

**#RuffordLENepal024**

# **Rufford Learning Event**

*Fostering experience sharing and collaboration*



**1 to 4 October 2024**  
**Chitwan, Nepal**



**#RuffordLENepal024**

## Rufford Learning Event Nepal 2024: Fostering experience sharing and collaboration



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# About the event

This report covers the highlights from the Rufford Learning Event Nepal (#RLENepal024) which was held from 1 to 4 October 2024. The learning event aimed at fostering experience sharing and collaboration among the Nepali Rufford Grantees through a closed camp filled with skill-development sessions. Out of >400 grantees to date, 18 participants were selected considering diversity, gender, career stages, and focusing on active grantees (prioritizing grantees from 2017 to mid-2024). The event had a balance of activities, including workshops, discussions, poster presentations from grantees, games, and field trips led by local stewards. We chose the type of workshops and activities based on the participants’ responses to the pre-event survey. Greenhood Nepal, a conservation non-profit, hosted the learning event at Tigerland Safari Resort, Chitwan, Nepal.

Table: Event summary

NAME OF THE EVENT	RUFFORD LEARNING EVENT
DATE	01 TO 04 OCTOBER
EVENT VENUE	TIGERLAND SAFARI RESORT, JAGATPUR, CHITWAN, NEPAL
NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS	18 [10 MALE; 8 FEMALE]
NUMBER OF FACILITATORS AND SPEAKERS	7
RUFFORD REPRESENTATIVE/S	MARIAM WESTON
EVENT HOST	GREENHOOD NEPAL
CONTACT INFORMATION	INFO@GREENHOOD.ORG





# EVENT SUMMARY

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EVENT- 01 TO 3 OCT

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<b>PRE-EVENT</b> 29-30 SEPT	ARRIVALS/REGISTRATION WELCOME
<b>DAY 1</b> 01 OCT	ARRIVALS/REGISTRATION WELCOME SESSION ROUND CIRCLE ACTIVITY WITH PARTICIPANTS RUFFORD: PRESENTATION GREENHOOD NEPAL: PRESENTATION
<b>DAY 2</b> 02 OCT	WELCOME NOTES: LOCAL GOVERNMENT WORKSHOP 1: MEDIA WORKSHOP WORKSHOP 2: PROJECT MANAGEMENT  PRESENTATION: LOCAL NATURE STEWARD FIELD TRIP
<b>DAY 3</b> 03 OCT	PRESENTATION 3: CONSERVATION ACTION PLAN WORKSHOP 3: FUNDRAISING PRESENTATION: CONSERVATION THREATS WORKSHOP 1 (CONTINUED)
<b>DAY 4</b> 04 OCT	REFLECTION: EVERYONE WRAP UP
<b>04-05 OCT</b>	TRAVEL BACK TO DESTINATION

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# The program

01 to 03 October

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## 30 September

18:00	Arrival and registration at <u>Tigerland Safari Lemon Tree Resort</u> , Jagatpur, Chitwan
19:00 onwards	Welcome Rest/Option to play a game (Tharu) Cultural dance
20:00	Dinner

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## 01 October

	Arrival and registration (continued)
14:30-16:30	Nature walk (Krishna Bote, Nature Guide)
16:30-17:00	Round circle activity with participants
17:00-20:00	Presentation including sharing expectations (Mariam Weston, Grants Officer, RSG)
	Program outline and introduction to the program host (Kumar Paudel, Director, Greenhood Nepal)
	Poster presentation (5 participants)

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## 02 October

Before 8:15	Breakfast
08:30 - 09:30	Welcome & a roundtable discussion (Deepak Dawadi, Ward Chair)
09:30 - 11:00	Workshop 1 - Media workshop (Abhaya Joshi, Journalist, Mongabay)
11:00 - 11:10	Fun activity
11:10 - 13:00	Workshop 2 - Project design (Reshu Bashyal, Research Fellow, Greenhood Nepal)
13:00 - 14:00	Lunch break



# The program

01 to 03 October

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## 02 October

- |               |   |
|---------------|---|
| 14:00 - 18:00 | Local nature steward followed by a visit and discussion<br>(Manesh Tamang, President, Nature Guide's Association) |
| 19:30 - 20:00 | Poster presentation (8 participants)  |
| 20:00         | Dinner and fun activity   |

## 03 October

- |               |  |
|---------------|--|
| Before 08:15  | Breakfast  |
| 08:15 - 08:40 | Poster presentation (5 participants)   |
| 08:40 - 09:40 | Presentation 3 - Conservation action plan, policies<br>(Avinash Thapa Magar, Conservation officer, Chitwan<br>National Park) |
| 09:40 - 10:00 | Fun activity   |
| 10:00 - 13:00 | Workshop 2 – Fundraising and engaging with corporates<br>Mariam Weston, Grants Officer, RSG)                                 |
| 13:00 - 14:00 | Lunch break  |
| 14:00 - 16:00 | Presentation 2 - Conservation threats (Kumar Paudel,<br>Director, Greenhood Nepal)   |
| 16:00 - 16:30 | Tea break and fun activity   |
| 16:30 - 19:30 | Workshop 2 - Project design & management group<br>activity continued.. (Reshu Bashyal, Research Fellow,<br>Greenhood Nepal)  |
| 19:30         | Dinner and cultural dance  |

## 04 October

- |               |   |
|---------------|---|
| Before 08:30  | Breakfast   |
| 08:30 - 13:00 | Wrap up/closing<br>Collaboration posters<br>Hand painting activity<br>Networking activity with a yarn<br>Token of love<br>Group photo |

**Travel back to destination (04 and 05 October)**



# Event details

## 30 Sept 2024 - pre event

One-third of the participants (exactly six of them) arrived at the venue *Tigerland Safari Resort* in Jagatpur, Chitwan, Nepal, on the 30th of September. The participants were welcomed by a cultural dance (organised by a local Tharu community showcasing their cultural instruments and dance moves).

## Day 1, 01 October 2024

The technical session started on the 1st of October. The first activity was a guided tour to “Ghaila Ghari Community Forest” in Jagatpur organized with a strategy to release participants’ travel hustles. Krishna Bote a local nature guide led this tour who helped participants spot different taxa and shared community best practice models.

The program started with a welcome from Mariam Weston, Grants Officer of The Rufford Foundation. Mariam shared expectations from the Rufford Foundation, the reason for choosing Nepal for this event, encouraging participants to actively participate in the learning event, and continuing with grant development. Kumar Paudel, Director of Greenhood Nepal, welcomed all the participants and expressed his gratitude to the Rufford Foundation for identifying Greenhood to host the event.



Photo 1: Participants of the learning event



## Event details



Photo 2: Glimpses from the welcome session. A) Rufford Grants Officer, Mariam Weston, B) Greenhood Director, Kumar Paudel



Photo 3: Rufford Grants Officer Mariam Weston

We held a “round circle activity” where all the participants were asked to sit on the ground forming a close circle to introduce themselves to the group. They were asked to say their name, where they come from, why they are in conservation, and why chose to work on that particular species. This was followed by speed presentations from 5 participants who bravely volunteered to be the first presenters!



Photo 4: Photos from the field trip to Ghaila Ghari Community Forest





Photo 5: Some more photos of the participants during the learning event



## Event details

### Day 2, 02 October 2024

On day 2, the sessions started with the media workshop. Participants learned to communicate with journalists in a way that facilitates unbiased coverage of the conservation issue under consideration. The participants also said they enjoyed learning techniques to identify the relevance of their story to a media article (through an exercise), pitch stories to a journalist, and write newspaper/media articles on their own.



Photo 6: Roundtable discussion with Deepak Dawadi, Ward Chair

Followed by the media workshop, we had an interaction with Deepak Dawadi, the Chair of ward no. 23 of Bharatpur Metropolitan City. Participants had the opportunity to ask questions and learn strategies to approach, coordinate, and collaborate with local government to undertake their project activities. The session was useful for participants to understand the expectations of the local government authority from conservationists. Also, it was fruitful to learn how best to help local government incorporate conservation activities in their workplan.



Photo 7: Abhaya Joshi during a group activity in the media workshop

*Note: We planned to start the day with a welcome from the local government. However, we had to change our plans considering an emergency of Mr. Dwadi that led us to start with the media workshop.*



## Event details

### Day 2, 02 October 2024 contd...

Day 2 continued with a workshop on project design and management facilitated by Reshu Bashyal. The session included an introduction to programs and projects, principles of project design and management, project management phases, and ways to manage changes in project.



Photo 8: Participants during project design & management workshop

After lunch, a local steward, Manesh Limbu (the head of the local nature guide association) shared his conservation journey with the participants. The idea of this session was to encourage local stewardship providing them the floor to share their work and motivate participants to continue working in conservation overcoming hurdles. Followed by this, Manesh led the guided nature tour to Malika Community Forest in Jagatpur.



Photo 9: Participants during Tiger encounter in the wild in our guided tour





Photo 10: Participants during field trip, along with a faint image of a tigress on the left. Some participants also saw a cub along with the momma tigress but for others who didn't see it wasn't true ;)





# Event details

## Day 3, 03 October 2024

Day 3 started with a presentation by Avinash Thapa Magar, Conservation officer, at Chitwan National Park. He shared about the work of the CNP and how they are working with communities to obtain lauded success in increasing the population of rhinos and tigers in Nepal. Also, he encouraged event participants to mainstream their conservation projects with national-level and protected area management plans for a bigger impact.



Photo 10: Participating interacting with local level community stewards

Following this session, Mariam Weston led a workshop on fundraising. The fundraising workshop covered topics on grant writing, fundraising (private sector donations, crowdfunding, competitive grants), criteria for Rufford grants, etc.



Photo 11: Participants engaging in a group activity



# Event details

## Day 3, 03 October 2024 contd...

Kumar Paudel took a session on conservation threat identification. He used an exercise, to help participants identify (direct and indirect) threats to their species and their habitats. The participants also learned to rank threats based on their urgency.

The session continued with the remaining activities of the Project design and management workshop from Reshu Bashyal. The participants learned to prepare a problem tree/objective tree based on the identified threats. The project design session also included details on the log frame and theory of change followed by exercises on the problem tree and theory of change.



Photo 12: Participants working individually to map threats to their species



Photo 13: Mariam Weston during one of the sessions of fundraising workshop

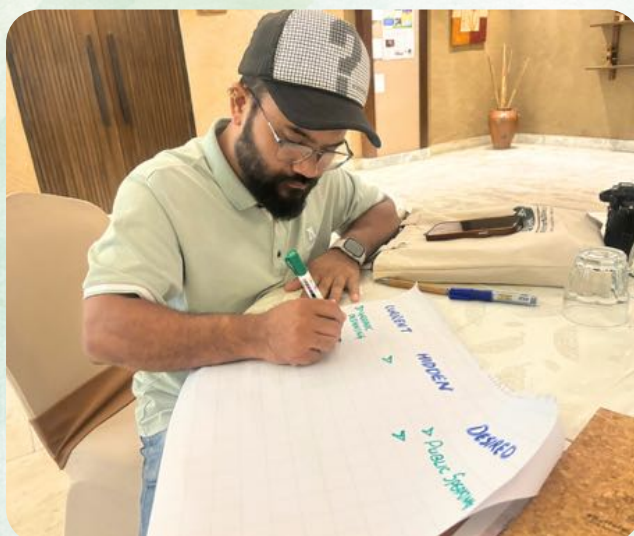


Photo 14: Participants engaging in group and individual activities



## Day 4, 04 October 2024

Day 4 started with a collaborative poster session where participants prepared individual posters including their current skills, hidden skills, and desired skills. The posters were placed on the walls of the room and all participants (including facilitators) walked around to place their name (and the name of someone they know) facilitating better collaboration to learn and teach skills.

The event closed with a woven wisdom activity and brief closing remarks from organisers and the Rufford team.



Photo 15: Participants fully engaging in group activities during the event



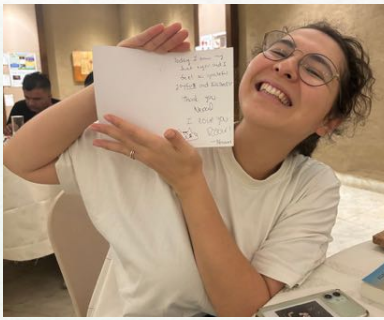


Photo 16: Glimpse from the event



## Learning event outcome

The participants were affiliated with different conservation NGOs in Nepal, representing different stages of their conservation and academic careers. There were 8 female and 10 male participants (initially we had 50% female participants but 2 of them withdrew their participation).

We did surveys before and after the learning event with all the participants. This section presents the key findings from the survey.

### *Learning and exchange*

The event helped participants to enhance (learn and unlearn) new conservation skills and tools with a specific focus on community-based conservation and research tools. It facilitated them to engage in discussions around key conservation issues and learn impactful communication skills. We had at least two workshops every day followed by poster presentations from at least six participants. There were invited speakers, local management authorities, and guided nature walks, to motivate participants to consider all aspects of conservation (nature, people, policies) when they design community-focused conservation initiatives in the future. The workshop topics were identified based on the responses from participants during the initial selection survey to help participants improve their knowledge and enhance their conservation project impacts.



Photo 17: Photo of some of the participants





# Learning event outcome

## *Learning and exchange contd...*

The participants found the event sessions to be fruitful. The three key learnings of the participants were different as some focused on workshop topics while others on networking and knowledge exchange. some of the most significant learnings were learning about the project management tools, fundraising, and threats mapping (Fig 1).

## *Future collaboration*

Overall, 100% of the participants said that they found the event fruitful in terms of generating future collaboration (53% said that they would collaborate in the future; 47% said they may collaborate).

## *Feasibility of the topics presented during the learning event*

Overall, 100% of the participants believed that the information and activities in the workshop were useful. 80% said the information they obtained would be useful in their work to address conservation challenges while 20% said they may use it. Likewise, 73% strongly agreed that the event promoted interaction among grantees while 23% agreed the same (fig 2).



Fig 1: Most significant learning during the learning event

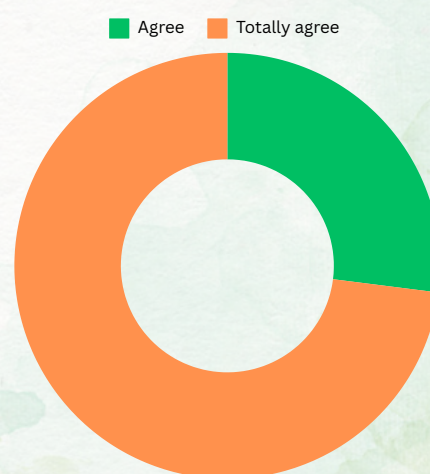


Fig 2: Participants response to the usefulness of the session and topics presented during the learning event



# Learning event outcome

## ***Conservation threats***

Before the learning event, participants decided on which threat to focus on for their conservation project based on a detailed literature review, interaction with local communities, and self-evaluation (based on their experience). After the event, they can now confidently decide on the type of threats to their species and the habitat (fig 3). Additionally, they are now confident to decide what conservation activities are needed in the group.

The major threats to the species were habitat degradation, poaching, lack of awareness, conflict and retaliation, and knowledge gap. The treats identified by participants were similar pre/post-event. Participants felt that their confidence in threat identification increased after the learning event (fig 4).

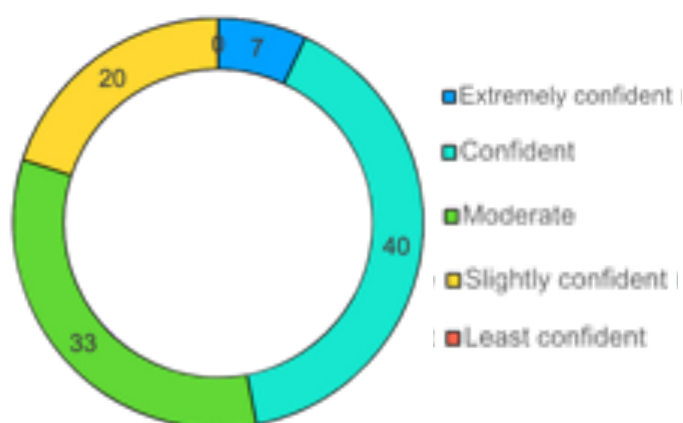


Fig 3: Confidence (%) of participants to identify threats to their species and their habitat (post-event)

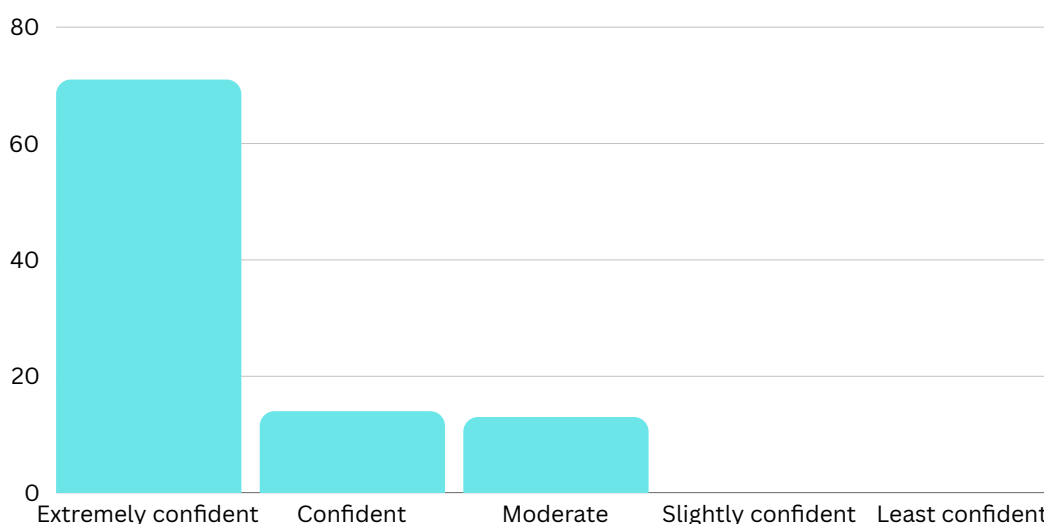


Fig 4: Confidence (%) of participants to decide type of conservation activities needed on the ground (post-event)

## ***Motivation to apply for continuation grants***

The learning event was an opportunity to strengthen relations among the Nepali conservationists, Rufford grantees in Nepal, Rufford team. It also helped to facilitate collaboration, develop ideas, and motivate grantees to apply for the continuation grant.



## Learning event outcome

The participants identified were at different stages of their professional and academic careers, representing passion for the conservation of different taxa i.e. there was an opportunity to network and plan holistic conservation initiatives, especially promoted through targeted workshops such as fundraising and project design.

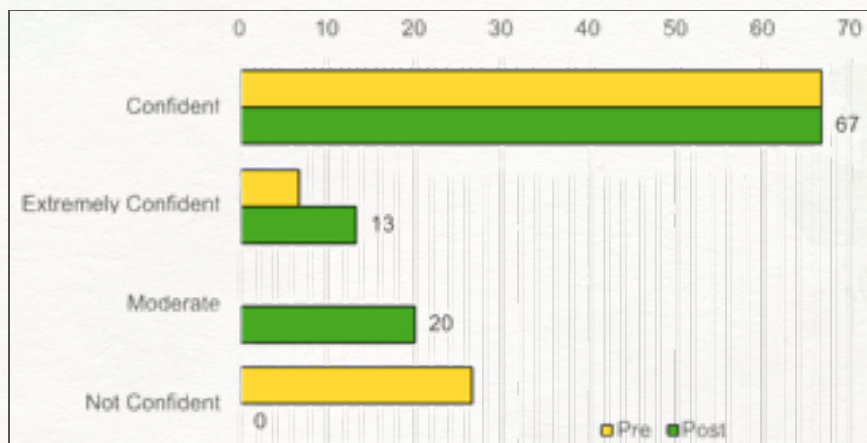


Fig 5: Confidence (%) of participants to apply for the grant (pre/post-event)

During the pre-event survey, 46% of the participants said they had not applied for future funding while 27% had applied already and the rest of them were leading their first project. After the event, 100% of the participants said they plan to apply for more funding from the RSG, 93% said they gained a better understanding of how to apply, and participants seemed confident to apply for future grants (fig 5). Moreover, participants also found themselves more confident in writing grants (fig 6).

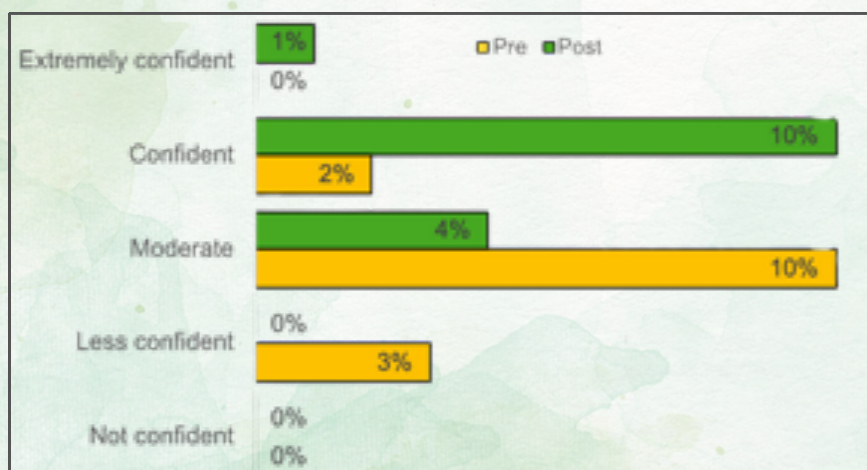


Fig 6: Confidence of participants to in grant writing (pre/post-event)



# Learning event outcome

## *Project management*

Only 20% of the participants had attended training on project design and management before the event. Participants said that the event helped them to understand the importance of impact, budget, and timeline as key components in project management, including using tools such as the theory of change, log-frames, and Gantt charts in their projects at different stages of design and management.

Of all, 47% of the participants had either prepared or learned about the Gantt chart before the event, of which only 13% had prepared it in the last six months. After the learning event, 100% of the participants seemed interested in using the Gantt chart with 47% extremely interested, 33% moderately interested, and 20% interested (fig 7).

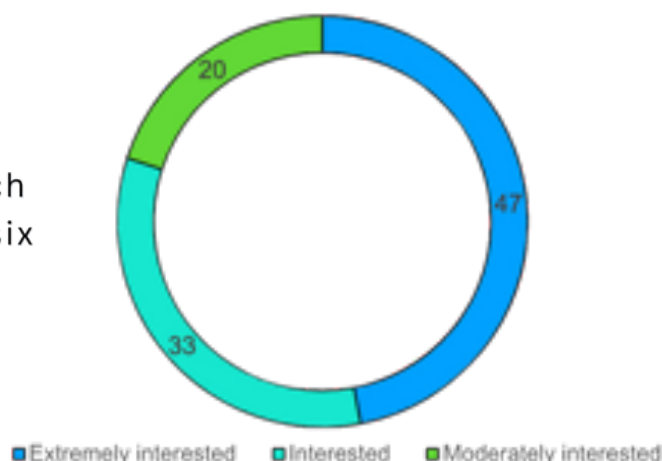


Fig 7: Interest (%) of the participants to use Gantt chart (post-event)

Regarding the theory of change, 27% said that they had prepared the theory of change before while post-event, all participants wanted to prepare it for their projects. 20% of participants said they were extremely confident to prepare while 20% each said they were either confident or moderately confident (fig 8).



Fig 8: Confidence (%) in preparing theory of change (post-event)



# Learning event outcome

## Enhanced visibility

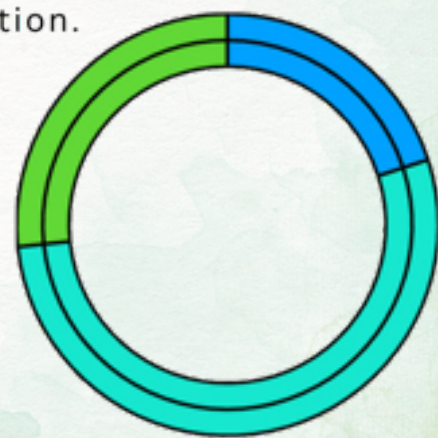
Communicating the research outcomes was another key focus of the learning event. We had a “media workshop” facilitated by a renowned journalist who constantly writes for Mongabay-conservation news. The Media workshop turned out to be an important one to the participants as 100% of the participants said they gained the confidence to publish their findings targeting the general audience (compared to our anticipated 80% of participants).



Photo 18: Learning event participant sharing experience of working with media

Only 6% of the participants had participated in the media workshop before; 53% had already pitched their ideas for at least one journalist. Also, all the participants said that they would be either interested in writing one or working with a journalist to pitch an idea in the future but it is very difficult to make journalists understand sensitive issues of conservation.

Confidence to pitch to media and confidence to write to media: 20% said they are extremely confident, 27% said moderately confident, and 53% said they are confident (fig 9). Both fields, writing on their own, and pitching to journalists had the same value of response while all the participants post workshop aspired to write about their work in media on their own.



■ Extremely confident ■ Confident ■ Moderate

Fig 9: Confidence (%) of participants to pitch to media and write on their own (post-event)



# Learning event outcome

## *Enhanced visibility*

We organized poster sessions for all the event participants to encourage shared learning and exchange including enhancing the visibility of early-career grantees. We asked participants to prepare a four-minute fun-filled poster highlighting key learnings from their recent Rufford project (or expected findings for those who had not yet completed their project). Participants found the poster session fruitful and enriching as they received feedback from each other.



Photo 19: Glimpse from the poster presentation session where participants are seen presenting their project

Further, the learning event facilitated the visibility of not only the participants but also of local stewards and conservation officers, especially nature guides who often do not get the recognition they deserve for all their contributions to on-ground nature conservation.



## Learning event outcome

### *Social media post analytics/engagement*

We shared the event activities and pictures exclusively on our social media platforms mainly on Facebook, Instagram, X (formerly known as Twitter) and LinkedIn. Through these platforms the posts were able to reach out to more than ten thousand people and brought interactions and impressions that were higher than for our regular posts during the Learning Event dates.



### **Summarising the event outcomes and learnings**

Overall, the participants found the event to be fruitful. The three keywords to describe the participant's experience of the event were different for different individuals with highlights being inspiring, uplifting, engaging, insightful, transformative, and collaborative (fig 10).



fig 10: Participant's post- event survey results about their experience of participating at the learning event



# Rufford Learning Event

## *Key suggestions from participants to improve future programs*

The participants said that the learning event was good and timely. Overall, the participants said that the learning event was an opportunity for participants to learn and exchange and would love to be a part of any future programs.

The participants found the venue suitable in terms of location, rooms, and conference facilities and they enjoyed the vegetarian food. Also, there was no complain about the transportation facility.

Here are some suggestions to improve future programs:

- Include a diverse range of panelists to provide different perspectives and experiences in conservation
- Time management (for each session and overall program)
- More opportunities for peer-to-peer sharing
- Include programs to help participants connect with the government

One of the participants also suggested that reshuffling workshop sessions (such as fundraising and threats categorization) could have been done as the first thing. Another participant said that the sessions should be formal (with proper formal dress codes).

Just two days before the scheduled event dates, there was a huge flood in Kathmandu and other parts of Nepal that disrupted the majority of road travel. The impact was also seen in air travel, the participants so some of the facilitators could not travel to the venue nor could do online classes due to electricity issues in Kathmandu where most of them were based. As organisers, we also feel that the event would have been better.



# Appendix

## Event venue

We organized the event in Tigerland Safari - Lemon Tree Resort, located in Jagatpur, Chitwan. The venue was selected considering its vicinity to the Chitwan National Park keeping in mind the possibility of facilitating interaction with the national park officers (or visit to the CNP) as one of the outdoor activities during the event.

Chitwan National Park is the oldest National Park in Nepal and is enlisted as a World Heritage Site. It harbors more than 68 species of mammals including the greater one-horned rhinoceros and tigers, >540 species of birds, >55 species of herpetofauna, several protected plant species, and many other wildlife - a perfect learning background for nature lovers and conservationists.

Tigerland Safari Resort was approximately 20 km away from the Bharatpur Airport, within a 2-hour journey from the central location. This resort-cum lodge offered a great view of the national park forest and wildlife including different protected plants and animals. It had a perfect amalgam of architecture and interiors that seemingly blended with the jungle itself, providing an isolated yet outstanding venue for conservation camps. The best part of this venue was its initiative to minimize environmental footprints which they did by promoting local foods, organic vegetables, and using solar panels to power the resort. The venue itself had a small jungle offering sightings of wild birds, butterflies, deer, and different protected plants. It also offered isolated villas, a well-equipped workshop hall, internet service, and cultural shows after dinner.

The venue had sufficient accommodation for up to 30 people to suffice our needs (participants, Rufford team, organizing team, and experts). It includes on-site dining facilities, hot water, internet, and facilities to accommodate sessions.



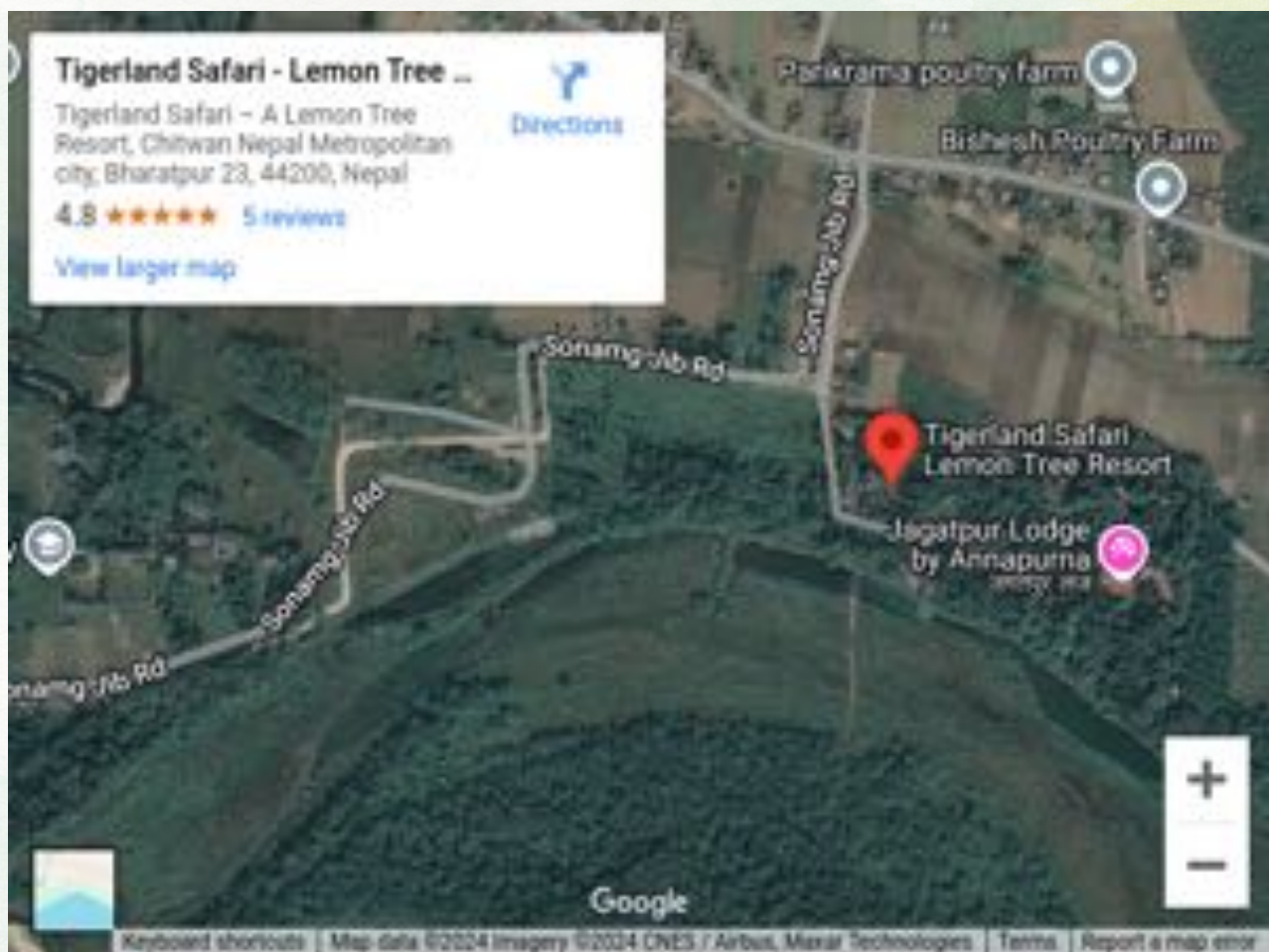


Photo: Map of event venue at Tigerland Safari - Lemon Tree Resort, Jagatpur, Chitwan

## Participants details

The 18 early to mid-career Rufford grantees (25-45 years of age) attended the event (see, participant details below). We had one to two resource persons each day, 1 Rufford Grants representative, and 2 event organizing teams. The resource persons included experts from Chitwan and the local community as well as external experts from Kathmandu.

*Note: We initially selected 20 participants considering diversity in terms of gender (10 male and 10 female), species (one species or area of focus), stage of grantees (current, former, both), and location (7 participants were from Terai, others represented high-hills and mid-hills in terms of their work and/or work residence). However, two (both female) selected individuals withdrew their participation. We had 18 participants (8 female and 10 male).*





## The Rufford Foundation

The Rufford Foundation is a UK registered charity which funds nature conservation projects across the developing world. The programme identifies scientists at the very early stages of their careers and provides targeted support to enable them to achieve their goal of making a difference in terms of conservation. Over the past two decades the Rufford Foundation has supported thousands of young conservationists' vital research work into threatened habitats and species. Only in Nepal, it has supported >400 conservation projects.

### Mariam Weston

An engineer in Sustainable Development with an MPhil in Conservation Leadership from the University of Cambridge, Mariam has over eight years of experience developing sustainable conservation and coexistence strategies. She currently serves as a Programme Officer at the IUCN SSC Human-Wildlife Conflict & Coexistence Specialist Group and as a consultant for the Rufford Foundation, where she coordinates capacity-building events worldwide.

Mariam has expertise in building strategic alliances across governments, private sectors, academia, and NGOs. She is a significant contributor to the Small Wild Cat Conservation Foundation, where she coordinates conservation projects through the Ocelot Working Group, actively contributing to preserving small wild cat species by mitigating threats across their distribution range.

Her career showcases her unwavering passion for wildlife conservation, incorporating human dimensions and sustainable social development, combining technical proficiency with social and community approaches. When Mariam is not working on conservation projects, she enjoys talking about cats, horse riding, yoga, watching movies, and hiking.

Get in touch: [LinkedIn](#)





# Facilitators

## Local facilitators and presenters

- Deepak Dawadi, Ward Chair, Ward no. 23, Bharatpur metropolitan
- Avinash Thapa Magar, Conservation Officer, Chitwan National Park
- Manesh Tamang, President of Nature Guide Association, Jagatpur
- Krishna Bote, Local Nature Guide affiliated with Nature Guide Association in Jagatpur

## Other facilitators

- Abhaya Joshi, Journalist
- Kumar Paudel, Director, Greenhood Nepal
- Mariam Weston, Grants Officer, RSG
- Reshu Bashyal, Research Fellow, Greenhood Nepal

### Abhaya Joshi

Abhaya Raj Joshi is a journalist based in Kathmandu, Nepal. He writes about issues related to biodiversity, conservation and technology. He holds an LLM degree in Human Rights from Purbanchal University, Nepal and a post graduate diploma in journalism from Asian College of Journalism, Chennai, India. I am excited to connect with Rufford grantees at the learning event and look for potential collaboration for future conservation works.



### Kumar Paudel

Kumar Paudel is a conservation scholar-practitioner with an MPhil in Conservation Leadership from the University of Cambridge. He is the Founder and Director of Greenhood Nepal, a science-driven conservation non-profit. His work primarily lies in interdisciplinary conservation research covering law enforcement, wildlife trade, community-based conservation, species conservation, strategy and policy. He is currently also serving as IUCN SSC Pangolin Specialist Group Co-Chair for South Asia.





# PARTICIPANTS

## Badri Baral

Badri Baral, an MSc graduate believes himself as preacher for good conservation science. He started his conservation career as volunteer for Clouded Leopard Survey in Shivapuri Nagarjun National Park in 2012-2013. He co-founded a research-based organization Nepal Environmental Research Institute (NERI) and an NGO Nature Conservation Initiative Nepal (NCI-Nepal). Rufford grants been a stepping stone to ascend the ladder of grant writing success to fuel his organization's mission with other robust funds. Concomitantly, Rufford helped him to remain rooted not only with Conservation communities; but equally with local communities by granting him a chance to be the driver of positive change in the society - he has been involved in grass eating carnivora research.

Get in touch: [ResearchGate](#) [ORCID](#) [Google scholar](#)



## Beeju Poudyal



Beeju Poudyal is currently working as an assistant professor at Agriculture and Forestry University, Faculty of Forestry. She comes from Jhapa district where she had close interaction with the elephants, the charismatic animal of the ecosystem. Yet, she got traumatized by some of the extreme conflict events during her childhood. Although there exists Human-elephant conflict and the impacts are unavoidable, she decided to work for the conservation of the elephants with attempts to minimize the conflicts. She has completed two projects through Rufford and conducted some research in collaboration with the students on the conservation of these animals. Rufford Small Grants have been the backbone of her conservation efforts. She loves working for the conservation of one of the wisest animals on the planet!

Get in touch: [ResearchGate](#) [Facebook](#)



# PARTICIPANTS

## Bishnu Achhami



Bishnu Achhami initiated his conservation journey several years ago while pursuing an MSc at the Central Department of Zoology, Tribhuvan University. For his master's dissertation, he studied parasitic infections in wild ruminants and chauris in Langtang National Park, Rasuwa, where one of the species included was the Musk deer. This research sparked his interest in wildlife conservation. Following this, he volunteered in wildlife research projects, awareness programs, including in the Small Mammals Conservation and Research Foundation (SMCRF). During this time, he applied for the Rufford Small Grants and was fortunate enough to receive the grant, which marked the beginning of his true conservation journey. As the principal investigator, he led the project and successfully completed it, gaining valuable experiences—both positive and negative. The Rufford Foundation has had a profound and inspiring impact on his conservation efforts.

Ganesh began conservation journey driven by a passion for addressing human-wildlife conflicts, particularly in the Western Terai region of Nepal. His work primarily focuses on mitigating conflicts between fishing cats and local fish farmers through market-based solutions. By establishing the Fishing Cat Coexistence Initiative, he has worked closely with local communities to create sustainable programs that protect both livelihoods and wildlife.

He is the founder of the Western Terai Fishing Cat Conservation Project and currently works as a forest officer under the Ministry of Forest and Environment in Bagmati Province, Hetauda. The support from Rufford has been instrumental in amplifying these efforts, enabling him to implement innovative strategies like the Fish Bank Program, which compensates fish farmers for losses and supports conservation goals.

Get in touch: [LinkedIn](#).

## Ganesh Puri





# PARTICIPANTS

## Hemanta Dhakal

Mr. Hemanta Dhakal is nature and bird lover. He holds a Master's degree in Zoology from Nepal and has been actively involved in vulture and bird conservation since 2009. With over a dozen publications in local, national, and international peer-reviewed journals, he is a respected voice in his field. He has also authored several books focused on vultures and birds. Additionally, he is a committed activist advocating against development projects that threaten natural habitats and avian species. Mr. Dhakal is also awarded with some reputed conservation awards locally and nationally for awareness and research campaign on vulture conservation. After two small grants from the Rufford Foundation, UK., recently on Jan 2024 he was able to get Rufford Booster grant for conservation of vultures in four provinces (Gandaki, Lumbini, Sudhur Paschim and Karnali) of Nepal. Mr. Dhakal is a faculty member at Zoology Department, Prithivi Narayan Campus, Founder Secretary and life member of Pokhara Bird Society, National Focal person of IUCN SSC Specialist group of Nepal, IUCN SSC Vulture Specialist Group member, general member of American Ornithological Society, Life member of Birdlife International Nepal.



## Jyoti Bhandari



Jyoti Bhandari is a dedicated forestry expert with extensive knowledge in vegetation ecology, silviculture, wildlife and community forestry. Her expertise encompasses critical areas such as poverty alleviation, livelihood enhancement, biodiversity conservation, and forest governance, particularly within developing countries like Nepal, India, and China. Bhandari's research interests also include otter survey, wetland and grassland management, and rural development. In July 2017, she led a project funded by a Rufford Small Grant, focusing on the conservation status and awareness of Smooth-Coated Otters in Babai River of Bardia National Park. Her work aims to integrate otter conservation with community welfare, addressing both ecological and socio-economic challenges. Furthering her impact, Bhandari received the Organization for Women in Science for the Developing World (OWSD) Early Career Fellowship in 2020. Her contributions are pivotal in advancing sustainable forestry practices and promoting rural development through her dedicated research and advocacy. Through her research and projects, Bhandari contributes to advancing sustainable forestry practices and promoting the balance between human and ecological needs.



# PARTICIPANTS

## Kamal Devkota



Kamal Devkota holds an M.Sc. from the Tribhuvan University, Nepal. He is the President of Save The Lives Society, and a member of the IUCN SSC Snake Specialist Group. As a Zoologist, he is leading research and outreach primarily on snakes, conflict mitigations, and snakebite management since 2011. His works has been published in different journals and has presented at conferences. He has conducted numerous awareness programs like Nepal Snake Festival, Theatre in Education, Save The Lives, Save The King, Human-Snake Co-existence, Save Snakes Save Nature, Snake Rescue Methods, etc. He also acts/directs radio, street and theatre dramas as well as Nepali films. Kamal is grateful to The Rufford Foundation for supporting his works and connecting him with international scientific and conservation communities.

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Since her early years as a forestry student, Kiran developed a profound interest in conservation which grew as a passion over time. To channel this passion, she began volunteering with NBrCC where she contributed to a project that aimed to intervene tools to mitigate human-elephant conflicts. She also volunteered in several other projects on elephant and biodiversity and ended up pursuing a Master's degree in Wildlife Management and Biodiversity Conservation. This decision brought her closer to realizing her dream of becoming a dedicated conservationist. Rufford has been pivotal in her conservation career, offering a strong foundation. The support and funding have equipped her with the resources needed to implement and expand skills through her project, "Ecology and Conservation of Gaur in Nepal,". She enjoys photography in her spare times.

## Kiran Poudel



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# PARTICIPANTS

## Kushal Shrestha

Kushal Shrestha is the youngest Forest Officer at the Ministry of Forests and Environment, Government of Nepal. He holds an M.Sc. in Forestry from Agriculture and Forestry University (2020-2023). He began his conservation journey in 2016 as a coordinator for the Alumni Association for Conservation and Development at the Institute of Forestry Coordination Committee, where he led training and awareness programs. He then volunteered with Friends of Nature and Chandra Gurung Conservation Foundation, and joined Greenhood Nepal as a Research Associate in 2019 to 2022 during which he also led a Rufford-funded project to uncover illegal bird trade in Kathmandu and raise awareness. His work significantly advanced the understanding of bird trade issues in the region and contributed to stronger conservation measures. He is passionate about birding and exploring new places, which fuels his commitment to avifauna conservation.

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## Manju Shree Thakur



Manju Shree Thakur is deeply passionate about wildlife conservation and environmental science. She is a faculty member at GoldenGate International College in the Environmental Science Department, where she teaches and inspires the next generation of environmental scientists. Additionally, she serves as a research associate at Enprosc, an organization dedicated to environmental protection and sustainable conservation. Her recent research primarily focuses on wildlife road safety, sloth bears, and striped hyenas. These projects aim to know about the status, mitigate human-wildlife conflicts and promote coexistence between communities and wildlife. The Rufford Foundation has been instrumental in supporting her efforts in wildlife road safety. Their grant allowed her to carry out extensive fieldwork and raise awareness about the importance of safe road practices to minimize roadkill incidents.



# PARTICIPANTS

## Prakash Poudel



Prakash Poudel is an early career conservationist and a botanist focused on threatened plant species conservation. Currently, he works as a Research Associate at Greenhood Nepal, where he looks after plant conservation and restoration initiatives combining fieldwork, research and community collaborations. He was previously engaged in identifying, documenting and conserving threatened species like yews and orchids. With the support of the Rufford Foundation, he is now implementing a threatened Tree-fern documentation and conservation project in the Gaurishankar Conservation Area. When not immersed in research, he enjoys singing and playing football.

Get in touch: [X](#)

Dr. Rajan Prasad Paudel is an expert in wildlife biology focusing on mammal research and conservation. Dr. Paudel holds a Ph.D. in Wildlife Biology and Medicine from Hokkaido University, Japan, an M.Sc. in Biodiversity and Environmental Management from the University of Bergen, Norway, and a B.Sc. in Forestry from Kathmandu Forestry College, Tribhuvan University. He is a Conservation Officer at the National Trust for Nature Conservation, Nepal, and founder of the Center for People and Planet. He is a National Geographic Society explorer, WWF EFN fellow, recipient of the prestigious NORAD and MEXT scholarship, and grants from Rufford Small Grants. His recent work involves bear research and conservation in Nepal. Through grants from Rufford, he conducted the first-ever non-invasive genetic study on sloth bears from Nepal and reached out to communities living in the landscape with bears.

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## Rajan Prasad Paudel





# PARTICIPANTS

## Sabin Adhikari

Sabin is an aspiring herpetologist with an academic background in Environmental Science. His conservation journey began as a student volunteer at the Turtle Rescue and Conservation Centre in Jhapa, Southeastern Nepal. Over time, he realized that wildlife conservation was his true passion, and since then, he has actively pursued opportunities to expand his knowledge and skills in wildlife research and conservation. Currently, Sabin serves as a Research Fellow at Wildlife Conservation and Research Endeavour (WILD CARE) Nepal. He is also a member of IUCN SSC Tortoise and Freshwater Turtle Specialist Group. The Rufford Small Grants have played a pivotal role in advancing his work in elongated tortoise conservation, a field that has long captivated his interest. This support has enabled him to transform his ideas into action, strengthen conservation efforts, and make a tangible impact on the species he is dedicated to. It has also reinforced his resolve to continue working on the conservation of neglected yet threatened tortoise species.



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## Sabitri Rai



Sabitri Rai is a master's graduate in Environmental Science and a Research Fellow of the Nepal Conservation Research Fellowship, a collaboration between Greenhood Nepal and Lancaster University. In 2021, she led a project titled "Implementing and Evaluating Conservation Education Interventions in Gaurishankar Conservation Area, Ramechhap" where she educated over 170 students on red panda conservation. Sabitri has a strong passion for educating the public about endangered wildlife and frequently contributes op-ed articles to daily newspapers. Additionally, she enjoys designing visual materials such as posters, infographics, and booklets.



# PARTICIPANTS



## Sachet Timilsina

Sachet is a dedicated early-career conservationist with a background in forestry science. His conservation journey began during his M.Sc. thesis, when he assisted a project on snow leopard. He received his first Rufford Grant to assess snow leopard population engage local communities in conservation efforts. Through the Rufford Foundation, he gained valuable experience in project design and execution, successfully engaging with local communities and schools to promote snow leopard conservation. He is currently working as a Forestry Instructor at Nirmal Lama Polytechnic Institute, Bardibas-11, Mahottari.

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## Samjhana Khawan

Samjhana Kawan holds an MSc in environmental science from Khwopa College. After completing my master's degree, she was granted a Rufford Conservation Grant for the conservation of Lesser adjutant. She worked with youth and women in Lumbini and Bardia for the conservation of large wading birds including LA. Currently, she's pursuing her PhD degree at the Central Department of Environment Sciences, Kritipur, and also working as a Program Coordinator in Lumbini Environmental Services, Baneshwor, involved in the sector of research and conservation of biodiversity including large wading birds.

RSG has been instrumental in providing the platform to coordinate with the local people of remote parts of Nepal to conserve the threatened species. It helped to standardize and systematize her conservation career in Nepal, for which she's thankful to the RSG.

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# PARTICIPANTS

## Sanej Suwal



Sanej Suwal is a conservationist with a deep passion for butterflies, leading to extensive field research across Nepal's diverse landscapes. He is a Research Associate at the Nature Conservation and Study Centre (NCSC) a registered NGO, and the founder of non-registered Butterfly Watchers Nepal, a citizen science initiative. Over the years, he has combined scientific research with community engagement to promote butterfly conservation, focusing on both highland and lowland species.

The Rufford Foundation has been instrumental in his conservation efforts, providing crucial funding for projects that documented butterfly diversity in Suryabinayak and Rara National Park, and engaged local communities in sustainable conservation practices. Beyond butterflies he is passionate about graphic design and uses his skills to design knowledge products for extended outreach.

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## Sofiya K.C.

In school, when Sofiya first learned about the food chain, she was fascinated by how nature operates and maintains balance within ecosystems. Influenced by her love for nature, she explored potential career options in wildlife and conservation, which led her to pursue a bachelor's and master's degree in Environmental Science. Her research and conservation journey began with Bachelor's thesis on Rhesus macaque and Master's thesis on the Indian pangolin. Currently she works at Friends of Nature Nepal as a Project Officer where she is leading her Rufford project on pangolins. Rufford has financially supported her work and deepened her commitment to conservation. Beyond work, she enjoys nature photography, exploring rural communities to learn about their cultures.



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# Learning Event Organizing Team

## Greenhood Nepal

### Sanish Dhungana

*Admin and Finance Officer, Greenhood Nepal*



Sanish Dhungana is a committed Finance and Admin Officer at Greenhood Nepal, where he expertly manages both financial and administrative operations. With a Master's degree in Finance and Accounting and ongoing studies toward a CA qualification, Sanish is dedicated to enhancing his professional expertise and staying at the leading edge of his field.

Beyond his professional pursuits, he relishes hiking and trekking, finding both challenge and inspiration in nature's landscapes. He also has a keen interest in sports and enjoys participating in and following various sports matches.

### Reshu Bashyal

*Rufford Learning Event Co-ordinator  
Research Fellow, Greenhood Nepal*

Reshu is a Nepal-based conservationist with research experience and a strong interest in the wildlife trade. Her interdisciplinary profile includes diverse areas such as project design and management, fundraising, and capacity development.

She holds two master's degrees in natural social science and has obtained skill development training that has capacitated her to lead and support several conservation research and initiatives. She loves exploring methods in conservation to generate science-based evidence. Reshu is strongly committed to building capacity in conservation, particularly among the emerging conservation leaders and local communities.











**THANK YOU!**

# **RUFFORD LEARNING EVENT 2024**

1-3 October, Chitwan, Nepal







**[www.greenhood.org](http://www.greenhood.org)**