Project Update: January 2015

Monitoring snow leopard status using sign survey:
At first, we divided the 1903 km^2 area of the Api Nampa Conservation Area into 3 x3 km^2 square grids to conduct an extensive sign survey for evidences of snow leopard presence such as pugmarks, scrapes and scats. We had a total of 211 sampling grids. Out of that, we systematically selected 70 sampling grids for our survey based on the preliminary information on habitat suitability of snow leopard. So far, we have conducted survey in 35 grids. The GPS locations of snow leopard's evidence of presence and associated habitat

Figure 1- Snow Leopard pugmarks on snow

variables have been recorded. After completion of the sign survey, we will analyze the data to understand the factors affecting the habitat use of the snow leopard.

Figure 2-A blue sheep herd seen in Api Nampa CA

Monitoring prey base for snow leopard: We used direct count method from different appropriate vantage points (fixed-point count) to determine the population status of blue sheep (*Pseudois nayur*). We conducted field survey in November-December 2014, a rutting time for blue sheep when their herds congregate for mating. We have recorded total herds seen along with classification of their habitat feature, sex composition and age classes. The field work in ongoing and we hope to determine the minimum count estimate and habitat use of blue sheep population using the data collected.

Social survey: We also conducted a questionnaire survey, semi-structured interviews and a group discussion with local herders and pastoral communities to identify the extent and nature of livestock losses due to snow leopard and their perception towards snow leopard conservation. To obtain the actual extent of livestock depredation by snow leopard within the, we have selected a professional herder from the Tinkar village, a major snow leopard habitat area to keep record of livestock depredation by snow leopard with detailed information (species of livestock, age, date and time of depredation, owner etc).