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Badrama: Home for herbal cure

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(Clockwise from left) A wild plant with a beautiful flower , a golden fronted leaf bird, butterfly Jezebel, buds of red mushroom, a wolf snake on a branch, an orchid Vanda Tessellata and a herd of elephants in the Badrama Wildlife Sanctuary. Telegraph pictures

Bhubaneswar, Oct. 24: If you want to know how nature helps human beings in getting formulae for herbal cure at close proximity, then Badrama Wildlife Sanctuary in Sambalpur district could be the next stop for you.

Not only ethno-botanical healing trends, but also Badrama, popularly called as Ushakohi, is famous for its animals, birds, wild mushrooms and the virgin sal and teak forests.

However, its native people and their traditional knowledge to heal common ailments for ages is the mainstay. Even today, a dry deciduous forest, which is vulnerable to forest fire, could retain its greenery through community participation.

Forest department officials in this region have also given due recognition to people's role in effective conservation and sustainable management practices. Besides the flagship species — elephant which has been declared national heritage animal by the environment and forests ministry — one can spot leopards, tigers, spotted deer hyena and wild boar in the wilderness.

But the beauty of the forest spread is attractive and one can watch them from watchtowers, two at Kutab village and the third one at Pathuri. Badrama Wildlife Sanctuary is nestled in Bamra Wildlife Division of Sambalpur district with an area of 304.03 sqkm, including core area 31.28 sqkm (Ushakothi Reserve Forest - 200.68 sqkm, Badrama Reserve Forest - 57.97 sq km, Binjhapalli Reserve Forest - 16.73 sq km and others - 28.65 sq km).

It is 40 km from Sambalpur town on NH-6. The sanctuary has a hilly terrain and is continuous with Khalasuni Sanctuary in the south. There are 172 villages (including hamlets) and 225 revenue villages inside the sanctuary with a population of around 3,000. Almost all are forest dependent tribal communities.

The vegetation is moist sal bearing forest and moist mixed deciduous forest at many places. The single forest rest house (FRH) at Badrama has four suites and the food is also available with expert chefs deployed by the forest department.

There are two perennial streams which provides water for the wild animals throughout the year. One is near Ushakothi, which is 33km from Badrama, FRH on forest road and the other is Deojharan which is 35km from Badrama FRH towards Kutab.

A biodiversity survey was carried out by social service organisation Vasundhara with the joint support of Badrama Wildlife Division and Badrama Abhayaranya Bikas Parishad, a self-help group.

Before that there were no published records available on the status of flora and fauna.

The survey was carried out in June, 2010 which resulted in documenting 220 species of flowering plants including 50 species for medicinal uses, 14 species of wild edible mushrooms, 15 species of mammals, 20 species of butterflies, 30 species of birds, 10 species of amphibians and 12 ologist Prasad Kumar Dash and wildlife biologist Pratyush Mohapatra, who conducted the survey said, "the sanctuary needs to be thoroughly explored to know the existing status of taxonomic novelties. The wildlife of the sanctuary, besides the big animals also include barking deer, sambar, mouse deer, chitals and giant squirrels."

"Badrama is rich in traditional knowledge as most of the villagers depend on herbal medicines to cure their diseases and ailments like tuberculosis, jaundice, fever, nephritis, headache, dehydration, common cold, cough and chest pain. The plants used for the purpose are Melia Azadirachta (garuda), Aeilanthus excelsa (mahanimb), Holarrhena antidysenterica (kurei), Alangium salvifolium (ankula), Atylosia scarabaeoides (banakolatha), Elephantopus scaber (eayura chulia), Carya arborea (kumbhi), Nyctanthes arboritristis (gotikhadika), Occimum sanctum (tulsi) and Ricinus communis (jada)," they informed.

The villagers of Kutab with the support of the forest department are being instrumental in protecting 1,200 hectares of forest area from fire in the summer of 2010. This has resulted in very good regeneration of seedlings and saplings of many economic and rare plants of the sanctuary.

Laxman Parua, president, Forest Protection Committee, said: "The prevention of forest fire has helped in natural

regeneration of plants such as kendu, bija, sal, harida, bahada, amla and char along with 14 varieties of wild edible mushrooms and many medicinal herbs in their community assessed forest areas.”

Another young activist Srikar Padhan, who is the secretary of the Forest Protection Committee, said: “The protection of forest against fire has helped in rejuvenating the small streams with the deposition of huge amount of leaf litters on the forest floor.”

He also expressed his satisfaction about the increase availability of elephant fodder plants in Kutab and Tansara after fire protection. This self-initiated forest protection has drawn the attention of the forest department, Badrama Wildlife Sanctuary and the Range Officer has joined hands with the local communities of Kutab to provide small incentives to strengthen future efforts. Dushmanta Pradhan of Badrama Abhayaranya Vikas Parishad said, “Favourite fodder plants of elephants and especially bamboo varieties attract elephants here. Though the water sources are limited, they never create any problem for the elephant population. There are more than 124 species of elephant fodders in the forest. From tourism point of view many caves are also found near Ushakothi, Deojharan and Satpahad. However, despite managing forest fire, things like spread of weeds in the forest area is a thing to worry about.”

A senior forest official said: “Badrama, which was notified as a sanctuary on December 17, 1987 represents a beautiful landscape and attention is also given to take de-weeding measures. We are having many pro-people projects to help prepare a sustainable management strategy for the forests, medicinal varieties and wild animals.”

JUNGLE FACTS: BADRAMA

- **Area:** 304.03 sqkm in Sambalpur district
- **Major forest species:** Sal, teak and bamboo
- **Temperature :** Winter around 10°C and summer 45°C
- **Tourist season:** October - April
- **What to see :** Elephants, leopard, tigers, spotted deer, hyena, wild boar, 220 species of flowering plants, 50 species of medicinal herbs, 14 species of wild edible mushrooms, 20 species of butterflies, 30 species of birds, 10 species of amphibians and 12 species of snakes
- **How to reach:** The forest is 48km from Sambalpur town
- **From other places:** 4200km from Rourkela via Bonai-Barkot, 180km via 4Bamra-Kuchinda-Jamankira route and 217km from via Jharsuguda-Sambalpur route
- **Nearest railhead:** Sambalpur
- **Nearest airport:** Bhubaneswar airport is 250 km and Raipur 300 km from Sambalpur

