

## **Wildlife Tourism For Conservation**

### **What is the issue?**

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- Wildlife tourism has been slowly gaining ground in India as an effective tool for conservation.

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- It has also increased government revenue and aided local communities earn a livelihood.

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### **How has wildlife tourism helped local communities?**

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- Wildlife tourism is currently focused on a few protected areas and these areas are running at maximum capacity.

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- Local populations being the largest beneficiary, wildlife tourism can potentially bring development to remotest areas.

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- 75crore or 45% of the 166crore generated through wildlife tourism was found to go back to communities.

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- Additionally, better road connectivity and other physical infrastructures such as electricity, health, education etc... sprout with development of tourism.

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- Notably, villages focused on tourism had better income, health and education levels than the rest.

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### **How has it benefited conservation efforts?**

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- The dependency of the locals on the forests was found to be significantly reduce with tourism due to other sources of revenue.  
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- Furthermore, their attitude towards wildlife conservation improved which is a win-win for conservation efforts.  
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- In the Tiger Reserves that were surveyed, the total revenue generated from entry fees alone was over Rs 19 crore annually.  
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- This was almost on par with the individual contributions of the state and central governments.  
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### **What is the best way forward?**

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- Exclusionary models of conservation is not feasible over a larger landscape outside the small isolated pockets.  
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- To take tiger conservation beyond the protected areas, we need to look at new, parallel and complementary models for conservation.  
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- Seeing 'nature tourism' as an effective solution rather than a threat makes prudent sense in this regard.  
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- Improving 'program planning and waste disposal' at tourism sites could potentially enhance benefits.  
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- While ecological damage due to tourism aided real-estate ventures is indeed a risk, strict vigil could keep it in check.  
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- Notably, the footprint of eco-tourism is much lighter than other developmental initiatives.  
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**Source: Business Standard**

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