

Ecotourism Potential Assessment of Dhera Dilfekar Block, Arsi Mountains National Park, Eastern Central Rift valley of Ethiopia

Ziyad Jemal^{1*} Kedir Erbo¹ Abdi Haji²

1.Department of Natural Resource Management, College of Agriculture and Environmental Science, Arsi University, Asella, Ethiopia

2.Department of GIS and Remote Sensing, Wondo genet College of Forestry and Natural Resources, Hawassa University

Abstract

Ethiopia holds substantial ecotourism potentials that have to be promoted for economic development. This study was done with the objective of assessing ecotourism potentials of Dhera dilfekar block for ecotourism development. Dhera dilfekar block is one of the four blocks of Arsi Mountains National Park. Seven (7) major tourist attraction sites were identified namely; Dire kiltu hyena valley, Dire kiltu lesser kudu site, Dire kiltu greater kudu site, Fachiso greater kudu site, Gara dima hyena valley(1), Awash bishola dhagaa taa'aa valley and Gara dima hyena valley(2). Additionally, the park can offer the visitor an opportunity to see lowland game species, a variety of bird species, Acacia dominated plant species with spectacular landscape, historical and Cultural sites which make the parks unique features to attract eco tourists. The block is the nearest to Addis Ababa (Finfinne) from any other Parks of our country and is found on the main asphalt road which goes to Bale Zone via Adama-Asella. Dhera dilfekar block is found in the lowland that situated in altitudinal elevation ranges from 1300 masl to 1835 masl. This makes the block to be visited all over the year for both domestic and international tourists since there is no mud to travel by vehicle and on foot. The proximity to Sodere resort hotel also brings additional opportunity to be visited by both domestic and foreign tourists. It can be concluded that the area is endowed with high Ecotourism potentials. It can also be good potential for bird watching tourism that can integrate economic gain with biodiversity conservation. Hence, urgent conservation measures and further detail research is recommended to promote this Ecotourism potentials.

Key words: Ecotourism, Arsi Mountains, Potential, Dhera dilfekar, Attraction

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1. INTRODUCTION

The tourism industry is considered one of the largest and fastest growing industries in the world (Cooper & Hall, 2008). The growing dynamics and increased destinations turned tourism to become a driver for socio-economic progress and the main income sources for many developing countries in which Ethiopia is apart (Papatheodorou, 2006). Ethiopia is known as a land of origins and biodiversity, a country of several ethnic groups, and a symbol of freedom who retained her sovereignty even during the colonial era has abundant natural and historical tourist attractions areas (Sinha, 2001). However, the tourism industry has not tapped its full potential to attract tourists in large numbers owing to poor investment in infrastructure development and inadequate promotion (UNWTC, 2010). The economy of Ethiopia has prospered for many years on agricultural products but currently, the country expands to industrialization and service providing for additional incomes through Ecotourism industry (Alamneh Amare, 2015). Proper understanding of the nature, significance and importance of these resources are essential for decision makers at all levels to make appropriate plans for improving the ecotourism in the regions (Mustefa Sultan and Teyiba Amano, 2017). However, the Eco tourism and conservation practices are still at low attention in the study area. Therefore, the aim of this study was to assess and pointed out the attractive natural and cultural resources having Ecotourism potential to be developed in Dhera Dilfekar block of Arsi Mountains National Park.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

2.1. Description of the Study Area

2.1.1. Location: The study was conducted in Dhera Dilfekar block, Arsi Mountains National Park, Eastern central rift valley of Ethiopia. Dhera Dilfekar block is located in Dodota district in the North eastern part of Arsi zone, Oromia Regional State. The geographic location of the study area is between 8° 19'- 8° 22' N latitude and 39° 19'- 39° 22' E longitude (Figure 1). The block was Adjacent to Dhera town, 25 km south from Adama town and 125 km far apart from Addis Ababa (Finfinne) town. It's also 15 km from the Sodere resort center in the south west, which is the most popular resort area, frequently visited.

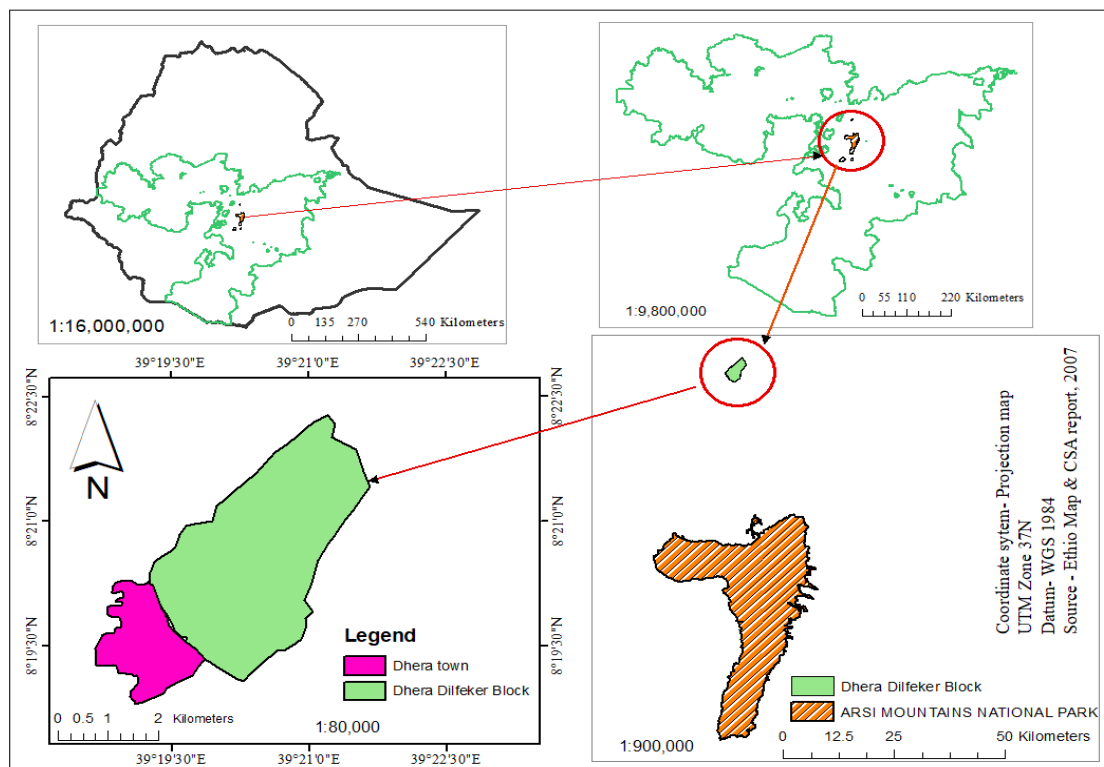


Figure 1. Map of the Study Area

According to local elders evidences the term ‘Dhera’ is an Afan Oromo word which sense ‘long height’. This ‘long height’ implies to hero person called ‘Shek zulfekar’ who lived in this area for many years. Since he was too long and a place was called simply Dhera-Dilfekar. This conservation block renamed after this famous person lived in the area.

The total area of block was 1341 hectares. This block is bordered with five kebeles; Dhera town [kebele 01 & 02] to the south west, Awash-Bishola to the north, Dilfekar to the south east and Dire-Kiltu to the east. The block is found in the edge of eastern central rift valley parts which is situated in altitudinal between 1300 to 1835 m above sea level. It’s situated 50 km north of Asella, the zonal capital city and 25 km south of Adama town which is the most popular with MICE (Meeting, Incentive, conference and Exhibition) tourism. This makes the block to be visited all over the year by tourist. Even during wet season there is no mud to travel with vehicle and on foot.

2.1.2. Flora and fauna: The park features are Acacia woodland, bush land and scrubland; which are crucial components of the park ecosystem, keeping the highly fragile soil of the area from erosion (Dereje Mokonin, 2006). The major attractive fauna is bird species. Additionally, Mammal species like; Warthog, Greater Kudu, lesser kudu and Hyenas are common animals.

2.1.3. Socioeconomic: The people who settled in and around the park are the ethnic group of Oromo, Arsi clan. Farming practices is mainly dominating the surrounding areas of Dhera Dilfekar block (Dereje Mokonin, 2006). The major socio-economic problems are highly increasing number of human and livestock population density which could account for the boundary range shrinkages of Dhera Dilfekar block. The block is unsuitable for agronomy and heavy grazing but the local people use it for these purposes (DWAO, 2007).

2.2. Methods of data collection

This research paper is written based on both primary and secondary sources. To gather the primary data, semi-structured questionnaires and field assessment were made to determine the opportunities for the development of ecotourism in Dhera Dilfekar block. The qualitative data were acquired through semi-structured questionnaire and interviews from selected groups. The researcher used purposeful sampling method to select informants. The interview was made with twenty-one (21) knowledgeable informants who were selected purposefully. Three (3) experts from the park, park warden, two (2) experts from culture and tourism office of Dodota district, and ten (10) elders from the local area. The sample size was determined based on the quality of information obtained from the informants. The secondary data were collected from journals, books, web sites and official documents. Also, inventory assessments were taken to collect the status of biodiversity resource through plant specimen collection, transect walk and field observation. An inventory was made using direct observation and specimen collection which is supported with field materials such as Nikon D3200 Digital camera, Nikon action 10x50

Binocular, Garmin 60 GPS and materials for field plant press.

2.3. Data Analysis

The collected quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive and explanatory statistics; Microsoft Excel and SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Science) Version 25 software were used for the analysis. Qualitative data analysis followed steps of data reduction (selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting, transforming), data display (organizing, compressing), and conclusion drawing (Miles and Huberman, 1994). The findings were discussed through narrative and explanatory approaches then presented by using tables, figures, graphs, and charts.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Assessment on ecotourism potentials at Dhera Dilfekar block was made based on natural attractions, cultural and historical features; from the perspective of identifying conservation challenges hindering the management activity and to endorse possible mitigation strategies.

3.1. Ecotourism Potentials of Dhera dilfekar block

The dhera dilfekar block is home for a variety of mammals and bird species. A common mammal species inhabited in this conservation block are Greater Kudu, Lesser Kudu, Spotted Hyena, Warthog, Anubis Baboon and others as well as a variety of bird species like Cattle Egret, White Browed Sparrow, Ring Necked Dove, Ruppels Starling and others. The vegetation cover was dominated by different acacia species like *Acacia albida*, *Acacia tortilis*, *Acacia Senegal* and *Balanites aegyptica*.

Additionally, the park harbors seven (7) major tourist attraction sites namely; Dire kiltu hyena valley, Dire kiltu lesser kudu site, Dire kiltu greater kudu site, Fachiso greater kudu site, Gara dima hyena valley(1), Awash bishola dhagaa taa'aa valley and Gara dima hyena valley(2) (Table 3.2. Circulation within the Park

3.2.1. Main gate /entrance/of Dhera Dilfekar block

There are two park gates(entrance) for dhera dilfekar block ; through dilfekar & through Asphalt road from Adama to dhera Asella before you entered to the center of dhera town you will find park gate. The main gate of Dhera Dilfekar block was found on the main asphalt road from Adama to Asella. On the main gate there is tourist information center. When you entered to the park boundary you meet a guy inside tourist information center on the gate. Once you come to site at any time you have a great chance to see wild animal's especially large group of greater kudus.

On the other side near Dilfekar spiritual place, there is also another gate especially for tourists these back from Bale Mountains through Asella town. They can enter through this gate and can exit with the main gate that found on the asphalt road to the west direction from Adama to Asella main road.

There is car road and foot path which takes you to all direction of the park (to the east, west, north and south). Trekking is also possible on mount Dilfekar and Gara dima. The one who come with bicycle can also ride everywhere.

3.2.2. Natural attraction of this block

The major Core points of wildlife area were the following.

- ✓ Dire kiltu hyena valley
- ✓ Dire kiltu lesser kudu site
- ✓ Dire kiltu greater kudu site
- ✓ Fachiso greater kudu site
- Garadima hyena valley(1)
- Garadima hyena valley (2)
- Awash bishola Dhagaataa'aa

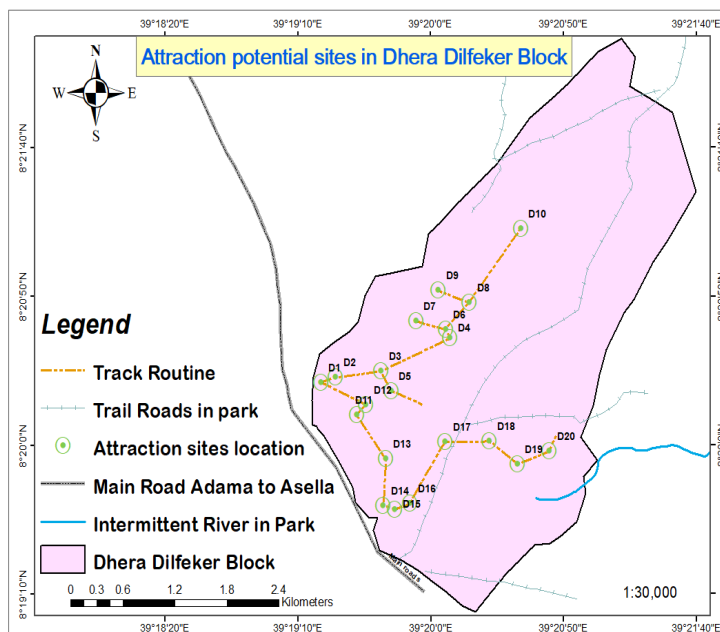


Figure 2.Dhera Dilfekar Block Tourism Attraction Potential Map

Table 1. Geographical Location of Attraction Places on the Block

Map code	Name of Attraction places	Longitude	Latitude
D1	Main gate1 (tourist information center)	535436	921725
D2	Town Area Out post	535605	921780
D3	Fachiso Water pond	536129	921843
D4	Gara Dima Hyena Valley Water Pond	536925	922183
D5	Ujune Baji Graveyard	536244	921633
D6	Gara Dima Hyena Valley1	536874	922267
D7	Fachiso Greater kudu site	536532	922360
D8	Gara Dima (out post)	537147	922552
D9	Gara Dima Hyena Valley2	536789	922678
D10	Awash Bishola dhagaa taha valley	537739	923312
D11	Town Area Water Pond	535852	921388
D12	Water Pond2	535954	921492
D13	Mount Dilfekar	536181	920939
D14	Dilfekar spiritual place	536154	920451
D15	Main gate2 (Dilfekar)	536290	920414
D16	Mount Dilfekar Out post	536462	920480
D17	Dilfekar Water pond	536867	921110
D18	Dire Kiltu Greater Kudu Site	537376	921118
D19	Dire Kiltu Peak Point	537699	920880
D20	Dire Kiltu Lesser Kudu Site (out post)	538067	921013

Table 2. Major Tourist Attraction Sites within Arsi Mountains NP Dhera Dilfekar Block

Map code	Name of Attraction	Distance from main gate (km)	What to See	What to do
D1	Main gate 1	0.00	Tourist Information center	Pay entrance fee
D2	Town Area Out post	0.17	Overview of the landscape	Game viewing, photography, walking
D3	Fachiso water pond	0.70	Wildlife drinking water point, greater kudu, lesser kudu, warthog	Game viewing, photography, walking
D4	Gara Dima Hyena Valley Water Pond	1.57	Wildlife drinking water point, greater kudu, lesser kudu, warthog	Game viewing, photography, walking
D5	Ujune Baji Graveyard	0.95	Different graveyards	Game viewing, photography, walking
D6	Gara Dima Hyena Valley1	1.66	Herd of Hyenas	Game viewing, Photography, Hiking
D7	Fachiso Greater kudu site	2	Greater kudu, lesser kudu, Warthog	Game viewing, photography, walking
D8	Gara dima peak	2	Greater kudu, Hyena, lesser kudu, Warthog	Game viewing, Photography, Hiking
D9	Gara Dima Hyena Valley2	2.44	Hyenas, Greater Kudu	Game Viewing, Photography, Hiking
D10	Awash Bishola dhagaa ta'aa valley	3	Klipspringer, Greater Kudu,	Game Viewing, Photography, Hiking
D11	Town Area Water Pond	0.71	Wildlife drinking water point, greater kudu, lesser kudu, warthog	Game viewing, photography, walking
D12	Water Pond2	0.56	Wildlife drinking water point, greater kudu, lesser kudu, warthog	Game viewing, photography, walking
D13	Mount Dilfekar	1.27	Greater kudu, lesser kudu, Warthog,	Viewing the spectacular landscape, Dhera town, Wanji factory sugarcane plantation
D14	Dilfekar spiritual place	1.75	Spiritual mosque, entombment of local people with different artistic design	Like Dire sheik Hussen "muda" was undertaken two times per a year
D15	Main gate2 (Dilfekar)	2	Overview of the landscape	Game viewing, photography, walking
D16	Mount Dilfekar Out post	2.1	Greater kudu, lesser kudu, Warthog	Game viewing, photography, walking
D17	Dilfekar water pond	1.5	Wildlife drinking water point, greater kudu, lesser kudu, warthog	Game viewing, photography, walking
D18	Dire Kiltu Greater Kudu Site	3.34	Greater kudu, Hyena, lesser kudu, Warthog	Game viewing, photography, walking
D19	Dire Kiltu Peak Point	3.74	Greater kudu, Hyena, lesser kudu, Warthog	Game viewing, village viewing, photography
D20	Dire Kiltu Lesser Kudu Site	4.13	Lesser kudu ,Hyena, Greater kudu	Game viewing, photography, walking

3.2.3. Hydrological features

Since there is no natural river or spring water in dhera dilfekar block, six (6) water ponds were artificially constructed in the park at different places for the purpose of wildlife drinking water storage .Before this, most of the time wild animals move to find water outside the park boundary especially on asphalt road; at that time they were suddenly exposed to car accident but now due to this ponds these problems were partially solved.

- Town area water pond (D11)

- Water pond 2 (D12)
- Fachiso Water pond (D3)
- Dilfekar water pond (D17)
- Gara dima hyena valley water pond (D4)



Figure 3. Water Pond for Wildlife Drinking Water (Photo by: Ziyad J.)

3.2.4. Biological Resources

3.2.4.1. Wild Animals:

The Park is home for about 25 wild mammals dominated by Greater kudu, lesser kudu, spotted hyena and Warthog. The other mammals such as Golden backed jackal, Abyssinian hare, Leopard, Grivet monkey, Anubis baboon, Grey duiker, etc are also found in this block (Abdurrahman Kubssa, 1995). According to the report of the park warden and tourist information center this block is the only place where visitors could watch a herd of greater and lesser kudu in the country without spending a minutes.

Table 3. The Wildlife Species found in Dhera Dilfekar Block

No	Local Name	Common Name	Scientific Name
1	Waraabessa	Spotted hyena	<i>Crocuta crocuta</i>
2	Kuruphee	Grey duiker	<i>Sylvicapra grimmia</i>
3	Gicii	Klipspringer	<i>Oreotragus oreotragus</i>
4	Goljaa	Warthog	<i>Phacochoerus aethiopicus</i>
5	Qeerransa	Leopard	<i>Panther pardus</i>
6	Jeedala gurra bal,aa	Bat eared fox	<i>Otocyton megalotis</i>
7	Deeroo	Serval cat	<i>Felis serval</i>
8	Jeedala bakka maraa	Common jackal	<i>Canis aureus</i>
9	Jaldeessa	Anubis baboon	<i>Papio Anubis</i>
10	Qamalee	Monkey /vervet	<i>Cercophitecus pygerythrus</i>
11	Awwaal-diiigessa	Aardvark	<i>Orycteropus afer</i>
12	Waraabessa ji'aa	Aard wolf	<i>Protelus cristatus</i>
13	Dhaddee	Porcupine	<i>Hystrix cristata</i>
14	Amaa	Mongoose /Egyptian	<i>Herpestesin chneumon</i>
15	Hilleettii	Abyssinian Hare	<i>Lepus capensis</i>
16	Amaa gaaguraa	Honey badger	<i>Mellivora capensis</i>
17	Amaa gootaa/eegeeadii	White tailed mongoose	<i>Icneumia albicauda</i>
18	Gadamsa gammojjii guddaa	Greater kudu	<i>Tragelaphus strepsiceros</i>
19	Hammarreesa	Lesser kudu	<i>Tragelaphus imberbis</i>
20	Waraabessa sarara qabu	Striped hyena	<i>Hyena hyena</i>
21	Sardiida dugda gurraacha	Black-backed jackal	<i>Canis mesomelas</i>
22	Moor'ee	African civet	<i>Civettictis cuivetta</i>
23	Warbaa/daalga anbassaa	Caracal	<i>Felis caracal</i>
24	Deeroo	Serval cat	<i>Leptailurus serval</i>
25	Amaa	Ichneumon mongoose	<i>Herpestes ichneumon</i>
26	Jeedala gurra bal'aa	Bat eared fox	<i>Otocyton megalotis</i>



Figure 4. Greater Kudu (Left side) and Lesser Kudu (Right side(Photo by : Ziyad J.))

3.2.4.2. Vegetation cover: Dhera-Dilfeker has a variety of acacia dominant vegetation types like *Acacia melifera*, *Acacia senegal*, *Acacia tortilis*, *Acacia albida*, *Acacia abyssinica*, *Acacia seyal*, *Balanites aegyptica* (Abdurrahman Kubssa, 1995).

Table 4. The common Plant Species found dhera dilfekar block

S.no	Local name /Afan oromo/	Scientific name	Family	Plant habit
1	Doddotii	<i>Acacia etbaica</i>	Fabaceae	Shrub
2	Qordiimoo	<i>Acacia nilotica</i>	Fabaceae	Tree
3	Ajoo	<i>Acacia oerfota</i>	Fabaceae	Shrub
4	Saphansa	<i>Acacia senegal</i>	Fabaceae	Tree
5	Waaccuu	<i>Acacia seyal</i>	Fabaceae	Tree
6	Loxxobbaa	<i>Acacia tortilis</i>	Fabaceae	Tree
7	Qaraaruu	<i>Acokanthera schimperi</i>	Apocynaceae	Tree
8	Shaartii	<i>Asparagus africanus</i>	Asparagaceae	Shrub
9	Beddano	<i>Balanites aegyptiaca</i>	Balanitaceae	Tree
10	Heebsata	<i>Cadaba farinosa</i> Forssk	Capparidaceae	Shrub
11	Yeferenj Kitkita	<i>Caesalipinia decaptela</i>	Fabaceae	Shrub
12	Ceekataa	<i>Calpurnia aurea</i>	Fabaceae	Shrub
13	Harangamaa	<i>Capparis fascicularis</i>	Capparidaceae	Shrub
14	Agamsa	<i>Carissa edulis</i>	Apocynaceae	Shrub
15	Shashawwee	<i>Casuarina equisetifolia</i>	Casuarinaceae	Tree
16	Rukeessa	<i>Combretum molle</i>	Combretaceae	Tree
17	Chal Gulfa	<i>Cenchrus pennisetiformis</i>	Poaceae	Herb
18	Hammeessa	<i>Commiphora africana</i>	Burseraceae	Tree
19	Gilay	<i>Commiphora rostrata</i>	Burseraceae	Shrub
20	Wodeessa	<i>Cordia africana</i>	Boraginaceae	Tree
21	Madheeraa	<i>Cordia ovalus</i>	Boraginaceae	Tree
22	Bakkanniisaa	<i>Croton macrostachus</i>	Euphorbiaceae	Tree
23	Baaladii /Magoof	<i>Croton dichogamus</i>	Euphorbiaceae	Tree
24	Coqorsa	<i>Cynodon dactylon</i>	Poaceae	Herb
25	Jirimee	<i>Dichrostachys cinerea</i>	Fabaceae	Shrub
26	Dhittacha	<i>Dodonea angustifolia</i>	Sapindaceae	Shrub
27	Mi'eessaa	<i>Eculea schimperi</i>	Ebenaceae	Shrub
28	Ulaagaa	<i>Ehertia cymosa</i>	Boraginaceae	Tree
29	Waleensuu	<i>Erythrina abyssinica</i>	Fabaceae	Tree
30	Baargamoo	<i>Eucalyptus camaldulensis</i>	Myrtaceae	Tree
31	Hadaamii	<i>Euphorbia candelabrum</i>	Euphorbiaceae	Shrub
32	Qacaacillee	<i>Fleuggea virosa</i>	Euphorbiaceae	Shrub

S.no	Local name /Afan oromo/	Scientific name	Family	Plant habit
33	Harooressa	<i>Grewia bicolor</i>	Tiliaceae	Tree
34	Harooressa arbaa	<i>Grewia mollis</i>	Tiliaceae	Tree
35	Qococcee	<i>Grewia tenax</i>	Tiliaceae	Shrub
36	Sanbaleexa	<i>Hyparrhenia multiplex</i>	Poaceae	Herb
37	Ashaalee	<i>Leucas abyssinica</i>	Lamiaceae	Shrub
38	Qanqalcha	<i>Maerua angolensis</i>	Capparidaceae	Shrub
39	Kombolcha	<i>Maytenus senegalensis</i>	Celastraceae	Shrub
40	Qacama	<i>Myrsine africana</i>	Myrsinaceae	Tree
41	Ejersa	<i>Olea africana</i>	Oleaceae	Tree
42	Abushuukii	<i>Opuntia ficus-indica</i>	Cactaceae	Shrub
43	Damakasee	<i>Ocimum lamiifolium</i>	Lamiaceae	Shrub
44	Waatoo	<i>Osyris quadripartita</i>	Santalaceae	Shrub
45	Biiqqaa	<i>Pappea capensis</i>	Sapindaceae	Tree
46	Urgeessaa	<i>Premna resinosa</i>	Lamiaceae	Shrub
47	Qonxiir	<i>Pterolobium stellatum</i>	Fabaceae	Tree
48	Hawaasee	<i>Rhus retinorrhoea</i>	Anacardiaceae	Tree
49	Xaaxessaa/mi,eessaa	<i>Rhus natalensis</i>	Anacardiaceae	Tree
50	Hiddiibidoo	<i>Solanum somalensis</i>	Solanaceae	Shrub
51	Hiddii	<i>Solanum incanum</i>	Solanaceae	Shrub
52	Birreessa	<i>Terminalia brownii</i>	Combretaceae	Tree
52	Qurquraa	<i>Ziziphus mucoranata</i>	Rhamnaceae	Tree

3.2.4.2. Bird Species

There are more than 189 birds among these; Helmeted Guinea fowl, little bee eater, Black wood hoopoe, Grey wood pecker, Grey headed sparrow, Shinning sun bird, Rupp ells long tailed starling, Red checked cordon blue, Speckled mouse bird, Ring necked dove, Black kite and Long crested eagle are the common species (Table 5).

Table 5. The Common Bird Species Found In Dhera Dilfekar Block

No.	Common name	Scientific name
1	Little bee eater	<i>Merops pusillus</i>
2	African Hoopoe	<i>Upupae pops</i>
3	Black wood hoopoe	<i>Phoeniculus aterrimus</i>
4	Grey woodpecker	<i>Dendropicos goertae</i>
5	Grey headed sparrow	<i>Passer griseus</i>
6	Shinning sun bird	<i>Nectarinia habessinica</i>
7	Ruppell's long tailed starling	<i>Lamprototrispur puropterus</i>
8	Red checked cordon blue	<i>Uraeginthus bengalus</i>
9	Speckled mouse bird	<i>Colius striatus</i>
10	Ring necked dove	<i>Streptopelia capicola</i>
11	Laughing dove	<i>Streptopelia senegalensis</i>
12	Helmeted guinea fowl	<i>Numida meleagris</i>
13	African hawk eagle	<i>Hiera aetusspilogaster</i>
14	Black kite	<i>Milvus migrans</i>
15	Superb starling	<i>Spreo superbus</i>
16	Black headed batis	<i>Batis minor</i>
17	African paradise monarchy	<i>Terpsiphone viridis</i>
18	Speckled pigeon	<i>Columba guinea</i>
19	Pied crow	<i>Corvus albus</i>
20	African rock	<i>Corvus capensis</i>
21	Tawny flanked prinia	<i>Prinia subflava</i>
22	Hemprich's hornbill	<i>Tockus hemprichii</i>
23	Sinamon breasted rock bunting	<i>Emberizata hapisi</i>
24	Village indigobird	<i>Vidua chalybeate</i>
25	Red billed firefinch	<i>Lagonosticta senegala</i>
26	Northern black tit	<i>Parusleu comelus</i>
27	Blue breasted bee eater	<i>Meropsvari egatus</i>
28	Stout cisticola	<i>Cisticola robusta</i>

No.	Common name	Scientific name
29	Northern red bishop	<i>Euplectes franciscanus</i>
30	Morning weater	<i>Oenanthe lugens</i>
31	Common bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus barbatus</i>
32	Abyssinian crimson wing	<i>Cryptospiza salvadori</i>
33	Eurasian redstart	<i>Phoenicurus phoenicurus</i>
34	House bunting	<i>Emberiza striolata</i>
35	Coppery sunbird	<i>Cinnyris cupreus</i>
36	Red billed ox pecker	<i>Buphagusery throrhynchus</i>



Figure 5. Vegetation cover of the dhera dilfekar block (Photo by: Ziyad J.)

3.2.5. Historical and Cultural site

In addition to natural attraction, there are also cultural and historical heritage sites where the local communities undertaking spiritual activities.

3.2.5.1. Dilmekar Spiritual Place

It is found at the South gate of Dhera block about 300m far away from main road which goes to sire District to the north direction. It is a ritual/spiritual cultural site where “Muda” practiced and long aged with different size of entombment of local people with different artistic designed plate of wildlife habitat of the area. This burial may attract visitors because it has a beautiful artistic design with different type of picture. In this area like dire sheik Hussein muda was undertaken two times per a year (during Hajji and Zahra) hundreds of believers even come from faraway places for pilgrimage.



Figure 6. Dilmekar Spiritual Place (Photo by: Ziyad J.)

3.2.5.2. Ujune Baji Graveyard and His Historical Background (Source: Local elders & his relatives)

This grave was found in the dhera dilfekar block of Arsi mountains national park. It is about 1km far from the first main gate. This grave may attract visitors because it has a beautiful artistic design with different type of animal pictures such as Ape, elephant and others showing the availability of diversity of wildlife in the area. In addition there are also cultural materials such as Shield, Spear for the purpose of defending his opponent.

Ujune Baji was a popular hero man that was born in Oromia regional state Arsi zone, dodota woreda, dilfekar kebele. This person was very prominent and well known in Oromo Arsi area during war on Oromo people. During that time he tries to defend his enemies in collaboration with his brothers, Burka, Kilo and other friends. He has very strong horse called “**biyyo**” that he was used to ride for purpose of defending the war. He named his horse “biyyo” because during that time there is no enough food to eat and famine was so known. So, to survive peoples eat soil which means in Afaan oromoo “biyyoo”. He is patriotic person who always stand for truth, to protect his country from enemy. In addition, Ujune Baji was a person who always refuses to give his hand to his opponents and enemies. During that time according to local elders told us “**Ujune Baji**” was a young person of 20 years old. He was born in 1867 E.C. He seriously struggles and won Menilik II war on oromo peoples especially in Arsi area. This person was a father of nine (9) children. He follows “wakeffata” religion. Finally he become sick and left this world during this war.

3.2.6. The Local Community

The people who settled around the park are ethnic group of Oromo-Arsi. They have their own unique dressing style (Figure 6), wedding ceremony, local handicrafts, traditional foods, and time-honored ruling system of Abba Gada. Some of the known traditional foods are called “Chechebsa” and “Chuko” with traditional coffee ceremony. They are welcoming and friendly people and endowed with traditional way of living.



Figure 7. Arsi Oromo Cultural Dressing Style (Photo by: Ziyad J.)

4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Eco tourism potential of Arsi mountains National Park dhera dilfekar block is assessed based on natural attractions, cultural features, and tourism activities. The results of the research revealed some of ecotourism potentials of dhera dilfekar block like Dire kiltu hyena valley, Dire kiltu lesser kudu site, Dire kiltu greater kudu site, Fachiso greater kudu site, Gara dima hyena valley (1), Awash bishola dhagaa taa'aa valley and Gara dima hyena valley (2) (Table 2). Additionally the park can offer the visitor an opportunity to see lowland game species, a variety of bird species, Acacia dominated spectacular landscape, historical and Cultural sites, Cultural living style of the local community which makes this block unique feature to attract eco tourists. Furthermore, tourist facilities and services including camping sites, guiding services and hotels/lodges nearby found in Adama town which is the center of conference tourism and sodare resort hotel which is frequently visited by both domestic and foreign tourists contributed to an increase in tourist flow.

Wild animals like Greater kudu, Lesser Kudu, Warthog, Hyena, Anubis baboon, are among common species in dhera dilfekar block. The park is also rich in Avifauna species (OFWE, 2010).

Recommendations: Based up on the above conclusions the following recommendations were made.

- ✓ To scale up wildlife tourism potentials of dhera dilfekar block, better promotion with practical conservation activities, community based tourism approaches and infrastructures should be implemented for tourist destination of dhera dilfekar block.
- ✓ On the other hand, anthropogenic pressures are identified as the main conservation challenges; hence the park requires immediate intervention.
- ✓ Awareness creation should be developed for the local communities and other stakeholders on the benefits of ecotourism and conservation of eco-attractions for sustainable management of ecotourism activities.

- ✓ Finally it is better that offering tourist facilities and services and creating job opportunities for members of local communities have a positive impact on tourism activities by creating a sense of ownership on the local community.

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