

Scope and Valuation of Urban Ecotourism for Generating Sustainable Livelihood Opportunities in Delhi

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Abstract: Ecotourism is an extension of tourism and is directed towards visiting natural environments, both for recreation as well as conservation. Urban Ecotourism is the application of ecotourism in those cities which have maintained a certain degree of naturalness despite the increasing pressure from urbanisation. The 1,483 sq km. National Capital Territory of Delhi is one such urban area which has been able to maintain some of its parks, forested areas, wetlands and other green spaces some of which are centuries old. Many of these parks and water bodies are now facing a threat due to encroachment and subsequent destruction. This makes Delhi an excellent urban ecotourism destination so that this can also be used as a tool aiding the conservation of the parks, gardens and wetlands. Delhi, like many other rapidly expanding cities of developing countries, also witnesses large-scale migration. The migrant population is unaware of the parks, gardens, urban forests and wetlands of Delhi, and therefore remain unaware of the ecosystem services that support them. It has already been shown through an earlier publication that urban ecotourism can also help in making citizens into stakeholder for protection of natural resources. This paper explores the scope and economic valuation of developing urban ecotourism as a sustainable livelihood option in Delhi. The ecotourism potential of Delhi is illustrated through spatial-ecotourism circuits. Tourists in the city are surveyed for assessing the willingness to pay and accept (WTP/WTA) for embarking on an urban ecotourism expedition of Delhi city. The paper concludes with recommendation and a blueprint for successful implementation of Urban Ecotourism for boosting employment, generating awareness and conservation of ecosystem services and natural resources of the NCT of Delhi.

Keywords: ecotourism, Delhi, livelihood, sustainable development, urban.