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My observations on Great Himalayan National Park

After doing research on the distribution of natural vegetation in the high altitude region of Kinnaur and Lahaul & Spiti, I started trekking in the GHNP three years ago. The idea was to target a region which is largely unaffected by ever increasing human expansion needs. In a programme on climate change studies at CSIR-IHBT, I was assigned the responsibility to place permanent quadrats for repeat ecological sampling of vegetation in natural state to study the effects of changing climate. After getting necessary permissions from forest department, the mission started in 2009. I was awestruck with the natural beauty of wilderness areas of the park. Once you are inside the core area of park, you are disconnected with rest of the world and the only connection is that with divine nature for the next few days. The treks to *Raktisar* in *Sainj* valley and to *Tirath* in the *Tirthan* valley are simply unforgettable with awesome adventure and great experience. This area supports enormous diversity of flora and fauna. The population of pheasants especially the western Tragopan and brown bear is really good. The lush green landscapes unaffected by human land use and formed by large patches of forests gradually changing as you ascend into the mountains present a sight unmatched elsewhere. The rich diversity of plants with a large number of rare and threatened plants and almost 10 % of the flora being endemic to western Himalaya is something unique to this region. I really give kudos to the people who had envisaged the formation of this park and to the team who did preliminary baseline studies to document its biodiversity, and to the forest department who are managing the park efficiently and maintain the status quo of protection from human incursions and greed. **I strongly propose that GHNP should be on the world heritage site list** for its unique status of providing conducive habitats to threatened species and harbouring colossal biodiversity and its conservation in this region when its being depleted all over the Himalaya.

(Amit Chawla)