

Project Update: June 2013

i) Preliminary survey

Preliminary survey of Himalayan vulture (HV) was done in March 2013 from Beni, Pakhapani, Kuine and back to Beni (6 days). During this survey we recorded four abandoned nests of HV in the high cliff of Pakhapani. We also recorded the four HV, two bearded vulture (BV) four Egyptian vulture (EV) (Endangered) feeding on the carcass of a cow which had after falling down from the cliff due to heavy hailstones falling during grazing. We continued our survey trek towards Galeshor, Tiplyang, Tatopani, Dana, Kopchepani, Talbagar, Pairothapla, Thaplyang, Ghasa, Chhayu, Lete, Kokhrthanti, Larjung, Kobang, Tukuhe, Marpha, Syang, Jomsom, Eklebhati, Kagbeni, Khinga, Jharkot, Ranipauwa, and Muktinath top and returned back to Tatopani by bus for Ghorepani and Ghandruk survey trek (8 days). We continued the next survey trek from Besisahar to Chame via Bhulbhule, Khudi, Nadi, Bahundanda, Ghermu, Syange, Jagat, Chamje, Tal, Dharapani, Bagarchhap, Danakyu, and Latamro (6 days). We covered Kaski, Muagdi, Lamjung, Manang and Mustang districts of Annapurna Conservation Area. We observed significant number of vultures in the route from Muktinath to Ghandruk and Pokhara which was selected for further survey.

During the preliminary survey we coordinated with local government bodies, local schools, conservation agencies, political leaders, local farmers and District Livestock Service Offices (DLSO) of both Manang and Mustang districts for extensive vulture survey, capacity building awareness outreach and monitoring of NSAIDs drug diclofenac regularly.

ii) Capacity building training for local government bodies and community groups

Our team conducted capacity building training on developing skills for individuals from local government bodies and community groups in monitoring vultures and veterinary drugs in Manang on 17th May 2013 and in Mustang on 21st May 2013 during diclofenac-free District declaration programme with technical support from Bird Conservation Nepal (BCN), National Trust for Nature Conservation (NTNC) and Annapurna Conservation Area (ACA)-Unit Conservation Manager and Mustang. Altogether, 77 people from local government bodies, local conservation agencies, media, political parties, schools and local farmers were actively participated in the programmes. Two local farmers from Mustang, having great interest in conservation, were selected for further monitoring of vultures with us to sharpen their skills in conservation of vulture in local level in long run. On 4th June 2013 we managed the similar programme in Appollo Academy, Kathmandu targeting youth conservationists in which 28 students from Central Department of Zoology, Tribhuvan University participated with immense attention.

iii) Awareness raising, advocacy, government engagement and promotion

The project published 500 awareness posters, 5000 pocket calendars with eco-days and awareness leaflets, 50 T-shirts, six awareness flexes and six event flexes. We distributed and attached the awareness publications during our survey in each and every hotels, lodges, schools, tea and coffee shops where we rested. The team flooded the messages of vulture and nature conservation with each and every person in the field at rest. The awareness raising materials were used in each and every eco-day's celebration and distributed to all participants. The awareness and event flexes were used during school outreach events, eco days celebration and diclofenac-free district declaration programmes. The awareness posters, calendars and leaflets were attached on the notice boards of the NTNC Pokhara, ACA information centres, local government offices, community organizations, schools, hotels and restaurants of ACA. We also promoted and attached the posters of 'Vultures of Nepal' published by BCN and 'Save the Vultures' gifted by Himalayan Nature during events and in the fields.

iv) Support for wildlife week celebration

The project supported for celebration of 'Wildlife Week' in Pokhara on the first week of Nepali new year (April 14th to 20th 2013). Our education and outreach officer Sonam Tashi Lama coordinated with 10 green organizations (Alumni Association for Conservation and Development, BAT Friends Pokhara, Bird Conservation Nepal - Pokhara Branch, Foresters Alliance for NTFP, Foresters' Association for Transformation, Himalayan Scholar Group for Nature Conservation, Prakirti Sahitya Manch, Self-Help Environment Association Camp, Society for Wildlife Research and Conservation and Union for Nature Conservation - Nepal) of Institute of forestry and Dean office Pokhara to organise the events with the theme 'Coalition for Human-Wildlife Conflict Reduction' aiming to create mass awareness on wildlife conservation. The event started with conservation rally and street drama on the first day and followed sanitation programme, speech competition, birding, documentary shows, plantation and presentations on wildlife conservation and management during a week-long event.

v) Participation in World Migratory Bird Day and World Environment Day:

The team members actively participated in the 'World Migratory Bird Day' with the theme 'Networking for Migratory Birds' organised by BCN on 11th May 2013 in Godawari forest. Similarly we voluntarily participated via BCN in the 'World Environment Day' on 5th June 2013 with the theme 'Think-Eat-and Save' which was jointly organised by Central Zoo, National Trust for Nature Conservation (NTNC), IUCN, WWF Nepal and Lalitpur Sub-Metropolitan City. More than 2,000 students from various schools, representatives of government and non-governmental organisations and media persons participated in the event. A rally was also organised in the Lalitpur to spread the awareness message in accordance to the world theme of food security. We presented migratory birds and vulture conservation documentary shows in three days exhibition (8th-10th June 2013) targeting visual conservation messages to school students held in Taxus International Academy.

vi) Diclofenac-Free Zone (DFZ) Declaration Programme

We organised the Diclofenac-Free District Declaration Programme on 17th May 2013, in Chame, Manang district of Annapurna Conservation Area (ACA), jointly with District Livestock Service Office Manang, BCN and Global Primate Network (GPN) Nepal. During this event Manang district was formally declared as 'Diclofenac-Free District' by Chief District Officer (CDO) of Manang, Local Development Officer (LDO) from District Police Office and District Livestock Service Officer (DLSO). Altogether 36 people from different local government agencies, District Health Office (DHO), District Agriculture Development Office (DADO), District Forest Office, District Education Office (DEO), Women Development Office, District Finance Control Office, National Investigation Department Office, Local conservation agencies, NTNC-Annapurna Conservation Area Project (ACAP) Manang Unit Conservation, different political parties leaders, other Governmental and Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) representatives, Community Based Organization (CBO) representatives, journalists, media person, local farmers, parents and students actively participated in the programme.

A similar programme was organised in Jomsom, Mustang of ACA on 21 May 2013 jointly with District Livestock Service Office Mustang, BCN and GPN Nepal. In this event Mustang district was formally declared as 32nd Diclofenac-Free District of Nepal by CDO -Laxmi Raj Sharma Gautam, DSP -Basanta Ranjit and DLSO -Dr Guru Prashad Khakural. Altogether 41 people from local government bodies, veterinary professionals, LDO, DHO, DADO, DEO, Armed Police Force Office, District Soil Conservation Office, local journalists, media persons, local political leaders, NTNC-ACAP Jomsom Unit Conservation, NGO Federation, other governmental and non-governmental organisation representatives, CBO representatives, locally respected persons, local farmers, parents and students were participated with their keen interest.

During the event Bhupal Nepali, the field officer of BCN presented on vulture, its importance and need of Vulture Safe Zone (VSZ) in Nepal. With brief history of vulture conservation dealings in South

Asia, the PI presented on current updates and strategies of VSZ in Nepal. The Chairperson, DLSOs stated their reports of diclofenac monitoring in Manang and Mustang districts and harmful effect of diclofenac to vultures. They added the current law and punishment for use of banned diclofenac. A short documentary film of "Saving Asia's Vulture from Extinction" (SAVE) was shown for refreshment and to make the participants commitment for vulture conservation. During occasions the chief guest and all participants signed in Diclofenac-Free District Declaration banner. The programmes were closed with birding and vulture observation through binoculars in nearby area.

vii) Extensive survey of Himalayan vulture (HV)

The team conducted extensive replication survey of HV immediately after the declaration of Diclofenac-Free Districts. We spent 10 walking days in the line transect from Muktinath to Pokhara covering all potential sites Ranipauwa, Jharkot, Khinga, Lupra, Kagbeni, Eklebhati, Jomsom, Syang, Marpha, Tukuhe, Kobang, Larjung, Kokhrthanti, Lete, Chhayu, Ghasa, Thaplyang, Pairothapla, Talbagar, Kopchepani, Dana, Tatopani, Ghara, Shikha, Chitre, Ghorepani, Ban Thanti, Tadapani and Ghandruk. We walked 6-8 hours per day and averaged 15 km per day, starting from 7:30 am to 5:00 pm. All the collected data were compiled and submitted for METADATA publication to make available for concern people through online. During the survey four species of vultures were recorded. Their population status, encounter rate and other parameters are on the way for analysis and will make published soon.



Participants in awareness rally, first day of wildlife week). ©ST Lama



Participants in World Migratory Bird Day- 11 May 2013.



Student's participation in World Environment Day- 5 June 2013.



Wildlife conservation street drama. ©ST Lama

