

# TANGENTS

BY IHTISHAM KABIR



Egret in Sundarban.

PHOTO: IHTISHAM KABIR

## What to See in Sundarban

The other day I met a newly-arrived diplomat. Our conversation turned to tourism and he seemed surprised to learn that foreign tourists visit Sundarban. "I understand tigers are very difficult to find, so what is there to see?" he asked.

His question startled me as I find Sundarban extremely beautiful. But after some reflection it occurred to me that his query was genuine. Not everyone knows what you can see in Sundarban. With this in mind, I have made a top-ten list.

1. **Birds.** Sundarban is home to numerous species. For example, it has nine species of kingfishers: four or five are easy to see. There is also a secretive but beautiful duck, the masked finfoot, which is critically endangered. It is uncommon, but I have seen it in two trips. There are majestic eagles in the air, such as the white-bellied sea eagle and the crested serpent eagle. Along muddy banks are shorebirds such as curlews (with long, curved beaks) and redshanks. Inside the forest are songbirds including colourful minivets, leafbirds and various bulbuls.

2. **River dolphins.** Bangladesh has several types of river dolphins, of which the gangetic dolphin (*shushuk*) and the irrawaddy dolphin (*iraboti*) are easy to see in Sundarban. The former has a long snout; the latter has a rounded one. You can see them very briefly when they come up for air.

3. **Crocodiles and otters.** Estuarine crocodiles, both large and small, can be seen sunning themselves in the riverbanks. The small-clawed otter moves in families and can be spotted on the undergrowth near banks.

5. **Deer, monkeys, wild boars** are the common wildlife. The axis deer are spectacular and I never tire of them. Monkeys coexist with deer. Wild boars may be seen in several types of habitats.

6. **Mudskippers and fiddler crabs.** Mudskippers are mangrove fish that move faster in land than in water. They have beautiful turquoise dots on their body. The red crabs can be seen on beaches.

7. **Monitors and snakes.** Water monitors - large lizards - can be on land or water, sometimes swimming across canals. If you have a good spotter in your group, you might find some camouflaged snakes as well.

8. **Riverine life.** Many people make their living in Sundarban from fishing and collecting forest products such as nypa palm leaves (*golpata*) and honey. You can get a glimpse into the spartan life of these brave people which is dictated by the forest and its tides.

9. **Trees.** Sundarban has several large mangrove species as well as smaller plant species and grass, each with its unique features. For example, nypa is the only trunkless palm.

10. **Mind-bending scenery.** Sundarban is achingly, hauntingly beautiful.

Four years ago I published a photo-book called *Sundarban: A Photographic Journey* to show what a normal tourist (not a National Geographic expedition) can see while touring Sundarban with a commercial travel company. This year, I returned with Bengal Tours. I am happy to report that I found Sundarban as beautiful and exciting as ever. You can join a tour from Bengal, Guide or others, or, if you have a large group, rent your own launch such as the *Tanguar Haor* or the *Mahirah*.

(Note: As with any wildlife, luck and perseverance plays a big part. Some sightings are fleeting. To get the most from your trip, stay alert on the deck of your launch and use binoculars or a big telephoto lens with your camera.)

www.facebook.com/tangents.ikabir

## Help ensure better future for tigers

DU VC urges at awareness campaign  
DU CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka University (DU) Vice Chancellor AAMS Arefin Siddique yesterday urged all to work towards increasing the number of tigers, ensuring the betterment of the animal which symbolises the nation.

He said this after awarding winners of a children's drawing competition on tigers and the Sundarbans at a daylong programme organised on the fine arts faculty premises with the theme, "Tiger is our pride - We shall protect tigers".

An exhibition of paintings of prominent artists and a folk music concert was also organised to raise awareness about the importance of conserving the critically endangered species and their habitat, the Sundarbans.

Moreover, guests saw pictures and videos along with a representation of the forest inside a high-tech tiger shaped bus, "Tiger Caravan", which is scheduled to visit 100 strategic areas around the country. Another vehicle will carry a street theatre troupe and celebrities, including cricketers and film actors, educating people on issues threatening tigers and the necessity of their protection, said the organisers.

These, along with a Facebook page with the hashtag #iStandForTigers, are part of a two-year nationwide campaign launched on Thursday.

The campaign is part of Bagh Activity, a joint project of the Bangladesh government and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) implemented by WildTeam, an international conservation organisation, with support from Smithsonian Institution and the Bangladesh Centre for Advanced Studies.

DU, The Daily Star, Bangladesh Cricket Board, Gazi Television, ABC Radio, bdnews24.com and Kishor Alo, a monthly Bangla magazine of Prothom Alo for youngsters,



Two children satisfy their curiosity centring a tiger sculpture at a daylong programme with the theme, "Tiger is our pride - We shall protect tigers", organised on the fine arts faculty premises of Dhaka University yesterday to raise awareness on conserving the endangered animal.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

## Dr Golam Rahman's solo exhibit opens at Drik

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A three-day solo photography exhibition titled "Rhythm" by Prof Golam Rahman opened at the capital's Drik Gallery yesterday, featuring 51 pictures he took in different countries on nature, people, faces, and geometrical patterns.

Cultural Affairs Minister Asaduzzaman Noor, Vice Chancellor of Dhaka University Prof AAMS Arefin Siddique, and cultural activist Nasir Uddin Yousuff were present at the inaugural ceremony.

Dr Rahman, a professor of mass communication and journalism at DU, also chief information commissioner, said in his welcome address that the photographs showed his journey of life.

"I am a teacher, researcher and administrator, but photography is my passion. I took these pictures mostly in my leisure time of things around me. This is how I see the rhythm," he told The Daily Star.

The exhibition is open for all from 3:00pm to 8:00pm every day till February 14.

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Head of HR, Labaid Group  
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Or

Email: [labaidhr@labaidgroup.com](mailto:labaidhr@labaidgroup.com)

Please mention the applied post at the subject of the email or top of the envelope. Application Deadline: 20th February, 2016.

Cultural Affairs Minister Asaduzzaman Noor along with guests and visitors at the solo photography exhibition titled "Rhythm" by Dr Golam Rahman after opening the three-day event at Drik Gallery in the capital yesterday.



PHOTO: SUMAIYA ZAMAN

**Moon Observation Camp**

Canadian International School, in association with the Bangladesh Astronomical Association, have arranged a **Moon Observation Camp** at the CIS premises on the 16<sup>th</sup> of February from 6:30 pm to 9:30 pm. Students and parents of CIS are welcome.

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