

## **Project Update: September 2016**

We celebrated the 8<sup>th</sup> International Vulture Conservation Awareness Day with cultural song and dance competition regarding the vulture conservation in Vulture Safe Feeding Site, popularly called Jatayu Restaurant, Ghachowk, and Kaski. On that day also organised an interaction programme among key stakeholders and the local community on the way of sustainable management of VSFS and vulture conservation.

The programme was organised by the Vulture Safe Feeding Site Management Committee together with helping hands, Bird Conservation Nepal, Rufford Foundation, Pokhara Bird Society and Annapurna Conservation Area at Shree Shuklagandaki Higher Secondary School, Ghachowk. Chief guest was Krishna Prasad Bhusal, Vulture Conservation Program Officer at Bird Conservation Nepal who briefed people about the current status of vulture in Nepal and how this ideal conservation work of community link with ecotourism promotion and community development as well. Raja Ram Poudyal President of Vulture Safe Feeding Site Management Committee updated people about the current status of VSFS, Ghachowk and shared their upcoming plan. Biology lecture Ramji Gautam at Prithivi Narayan Campus, Pokhara recommended to develop the site as a research centre where people can easily see the three critically endangered and one endangered vultures. Local government authority Shanti Prasad Gautam, Secretary, Village Development Committee Ghachowk said the government body was always supportive to community work on vulture and biodiversity conservation. Mausam Karki, president of local youth club, Hemanta Dhakal, Mahendra Katila, Binod Kunwar and Ohm Prakash Sharma wildlife researcher and conservationist also highlighted the importance of vulture, community role and technical feedback on upcoming programme. Local political leader, journalists, social activists and women's groups commit to develop the site as famous destination of ecotourism and biological research center by collaborating government organisation and non-governmental organisations because this site is located just 12 km from Nepal's second famous tourism destination Pokhara. Other participants of the programme were local vet practitioners, community forest representatives, eco club members, students from Institute of forestry and Prithivi Narayan Campus, member of Pokhara Bird Society, representative from Annapurna Conservation Area.

After the interaction programme there was organized Teej songs and dance competition regarding vulture conservation and community development. How incident, the greatest festival for Vulture, International Vulture Conservation awareness day is coincident with the greatest festival of Hindu women Teej in Nepal. Thus the local culture Teej was celebrated together with vulture day. Hindu women made group and sing song and worshipped lord Shiva with fasting for long life of their husband during this festival Teej. However there were eight groups participated in the song competition with a theme of vulture conservation this year. Many interesting and knowledge giving songs were presented by the participants. Megaraj Nimna Madhyamik School students stood first and won 5000 NR, women's group from Ghachowk got second prize of 3000 NR and Milijuli Amasamuha from Ward number-1 got third prize of 2000 NR. Bharatibhawan Bal club and Bhajan Mandali won consolation prize.

During the programme posters brochures and some publications from Bird Conservation Nepal related to vulture and its conservation were also distributed among local people and participants. With more than 200 participants from different sectors the programme was informative. During the programme, field guidance techniques for the identification of vulture were also provided to all interested participants.

In the early morning we also did the vulture observation on Vulture Safe Feeding Site and recorded a of total 77 vultures of five different species; slender billed vulture (11), white rumped vulture (32), red-headed vulture (9), Egyptian vulture (12) and Himalayan griffon (13). Krishna Bhusal and Hemanta Dhakal assist to students to identify the vultures and monitoring technique.

#### On the 5<sup>th</sup> September 2016

Vulture Identification and Monitoring training and Field Practice to research assistant of Institute of Forestry, Tribhuvan University at Land filled Site, Pokhara.

Eight Research Assistants of the project were trained for vulture identification and monitoring in Landfilled site (garbage and carcass dumping site) of Pokhara. Seven students, Suman Ghimire MSc, Sanjay Raj Tamang BSc, Bipana Maiya Sadadev BSc, Purnima Acharya BSc, Namrata Khatri BSc, Amrit Poudyal BSc, Prativa G.C. BSc, from Institute of Forestry, Kaski and one lecture Binod Kunwar at Prithivi Narayan Campus have benefited from that training and field practice. The programme was focused on providing the method to identify the vulture species and its different age classes (juvenile, sub-adult and adult). Also the vulture record keeping techniques was provided to the participants. The students participated in the programme will also be encouraged to participate in vulture conservation awareness campaigns and monitoring of vultures in upcoming days. The programme was led by Hemanta Dhakal with the guidance of Krishna Prasad Bhusal, Vulture Conservation Program Officer, Bird conservation Nepal.

Students were given a form and were guided how to fill the form. The identification techniques to identify the different species of the vulture and their age classes were also provided before providing the form. The absolute count method was used to count the number of vultures by using binoculars and DSLR. A handbook Birds of Nepal was also used to avoid the confusion for species identification.

After detailed guidance we divided them into five groups and departed into different spots randomly. We arrived at landfilled site at 8 am in the morning and we started monitoring from 9:00 am to 10:00 am. A total 83 vultures were counted soaring; white-rumped vulture (21 all adult), slender-billed vulture (3 all adult), Egyptian vulture (39 adult, 14 sub adult), Himalayan griffon (2 all adult) and red-headed vulture (6 all adult).



Top: pictures from Jatayu Restaurant Vulture Awareness Programme. Bottom: Pictures from Landfill Site Vulture Monitoring Training.