



## NATURE TRAIL STUDY AT TEKNAF GAME RESERVE





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February 2005



With partners: CODEC, NACOM & RDRS



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# 1. Introduction

Teknaf Game Reserve (GR) 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 Teknaf GR 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 Teknaf Game Reserve was carried out by NACOM with the participation of FD staff, CODEC staff and local stakeholders (Table 1) during 21 to 23 December 2004. Initial discussions were held at Whykheong Range Office by involving FD staff, local people (Photo 1) and other field staff of CODEC and NACOM, mainly to know possible walking trails. A forest map of Teknaf GR was shown to them and trails were roughly sketched on the map. A long discussion was carried out regarding the ecological and cultural features of the GR.

Table 1: **Participants of Trail Study at Teknaf Game Reserve**

Sl	Name	Designation	Organization/ addresss
1.	Shiba Prasad Kar	Team Leader of the study	NACOM
2	Shafiqur Rahman	Field Monitoring and Research Specialist	NACOM
3	Kazi Saifuzzaman	Site Facilitator, Teknaf	CODEC
	Md Khorshed Alam	Field Organizer	CODEC
4	A.H.M Rezaul Karim	Range officer, Whykheong	FD
5	Hafizur Rahman	Deputy Range officer, Whykheong	FD
6	Birendranath Roy	BO, Raikheong Beat	FD
7	Mokhlesur Rahman	FG, Whykheong Beat	FD
8	Md Samedul Huq	FG, Raikheong Beat	FD
9	Md Idris Mia	FG, Raikheong Beat	FD
10	Mostafizur Rahman	FG, Shaplapur Beat	FD
11	Bhaigyomon Chakma	Forest Villager	Harikhola, Whykheong

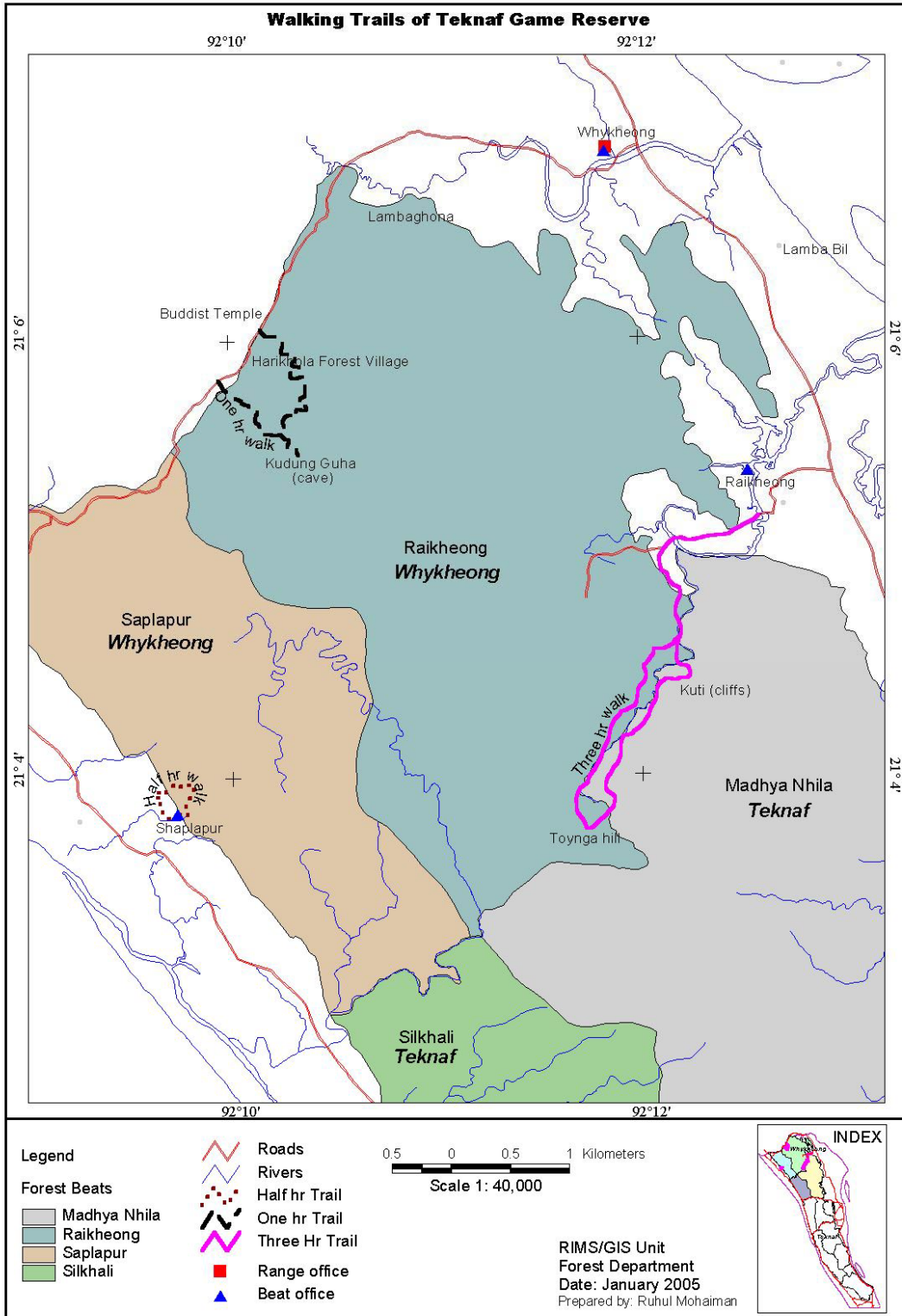
12	Ong Chaiggo Chakma	Forest Villager	Raikheong
13	Babul Barua	Forest Villager	Raikheong
14	Ali Akbar	Forest Villager	Raikheong
15	Nur Alam	Local stakeholder	Whykheong
16	Mujibul Huq	Local stakeholder	Whykheong
17	Mohammad Hossain	Local stakeholder	Whykheong
18	Bashir Ahmed	Local Stakeholder	Whykheong
19	Nurul Hakim	Headman & Forest Villager	Shaplapur
20	Nur Uddin	Forest Villager	Shaplapur
21	Md Nurul Huq (Kalu)	Forest Villager	Shaplapur



Photo 1: Local stakeholders participated in discussion on existing trails of Teknaf

Team members (Table 1) walked through the identified 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 while walking along the trails, depending on the special attractions of the particular trail. Three were identified finally and named as Short Trail (half an hour walk), Medium Trail (one hour walk) and Long Trail (three hours walk). Based on fieldwork, the GPS coordinates were later plotted on the GIS map of FD at Banbhaban. Thus trails were plotted on the map of Teknaf GR (Map 1).

Map 1: Walking Trails in Teknaf Game Reserve



## **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 from Shaplapur Beat Office (21.06610 N and 92.15793 E) and ends at the same point after a loop through the hilly path.

Length: About 1 km

Width: At starting point 1-2 m, after a while it becomes 0.5-1 m

Type of Path: Earthy trail with little grass cover, very narrow sometimes

Type of soil: Silty clay

Topography: The trail goes through flat land for a while then it passes through steep hilly region and end & again in flat. Terrain.

Vegetation: There are some small patches of natural Garjan Trees around the trail. The hills are almost degraded with scattered trees of Bat, Sheora, Kosoi, Civit, Moose and Lalgach. Homestead plantations of Betel nut, Coconut, Kerung, Kathal, Banana are found around the trail

Wildlife: Main wildlife in Teknaf GR include Elephant, Small Deer, Mecho Bag, Jungle Fowl, Wildboar, Monkey, Wild Dog, Fox, Civet, Tititr, Moyna, Dhanesh (Rasulla), Tia, Shalik, Bulbuli and Finge.



#### 4.1.2 Description of the short trail sights

Reach the Shaplapur Beat Office of Whykheong Forest Range by driving along the coast from Cox'sbazar (35 kilometers away and takes more than an hours. The journey along the longest sea beach of the world will thrill you with high hills at your left and vast sea at your right.

Start from Shaplapur Beat Office (GPS location 21.06610 N and 92.15793 E) and turn right to follow the trail that goes through a banana garden and Betel nut trees. Have a look towards your left on a nice small patch of big Garjan trees.



Photo 2: The trail leads to a hill top at Shaplapur

The trail afterwards is a bit elevated and reaches a hill with planted species of *Mehogony*, *Telsur* and *Chikrassi* (Photo 2). Look back from uphill and you will be delighted to see the nice sea view with blue water (Photo 3). Go up through the hilly trail and you will find some wildlife species such as wild boar, small deer, fox, jungle fowl and birds like *tia*, *moyna*, *shalik* and *bulbuli*.



Photo 3: A scenic view that could be captured from a hill top on the Short trail

Move forward to reach the pick of the hill. Look around and you will enjoy the natural beauty and cool breeze. A small trail goes to your right towards the Beat Office. Follow the trail and you will see a big Garjan tree to your right. Some of the birds on its branches will welcome you to the forest with their nice songs.

Go ahead and you will find that the trail slopes down to a paddy field. Follow the trail and reach the paddy field at the valley of the hills. Look back to the hills you left behind and will see the view of a different landscapes (Photo 4).



Photo 4: An amazing landscape on the Short trail at Shaplapur

Walk through the paddy field and turn right, towards a Private homestead of Am, Kathal, Coconut, Betel nut and Kerung (Photo 5). Move forward and turn to your right to reach Shaplapur Beat office, where the trail ends.



Photo 5: Homestead gardens could be seen while walking along the trail

## 4.2 Medium Trail (one hour walk trail)

### 4.2.1 Specific information on medium trail

Location: Starting from 300 meter west of Harikhola Primary School from the road (GPS location 21.09694 N and 92.16382 E) to the south under Whykheong beat. After reaching the *Kudung Guha* (a cave) the trail returns to *Harikhola* Primary School (GPS location 21.10166 N and 92.16684 E)

Length: About 2 km

Width: 1-2 meter

Type of Path: *Kacha* (earthy), wet and muddy at places

Type of soil: Silty clay to loamy

Topography: Most of tillas (hillocks) that the trail crosses through are of moderate elevation.

Vegetation: Scrubby vegetation with few trees of Moss, Chalta, Tentul, chandul, Bhadi, Jam and *Book Gach*. Most dominant undergrowth species are putti gach, Assam gach and bamboo. Some areas have betel leaf cultivation, jhum cultivation and other agricultural practices, especially near to Harikhola Chakmapara.

Wildlife: Elephants are frequently seen around this trail. Small deer, Small tiger (Mecho bag), Fox, squirrel are also commonly found. Bird species common around this trail include Woodpecker, Parrot, Myna and Finge. Some of the reptiles frogs, snakes are also common around the trail.

#### *4.2.2 Description of the medium trail sights*

Start from 300 meter west of Harikhola Primary School from the road (GPS location 21.09694 N and 92.16382 E) to the south under Whykheong Beat. There is a big Jarul tree at the starting point. The road from which the trail starts goes to Shaplapur from Whykheong.

Move along the trail, and watch the scrubby vegetation on both sides (Photo 6). Elephant foot prints are frequently along the trail. After about 30 meters the trail is wet and muddy and so walk carefully.



Photo 6: A partial view through scrubby vegetation like this

When you enter through this forest area, the surrounding view is nice as there are small streams flowing irregularly on both sides of the trail. *Tentul*, *Chandul*, *Bhadi* are the frequently seen trees around the trail here (Photo 7). The trail goes

through hills on both sides. Foot prints of small tiger and deer are found along the trail. It will be interesting to see some of the wildlife, if you are lucky!



Photo 7: The trail passes through the natural vegetation like this

Move forward, there is a large stream with good water flow. The nice sound of water and chirping of birds will make you pleased in the quiet forest area. There are few big natural trees and dense undergrowth around the trail. Walking along trail here is a bit difficult as it is much slippery (Photo 8 and Photo 9).



Photo 8: A partial view of wet and slippery portion of the medium trail



Photo 9: A partial view of dense undergrowth around the medium trail

Keep going along the trail, there are few trees which are resting places for woodpeckers. Seventeen holes were found in the stem of a big *Book* tree. There are few other trees such as *Jam*, *Kosoi*, *Chandul* around the hills.

If you move forward, you will reach a unique place, *Kudung Guha* (a natural cave through a large hill) (Photo 10). Stop for while in front of the cave and enjoy its natural beauty of this attraction. If you are courageous, walk through the cave to experience cool water that becomes darker as you move through the cave. Move gradually for about 5 to 10 meter through the cave, you will get a different thrill and enjoyment with joy. Small bats will start shouting within this dark cave but do not be scared as they will not harm you .Be carefull when putting your steps within the water of the cave. You may see Elephants around as they come here to drink water.

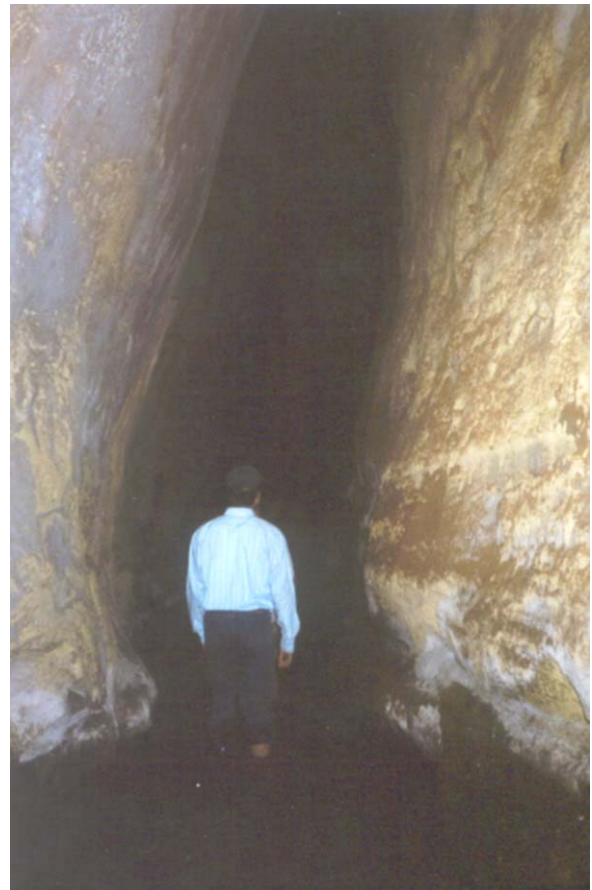


Photo 10: A view of the Kudung cave (Guha) at Whykheong- a thrill to enjoy

Come out *Kudung Guha* and start returning through the trail along which you came here. After walking about 200 meter, turn right towards *Chakma Para* after crossing a stream. As you move along, there is another stream that you have to cross. The surrounding hills have very less vegetation. After a certain distance, you will see that the Forest Villagers do *Jhum* practice on the barren hills.

There are a few betel leaf cultivation areas around the trail. Gradually you will enter into a Forest Village (*Chakma Para*) having 200 families who depend on forests. The houses of this village look nice from the hills. They grow different horticultural species around their houses. There are paddy fields around the village.

The life style of the *Chakma* people (an indigenous community) is colourful but simple. You can spend some time with them to know about their lifestyle and culture. Some of the *Chakma* women are engaged with home textile (Photo 11) you may buy.



Photo 11: A Chakma girl weaving clothes with indigenous technique

The trail gradually moves to *Harikhola* Primary School (near to the road from *Whykheong* to *Shaplapur*) and the school is the ending point of the trail.

### **4.3 Long Trail (three hour walk trail)**

#### *4.3.1 Specific information on long trail*

Location: Start from Abdur Rahman's house (near to Raikheong Beat with GPS location of 21.08805 N and 92.20668 E), Reach upto the *Taingya* Hill inside the forest and return to the starting point through another trail along the main stream.

Length: About 7 km

Width: 0.5 to 3 meter

Type of Path: Fully earthy trail, sometimes along the stream

Type of soil: Sandy loamy to silty clay

Topography: Nearly half of the trail crosses steep hills till *Taingya* hill it reaches, The returning trail is along the stream through the valleys.

Vegetation: Most of the vegetation around this trail is natural but at some points there are plantations. The dominant species of natural forest are Chapalish, Dewa, Jam, Civit, Bat, Urium, Jial bhadi, Jarul, Tentul, Awal, Jir, Banak, Buitta Awal, Shimul and several bamboo species. Planted tree species include Garjan, Sal, Teak and Jarul. There are dense undergrowth of many herbs and shrubs all over the forest.

Wildlife: Elephants are frequently seen along and around this trail. Small deer, Small tiger (Mecho bag), Fox, Deer, Chita bag, Bear, Monkey, Squirrel are also commonly found. Bird species common around this trail are Junglefowl, Bak, Mathura, Parrot, Myna, Finge, Woodpecker etc. Among the reptiles, different frog species, snakes of various species such as Cobra, Darash, Kalantar etc. are common around the trail.

#### 4.3.2 Description of the Long Trail Sights

Start from Abdur Rahman's house (near to *Raikheong* Beat with GPS location of 21.08805 N and 92.20668 E) in village is *Bhubunia*. Move along the trail towards west and gradually you will reach *Putibunia Chakmapara* near a stream that you will to cross through a wooden bridge. There are very few trees around the trail at this point.



Photo 12: The long trail passes through steep slopes of the hills



Turn to your left and cross the paddy field to reach the hilly areas. Go down through the steep hill near to a large stream (Photo 12) at your left and walk along. After a certain distance you will reach a farmhouse inside the forest after crossing several steep hills with very less vegetation. Gradually you will reach an intersection of the trails near farmhouses. Take a rest for a while under the shade of a big Bahera tree (Photo 13).



Photo 13: A big Bahera tree which can be used as watch tower

Start walking again and you will enjoy the nice view of Hangaripara uphill with a few trees on the hills. Move along, you will find wild flowers (for example, *Desra phul*), blooming to enhance the beauty of the forest. Nice chirping birds will also please you, Go ahead and cross several hills with few natural trees (of *Urium*, *Bat*, *Civit*, *Juijja*, *Barala*, *Moose*, *Kaichlu*, *Naricha*, *Bamboo*, *Kosoi*, *bhadi*, *Guijja*, *Bahera*, *Guitta Garjan*, *Chapalish*, *Boilam*, *Telsur*, *Garjan*, *jarul*, *Jam* and *Civit*) Move along the trail and look around wild elephants as elephants are usually seen around here (*Taingya jain*) (Photo 14).



Photo 14: A scenic view along the long trail at whykheong Range (elephants are frequently seen in this area)



Photo 15: A partial view of the Long trail at whykheong Range (the trail passes through a number of hills like this)

After, crossing few hills you will reach the Taingya Hill (GPS location 21.06524 N and 92.19225 E), the highest peak of the area (about 400 feet). Go up to the hill and look around (Photo 15), especially look western side, to have nice sea view. The blue white line of sea water after the hills will attract you. Stop here for a while and enjoy the beauty of nature.

Walk rightwards to the large stream; as you move along, you will reach the stream locally known as *Chalajhiri* (GPS location 21.06828 N and 92.19479 E). The stream bed is hard and rocky. There are several attractive water falls around this place (Photo 16). The water falling from uphill really looks beautiful and the sound of the water falls in this quiet forest will really provide you unique feelings. Relax for a while in this nice natural environment sitting on the rocky bed of the stream.



Photo 16: A scenic water fall at Whykheong Range nearby the Long trail

Move along the trail parallel to the stream at the foothills. You will enjoy beauty of walking through the valleys of steep hills having dense undergrowth. You will be pleased with the sound of water flowing through the stream and chirping of birds. Follow left and right turnings of the trail along the stream to reach another attractive place, *Kuti* (GPS location 21.07240 N and 92.19712 E) (Photo 17). The *Kuti* is an elongated cliff of a steep hill and the bottom of the cliff is hollow. Turn right from the trail and go to the bottom of *Kuti* to enjoy staying under a cliff of a hill.



Photo 17: A cliff, locally called *Kuti* at Raikheong beat (an attraction to look at)

The trail gradually turns left and right and after about 1 km merges into the trail through which you entered the forest area (GPS location 21.07932 N and 92.20031 E). There is a nice dense plantation of *Mehegony*, *Boroi*, *Garjan*, *jarul*, *Jam*, and *Civit*. Stop for a while at the bottom of a large *Bahera* tree.

Move forward along with same trail that you followed before entering the forest, Gradually you will reach to the Abdur Rahman's shop (near to a culvert on the stream which was the starting point of the trail). After this long hike, get into any vehicle and reach your rest house.

## 5. What to Do in the GR

- Wear comfortable and field compatible clothes and shoes
- Use sunglasses and sunscreen, leech repellent (may be talcum powder)
- Walk silently to observe the wildlife
- Take sufficient water and dry food specially for the long trail
- Take a compass to know the various direction
- Take a good camera to catch some of the rare scenery of the Teknaf GR
- Take a good binocular to look at the wild elephants at surrounding hills

## 6. What not to Do in the GR

- Never throw the litters on to the ground of the GR
- 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 GR

## 7. Suggestions and recommendations

- The Medium trail is mostly wet and slippery. These portions of the trail can be improved by putting gravel on to the ground so that visitors can easily walk through.
- Leeches frequently catch human body while walking along the trails of the Teknaf GR. Therefore visitors should use leech repellent before start hiking along the trails
- 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 trails are too narrow to walk freely and therefore future development of the trails will be essential. These trails could be made wider by trimming some of the adjacent undergrowth of the existing trails.
- 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.
- Local stakeholders who were involved in trail study could be developed as professional tourist guides for the site through appropriate training and support.