

Project update: January, 2017

Musk deer, an endangered and IUCN Appendix I listed animal species, is crepuscular (active during dawn or dusk). Being a small mammal, and residing on a dense cover, it is mostly inconspicuous. But the most notable indicator in its habitat are its latrines. Therefore, this project has identified that latrines should be the prime focus for musk deer study and conservation. In this context, we have collected fresh latrine samples and will assess the population through the DNA study.

The preliminary scientific visit has been accomplished; during the visit, we have identified five Village Development Committees (VDCs) - Pisang, Manang, Bharka, Nawal, Ghyaru and Khangsar - as the potential habitats of the musk deer in the Manang district, Annapurna Conservation Area. Among them, forests of Pisang and Manage were intensively surveyed and fresh latrines were also collected. Further, from each site, we had collected fresh latrines for the five times and the total latrines were collected in 10 days. Fresh latrine samples were collected every morning, 7-11 am. Collected fresh latrine samples were stored in different tubes containing ethanol and silica separately. We had collected 126 samples, in total, and sent to laboratory for further analysis. Furthermore, potential habitat of these two VDCs were categorised into three types of forests viz. pine forest (*Pinus wallichina* dominated), Mixed forest (*Abies*, *Pinus wallichina* and *Betula utilis* all are present) and *Betula* forest (*Betula utilis* dominated).

During the preliminary visit, a musk deer was found to be killed by poachers and the pod was already removed from the body; sorrowfully, the deer was hung in a tree. Later, under the coordination of police station Humde (Manang), Conservation Area Management Committee Members and Annapurna Conservation Area's staffs, the remains of the dead deer was safely disposed.

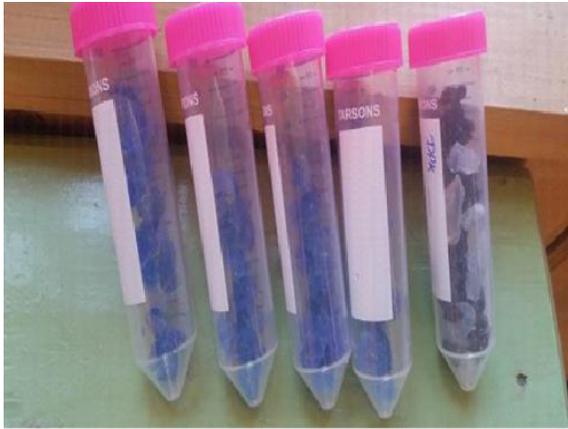
Additionally, we were lucky enough to be able to capture some images of this elusive animal species. We had seen these animals for three times during field survey in different places of the Annapurna Conservation Area.



Latrines



Vile at fresh latrine site of musk deer



Fresh pellet stored in viles



Ethanol alcohol, Silica, Viles and GPS



Researcher collecting the fresh pellet



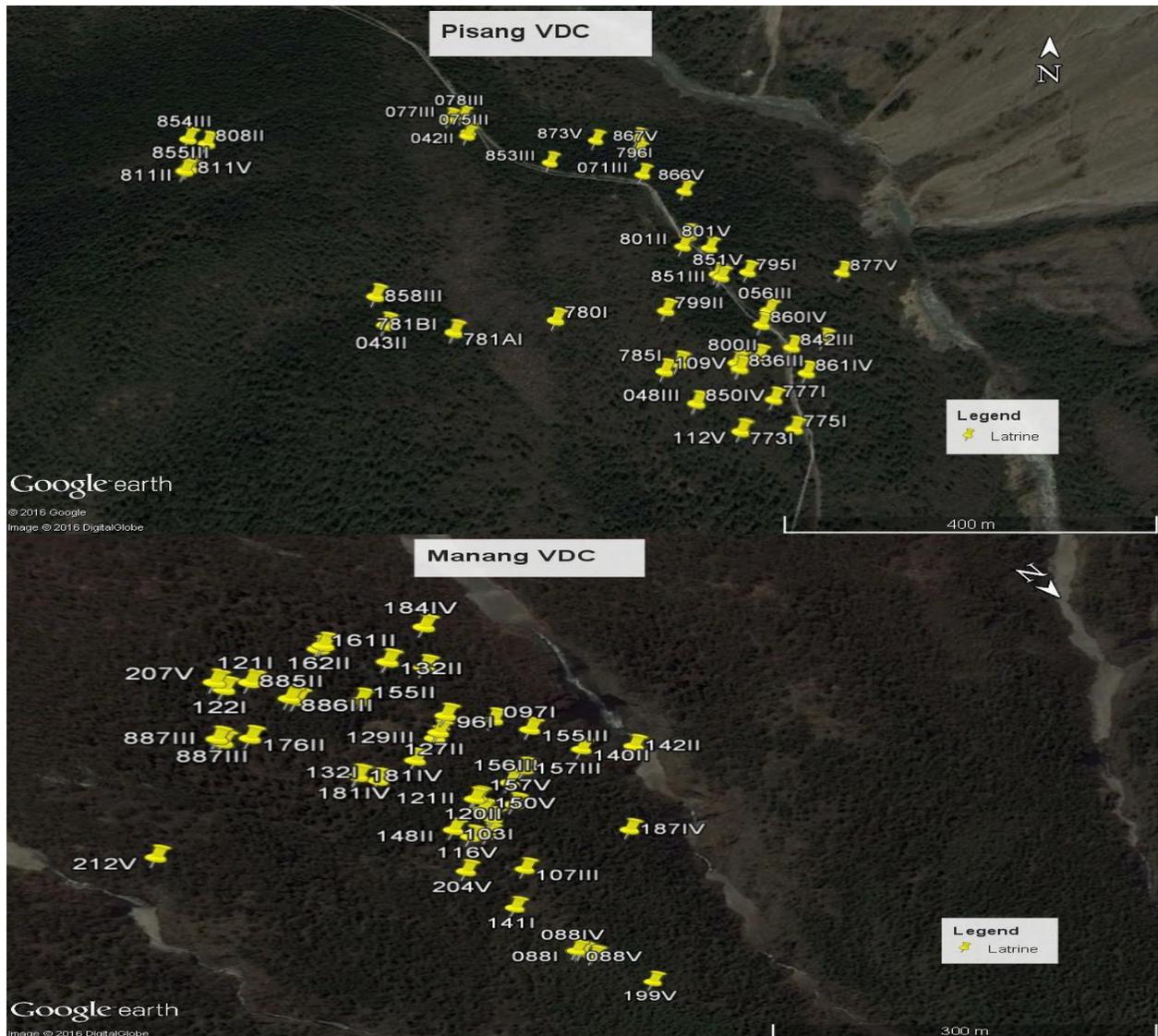
Researchers during survey



Male musk deer hanging at a snare



Burial of that killed musk deer by Police



Samples collected GPS points