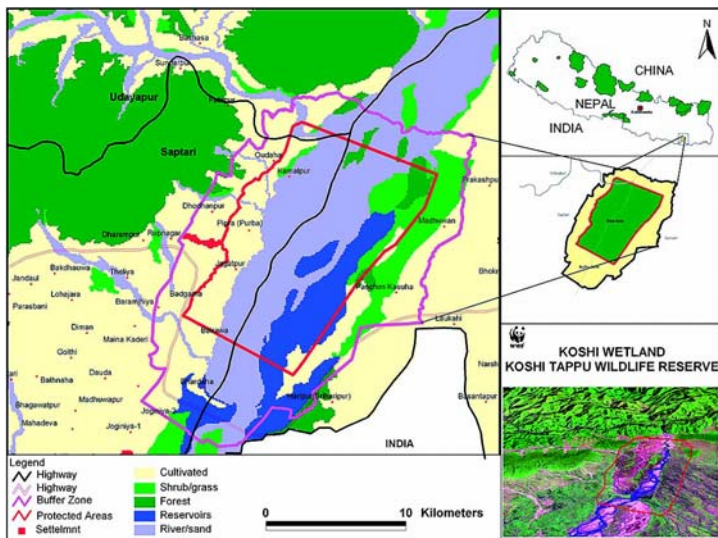




FACTSHEET

Koshi Tappu Wildlife Reserve

Sunsari



Ramsar Designation Date: 17-12-1987

Coordinates: 26°39'00"N
86°59'00"E

Area: 17,500 ha

Length : 24 KM

Elevation: 75 m - 81 m

■ OVERVIEW:

Koshi Tappu Wildlife Reserve is a freshwater, natural and permanent river system located on the flood plains of Sapta Koshi River. It is a major river system in Nepal that originates in the Central Himalayas. Koshi Tappu is a rectangular shaped reserve and was formed by the Koshi barrage near Nepal-India border on the east-west Mahendra National Highway.

■ HYDROLOGICAL VALUE:

The floodplain is a periodically flooded flat area between the river channel and the terrace or plateau delimiting the plain. The Koshi Tappu floodplain gradually dries up

during the post-flooding period, although it remains saturated with water in certain places, while in other places it dries out to a loose sandy, semi-arid condition. The floodplain is also characterized by grassy marshes, oxbow lakes, back swamp lakes and many other depressions which retain water throughout the year.

Flora: The existing vegetation consists of diverse physiognomic types as submerged and floating aquatic plants, tall reed stands, seasonally flooded grassland/savannah and structurally complex forest communities in various conditions of spatial arrangements. Among 514 species of plants, *Dalbergia sissoo*, *Bombyx ceiba*, *Saccharum* sp., *Phragmites* sp., *Typha* sp., *Imperata* sp., *Valisneria* sp., *Eichornia* sp., *Hydrilla* sp., *Azolla* sp., *Lotus* sp. are common species found in the wetlands. Six species of plants found in this area, *Rauwolfia serpentina*, *Alstonia scholaris*, *Oroxylum indicum*, *Acacia catechu*, *Butea monosperma* and *Dalbergia latifolia*, are listed in the different threat categories and appendices of IUCN and CITES respectively. Except *Acacia catechu*, other 5 species are sparse in the area. Lacustrine habitat like oxbow lake such as Kamal Daha harbors 28 species of plants.

Fauna: Among 485 species of birds, notable birds recorded in the site include *Gallixrex cinerea*, *Caprimulgus asiaticus*, *Bubo coromandus*, *Coracina melanoptera*, *Saxicola leucura* and *Megalurus palustris*. At least 114 species are water birds, 176 species breed in the reserve and 180 species are passage migrant or winter visitors. It is the only area in Nepal where water cock, (*Gallixrex cinerea*) and Abbott's babbler are found. Out of these 485 species of birds, 12 species are Globally threatened and 101 species are nationally threatened.



RAMSAR SITES IN NEPAL

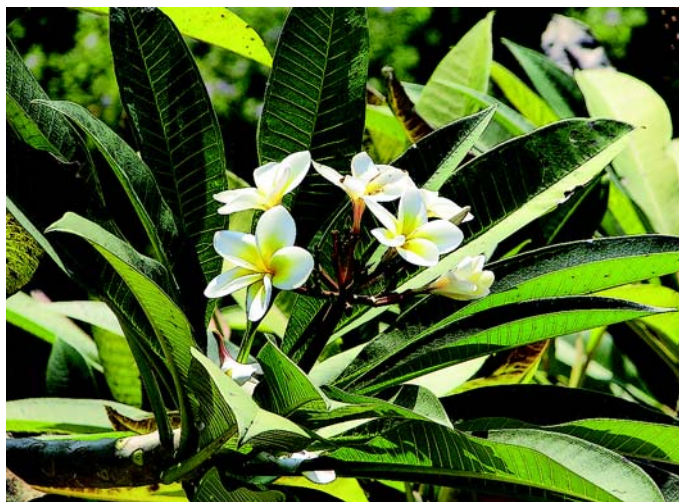


Photo © WWF/Nepal/Srinivasa PRADHAN

Of the 31 species of mammals recorded, Nepal's last remaining population of wild water buffalo (*Bubalus arnee*) inhabit the area and the Gangetic dolphin (*Platanista gangetica*) has been recorded in the Koshi river. Large mammals like gaur (*Bos gaurus*) and blue bull (*Boselaphus tragocamelus*) are almost disappearing from the area. Other mammals found are Wild Elephant (*Elephas maximus*), wildboar (*Sus scrofa*), hog deer (*Axis porcinus*), spotted deer (*Axis axis*), smooth coated otter (*Lutra perspicillata*) and Jackal (*Canis aureus*). Of the 200 species of fishes, 91 species are resident, 21 species are local migratory and 5 species are migratory. Of these, 9 species are listed in the different threatened categories, 8 species as vulnerable and 1 species as endangered. 11 Amphibian (2 toads and 9 frogs) and 24 reptiles (2 crocodiles, 11 turtles, 6 lizards and 5 snakes) are recorded till now. 17 species of herpetofauna are nationally threatened out of which 6 species are globally threatened. 77 species of butterfly are recorded in the area.

■ SOCIOCULTURAL AND RELIGIOUS VALUES:

People living in nearby villages depend on the buffer zone for energy, fodder, livestock grazing, building materials and other products. Fish farming in the artificial pond and use of wetland vegetation for the construction of local items has become increasingly prominent for income generation. Koshi Tappu Wildlife Reserve is one of the important tourist destinations in Nepal where migratory and resident birds can be seen at the barrage and on the main river channel. Several Himalayan peaks including Mount Makalu (8,475 m) the world's fifth highest mountain, can be seen during the

period of cooler clear weather. Other tourist attractions include rafting and sightseeing of Gangetic River dolphins. The reserve is also used for social and religious purposes. It is a popular picnic spot, used for the holy bath during Chhat Festival (worship of God in winter using Sun as a symbol) and also for cremation of dead bodies.

■ THREATS:

- High dependency on forest and wetland resources
- Over harvesting like fishing, grazing etc.
- Flooding and siltation
- Poisoning birds and fishes
- Poaching and illegal hunting / bird trapping
- Increasing developmental projects



Photo © Hem Sugar BARAL

■ CONSERVATION MEASURES:

The site was nationally designated as a Wildlife Reserve in 1976. The site is under jurisdiction of the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation and managed by the Koshi Tappu Wildlife Reserve Office. Buffer zone of 173 sq.km² has been declared in 2004 incorporating 16 VDCs of 3 districts around the reserve. Buffer Zone Management Committee has already been formed with User committees and user groups from 10,693 households of the buffer zone. A reserve headquarters with five guard posts and Royal Nepal Army were established to prevent encroaching in the reserve. A management plan has been prepared for Koshi Tappu Wildlife Reserve and is under the process of approval.

Acknowledgement: DNPWC and WWF acknowledges the support of IUCN for preparation of Ramsar Information Sheet.



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