Project Update: December 2017

Completion of Fieldwork

Fieldwork for the project was conducted from November 4th to December 4th 2017 using transect survey and camera trap survey. Overall survey was conducted in two phases. During the first phase, 16 camera traps were installed in trails, ridges, water holes and dens considering the sign of wildlife in Gupha-Khoping-Hile-Gidde-Gauthale-Chitre Pokhari-Pyangkot-Khoping-Gufa area. Each camera trap was installed for minimum 15 trap nights in this phase. Strip transect was purposively conducted following the existing trails. Signs of mammal like pugmark, scat, scrapes and feeding sites were photographed and their geo-location were recorded using GPS unit.

A total of 14 camera traps were installed in second phase in Lampokhari-Akkare Deurali-Mencheyam-Vuje Deurali-Yangsijung-Shrijung area. Camera traps were installed for minimum 9 days for during this phase. Trails, water holes and dens were selected for camera trap installation. Similarly, strip transect was also done to record the sign of wildlife using photographs and GPS unit in this phase. Field guides (Baral & Shah, 2008; Menon, 2014) were used to identify mammals captured in camera traps. Informal interviews were conducted with locals to find out the status of wildlife focused on small carnivores. The locals were asked about presence/absence, medicinal values and hunting information about small carnivores.

Results so far

The camera traps were successful in capturing 15 mammal species with five small carnivores of our interest, viz. Asiatic golden cat (*Catopuma temminckii*), red panda (*Ailurus fulgens*), leopard cat (*Prionailurus bengalensis*), crab-eating mongoose (*Herpestes urva*) and yellow-throated marten (*Martes flavigula*). However, we still need to verify the Asiatic golden cat with experts.

S.N	Common Name	Scientific Name	Global Status	National Status	*Evidence
1	Asiatic golden cat*	*Catopuma temminckii*	Near Threatened	Data Deficient	CT
2	Asiatic wild dog/dhole	*Cuon alpinus*	Endangered	Endangered	CT, IN
3	Assamese macaque	*Macaca assamensis*	Near Threatened	Vulnerable	CT, IN
4	Barking deer	*Muntiacus vaginalis*	Least Concern	Vulnerable	CT, IN
5	Crab-eating mongoose	*Herpestes urva*	Least Concern	Vulnerable	CT
6	Flying squirrel				CT, IN
7	Nepal gray langur	*Semnopithecus schistaceus*	Least Concern	Least Concern	CT
8	Leopard	*Panthera pardus*	Near Threatened	Vulnerable	CT
9	Leopard cat	*Prionailurus bengalensis*	Least Concern	Vulnerable	CT
10	Mouse				CT
11	Malayan porcupine	*Hystrix brachyura*	Least Concern	Data Deficient	CT, IN
12	Red panda	*Ailurus fulgens*	Vulnerable	Endangered	CT, IN
13	Squirrel				CT, IN
14	Wild boar	*Sus scrofa*	Least Concern	Least Concern	CT, IN
15	Yellow throated marten	*Martes flavigula*	Least Concern	Least Concern	CT, IN

* Camera-trap image of Asiatic golden cat has not been verified. It will be sent to experts for identification and verification.

A total of 60.05 km of transect surveys were conducted recording 85 signs of wildlife like scat, pugmark and pellets. Overall sign encounter rate was 1.41 signs per km.

Camera traps and sign surveys didn't yield any evidence of binturong (*Arctictis binturong*). Informal interviews also failed to strongly support the presence of this species in TMJ. However, one herder described a species that was very close to it.

Next phase of the project

The next phase of the project consists of conservation activities. During this, conservation workshops will be conducted in school and local communities.

Conservation materials will also be produced and distributed.

Left: Camera trap used in the field. Right: Our camp at Hile freezes due to extreme cold.

Left: Yellow-throated marten. Right: Red panda captured in our camera trap.

Left: Leopard cat. Right: Crab eating mongoose captured in our camera trap.