and flowers in Satchari forests

Move along the enrichment plantations of *Jam*, *Chapalish* and *Amloki*. After a while you will be able to view forests from uphill and listen to birds. Gradually you will find the forest canopy is becoming denser as you proceed (Photo 7). After a few foot steps, you will see the soil is brown in colour with sandy clay type; hollock gibbons are usually seen here. Wait here for a while if you are eager to hear the shouting of gibbons. Move along and you will feel the real charm of the rain forest as sound of dry leaf falling onto the ground, and also drops of water falling from one leaf to another. These sounds mixing with chirping of different forest birds will provide you a different feeling that you may remember for long. There is a small stream flowing parallel to the trail on your right.



Photo 7: The trail passes through dense natural forest of Satchari

Go ahead, you will hit a bit wider trail (Photo 8) with sandy soil where you will have the feeling of walking on cool sands with beautiful forest canopies above and around you. Be careful about some of the spiders which are common in this place resting within their nets. *Chasma honumans* are frequently seen at this place.



Photo 8: A part of the long trail is sandy at Satchari

After crossing several *tilas* you will find that the natural forests are replaced by old Teak plantations. Here you will find that a small trail turning to left; move along the trail to find nice plantations of *Kadam*, *Acacia* and *Eucalyptus*, and teak plantations on left. Take a rest for a while and enjoy the nice chirping of birds.

Move along the trail, you will find a small trail that goes to plantations (Photo 9). You have to follow the straight trail which is narrow and sandy. Both sides of the trail are densely vegetated. After a while you will find natural vegetation at your left and plantations on your right. The trail here goes through *Acacia* plantations with dense bamboo undergrowth. *Langur (honuman)* may be seen in this quiet place if you are lucky!



Photo 9: The trail goes through plantations

This portion of the trail is plain and sandy with dense vegetation on both sides. You will see some interesting stones spreading around the trail. These stones have been converted from the stems of big timber after conversion through weathering process continued for hundreds of years. Wait and observe the beauty of these stones which are very interesting. Chirping of birds is very common in this place.



Photo 10: Fossilized wood blocks (an attraction to look at)

If you walk further you will reach a stream which is dry and sandy. This portion of the trail is wider and saturated with the charming sound of birds. Stones converted from fossil of timber trunk (mainly from *Gamari* and *Awal* tree) are available along this portion of the trail (Photo 10). After a few foot steps, you will find a small trail that goes towards *Chaklapunji* Tea Estate. There is a new plantation site of *Garjan*, *Mahagony*, *Akashmoni* etc. around the trail (Photo 11).



Photo 11: A partial view of the long trail at Satchari

Turn right towards Agar plantation through *Phul jharu* shrubs on both sides. There are two trails at your left, one goes to Range Office along the stream and the other goes to main road (at *komi Muchra*). Follow the trail that goes to Agar plantations which are worth observing. The landscape here is really beautiful. Dense undergrowth of sun grass, bamboo and cane provides a good habitat for Bear and so careful. After a while Agar plantations of the year 2000 starts. Gradually the trail goes upwards through Agar plantation on both sides of the trail.



Photo 12: Trail passes through Agar plantations at Satchari

Move forward to reach the main road near to border of NP and Chaklapunji Tea Estate. There is a big *Dumur* tree (Photo 12) at your left and a big signboard (of Agar plantations) near to the road. Get into your vehicle and reach the Forest Rest House at Satchari (about 2 km to the west) (Photo 13).



Photo 12: End point of the long trail, marked by a big *Dumur* (Fig) tree



Photo 13: Forest Rest House at Satchari NP

5. What to do in the NP

- Wear comfortable and field compatible clothes and shoes
- Use sunglasses and sunscreen
- Take necessary repellents for leeches and skin worms
- Walk silently to observe the wildlife
- Take sufficient drinking water and dry food specially for the long trail
- Take a compass to know the various directions
- Take a camera and a binocular to catch some of the rare scenery of the Satchari National Park (proposed)
- Take necessary permission to enter into Tipra Forest Village

6. What not to do in the NP

- Never throw litter on to the ground of the NP
- Do not make noise that disturbs the wildlife
- Do not agitate wildlife
- Do not tear or collect any parts of plants
- Do not walk alone and try to form a group to visit the NP
- Do not disturb lifestyle and culture of Tipra people

7. Suggestions and recommendations

- Some of the trails are wet at places and slippery especially during wet season. These portions of the trails can be improved by putting gravel on to the ground so that visitors can easily walk through.
- Two wooden bridges should be developed above the wide stream adjacent to main road: one is along the main trail just after the signboard and the other is near to Tipra Village
- Leeches and skin worms frequently catch human body while walking along the trails of the Satchari National Park (proposed). Therefore, visitors should use repellents before start hiking along the trails. Ginger could be used as repellent for skin worms and talcum powder for leeches.
- Some of the places of the trails are very remote and less secure for visitors unless FD staff patrol those areas more frequently
- Some of the portions of the trails are broken and some earth filling works will be needed for smooth walk of the tourist.
- Detailed signboards are required to set up along the trails that shows the way to the visitors and provides information concerning the attractions of the trails.
- Brochures describing the attractions of the trails are also important to be prepared for the visitors containing detailed information about the trails. It should be simple, attractive in design and handy so that nature lovers can easily carry during their hikes.

- Nishorgo office at Satchari will act as an information centre for the tourists. Therefore, this office should be strengthened with more information and materials to encourage ecotourism in Satchari National Park.
- Local stakeholders who were involved in trail study could developed as professional tourist guide for the site through appropriate training and support.