



# Studying of the tourism economy of Okhla Bird Sanctuary, Noida, Uttar Pradesh

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## ABSTRACT

An exceptional case study for the growth of ecotourism can be found at the Okhla Bird Sanctuary (OBS) in Noida, Uttar Pradesh, India. Although the sanctuary isn't a popular tourist attraction right now, it has a lot of potential to draw in birdwatchers and outdoor enthusiasts. This abstract examines the OBS's current tourist industry, the obstacles and possibilities facing it, and its potential to boost the local economy.

At the moment, the OBS serves a certain group of nature lovers and birdwatchers. Its appeal as a tourist destination is restricted by its industrial location, underdeveloped infrastructure, and insufficient marketing initiatives. There aren't many visitor amenities, such as marked hides for birdwatching, well-kept paths, and informative signs.

The OBS has a great deal of potential for the growth of ecotourism, even with these drawbacks. Due to its close vicinity to Delhi, a popular tourist destination, both domestic and foreign travelers may easily access it. It draws birdwatchers due to its vast bird diversity, which includes migratory species. The birds are set against a striking metropolitan backdrop at the sanctuary, making for a unique experience. Local businesses can profit financially from sustainable ecotourism at the OBS. New revenue streams may arise from admission fees, guided excursions, and equipment rentals for birding. Participating in the tourism sector may help local communities by generating income from homestays, offering transportation, and selling handcrafted goods made in the area.

Additionally, ecotourism can spur the growth of ethical companies that serve tourists that care about the environment.

## INTRODUCTION

The Okhla barrage across the Yamuna River is home to the Okhla Bird Sanctuary. It is a well-known refuge for approximately 320 bird species, particularly waterbirds, and is located in Noida, Gautam Buddha Nagar district, on the state border between Delhi and Uttar Pradesh. In 1990, the Uttar Pradesh government declared 3.5 square kilometers (1.4 square miles) along the Yamuna river to be a bird sanctuary, in accordance with the Wildlife Protection Act of 1972. Situated near the river's entry point into Uttar Pradesh is the site. The sanctuary's most notable feature is the sizable lake that was formed by damming the river that runs between Gautam Buddha Nagar to the east and Okhla village to the west. Okhla Bird Sanctuary (OBS) encompasses about four square kilometers. kilometers in size and is located in the Gautam Buddha Nagar district of Uttar Pradesh, at the entrance to NOIDA. It is located when the Yamuna River leaves Delhi's borders and enters the state of Uttar Pradesh. It is one of the state's fifteen bird sanctuaries.



There are undiscovered treasures in the OBS that could be converted into a popular ecotourism destination. It is easily accessible to both domestic and foreign visitors because to its proximity to Delhi, one of India's most popular tourist destinations. The sanctuary's diverse bird population is its real value. With more than 320 bird species recorded, many of which are migratory visitors, the OBS attracts birdwatchers from all over the world. In winter, when birds fleeing the severe Central Asian winters seek safety here, the sanctuary becomes a busy stopover site. A magnificent spectacle is produced by the brilliant array of ducks, geese, pelicans, cranes, and raptors such as eagles and harriers. Local birds like as babblers, kingfishers, bulbuls, and cormorants contribute to the year-round symphony of life. Especially, For endangered species like the stately Sarus Crane, the graceful Black-necked Stork, and the vividly colorful Painted Stork, the sanctuary offers vital habitat.

## Objective

- To conduct a thorough evaluation of the Okhla Bird Sanctuary's surrounding economic environment. Analyzing the current activities (such as manufacturing and tourism) in the vicinity of the sanctuary, their effects on the local economy, and any potential conflicts with conservation efforts will be part of this process. The research will also examine the sanctuary's economic possibilities, with a particular emphasis on ecotourism prospects and their capacity to bring in money and support employment in the area.
- Examine how much the nearby villages currently rely on the sanctuary's resources (such as fishing and grazing) and the present unofficial ecotourism activities.
- Analyze how ecotourism could boost the local economy in the surrounding areas by increasing demand for products and services from the area.

## Literature review

Examining the body of research on ecotourism, urban sanctuaries, and economic impact evaluations is essential to gaining a thorough grasp of the Okhla Bird Sanctuary's (OBS) tourism sector. Below is a summary of pertinent places to investigate:

Principles and Best Practices of Ecotourism:

- D. B. Weaver (2001). minimizes the effects of ecotourism. It gives a basic grasp of the fundamentals of ecotourism, such as reducing environmental effect, assisting local populations, and promoting visitor education.
- Honey, M. (2008). Sustainable development & ecotourism: Who controls paradise? This addresses ownership and community involvement concerns as it delves into the idea of ecotourism and its possible role in sustainable development.

Potential for Ecotourism in Urban Sanctuaries:

- Fernandes and associates (2014). The difficulty of maintaining biological diversity while incorporating green space—urban parks—into a city's ecological infrastructure. The ecological significance of urban green spaces and their ability to conserve biodiversity are examined in this study. It might be used to comprehend the OBS's function as an urban haven.

- J. E. McIntyre and colleagues (2001). A instrument for sustainable development is urban ecology. This emphasizes how crucial urban ecology is to sustainable development. It can be a useful resource for comprehending how Noida's ecological well-being is enhanced by the OBS.

#### Economic Impact Assessment on Ecotourism:

- J. A. Dixon and colleagues (1993). Environmental impact study from an economic perspective. This offers an economic impact assessment approach, which is a useful instrument for assessing the financial gains that the OBS's potential for ecotourism could produce.
- Lele and colleagues (2013). People and parks: Social justice and financial sustainability in protected places. This examines the necessity of maintaining social justice in the allocation of benefits and the long-term financial viability of protected regions. It can help guide plans for making sure that the OBS's ecotourism helps the neighborhood.

Researchers can learn a great deal about existing ecotourism methods, the special function of urban sanctuaries, and techniques for evaluating the financial impact of ecotourism on nearby populations by reading through this literature. This data repository will function as a solid basis for researching the Okhla Bird Sanctuary's tourism industry and creating a plan for its long-term, sustainable growth.

## Methodology

It takes a multifaceted approach to comprehend the Okhla Bird Sanctuary's (OBS) tourism sector, looking at both current tourism operations and possibilities for growth in the future. Here is a methodological framework for investigating this exceptional ecotourism location:

#### Data Collection:

- Stakeholder Interviews: Speak with important players in the sanctuary's tourism industry, such as tour guides, park officials, and nearby companies that offer food and souvenirs. These interviews can give light on the infrastructure that is now in place, visitor management procedures, difficulties encountered, and ideas for future growth.
- Secondary Data Analysis: Gather and examine secondary data from internet travel platforms, government tourism offices, and travel agencies. This information can shed light on travel patterns, visitor demographics, and the volume of tourists arriving in Noida.

- **Collecting Economic Data:** Compile information on visitor spending near the OBS, including money spent on lodging, food and drink, travel, and mementos. One way to estimate this is by collaborating with nearby firms or by conducting surveys.

#### Data Analysis:

- **Quantitative Analysis:** To determine the overall economic impact of tourism related to the Okhla Bird Sanctuary, examine survey and economic data. This may entail figuring out metrics such as expenditure by tourists, employment generation, and GDP contribution to the area.
- **Qualitative Analysis:** Examine survey results and interview data to comprehend visitor motivations, experiences, and views of the sanctuary. This can assist in pinpointing problem areas and provide guidance for marketing plans.

#### Additional Considerations:

- **SWOT Analysis:** To evaluate the present status of the tourism industry in OBS, perform a SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats). This

will assist in identifying its advantages (such as a distinctive bird diversity), disadvantages (such as inadequate infrastructure), opportunities (such as the growth of ecotourism), and dangers (such as pollution and encroachment).

## Research

**Study space** The Okhla Bird Sanctuary (OBS) is situated around 35 kilometers from where the Yamuna river enters the state of Uttar Pradesh and exits Delhi. The geographic boundaries of OBS are located between latitudes 28°32'43.5"N and 28°32'56.3"N and longitudes 77°18'41.7"E and 77°18'56.6"E (Fig. 1). The sanctuary covers 400 hectares in total, of which 273 ha are covered by open water, 97 ha are made up of reed and sand beds, and the remaining 30 ha are made up of roads and bunds. The sanctuary has a moderate southeast slope and is a large alluvial plain. OBS is situated at 200 meters above sea level.



Map of OKHLA BIRD SANCTUARY

## Bio Diversity Status:

There are about 188 species of plants known to exist, including 121 species of herbs, 10 species of shrubs, 30 species of trees, 9 species of herbaceous climbers, and 16 species of grasses. Among these species of plants are recorded as herbal plants.

→ Roughly ten threatened bird species have been identified, including critically endangered (CR) and virtually threatened (NT) species. Out of these, 20 common resident water bird species, 44 common resident forest species, 43 migratory water bird species, and 26 migratory woodland bird species have been reported, totaling over 320 bird species. One of India's 466 IBA (international bird area) sites, home to around ten species of mammals (including nilgai, indian mongoose, blacknaped hare, jackels, eight species of reptiles, and two species of amphibians). A range of OBS contains both native and invasive plant species (188). The water body is primarily covered in areas with water lettuce (*Pistia stratiotes*) and water hyacinth (*Eichhornia cracippes*). Common submerged vegetation includes *Hydrilla verticillata*, *Vallisneria spiralis*, *Potamogeton pectinatus*, and *Potamogeton crispus*. Numerous *Typha angusatata* and *Phragmites maximum* reed beds can be found throughout the banks and deltas in the Sanctuary, offering a home for a variety of birds. Numerous shrubs (10 species) and herbs (9 climbers, 16 grasses) can be found along the banks, along with a variety of trees (30 species) including Ficus, Babool, Sheesham, Semal, Subabool, and Keekar. This gives birds a great place to hide and roost.

\* In addition to birds, there are eight species of reptiles and ten species of mammals, including jackals, Nilgai, Indian Mongoose, and Black-naped Hares. There are additional records of 02 amphibian species, over 30 butterfly species, and a large number of other insects from OBS.

The Okhla Bird Sanctuary (OBS) has the potential to be a refuge for those who love the outdoors, but the area is still developing as a tourist destination. Here's a peek at how Okhla Bird Sanctuary tourism is doing right now:

Present

Situation:

**Niche Destination:** Devoted nature enthusiasts and birdwatchers are the main draws of the OBS. It's not a well-known travel destination just yet.

**Limited Appeal:** Its appeal to a larger audience is limited by the absence of infrastructure such as appropriate viewing spaces, defined paths, and educational signage. For casual tourists, the industrial surrounds might not be the most scenic.

**Hidden Gems:** In spite of these drawbacks, the OBS has a wealth of information that is just waiting to be discovered:

- **Paradise for Bird Watching:** With more than 320 bird species, including migratory visits, birdwatchers are drawn to the OBS. The refuge provides an amazing display of birds, including brilliant kingfishers, lively storks, and majestic eagles and cranes.
- **Urban Oasis:** An additional level of curiosity is added by the unusual juxtaposition of a thriving ecology with an urban setting. It acts as a reminder of how crucial conservation is in a society where development is the dominant force.

Potential for the Future:

For the Okhla Bird Sanctuary, ecotourism—which emphasizes ethical travel that benefits local populations as well as the environment—has enormous promise. This is an example of responsible ecotourism at the OBS:

**Tours for Observing Birds:** Qualified local guides can lead tours for observing birds, informing guests about the variety of birds at the sanctuary and its conservation initiatives.

**Nature pathways:** Observing wildlife in its natural habitat and exploring the sanctuary's diverse habitats are two opportunities provided by well-maintained pathways for visitors.

**Sustainable Infrastructure:** You can improve tourist experience while reducing your influence on the environment by implementing trash management systems, birdwatching hides, and eco-friendly visitor centers.

Planning carefully and working together with local people, conservation groups, and government agencies are necessary to develop ecotourism at the Okhla Bird Sanctuary. By putting an emphasis on sustainable methods, the OBS can develop into a distinctive urban birdwatching destination that will protect this important ecological asset and boost the local economy.

**Impact on economy in okhla bird sanctuary:**

Current Economic Impact:

- Limited: Because ecotourism at the OBS is still in its infancy, it has very little financial influence on the nearby towns. Although this is not common, there may be some unofficial activities like guiding neighborhood birdwatchers.

Potential Economic Impact:

Job Creation: When ecotourism is grown ethically, it can generate employment in the following sectors:

- Nature Guiding: Skilled locals can guide tourists on birdwatching excursions, teaching them about the area flora and fauna.
- Hospitality: To provide lodging choices for visitors, locals can run eco-lodges or create homestays.
- Sales of Souvenirs: By using sustainable materials to make their creations, local artists may showcase their cultural history and make money at the same time.
- Transportation: Within the sanctuary, local towns can offer electric rickshaw excursions or bicycle rentals for visitors.

Entrepreneurial Opportunities: Small enterprises that serve tourists and are aided in growing by ecotourism include:

- Equipment Rentals: Hiring field guides, binoculars, and telescopes for birding.
- Local Food Stalls: Offering regional delicacies and refreshments to visitors.
- Waste Management Services: Ensuring that waste is disposed of responsibly within the sanctuary.

Overall Impact:

The Okhla Bird Sanctuary's economic influence is yet in its early stages. However, it has the potential to be a sizable source of revenue production and an increase in the standard of living for nearby people with responsible ecotourism development.

## Suggestion

**Two unique measures which can be taken by Indian government to amplify the benefits on economy**

The Indian government can implement the following two novel strategies to increase the Okhla Bird Sanctuary's economic benefits:

### **1. Skill Development Program & Eco-preneurship Incubator:**

- The program's intended audience would be women and young people in the neighborhood.
- It would offer instruction on subjects essential to the development of ecotourism:
  - Identification and ecology of birds
  - Conscious directing techniques
  - Long-term hospitality administration
  - environmentally sustainable handicraft manufacturing
  - Social media promotion and digital marketing for nearby companies

In addition to training, the program would function as an Incubator:

- Provide coaching and seed money to assist participants in starting their own ecotourism businesses.
- These can include companies that provide eco-lodges, tour guides, or sustainably produced trinkets.



Benefits:

- Builds a pool of qualified people prepared to take advantage of ecotourism prospects.
- Empowers neighborhood communities via entrepreneurship and cultivates a feeling of pride in the sanctuary's accomplishments.
- Encourages creative and environmentally friendly ecotourism methods inside the refuge.

## 2. Volunteer Tourism & Conservation crops program:

- Create volunteer programs by collaborating with national and international conservation organizations.
- Through these initiatives, guests would be able to take part in conservation efforts such as:
  - Habitat restoration
  - Birds Monitoring
  - Environmental Education programs for local Communities
- Create a local "Conservation Corps" in addition to volunteer tourism:
  - Seek out young people in the area for paid jobs supporting the sanctuary's operations.
  - Jobs could involve data collecting, trail upkeep, and support for educational initiatives.

Benefits:

- Increases the sanctuary's income by charging fees for its volunteer program.
- Encourages a feeling of local ownership and offers important support for conservation.
- Gives young people in the area access to job and training possibilities while establishing a link with environmental initiatives.

These novel approaches do more than just generate employment. They strengthen relationships between the sanctuary and the surrounding community, empower local communities, and encourage sustainable practices. This all-encompassing strategy can guarantee the Okhla Bird Sanctuary's ecotourism's long-term success, which will help the local economy and the ecology.

## Conclusion

The Okhla Bird Sanctuary presents a unique opportunity for India. It serves as a haven for wildlife in addition to offering economic prospects through ecotourism. However, how it integrates into the economy necessitates a more sophisticated strategy. The sanctuary's current ecotourism business may be lucrative, but it most likely doesn't reach its full potential. If the Indian government implements creative initiatives, these benefits could be increased. Plans like the Okhla Bird Sanctuary Conservation Corps program would improve sanctuary management, generate jobs locally, and increase community support for conservation. This could attract more environmentally conscious tourists in addition to well designed sustainable ecotourism packages. These packages may include local communities, creating new money streams and promoting intercultural dialogue.

Typically, it's important to achieve a balance between conservation and economic growth. The Okhla Bird Sanctuary in India could serve as a model for ethical ecotourism by promoting community empowerment at the grassroots level.

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