

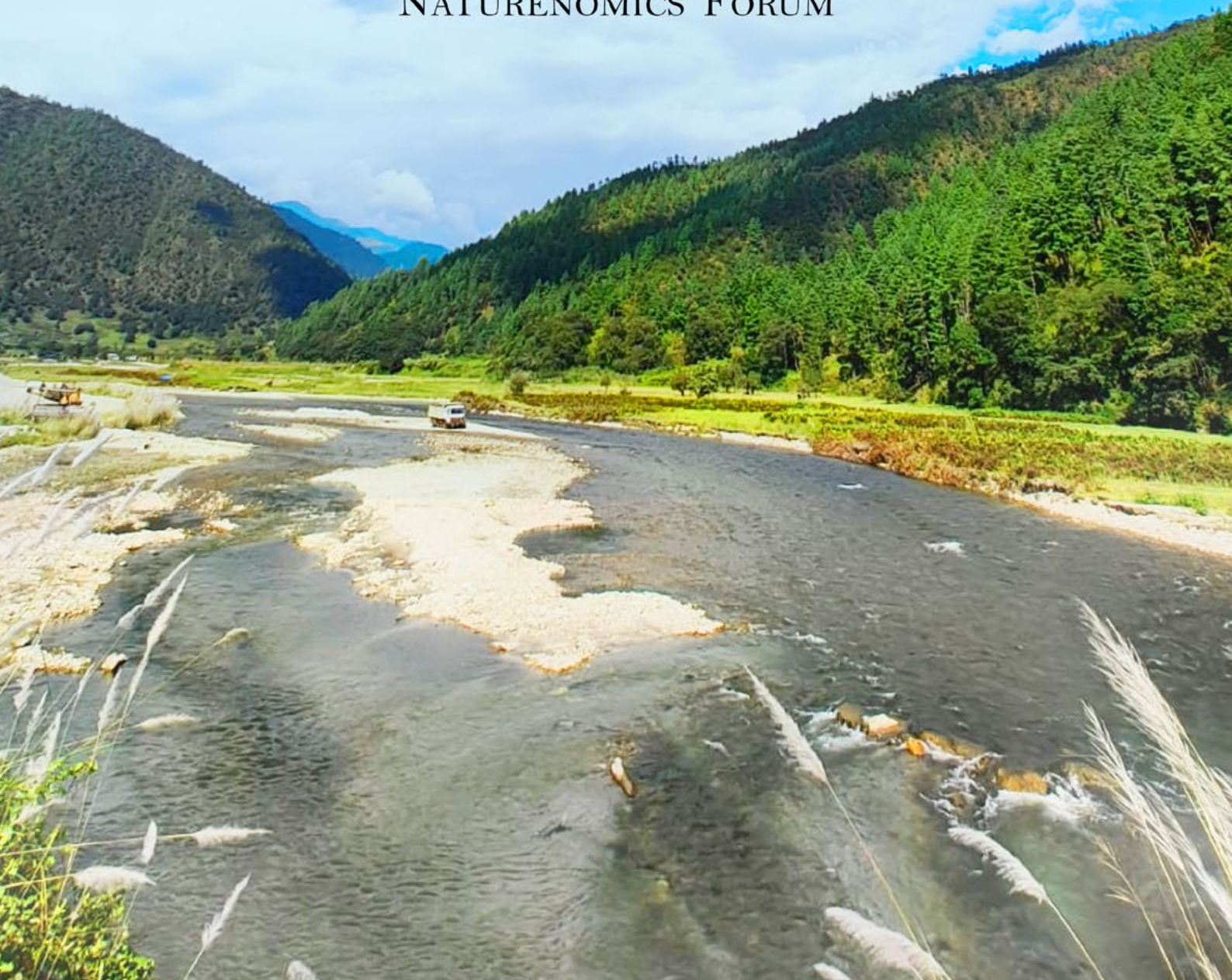
BALIPARA FOUNDATION

Assam • India

SANGTI VALLEY

Intelligence Report


EASTERN HIMALAYAN
NATURENOMICS™ FORUM



Introduction

Sangti Valley, located in the West Kameng district of Arunachal Pradesh, India, is a pristine retreat renowned for its unparalleled natural beauty and ecological significance. Nestled at an elevation of approximately 1,500 meters above sea level, this picturesque valley is cradled by the Eastern Himalayan ranges and lies about 15 kilometers from Dirang. The Sangti River, a tributary of the Kameng River, meanders through the valley, enriching its biodiversity and sustaining local communities.

Sangti Valley is not just a natural paradise but also a cultural treasure trove. It is inhabited by the Monpa tribe, whose traditions and sustainable lifestyles have harmoniously coexisted with nature for generations. Visitors can experience their rich heritage through local festivals, traditional cuisine, and handicrafts.

Population

Sangti Valley is a part of the Dirang Circle in the West Kameng district. According to the 2011 Census, the population in Sangti Valley is 630, out of which 316 are males and 314 are females, who constitutes 49.8% of the population. The community is predominantly indigenous. The local inhabitants are known for their hospitality, and the community is deeply rooted in its traditional practices and connection to the natural surroundings. However, the literacy rate of the valley is comparatively low with only 48.4%.

Biodiversity

Sangti Valley and its surrounding region are known for their rich biodiversity, shaped by the valley's unique location in the Eastern Himalayas and proximity to high-altitude ecosystems. Key components of the valley's biodiversity include:



Fauna

Birdlife: Sangti Valley is a paradise for birdwatchers with regular sightings of eagles, pheasants and Himalayan thrushes, alongside many migratory birds. The most iconic sighting is of the Black-necked Crane, locally known as Thing Thung Karmu. Deeply woven into Monpa folklore, the bird holds cultural and spiritual significance, even being linked to the incarnation of the sixth Dalai Lama.

However, its sightings in the region has sharply declined due to habitat loss. Expanding human settlements, power grids and hydro projects disrupt their natural habitat, while the shift from paddy to maize cultivation reduces vital wetlands—their primary feeding grounds—posing a serious threat to this revered species.

Mammals: The valley's forests are home to Himalayan species such as the red panda, Himalayan black bear, barking deer, and wild boar.



Flora

Coniferous Forests: The valley is dotted with pine, oak, and fir trees, contributing to the green landscape and supporting local wildlife.

Orchards: Apple, kiwi, persimmon, walnut, peach, pear, and oranges are commonly grown, contributing to the valley's agricultural economy. Apricots are also cultivated, though on a smaller scale by only a few growers.

Alpine Vegetation: Higher elevations support alpine plants and shrubs, showcasing the diverse flora of the region.



Aquatic Life

River Ecosystem: The Sangti River, which flows through the valley, supports a range of fish and other aquatic species, vital to the valley's ecosystem and local livelihoods.



Conservation Efforts

Sangti Valley is part of a global biodiversity hotspot, prompting ongoing conservation efforts aimed at protecting the area's unique flora and fauna. Local awareness programs and sustainable tourism practices are being encouraged to preserve the ecological balance. The valley is also contributing towards waste management where the women group of the village are engaged in collection and segregation of waste.

Indigenous Communities, Language, and Dialects

The valley is inhabited by the Monpa community, an indigenous group with a rich cultural heritage. The Monpas are primarily Buddhists, and their traditions include Tibetan-influenced practices, language, and customs. The Monpa dialect is widely spoken here, and local festivals such as Losar (New Year) showcase traditional Monpa dances, music, and rituals. The community's spiritual practices emphasize harmony with nature, reflecting their deep connection to the valley.



Rural Economy

The economy of Sangti Valley is primarily rural and relies on agriculture, handicrafts, and tourism. Key economic activities include:



Agriculture: Traditional agriculture is the backbone of the economy, with farmers cultivating crops like rice, maize, and millet. Apple, kiwi, persimmon, walnut, peach, pear, and oranges drive the valley's agriculture, while apricots are grown on a smaller scale.



Handicrafts: Monpa artisans are known for their craftsmanship, including weaving, wood carving, and bamboo crafts, which provide additional income.



Livestock Farming: Livestock rearing, including yaks, cattle, poultry and sheep play a vital role in local livelihoods and is integral to the rural economy. The Regional Sheep Breeding Farm in Sangti Valley further supports sustainable livestock management, providing resources and opportunities for local herders.



Tourism: The valley's scenic landscapes, indigenous culture, and seasonal festivals attract tourists, promoting local homestays and tourism-related services as a growing source of income.

Human-Animal Conflict

Sangti Valley residents frequently encounter wildlife, including Himalayan black bears, leopards, and monkeys, leading to conflicts that can impact safety and agriculture. Conservation efforts are in place to mitigate these conflicts while ensuring the protection of local wildlife.

Use of chemical fertilisers

The valley produces a huge amount of tomato, chilly and cabbage but they use chemical fertiliser to increase production. This produce is sold to the other states and they keep some organic produce for their consumption. Over time, repeated use of chemical fertilizers can lead to nutrient imbalances and a decrease in soil fertility. This results in lower crop productivity and reduced soil health, requiring increased fertilizer use to maintain yields.



Water Scarcity

Water scarcity is a common challenge in Sangti Valley due to its geography and climate variability. Factors contributing to this issue include:



Topography and Geography: The hilly terrain complicates water distribution and irrigation, often resulting in limited access to water resources for both agriculture and daily use.



Climate Variability: Erratic rainfall disrupts water availability, impacting agriculture and daily life. Unpredictable rain affects crop yields making farming more challenging.



Population Growth and Tourism: Increased tourism has placed additional strain on local water resources.



Infrastructure Challenges: Limited infrastructure for water storage and distribution restricts effective water management.





Outmigration of Youth

Outmigration is a notable concern in Sangti Valley as young people often seek opportunities beyond rural life. Key factors include:

Educational and Employment Opportunities:

Limited access to higher education and employment in specialized fields drives migration to urban areas.

Urbanization Pull: The allure of urban amenities and career prospects attracts younger generations.

Economic and Agricultural Challenges:

Agriculture is challenged by climate unpredictability and limited arable land, pushing individuals toward urban areas in search of economic stability.



Transport and Communication

Sangti Valley is accessible by road from Dirang, with Bomdila as the nearest major town. The closest airport is located in Tezpur, Assam, approximately 200 kilometers away, requiring a 6-7 hour journey. The nearest railway station is in Tezpur as well. Roads connect the valley to nearby towns, but transportation remains limited, which adds to the area's remote and untouched appeal.

Community Case Story -

Sangti Valley: Towards Sustainable Waste Transformation

In the serene Sangti Valley of Arunachal Pradesh, a remarkable transformation is underway, driven by the collective efforts of the community under the leadership of Ittisha Sarah, Director, Azure Lotus Foundation and founder of Northeast Waste Collective. Recognizing the growing challenge of waste management in this fragile Himalayan ecosystem, Ittisha has worked hand-in-hand with the local community to develop sustainable and inclusive solutions.

The community has embraced waste segregation, composting, and recycling practices that align with their traditional values of harmony with nature. Through awareness campaigns and capacity-building workshops, residents have become active participants in creating a cleaner environment. The establishment of localized waste processing systems has not only addressed waste accumulation but has also facilitated the channelization of waste for recycling, enabling women-led Self-Help Groups to generate an additional source of income. Together,

the Sangti Valley community is redefining waste management as a shared responsibility, showcasing how collective action can lead to meaningful change. By integrating traditional ecological knowledge with modern waste practices, they are ensuring that their valley remains a haven of natural beauty.

This initiative, championed by the community and guided by Ittisha's vision, is a powerful testament to how sustainable practices can empower people and protect the environment. Sangti Valley now stands as a model for other Himalayan communities, demonstrating that change begins at the grassroots level when people come together for a common cause.



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