

Project Update: May 2008

The project is being implemented in coordination with the local community based organization (CBO), an umbrella organization of community forests; Khata Community Forestry coordination committee (CFCC-Khata). This organization was set up under the initiation of Terai Arc Landscape (TAL) program which is jointly implemented by WWF Nepal and the Government of Nepal. As the organization has been working in this area for the last 6-7 years, their outreach has been utilized by the project to increase effectiveness in implementation. In this way, the project is running with a wide range of local partners.

Various activities as planned in the proposal have been carried out till date. An initial phase of reconnaissance survey to identify the distribution of otters has been completed. These surveys have at the present identified three sections of Karnali River and its tributary, the Orai River as potential sites for otter presence. One site has shown the presence of a group of otters present including a few young ones as well. Their footprints and spraints were sighted by the local assistants. Along with this two other areas have been identified where footprints were seen. During consultations, it has been noted that these animals are frequently sighted in areas other than the ones identified above during the monsoon season when there is a high water level in tributaries along with a reduced amount of human impact. Locals have mentioned that otter populations have declined as a result of increasing anthropogenic impacts along these river systems in the form of extensive fishing and removal of debris and sand and gravel mining.

With the aim of increasing awareness in issues related to freshwater and important species like Gharial, Ganges river dolphin and otters, the Eco-clubs (a group of students in a school interested and motivated for conservation) set up by CFCC-Khata have been mobilized. Working with these existing eco clubs has reduced the need to set up any new structures which may be time consuming and also requires additional effort for motivation.



Left: Inspecting otter spraints on the bank of Orai River, a tributary of Karnali River. Right: Otter spraint in an area disturbed by frequent movement of domestic animals.