

Project Update: July 2016

During the camera trap survey period of January- February 2016 we recorded fishing cat *Prionailurus viverrinus* in a community fish pond 7.7 km east of Koshi Tappu Wildlife Reserve which to date is the easternmost record in Nepal. We also conducted a camera trap survey along the Sunsari River in a religious forest called Ramdhuni 5.5 km north of Bankalwa and fish ponds of local farmers at the periphery of Koshi Tappu Wildlife Reserve. Besides fishing cat, we recorded large Indian civet *Viverra zibetha*, golden jackal *Canis aureus*, jungle cat *Felis chaus*, grey mongoose *Herpestes edwardsii* and rhesus macaque *Macaca mulatta* and different birds. We also got an opportunity to shoot the live footage of fishing cat at the buffer zone of Koshi Tappu Wildlife Reserve in Prakashpur during the survey.

The area of our study is a pocket area for the fish farming in Sunsari district and according to District Agriculture Office, the government has a systematic plan to increase the fish pond in the area. More than 14000 ha of fish ponds are already existing in the area. The major practice of the community is to mix the different breed of fishes like big head *Hypophthalmichthys nobilis*, common carp *Cyprinus carpio*, grass carp *Ctenopharyngodon idella*, rohu *Labio rohita* for the maximum yield. According to local community and fish farmers of the area the most lost fish species were grass carp and common carp. We studied the behaviour of these two fish species and found out that these two species are the most common bank dwellers for eating grass and mud puddling which makes them easy prey for the fishing cat.

Talking to many local fish farmers we found that any species that brings loss to their profit is an enemy and will do any means necessary to get rid of them causing a serious threat to the fishing cat. We also found the threats to the fishing cat during the project were excessive fishing by local people using poison, which not only kills the fish but all the other aquatic animals like snails, crabs, birds and even mammals like golden jackal jungle cat. Hunting of wildlife for meat using electrocution and poison is common by Tharu community in the periphery of the Ramdhuni forest. The team also found a carcass of a fishing cat killed by a guard dog kept for protecting the fish ponds. The project is still going on and a field visit for the conservation awareness program is due.

Observing the behavior of Fishing Cat

On February 3rd 2016, after me and my colleague Angie Appel had the dinner at about 6.00PM we waited for the fishing cat in the blind we had prepared with our cameras and spot light at the bank of fish pond of a local farmer. After sitting quietly and spot lighting for 2.5 hours I suddenly saw a face of a fishing cat at my 3 o'clock which was no more than 10 m away above 3 m up. The water level of the fish pond was not high hence we could sit dry at the bank of the fish pond. The cat did not move for 10 minutes and my heart was pounding as this was the first time I was observing fishing cat in wild with my naked eyes in such proximity. It remained still, yawned frequently and lapped its feet and went away after 10 minutes. It was a mature cat but the sex could not be identified. The cat returned to the fish pond after 31 minutes at 9.12 PM and walked slowly at the bank of the pond nearly 30 m away. We could see the glazing

yellow eyes reflected in the pond as it was looking for the fish. The cat moved slowly and disappeared after few minutes.



Figure1 Fishing Cat recorded site in Sunsari District.



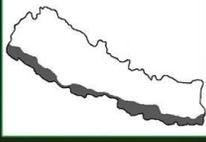
Figure: Fishing Cat recorded at the Prakashpur

पानी/मलाहा बिरालो (Fishing Cat)

प्राकृतिक तथा कृत्रिम पानीका
स्रोतहरूको संरक्षण गरौं

संकटापन्न पानी/मलाहा
बिरालोको संरक्षण गरौं

वासस्थान



नेपालको तराई क्षेत्र



कृत्रिम ताल पोखरी तथा प्राकृतिक
सिमसार क्षेत्र नजिक

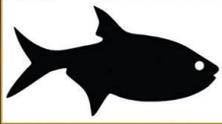


नदी किनारका
जङ्गल / घाँसे मैदान



पानीका स्रोत नजिकै रहेका
घाँसे मैदान

आहारा



माछा



चरा



साना स्तनधारी जनावर
(मुसा / ह्युचुन्द्रा)



कुकुरा, हाँस तथा पाठापाठी

जोगाउन



जनचेतना



प्राकृतिक तथा कृत्रिम सिमसार, ताल / तलाउ,
पोखरी, नदी क्षेत्रको उचित संरक्षण

खतरा



माछा मार्न विषको प्रयोग



अवैध सिक्कर



प्राकृतिक जलासयमा अत्याधिक
माछा मार्ने प्रवृत्ति



पानी बिरालो भेटिएमा कृपया जानकारी गराइदिनुहोला । ९८४१५०८४९४ (साना स्तनधारी प्राणी संरक्षण तथा अनुसन्धान फाउण्डेसन)

Figure 3 Poster Designed for the Conservation of Fishing Cat awareness in Sunsari district, Nepal