The Similipal National Park is located in the Mayurbhanj district of Orissa, the northeastern part of Orissa. It is 270 kilometers from Bhubaneswar and 50 kilometers from Baripada.
What is a biosphere? A biosphere is a designated territory that represents a specific type of ecosystem or ecosystems (“Biosphere”). They are areas used for educational purposes and conservation, which many biospheres are filled with reserves to protect the plants and animals that cohabitate there. Even though biospheres are used for much conservation, they are not to be confused with a national park of animal sanctuary (“Natural”). Biospheres give great emphasis of the biodiversity that live there (“Biosphere”). They use the biosphere to educate people and use them for research activities. All of this ties into the objective that a biosphere is trying to do, which is to protect the specific biodiversity to that area to ensure the future evolutionary path, provide a wide-array of research facilities, and the monitor the use of natural resources by the local people (“Natural”). In a biosphere there are three different zones; core area, buffer zones, and transition or cooperation zones (“Biosphere”). The core areas’ are the most heavily protected sites where the ecosystems remain relatively untouched. They are the areas designated mainly for conservation and the only human role in these areas’ is for observation and non-destructive research (“Natural”). The buffer zones surround the core area and are open to people to visit however, people cannot inhabit these areas. They are mainly used for applied and basic research, environmental education recreation, and ecotourism (“Bharatanline”). Transition or cooperation zones are the areas in the biosphere where towns would be located if there were any. People that live in these towns are usually management agencies, scientists, cultural groups native to the area, and farms and fisheries (“Biosphere”). The people that live in the towns are usually responsible for managing, sustaining, and developing the biosphere (“Natural”).
Before Similipal was the biosphere that it is today, it was the home to many monarchs and leaders as it was the epicenter of Mayurbhanj, where men have been known to live in as long as fifty-thousand years ago determined by artifacts found in the region, such as ancient arrow-heads. These early tribes were known as the Santals, Kols, Mudas, and the Savaras. After these early tribes it is believed that a tribe called the Murandas ruled over not only Similipal but the most of the Orissa district derived from coins found throughout the area. This tribe inhabited the area throughout the second and third century A.D. In the sixth century the area was ruled by two families known as the Mayuras and the Bhanjas. These families kept rule over the area until 1361 when their capitol was destroyed by Sultan Toghuq. Later in 1400 the area got the name it is known by today, Mayurbhanj, after the two families that had ruled it. From then on the area was ruled by the Bhanja Dynasty until 1803 when Britain invaded India and held it under their occupation. Under British rule new land was settled quickly in the area and with the settlements forming so did agricultural land. In turn this caused many forest areas to be destroyed. Also timber leases were given to contractors and traders in order to log the forests in the area. This caused massive damages to the forests and was not stopped until 1904 until the government realized what great damage the logging companies were doing to the area. Small management systems were placed in the forests but this only cut back logging being done to the forests. This continued up into the early 1950’s before logging in the Similipal area was put to a stop. In order to protect what tigers were left after the destruction of their habitat, the Project Tiger was launched by the Indian government. The project focused their attention on Similipal until 1973 when it was finally declared a national park. Project Tiger was able to control poaching and improve the habitat successfully in this time period as the cutting of trees was reduced to an absolute minimum. Then
in February 1992 Project Elephant was established to prevent the poaching of elephants that still was occurring in the Similipal region. Then shortly after in June Similipal was declared a biosphere in order to protect not only the tigers and elephants in the area but all other types of wildlife as Similipal was considered a massively biodiverse area including hyena, wild dogs, many reptiles, and many different kinds of fish (Das, et al.).

Similipal has a distinct geography. It is located in the Mayurbhanj district of the state of Orissa (Similipal Biosphere). Northern Tropical Semi evergreen forests, Northern Tropical Moist Deciduous forests, Dry deciduous hill forests, High level Sal forest, grassland and savannahs cover the vast 2750 sq. km of land (Project Tiger). Approximately 330 sq. km is known as the core area (Similipal National). The core area is the thick biosphere reserve and one of the Tiger Projects and National parks of India. The biosphere reserve experiences extreme temperatures of 40 degrees Celsius in the summer, and as low as 5 degrees Celsius in the winter. Additionally, Similipal receives over 200 cm of rainfall annually, mostly during rainy season (Similipal Biosphere).

The Similipal National Park is located in the Mayurbhanj district of Orissa, the northeastern part of Orissa. Similipal is home to a large biodiversity of plants and animals. There are 264 species of birds, 3000 species of plants, 94 varieties of orchids, 42 species of mammals, and 29 types of reptiles (Reserve). Similipal is also home to the rare black and melanistic tiger. These black tigers are very rare and are said to have a small breeding population in Similipal. A black tiger is said to be created because of inbreeding and the black stripes are so close together you cannot tell that it has any other color and is caused by the overgrowth of pigment. Black tigers tend to be generally smaller.
than the orange tiger. Similipal holds conservations for endangered tigers, sea turtles, and black bucks. The conservation has put forth much effort to protect all of the endangered animals within the park. Similipal was named after the silk cotton tree, which can also be called the Simul. The tree is known to be the largest and most beautiful tree in India for its red flowers that envelop the landscape between January and March. The Simul tree is a fast growing tree that can be about 30 meters tall and be 2-3 meters wide in 50 years. The wood is white when cut, but quickly turns dark gray with exposure. The wood is also very light and is the ideal use for manufacturing plywood, match boxes and sticks, and making canoes. The Simul tree is also a very useful tool into helping to prevent deforestation because it is a fast-growing species of tree (bombax ceiba). Similipal is home to a variety of important animals. One impressive bird of prey found in Similipal is the Black Eagle. The black eagle is a large bird with a wing span of 70-80cm in length. The black eagle eats other mammals, birds, and is known to be a nest predator of other bird’s eggs. The black eagle is best known for its slow flights over the canopy in search of prey. An important reptile found in Similipal would be the mugger crocodile, also known as the marsh crocodile. The mugger crocodile is a freshwater species that mainly occupies the lakes, rivers, and marshes that can be found throughout Similipal and other parts of India. The mugger crocodile has adapted to be more terrestrial and mobile on land. During the dry season, they are known to dig burrows or travel on land to find a more suitable habitat. They survive on a diet made up of fish and other small and large mammals. It is very rare that a mugger crocodile will attack a human (Iloveindia). An animal found in the forests of Similipal has the capability of striking fear into any humans’ heart.
This animal is the King Cobra that can be found throughout South East Asia. The King Cobra is the world’s longest venomous snake. An interesting fact about this snake is that it really isn’t a cobra at all and belongs to its own genus. The king cobra is much larger and has other distinct differences from other cobras. The king cobras genus name is *Ophiophagus* which means “snake-eater”. This makes sense because its diet is mostly of other snakes.

Another impressive snake found in the Similipal biosphere is the rock python. Pythons are very easily distinguished from all other Indian snakes because only they have sensory pits located on the face. These snakes usually are the largest found in the area, with an average growth of about 4 meters or larger. Pythons prefer to dwell in dense areas of jungle. These snakes are now endangered because they are often hunted for their skins.

Living off the ecosystem, Similipal is inhabited with tribes. According to Rout, there are four villages inside the core area, sixty one villages in the buffer zone and twelve hundred villages in the transitional zone of Similial Biosphere Reserve with a population of about 4.5 lahks (a unit in the Indian numbering system equal to one hundred thousand) (Rout, et al.). The Kharias is known to be the primate tribe, however, Bhumija, Bathudi, Kolha, Gonda, Santhal and Mankadia are other commons tribes (Similipal Biosphere). The current living styles and dependence of people on Similipal do not cause any major potential threat to the land. These tribes are considered “eco-friendly people” (Rout, et al.). Poaching, and loss of diversity, nevertheless, are the main threats to the biosphere reserve. Tigers and elephants seem to be the main targets in poaching, and are killed every day (*Journeymart*). Collection of their plants, illegally, is a major concern of poaching, as well. However, 29 anti-poaching camps were set up to help bring poaching to an end (Similipal Biosphere).
Ethnomedicinal studies on the plants in and around Similipal are the main focus of study and research in this reserve (Thatoi, et al.). With over 500 species of medicinal plants, over twenty-seven are being used for treatments (Monhanta, et al. 2374). These treatments include malaria, snakebite, jaundice, dysentery, cold fever, ear ache, scabies, tuberculosis, head ache and colic pain (Thatoi, et al.). One plant, Pteridophytes, in particular, is being studied dramatically because of its abundant growth. Since the current dependence on new treatments is at high, the importance of finding medicinal plants and treatments are crucial (Monhanta, et al. 2372).

Cascading waterfalls, plentiful flora, and abundant wildlife are all reasons of why Similipal brings in many tourists a year to view its natural beauty. A popular site for tourists is called the Similipal National Park because of its tiger reserves (Similipal Ecotourism). The reserve holds about 100 tigers in the Sal wood forests. Another key tourism spot is at the Ramthirta crocodile raising facility, in which tourists like to go sight-seeing for the reptiles located in Similipal (Tourist’s Paradise). One place you must see when visiting Similipal is the Barehipani waterfall, which is located in the center of Similipal National Park. It is one of the tallest waterfalls in the country; at a height of 399 m. Another gravitating tourist site is the Joranda waterfalls. They are situated not far from the Barehipani waterfalls. The falls are probably one of the most beautiful sites at the Similipal National Park. Similipal is open from November 1st to June 15th every year for tourism. To go to Similipal you must obtain permits for entry from the ranger and enter through entry points, such as Pithabata. Park visitors can only be in the park from 6 a.m. to 2 p.m.
Works Cited


3 Nov. 2009.


