



BIRDWATCHING TOURISM: A CASE STUDY OF KEWZING, SOUTH SIKKIM:

Peter Lobo, Research Scholar,

Singhania University, Pacheri Bari, Jhunjhunu, Rajasthan

ABSTRACT

Sikkim, a northeastern state in India, stands out as a modern and culturally diverse region. Its linguistic tapestry includes languages like Nepali, Sikkimese, Lepcha, and several others, reflecting a commitment to preserving its rich cultural heritage. In this state, Hinduism and Vajrayana Buddhism are major faiths, contributing to its spiritual diversity.

While Sikkim's GDP is modest compared to other Indian states, its economy relies primarily on agriculture and tourism, emphasizing the need for sustainable development in these sectors.

Kewzing Village, nestled in South Sikkim, offers a unique topographical journey from Ravangla to the Rangeet River Valley, showcasing diverse habitats within the Maenam Wildlife Sanctuary. From tropical to sub-alpine forests, this sanctuary is a haven for biodiversity, making it a paradise for birdwatching enthusiasts. With around 200 bird species, including rare and elusive ones like the Satyr Tragopan and Fire-tailed Myzornis, Kewzing's private forests offer unique opportunities to observe birds in their natural habitat.

The region is also home to the iconic Red Panda, a treasure occasionally glimpsed during birdwatching excursions. West Sikkim, with destinations like Pelling, Khecheopalri, and Yuksom, further enriches the birdwatching experience with species like Rusty Cheeked Scimitar Babblers and Yellow-rumped Honey Guides.

In conclusion, Sikkim's linguistic diversity and cultural preservation efforts make it a unique Indian state. Its diverse geography, notably around Kewzing, provides an exceptional birdwatching experience, where enthusiasts can immerse themselves in the vibrant world of avian diversity while enjoying the natural beauty of this remarkable region.

KEYWORDS: *Sikkim, South Sikkim, Kewzing Village, Birds, Birdwatching, Butterflies, Mammals, Maenam Wildlife Sanctuary, Tourists.*



INTRODUCTION

Sikkim is a state located in north-eastern India. It is bounded on the north and northeast by China's Tibet Autonomous Region, on the east by Bhutan, on the west by Nepal, and on the south by West Bengal. Sikkim is also located near India's Siliguri Corridor, which connects India to Bangladesh. Sikkim is the smallest and least populated state in India. Sikkim, which is located in the Eastern Himalaya, is known for its biodiversity, which includes alpine and subtropical temperatures, as well as for being home to Kangchenjunga, India's highest mountain and the third highest on Earth. Gangtok is Sikkim's capital and biggest city. Almost 35% of the state is protected by the UNESCO World Heritage Site Khangchendzonga National Park.

Sikkim is a modern Indian state that is multi-ethnic and multilingual. English, Nepali, Sikkimese, and Lepcha are the state's official languages. Additional official languages are Gurung, Limbu, Magar, Mukhia, Newari, Rai, Sherpa, and Tamang to ensure the state's cultural and traditional heritage is preserved. English is a compulsory subject in schools and is utilised in official papers. Hinduism and Vajrayana Buddhism are the major faiths. The economy of Sikkim is primarily based on agriculture and tourism. As of 2014, the state has the third-lowest GDP of all Indian states, despite its rapid growth.

Kewzing Village is located in South Sikkim under Ravangla Sub-Division at GPS point of 27.2797° N, 88.3165° E, Kewzing Village has an altitude of 17,00 meters above sea level and looking at the geography of all over Sikkim the landscape of Ravangla, Barfung and Kewzing extending till valley of Rangeet river is the only landscape in Sikkim which is a gentle gain of altitude from Ravangla (2600 meters) to Kewzing (1700 meters) and Rangeet Valley (700 meters) and further beyond Ravangla, The Maenam Wildlife Sanctuary with its hill top at an altitude of 3000 meters has one of the highly biodiversity.

Maenam WLS, Ranjit Valley and Kewzing: Kewzing location is in the altitude of 1700m with the highest hill Maenam (3500m) and lower valleys of Rangit river valley 350m from the sea level is home to 200 Bird species (recorded till date). The Maenam wildlife sanctuary is famous for Satyr Tragopan (Tragopan Satyr) which is one of the rare species of Pheasants

found in Eastern Himalayas, the other star bird species to look for is Fire-tailed Myzornis. If one wants to photograph the Brown wood owl in day light then the only place in the world is in our private forest where there are three birds habiting there for years. In The lower valleys of Tashiding one birds that habitat are the great Sultan Tit, Puff-throated Babbler and Streaked Spiderhunter. Some common birds in the surrounding of Farmhouse are the Great Himalayan Barbet, Grey Treepie, Green Magpie, Wedge-tailed Green Pigeon, Black Bulbul and many more. Maenam wildlife sanctuary is also home to the rare beautiful state animal of Sikkim the Red Panda or Firefox which has been seen by many of the Farmhouse guests while going for birding since its look out location has been identified.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- To investigate the birdwatching tourism resources available in Kewzing, South Sikkim.

METHODOLOGY

Area of Study: Kewzing village and surroundings.

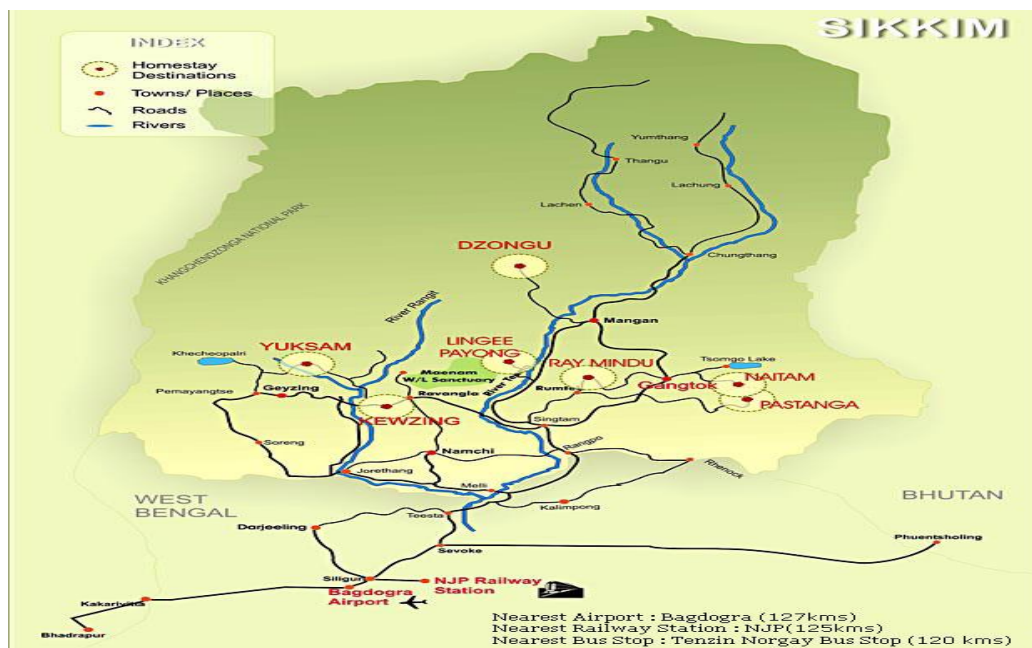


Figure 01: Sketch map of Sikkim



Study Groups:

Local Sikkimese: This group comprises people who have been living in the Kewzing area for generations and are part of the local community.

Birdwatching Tourists: This group includes visitors who came to Kewzing.

Data Collection Period:

The data for the study was collected between September 1, 2022, and June 1, 2023.

Data Collection Methods:

Questionnaires and in-depth interviews were used as the primary data collection methods.

Sampling Approach:

The convenience sampling approach was used to select the study participants. Specifically, 20 birdwatching tourists were chosen through convenience sampling. Additionally, ten local residents were interviewed in depth to gather information about the area.

Study Tools:

The study employed four categories of tools:

- a. Tourism resources survey
- b. Checklist of facilities
- c. Interviews with local residents living in the vicinity of Kewzing and Maenam Wildlife Sanctuary.
- d. Tourist survey to gather information from visitors to Kewzing and Maenam Wildlife Sanctuary.

These methods and group divisions suggest that the study aimed to understand the perspectives and experiences of both local residents and tourists in the context of birdwatching in the Kewzing area. The combination of questionnaires, interviews, and surveys allowed for a comprehensive data collection process.

Statistical Analyses:

Basic statistical calculations, such as percentages, were used to analyse fundamental data.

Mean Value Calculation: Calculating the mean (average) values of data from multiple tourism resources allows for the assessment of the overall situation.



RESULTS

The present study showed that the following the natural and services resources in kewzing which are making it a hub for bird tourism.

Natural resources

Bird & Mammal Observation, Herpetofauna Observation, and Butterfly Observation.

Service Resources

As of my last knowledge update in September 2021, Kewzing is a beautiful village located in the state of Sikkim, India. While it's not as heavily developed for tourism as some other areas in Sikkim, it does offer a range of accommodations to suit various preferences and budgets. Here are some common types of accommodations you might find in Kewzing:

Homestays: Homestays were a popular option in Kewzing and many other parts of Sikkim. They provide an opportunity to stay with local families, experience the local culture, and enjoy homemade Sikkimese meals. Homestays are often cozy and offer a more authentic and immersive experience.

Guesthouses: Guesthouses were small, family-run establishments that offer basic and comfortable accommodations. They are usually affordable and provide a chance to interact with the locals.

Resorts: While Kewzing may not have large luxury resorts, there were some mid-range resorts and eco-lodges in the area that offer comfortable stays with modern amenities. These are often set amidst natural surroundings and provide a peaceful environment.

Hotels: There were a few small hotels in Ravangla that offer standard hotel amenities and services. These can vary in terms of comfort and facilities.

Camping: For the adventurous traveler, some operators offering camping experiences in and around Kewzing. Camping allows you to immerse yourself in the pristine natural beauty of the area.

Heritage Homes: Some old heritage homes in Kewzing have been converted into guest accommodations. Staying in these homes can be a cultural and historical experience.

Tents and Eco-Cabins: In some cases, there were eco-friendly accommodations like tents and cabins that promote sustainable and responsible tourism.



CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

An enormous quantity of natural and service resources for bird tourism is found at Kewzing in south Sikkim. Kewzing draws many Indian and foreign tourists because of its remarkable bird variety. The potential for sustainable ecotourism in the area is suggested by the current study, provided that sufficient infrastructure and support are built to improve both the visitor experience and the preservation of the local ecology.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

1. Dr. Sumer Singh, Associate Professor, Singhania University, PacheriBari, Jhunjhunu, Rajasthan.
2. Prof. Sunil Kabia, Head, Department of Tourism & Hotel Management, Bundelkhand University, Jhansi
3. Prof Puneet Gautam, Head of Department, North Eastern Hill University (NEHU), Shillong
4. Dr. Praveen Vashistha, Director, Untold India Tours Pvt. Ltd, New Delhi
5. Chewang Rinchen Bhutia, Ukila Bhutia, Urogen Tamang
6. Sudesh Pradhan, Bird Watching Guide



REFERENCES

1. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maenam_Wildlife_Sanctuary
2. <http://www.sikkimstdc.com/GeneralPages/Details/Maenam-Wildlife-Sanctuary/252/Details.aspx>
3. WILD NATURE: Flora & Fauna of Sikkim, India by Viraj Choudhry
4. <https://sikkimbirdingtours.com>
5. <https://sikkimbirdingtours.com/tour-reports/#sikkim>
6. Rapid, cost-effective and high resolution assessment of climate-related vulnerability of rural communities of Sikkim Himalaya, India by S. Tambe, M. L. Arrawatia, N. T. Bhutia and B. Swaroop
7. Assessing the Priorities for Sustainable Forest Management in the Sikkim Himalaya, India: A Remote Sensing Based Approach by Sandeep Tambe & M. L. Arrawatia & Narpati Sharma
8. Status and distribution of endemic and threatened birds of the Eastern Himalaya in Sikkim, India Bhoj Kumar Acharya ¹ & Lalitha Vijayan²
9. Field Manual for Wildlife Rescue Management in Sikkim , Editor Dr.Minla Z. Lachungpa, Assistant Zoo Conservation Biologist.