All unofficial resource rents in Nepal’s forestry sector originate from bureaucrats’ exploitation, circumvention, and manipulation of seemingly laudable resource management rules intended to ensure sustainable utilisation of environmental, i.e. non-cultivated, products. In theory, such rules should rest on sound biophysical knowledge about stocks and growth rates but, in practice, they don’t. Rather, operational harvesting rules for a vast array of environmental products rest on meagre, manipulated, politicised, or non-existent data. This reality is no secret to most forest bureaucrats. However, they must make do with what they’ve got to calculate and enforce harvesting quotas because higher-level rules in the forest legislation require this. Hence, actual resource governance is the range of practices, which follow from pretending that existing rules rest on the professional ideal of credible biophysical stock and growth data while hiding this is not and probably never will be the case. The combination of a thriving commercial market for environmental products, low official salaries (among others) in the forest bureaucracy, and the actual processes of bureaucratic resource governance establish a virtual ecology of interconnected niches where different categories of bureaucrats can exercise particular rent-seeking practices. Drawing on generic classifications of corruption we use qualitative data from the level of forest guards to director general to develop a typology of unofficial rents and practices in the forestry sector. Through nation-wide empirical data, collected in 2014-15 from 359 harvesters, 393 traders, and 73 wholesalers we estimate the size and distribution of unofficial rents in the medicinal and aromatic plant (MAP) sector. Furthermore, we estimate the size and distribution of unofficial rents generated from commercial timber production in community forests. Unofficial revenues are substantial, a nuisance to traders, and unduly ‘tax’ primary producers. However, rent-seeking does not significantly constrain trade. Curiously, the resulting governance of community forests accommodates systematic rent-seeking but promotes under rather than over-harvesting of the timber resource. How the corresponding governance of MAPs affects this resource is, on the other hand, highly uncertain.