

## Project Update: October 2012

Tourism has become a major conservation issue on Kas plateau, and even this year we documented thousands of tourists visiting the place during the flowering season (August-October). In order to assess the impact of tourist disturbance on the herbaceous vegetation, we systematically marked 112 plots (1m x 1m) in July 2012 and sampled them twice in the flowering season. Tourist counts were taken on one of the busiest days of the flowering season (around 40,000 visitors estimated) to generate a tourist density map. According to local sources, approximately 500 kg of solid waste was collected by the local Municipal Corporation this season. Generally, all the waste is either dumped in landfills or burnt. However, this time, we managed to segregate and sell 20 kg of recyclable waste for Rs.250/- (£3), to demonstrate how waste collection and segregation can create an additional income for the waste collectors. As part of a team, I also conducted nature guide training for local stakeholders in July 2012 and have contributed to a field guide booklet developed by the Forest Department. We conducted around 200 tourist interviews and an interesting find was that many tourists prefer nature guides (41.9%) over books/pamphlets (19.04%) among others. Therefore, efforts are now being directed towards building capacity of local villagers to be nature guides for the remaining project duration. We are constantly in touch with the Forest Department, local communities and the local media for developing sensitive tourism on the plateau. At this stage, our future plan is to organise a nature training workshop, continue monitoring the vegetation plots, strengthen interactions with the locals and begin with the data analyses.



Left: Distribution of hand gloves to the waste collectors to facilitate segregation of solid waste. Right: Tourist interview being taken by a volunteer.



Left: Regular interactions with the members of the Joint Forest Management Committee to regulate tourism. Right: Sampling of vegetation plots and on field capacity building of forest department guards.