

Star HOLIDAY

DHAKA SUNDAY OCTOBER 31, 2004

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LOCATION > SRIPUR/GAZIPUR CATEGORY > FAMILY

Wilderness Close to Home

ALL lovers of the wild have their own crush on certain places to which they will return again and again.

Inam Ahmed, the most potential member of the Star Holiday team, has developed a special liking to the wilderness although other team members often differ a little with him.

As we were sitting together to make a choice of a place in the midst of the rain, we decided to visit a place close to the capital. It is not always easy to find wild-

ness close to Dhaka where you can spend a night with your family and friends in solitude.

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Finally, we came to know that a forest office called Shimlipara under the Sreepur Forest Division of Gazipur should be the ideal place to go. A new forest bungalow could offer night's halt. It was a game for us.

As our car bumped and jerked on the bumpy Dhaka-Mymensingh road for two hours, we became sceptic about the place until we took a turn at

Mana bazaar and followed the well-carpeted road towards east.

Our eyes were soon soothed by the green farmlands, and the sweet smell of countryside made us miss Inam, who could not make it this time. House sparrows and house crows, which are so typical of human settlement, disappeared and are replaced by jet-black dongos, snow-white egrets and pond heron in the paddy fields. Mynas, babblers and bulbuls sat on trees and little spotted doves hurriedly cleared off the road.

After 10 minutes of driving, we suddenly found ourselves inside the Sal forest. Our souls were calmed by the forest and even the impending threat of a black monsoon cloud could not dent our spirit. Light rain had washed out colour from the horizon, but the diffused daylight made it even more alluring.

Narrow paddy fields not wider than a hundred metres stretch through the woods.

The drenching rain of the last three days had inundated the fields and villagers were found catching fish. The setting was any photographer's delight and Towfik took some beautiful snaps.

After another three minutes' ride we reached Simlipara forest rest house adjacent to the beat office. The setting of the rest house and the surrounding ambience is simply beautiful.

Although it is too close to the metal road, fortunately not many vehicles ply it to disturb silence.

We took a hurried lunch and came out of the bungalow to take another ride in the microbus. It was still drizzling but it failed to

stop us from driving east where the forest patch is real dense. The forest guards who accompanied us said plant diversity in the forest is not that rich and so cannot support a variety of mammals other than the capped langurs, rhesus monkeys, mongooses, hares, bandicut rats and bats. But birds are there, rainedrenched and finding shelter under foliage.

At dusk we came to a bridge on the Saldaha river where a group of fishermen were fishing with net. As we returned to the rest house, it was pitch dark and the low voltage of electricity made the atmosphere a real jungle night.

We sat on the veranda of the rest house and listened to the croaking frogs and hooting owls. The beat officer, Mizanur, a handsome well-mannered young forester, came to see us. He informed us that the area under Simlipara forest office is around 45,000 hectares and the newly built rest house is yet to be opened for tourists.

We had a good dinner, but the hot chicken curry made us huff for air.

Next morning, we left bed early. The forester insisted that we visit Phulbaria bazaar, a large weekly agriculture market, further to the east by the eastern bank of the Turag. It is a huge thing teeming with thousands of farmers and suppliers, selling everything from fish to seeds to farm tools. By eleven, we are back again to the busy capital.

Courtesy: Department of Forests and Environments.

KHASRU CHOWDHURY



fact sheet

SRIPUR/GAZIPUR

Distance: 70-km
 Direction: Northwest
 Road condition: Bumpy in some areas.

BUDGET

(Tour cost for 6 persons) Visitor have to take permission and rent the rest house at Shimlipara in advance. The Divisional Forest Officer, Gazipur, has his office at Bon Bhaban, Mohakhali.
Microbus: Seven-seater airconditioned for two days Tk 3000, Fuel Tk 1200, Food and drinking water Tk 1500

Note: The rent of the rest house is yet to be decided

THINGS TO CARRY

Light-soled shoes • Warm cloths • Sun screen lotion • Sunglasses
 Sun hat • Binoculars • Insect repellent • Flashlight • Camera gears

