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The MPA spans an area that at its farthest is simply 30km away from the shore. Yet, this area of shallow water is so nutrient rich that critically endangered Rays use this as their nursing grounds, says Sham-sunnahar Shanta, coordinator of the MPA programme of the Wildlife Conservation Society.

Conservationists are hopeful that the MPA will be able to regulate the amount of fishing that goes on in this area and thus allow time for species to thrive and also reduce by-catch of species significantly, which is currently a major threat.

However, so many people rely on fisheries for income, it would be ambitious and grossly impractical to clamp down on fishing altogether.

Shanta agrees and emphasises the need for an effective management plan to ensure that fishermen are not deprived. "Given the number of people in the area whose income relies on fishing, it should be allowed at certain periods of the year but research is required to understand the amount suitable for sustainable extraction.



A fisherman by the coast of Bangladesh.

PHOTO: SAYAM U CHOWDHURY



CONSERVATION

Mother and calf humpback dolphin.

PHOTO: HELAL SUJON/WCS

Some more time is needed to come up with a management plan which will act as a guideline on how to sustainably use the resources here."

Asked about the current monitoring of MPA, Shanta says, "The government recently removed a 65-day ban on Hilsha and this MPA is a key area for their migration, meaning the catch here is huge. So, the fishermen are still going to the area but hopefully the government will soon come up with monitoring plans to ensure no one will overexploit natural resources."

Not only will the MPA provide a blueprint to protect these species, it will also deter any new development plans in the area.

"I believe that protected areas strive to conserve a habitat for life. And in a country where every inch of the landscape is considered prime real estate, this will deter any plans to develop the area. In fact, when a habitat is protected on paper, it also discourages any foreign funding for development initiatives in the area. It is crucial to protect habitats, rather than pick up species specific conservation efforts. This is because if a conservationist works to save one species, that will do nothing, unless its home is protected," opines Sayam U Chowdhury, conservation biologist working on endangered species in the country. The new MPA aims to protect at least

15 species of globally threatened or near threatened marine wildlife species, and as many as 30 additional species suspected to occur in these waters. Intertidal mudflats shared by the MPA and Nijhum Dwip National Park are priority migratory feeding habitat for threatened shorebirds including the critically endangered Spoon-billed Sandpiper.

One of the top priorities of the MPA is to protect the migration routes and highest priority spawning grounds of the Hilsa, which migrates between the big rivers of South Asia and the Bay of Bengal.

It is the key ingredient of the classic 'Shorshe Ilish', the flesh is soft, meaty and oily at the same time and is cooked in a gravy of mustard paste in a blend of spices. The fish is a national treasure, providing employment to about 2.5 million people and generating more than USD 1.3 billion for the economy.

We cannot afford to overexploit this biodiversity hotspot and conservationists are hopeful that an approach which will reap both commercial benefits and protect biodiversity just might prove fruitful in the end.

It remains to be seen though how these policy changes will translate in the field but that will take time as the authorities concerned are formulating an ambitious management plan for now.

ENTERTAINMENT

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You didn't have a hard time believing in Mowgli partying it up with Baloo to the tunes of *Bare Necessities* because for all you knew, they could be communicating in any number of human or animal languages.

But as nearly every other review of *The Lion King* unanimously agrees, the movie looks like a *National Geographic* documentary with voice-overs for the featured animals. So completely are you submerged in this animal world, in the absence of human characters, that to watch the creatures crying, singing, and roaring in English feels absurd. You connect to the story only because you already know what to expect. And you feel particularly let down by this diluted version of Simba crying beside his dead father and the climactic "I killed Mufasa!" delivered by Scar.

It's no mystery as to why Disney has settled on this remake spree. Compared to its recent flop releases *John Carter* (2012) and *Tomorrowland* (2015), Tim Burton's *Alice in Wonderland* (2015) and Bill Condon's *Beauty and the Beast* (2017) earned over a billion dollars. Both *The Jungle Book* and *Aladdin* have (so far) skirted the USD 960 million range, and *The Lion King* has already earned as much

just over the past two weeks since its release. The *Mulan* trailer is fresh out of the oven, and *The Little Mermaid* is set to follow soon.

While Disney earns its big bucks, for its vast fanbase the remakes offer an adjusted lens through which to better understand some of their favourite childhood stories. The live action *Beauty and the Beast* tweaked the story just enough for each character to gain greater agency and nuance. We meet a stronger, more fleshed out and therefore more believable version of not only Belle and the Beast, but also Gaston, LeFou, Maurice... them all. *Aladdin*, to its discredit, took the fieriest of Disney princesses and diluted her into a heroine who cries, sings, and occasionally slips out a snarky remark here and there. But it also made Will Smith's Genie a far-more human version than that of Robin Williams'—giving him a love interest, skewing his musical taste more towards hip-hop and away from Williams' jazzier numbers. As an audience, you're therefore made to pay closer attention to Genie's perpetual struggle to be more human, more himself, and less a cog in his masters' tales. He's more himself right from the beginning and not just at the end when Aladdin deigns to set him free. Meanwhile with the upcoming releases—the news of Halle Bailey sign-



We meet a stronger, more fleshed out and therefore more believable version of both Belle and the Beast in the remake.

ing on as Ariel has triggered important discussions on social media about how comfortable we are, how comfortable we *should* be, with imagining our favourite Disney characters as anything but white.

Unfortunately, in staying too faithful to the original, *The Lion King* remake offers few, if any, of these added insights. Hans Zimmer's soundtrack is heart-wrenching—Beyonce's new number *Spirit* in particular—as are the scenes of

Mufasa and Simba frolicking at sunset, and a more grownup Simba with Timon and Pumba all but blanketed by a diamond-studded sky. You laugh, you sing, you jump when lion roars pierce through the scene. But you could just revisit the 1994 original for the same, if not a higher, amount of feels.

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