Project Update: October 2015

Monitoring snow leopard population status using camera traps and sign survey:

We recently assisted the study team of the Api Nampa Conservation Area (ANCA) to deploy 10 pairs of camera traps in Byas Village Development Committee, of ANCA to estimate the population abudance of snow leopards. At least a pair of camera traps was opportunistically deployed to maximize snow leopard capture within a 4×4 km square grid cell following the study design suggested by Jackson et al. 2006. Moreover, we are also conducting sign surveys in Ghusa, Khandeswori, Sitaula and Rapla VDC of the ANCA. Using this information, we will develop a habitat suitability map for snow leopard in ANCA.

Figure 1- Gopal Khanal deploying camera trap

Figure 2: Blue sheep herd licking salt on stones left by herders

Estimating blue sheep population: We piloted the use of modified form of a double observer survey following Suryawanshi et al. 2012 to estimate abundance of blue sheep population in Tinker area of Byas VDC. In other parts of the conservation area, we are using direct count method from different appropriate vantage points (fixed-point count) to determine the population status of blue sheep (*Pseudois nayur*). Our field work is on-going and will continue till late November. We have recorded total herds seen along with classification of their habitat feature, sex composition and age classes.

Herder's perception and livestock depredation survey: So far, we have interviewed 35 herders using structured a questionnaire form, and two group discussions have been organized with local herders to identify the extent and nature of livestock depredation by snow leopard and their perception towards snow leopard conservation. To obtain the actual extent of livestock depredation by snow leopard within the study area, we have selected a professional herder from the Tinkar village to keep record of livestock depredation by snow leopard with detailed information (species of livestock, age, date and time of depredation, owner etc).