

# Report of the 8<sup>th</sup> Nepal Owl Festival, February 1-2, 2019



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**Kathmandu, Nepal**  
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## SUMMARY OF NEPAL OWL FESTIVAL 2019

**Date:** 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2019

**Location:** Jalapa, Khotang

**TOTAL FESTIVAL PARTICIPANTS:** 7800

**Students from owl conservation camps:** 2500

**General public participation during festival:** 5000

**Documentary show:** 300

### FESTIVAL ATTRACTIONS:

- 1. Cultural shows:** *Sakela, Lakhe, Maruni, Sangini, Balan, Selo*, special show from students of Jalapa and Jyoti School, flash mob from Institute of Forestry, and local orchestra.
- 2. Local game:** *Jhulo Chakmak, Gheer and Lathro Katne*
- 3. Face painting and nail painting:** 1000 students and public
- 4. Poster presentation:** Seven
- 5. School based competition:** Owl themed essay, poem, art and story competition
- 6. Bird related:** Bird watching, Nature photo walk, Temporary owl museum, Owl park, Jalpa declaration of owl conservation
- 7. Nature conservation award/Local conservation award and felicitation of organizations:** Three Nature Conservation Awards, two local conservation awards and two felicitated organizations
- 8. Conservation speech, Jalapa declaration, owl garden and many more**



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We would like to express our deepest acknowledgement to co-organizers, supporters, partners and well-wishers for making Nepal Owl Festival, 2019 a grand event. None of it would have been possible without your cooperation, support and well wishes.

### Organizers



Friends of  
Nature  
(FON), Nepal



Diktal Rupakot  
Majhuwagadhi  
Municipality, Ward No. 12

### Financial Supporters



ACCORDEOS



Diktal Rupakot Majhuwagadhi  
Municipality, Diktal, Khotang

### Festival Partners and Technical Supporters



We would also like to thank individual supporters of our event who gave us financial support through our online fund raising program (<http://fonnepal.org/nepal-owl-festival-an-innovative-approach-for-the-conservation-of-owls-in-nepal>).

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 1. Alisha Ghimire, Nepal                    | 14. Karla Bloem & Hein Bloem, Minnesota, USA |
| 2. Anil Raut, Nepal                         | 15. Nita Baral, Nepal                        |
| 3. Carol Inskipp, UK                        | 16. Pam Dimeler, Pennsylvania, USA           |
| 4. Dale Scobie & Sue Scobie, Minnesota, USA | 17. Pooja Baral Shrestha, Nepal              |
| 5. Doma Paudel, Sauraha, Chitwan Nepal      | 18. Prem Raj Neupane, Nepal                  |
| 6. Donatella Piras, Italy                   | 19. Raj Prasai, Missouri, Nepal              |
| 7. Gopal Raj Joshi, Nepal                   | 20. Rajesh Acharya, Nepal                    |
| 8. Hathan Chaudhary, Nepal                  | 21. Roshan Pokharel, UK                      |
| 9. Heidi Kretser, New York, USA             | 22. Sherry Neyman                            |
| 10. Ingrid Kohl, Germany                    | 23. Shiromani Gyawali, Nepal                 |
| 11. James Duncan, Manitoba, Canada          | 24. Shyam Paudel, Nepal                      |
| 12. Jiban Baral, Texas, Nepal               | 25. Susan Oddsen, Minnesota, USA             |
| 13. Joel Heinen, USA                        | 26. Usha Dhungana, Nepal                     |

We would like to express our deepest gratitude to the following organizations/institutions and individuals for financially supporting the event locally. Their support was truly encouraging for us to organize to the festival.

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 1. Diktal Rupakot Majhuwagadhi Municipality, Diktal, Khotang                         | 13. Imaan Rai & Urmila Rai, Jalapa             |
| 2. Diktal Rupakot Majhuwagadhi Municipality, Ward number 12, Jalapa, Khotang         | 14. Tanka Rai & Devika Rai, Jalapa             |
| 3. Ministry of Industry, Tourism, Forest and Environment, Province no. 1, Biratnagar | 15. Arjun Rai & Parbati Rai, Jalapa            |
| 4. Halesi Tuwachung Municipality   | 16. Tej B. Rai & Mishra Rai, Jalapa            |
| 5. Kepilasgadhi Rural Municipality   | 17. Bikash Rai & Ambika Rai, Jalapa            |
| 6. Aiselukharka Rural Municipality   | 18. Dan B Rai & Sarita Rai, Ghalegaun          |
| 7. Rawa Energy Pvt. Ltd. (Prop. Muktinath Timsina), Dipsung                          | 19. Dharmaraj Rai & Kumari Rai, Jalapa         |
| 8. Tirtha B. Rai & Bhansari Rai, Ghalegaun   | 20. Samala Rai & Dhanprasad Rai, Jalapa        |
| 9. Sarita Rai & Jayan Rai, Jalapa  | 21. Bishnu Ram Rai, Jalapa                     |
| 10. Jhamkana Shrestha, Jalapa  | 22. Thamuna Rai, Jalapa                        |
| 11. Pratiman Rai & Padam Kumari Rai, Puranogaun                                      | 23. Kamal Bishwakarma, Ghalegaun               |
| 12. Jayeshwar Rai & Pramila Rai, Jalapa  | 24. Rajkumar Rai & Ramila Rai, Jalapa          |
|  | 25. Hiralal Rai & Astalakshmi Rai, Purano gaun |
|  | 26. Saharman Rai, Jalapa                       |
|  | 27. Utsab Rai, Kharbari                        |
|  | 28. Watti Gurung & Paawan Gurung, Jalapa       |
|  | 29. Sambhu Rai, Maheswari                      |

30. Dhurva Shrestha & Rasa Shrestha, Puranogaun
31. Tika B. Shrestha, Puranogaun
32. Ram B. Shrestha, Purano gaun
33. Chabilal Rai, Purano gaun
34. Harka B. Shrestha, Purano gaun
35. Rajmani B.K., Jalapa
36. Gopal Gurung & Manmaya Gurung, Jalapa
37. Dil B. Rai, Jalapa
38. Gyan B. Shrestha & Anita Shrestha, Jalapa
39. Mani K. Rai & Usha Rai, Jalapa
40. Padam B. Tamang, Jalapa
41. Kali B. Rai, Jalapa
42. Chaluka & Dil K. Rai, Jalapa
43. Anju & Nandalal Rai, Jalapa
44. Chandra Narayan Chaudhary, Jalapa
45. Dipendra Chaudhary, Jalapa
46. Padma & Hom B. B.K., Jalapa
47. Ramila & Moul B. K., Jalapa
48. Kumar Rai, Sasarka
49. Krishna Rai, Sasarka
50. Narbhakta & Bishnu Rai, Sasarka
51. Sanjeev Rai & Binita Rai, Jalapa
52. Sampurnaa Rai & Dilli Rai, Dimlo
53. Bandana Rai & Parshuram Rai, Jalapa
54. Dhanshova Rai & Rajkumar Shrestha, Jalapa
55. Abiraj Rai, Purano gaun
56. Bam B. Rai & Mira Rai, Purano gaun
57. Padam Lama, Chipti
58. Bam B. Tamang, Chipti
59. Nirmala Chaulagain, Jalapa
60. Lakshmi Rai, Jalapa
61. Chatra Kumari Gurung & Puriman Gurung, Jalapa
62. Jalapa Sumo Counter, Jalapa
63. Purnakumar Tamang, Jalapa
64. Nirkumar Shrestha, Lambarkhu
65. Rahul Chaudhary, Jalapa
66. Ambar Rai, Jalapa

## Foreword

We extend our heartfelt appreciation to everyone involved in making Nepal Owl festival 2019 a very successful event. We are grateful to Accordeos Foundation, Switzerland in making the festival possible through their generous financial support. We also thank Bernd Thies Stiftung for their financial support in making the festival a mega event. The financial support from the Diktel Rupakot Majhuwagadhi Municipality, Ministry of Industry, Tourism, Forest and Environment, Province No. 1, Biratnagar, Halesi Tuwachung Municipality, Kepilasgadhi Rural Municipality, Aiselukharka Rural Municipality, Rawa Energy Pvt. Ltd. (Prop. Muktinath Timsina), Dipsung and entire individuals area highly appreciated.

Also we are grateful to our co-organizer, Diktel Rupakot Majhuwagadhi Municipality, ward no. 12, for their amazing support and co-operation throughout the festival. Coordination of Mr. Bikash Rai for successfully organizing the event and rallying local community was praiseworthy. We thank Mr. Bikash Rai and other team members of Nepal Owl Festival 2019 organizing committee (including 11 subcommittees) for their relentless effort and cooperation during the entire festival. We would like to thank Jalapa Secondary School for allowing us to use their premise to host the event.

We thank Raju Acharya and Bikash Ghimire for their hard work and effort in conducting owl conservation camps at the schools of Jalapa periphery. We want to thank Som GC and Bishal Gautam for respectively leading Birding and Photo Walk event during the festival. We want to thank Natural History Museum, Swayambhu, for providing museum specimen of Brown Wood Owl and Barn Owl and their prey species. Our special thanks go to Madan Gyawali, Kabira Khadka, Rupak Karki, Madhav Oli, Himal Rawat, Prakash Ghimire and Mukesh Shrestha for their innovative ideas for developing speech giving owl robot, owl robots, owl video call device and call device.

We would also like to thank Rajendra Deshar and Manoj Shakya Panju for constructing and coloring a statue of Indian Eagle Owl in newly established '*Huchil* Park'. Also, we thank Hunny Manandhar, Ram Prasad Itani, Manoj Shakya Panju and Rajendra Deshar for making the festival colorful with nail and face painting. For participating in poster presentation, we thank Akib Hasan from Bangladesh, Sanjeev Baniya, Anoj Subedi, Chiranjeevi Khanal, Manoj Pokhrel, Sanej Prasad Suwal, Suman Ghimire, Pratik Pandey and Kul Bahadur Thapa. We thank Bird Conservation Nepal, Himalayan Nature and Pokhara Bird Society for making the festival informative through their organizational stall. We thank students from Institute of Pokhara (IOF) for making the festival entertaining through their cultural dance and conservation flash mob. We also thank Prof. Karan Bahadur Shah for composing beautiful lyrics of welcome song and Mr. Rajman Maharjan for adding great music to the song.

We express our sincere thanks to Mr. Raju Acharya, country representative of World Owl Trust, for his integrity, leadership, co-ordination and vision for making this festival one of its kind among the conservation event in Nepal. Lastly, we are grateful towards our family of volunteer who have huge part in making this event successful. We thank local student from Jyoti Secondary School and Jalapa Secondary School who tirelessly worked hard as volunteers. We thank Yadav Ghimirey, Bidhan Adhikary, Shyam Subedi, Samundra Ghimire, Pratik Pandey, Manoj Pokharel, Pramisha Karki, Sunita Kunwar, Arati Khatri, Prabhat Kiran

Bhattarai, Ravi Bikram Shah, Manoj Ghimire, Prarthana Neupane, Keshab Dahal, Kaushal Yadav and Prabal Bir Jung Rana. Their volunteerism is truly commendable.

We would like to thank Mrs. Bicicleta Morada for designing the logo of owl festival for this year. And International Owl Center for helping online fundraise for owl festival. Constant encouragement from David Johnson, Karla Bloem, Hein Bloem, Tony Warburton are highly appreciated.



**Photo Credits for photos used in the report:** Mukesh Shrestha, Pramisha Karki, Bishal Gautam, Raju Acharya, Sanej Prasad Suwal, Samundra Ghimerey and Rishi Baral.

## **Nepal Owl Festival 2019 – Background**

Initiated in 2012, Nepal Owl Festival has now established itself as a prodigious event blending the local culture and tradition with the conservation of owls in Nepal. Our aim in celebrating Nepal Owl Festival was to reach different part of the country with the conservation message about owls through gleeful approach of festival where the local community would see and feel the importance of owl conservation.

This year the Nepal Owl Festival was scheduled to be celebrated on February 1 and 2. However it takes more than two months of time to prepare for those two days. Careful planning, discussion with local community, formation of organizing committee are some of the important tasks at the beginning as coordination and cooperation with the community is vital for the successful organization of the festival. After written agreement with local community or any local organization, Nepal Owl Festival organizing committee is formed which includes several subcommittees with each of them assigned specific responsibility among various responsibilities.

Conservation camps are also held in the schools situated in the periphery of the festival site two weeks prior to the actual festival event. School children are engaged with interactive information about the owls and the importance of owl conservation is disseminated to them. Competition like owl essays, stories, poems and art are organized in those schools and the top three from every competition are exhibited and awarded during the festival.

In the meantime, at Friends of Nature office back at Kathmandu, volunteers arrive to undertake several tasks from purchasing of owl curios to stationery items, fixing previously damaged curios or display materials, pasting, cutting and many more. Beside this our staffs get busy with finalizing profile of Nature Conservation Awardees, Local Conservation Awardees, Felicitated Organizations, and volunteers who have completed four years of volunteering at owl festival. Printing certificates and ID tags as well as the display materials are some of the work that goes hand in hand with other. Days past swiftly although we allocate two weeks to prepare here at the office and we get ready for the journey to the festival site together.

This two-day festival (February 1 & 2, 2019) was proposed to be celebrated in a small hamlet of eastern Nepal, Jalapa of Khotang District. Around 267 km narrow road distance from Kathmandu, Jalapa is an organic village at an altitude of 1500 m above sea level. It's an exemplary settlement regarding the fundamental services like community hospital, schools and cottage industry in comparison to the adjacent villages. Community includes people from Rai, Newar, Gurung Tamang and Sherpa ethnic groups. As per the information from the community, Jalapa also harbors the wide range of faunal diversity like common leopard, leopard cat, yellow throated marten, macaques, barking deer, porcupines, pangolins, pheasants, parakeets and of course the owls.

## A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF NEPAL OWL FESTIVAL 2019

February 1 and 2 was the day when Jalapa hosted 8<sup>th</sup> Nepal Owl Festival in 2019. Although being a small village in north eastern region of Nepal, this festival witnessed the participation of more than 7800 people/students. Festival offered the fusion of culture, entertainment and conservation through cultural dances, old traditional (near to extinct) games, conservation dances and temporary owl museum.

Organized in coordination with ward no. 12 of Diktel Rupakot Majhugadi Municipality, Jalapa had busy time in welcoming the guest from the neighboring settlements as well as from Kathmandu and other big cities.

The proceedings of Nepal Owl Festival, 2019 in Jalapa, Khotang is described in the following sections.

### Festival preparation and promotion

We started the preparation for the festival two months prior to the festival date. After the venue was fixed, we started posting promotional videos and photos about the venue, program description and promotional material of the festival on our official website and Facebook page.



Promotional post of Nepal Owl Festival by Friends of Nature, local organization and individuals

We also announced call for the poster presentation in our official Facebook page for national and international researchers to present their research on wildlife during the festival.

A press conference at district headquarter of Khotang, Diktel was organized where national and local journalists were informed about the festival and its components. Radio Kantipur, here at Kathmandu also aired the promotional jingle of the festival throughout the nation as

the festival date was approaching. Beside this several banners and information pamphlets were put in location en route to Jalapa from Kathmandu. Local people had prepared the flex print for wall, bus, Jeep and also aired at local FM.



**PHOTO:** Press conference at Diktel on Nepal Owl Festival 2019

## Conservation camps

Two weeks prior to the festival, Mr. Raju Acharya and Mr. Bikash Ghimire rode to Jalapa from Kathmandu on their motorbikes. Their plan was to conduct conservation camps in several schools in and around Jalapa. They were successful in their plan.



Seventeen schools around Jalapa were covered by Raju Acharya and Bikash Ghimire to conduct owl conservation camps. In doing so, 2500 participants were realized about the status and conservation of owls in Nepal. These camps delivered the ecological importance of owls to the participants and encouraged them to participate in their conservation.

Pre-evaluation surveys were conducted before every conservation camp where the existing knowledge and information about the owls were collected from the participants. This knowledge survey gave interesting result of 1.44% of the participants killing the owls before and 0.76% of them have eaten owl's meat possibly due to wrong beliefs. Also 3.24% of the participants from the school positively responded in stealing owl's egg from their nest.

S. No.	Schools	Address	Participants	Male	Female
1	Durchhim Secondary School	Durchhim, Khotang	143	57	86
2	Mahendrodaya Secondary School	Haleshi, Khotang	9	3	6
3	Haleshwor Boarding School	Haleshi, Khotang	47	27	20
4	Kalika Secondary School	Nerpa, Khotang	129	64	65
5	Kalika Secondary School	Kharmi, Khotang	74	31	43
6	Saraswati Secondary School	Arkhaule, Khotang	103	44	59
7	Jalapa Secondary School	Nunthala, Khotang	63	18	45
8	Diktal Boarding School	Diktal, Khotang	144	68	76
9	Mt. Everest Boarding School	Diktal, Khotang	100	50	50
10	Pancha Secondary School	Diktal, Khotang	70	30	40
11	Prithvi Secondary School	Bakshila, Khotang	191	80	111
12	Jyoti Secondary School	Jalapa, Khotang	217	122	95
13	Jalapa Secondary School	Jalapa, Khotang	372	181	191
14	Sharada Secondary School	Haunchaur, Khotang	174	64	110
15	Prithvi Secondary School	Aainselukharka, Khotang	319	194	125
16	Makpa Secondary School	Makpa, Khotang	140	75	65
17	Saraswati Secondary School	Diktal, Khotang	205	105	100
Total			<b>2500</b>	<b>1213</b>	<b>1287</b>



**PHOTO:** Owl conservation camps in various schools of Khotang district.

## Inter-school competitions

Poem, story, art and essay competitions with owl conservation theme were organized in the schools around Jalapa. Story writing competition was organized among the students of class 11 and 12. Students from standard 9 to 10 compete for essay writing and poem writing competition was organized among students from class 5 to 8. Art competition was held among the students from class 1 to 4.

Winning poems, essays, stories and art were displayed near temporary owl museum and the winners were awarded during the final day of the festival.

	Story writing		Essay writing		Poem writing		Art competition	
	Name	School	Name	School	Name	School	Name	School
1 <sup>st</sup>	Shanti Rai	Jyoti Sec. School	Pradip Acharya	Pancha Sec. School	Roshan Shrestha	Kalika Basic School	Digendra Ghimire	Saraswati Sec. School
2 <sup>nd</sup>	Mina Rai	Saraswati Sec. School	Sarwana Rai	Jalapa Sec. School	Pabitra Tamang	Jyoti Sec. School	Prasamsha Rai	Jagat Basic School
3 <sup>rd</sup>	Pabina shrestha	Jalapa Sec. school	Purnima Khadka	Saraswati Sec. School	Hemang Acharya	Janata Sec. School	Janam Rai	Jalapa Sec. School
							Bhumika Rai	Bhumesthan Basic School



**PHOTO:** Winning story, essay, poem and art was displayed during the festival.

## Bird watching and nature photowalk

Led by Mr. Som GC, Bird watching program was organized on early morning of February 1 and 2. Students from Jyoti Secondary School, Institute of Forestry (IOF) students, locals and few visitors made this program successful with their participation. Every participants were excited to watch the birds around Jalapa through binoculars and identify them with help of field guide as well. The number of bird species recorded totaled 65.

Along with bird watching, nature photo was also held on both days of festival. Mr. Bishal Gautam provided techniques on capturing photographs of the everyday objects which we see around us in a beautiful way.



## Cultural programs

Although Jalapa has dominant settlement of Rai community, scattered settlements of Newar, Tamang, Sherpa and Gurung have well preserved their culture making the settlement more heterogeneous. During the festival, students and locals performed several cultural dances and songs representing aforementioned cultures.



**PHOTO:** Locals from Rai community performing Sakela silli on first day of Nepal Owl Festival, 2019 at Jalapa.



**PHOTO:** Tamang Selo was performed by the students from Jalapa at Nepal Owl Festival 2019.

Sakela dance of Rai, Lakhe dance of Newar, Sangini dance from Hindu lady, Balan from Brahmin and Selo from Tamang community were well applauded by the audience during both days of the festivals.



**PHOTOS:** (TOP LEFT) Ladies in Gurung attire; (TOP RIGHT) Old lady practicing Madal just before her rendition; (MIDDLE LEFT) Local performing ecstatic Maruni dance; (MIDDLE RIGHT); Newari girls welcoming the audience: (BOTTOM LEFT) Lakhe dance; (BOTTOM RIGHT) Women playing Murchunga and Binayo.

(RIGHT END) Guy dressed as girl while performing solo Maruni dance.





**PHOTOS:** Students from Jyoti and Jalapa Secondary school sang a welcome song spreading owl conservation theme. The team also performed various cultural dance and welcome dance too. A street drama was conceptualized by Dil Bahadur Rai performed by students where they focus human and owl are interrelated to each other and they must be protected.

## Welcome songs and dance

Welcome song was written by Prof. Karan Bahadur Shah, music by Rajman Maharjan, Bikash Ghimire, Dinesh Lakandri and Om Raj B.K.

Manoj Ghimire (lead), Manoj Pokharel, Ravi Bikram Shah, Prabhat Kiran Bhattarai, Jeevan Thapa, Yadav Ghimirey, Prarthana Neupane, Pramisha Karki, and Anusha Shrestha gave their voices in the song.



**PHOTO:** Rakhsya Thakuri, Dinesh Bhusal, Pooja Pokhrel, Anusha Shrestha, Sujata Shrestha, Bibek Shrestha, Resham G.C., Sashi Aryal, Bishal Acharya, Sangam Shrestha, Madhav Dhital, Kshitiz Pathak and Bibek Gyawali from Institute of Forestry (IOF), Pokhara performed brilliant welcome dance on owl song.



**PHOTO:** Flash mob performed by IOF students was applauded by huge audience during second day of the festival. Their flash mob ended with short and sweet act and speech on conservation of all the wildlife particularly owls.

## Local games

### Gheer (घिर खेल)

Gheer is a local game that was played in past by the kids while herding their livestock. This game is quite like the modern day's hockey, where two teams try to hit the ball past the last defender of the opponent team and score a goal.



### Jhulo Chakmak (झुलो चकमक्)

Mostly played by ladies, this game involves competing to make fire using stone and tinder. Whoever makes the smoke come out first from the tinder by striking metal and stone becomes the winner. Here *chakmak* is the small metal knife and *jhulo* is tinder.



### Lathro Katne (लाथ्रो काट्ने)

In this traditional game, the traditional cap is placed on a top of stick which is fixed vertically in the ground. Players use the traditional Nepali blade, *Khukuri* and start cutting the stick in quick slashes after the whistle is blown. When done right, the cut piece of the stick falls vertically and the cap lands on top of the remaining part of stick. This is repeated as the stick grows shorter all the while without letting the cap fall to the ground. The player who cuts the stick into more pieces (or to the shortest length) without letting the cap falling in the ground becomes the winner.



## Documentary and Presentation on owl conservation

Around 6:30 pm at the evening of February 1, first day of the festival, local made their huge presence onto the stage of the program. It was time for documentary show, where the wish message from International Owl Center, videos on Owl, short presentation on Owl conservation and videos and photographs from Jalapa was shown to them. Despite the chilly winter weather in the evening, 300 people viewed the program for approximately two hours.

## Conservation Awards and Felicitations

### NATURE CONSERVATION AWARDS 2019

Two individuals and an organization dedicated to the research and conservation of wildlife/biodiversity were awarded with Nature Conservation Award 2019. Mr. Ramji Gautam from Simpani -1, Pokhara Metropolitan City, Kaski District and Mr. Yadav Acharya from Gulariya Municipality, Bardia District were awarded with this prestigious award for their continuous work in conservation of wildlife. Bird Conservation Nepal (BCN) was awarded with Nature Conservation Award for their work in conservation and research of Birds since 1982.

All three of them hold an outstanding contribution in the sector of wildlife conservation and were selected through systematic review process based on their nomination.

Profiles of Nature Conservation Award, 2019 are presented in subsequent pages.



**PHOTOS:** (From Left) Mr. Yadav Acharya and Mr. Ramji Gautam receiving their Nature Conservation Award 2019. Professor Karan Bahadur Shah receiving Nature Conservation Award on behalf of Bird Conservation Nepal.

## Winners' Profile

### Nature Conservation Award 2019

#### RAMJI GAUTAM

**Ramji Gautam** who originally hails from Machapuchhre Rural Municipality, Dhital-6 of Kaski district is currently a resident of Simpani-1, Pokhara. In 1997 he completed his zoology degree and for the past two decades has been working as a lecturer at Prithvi Narayan Multiple Campus. He is the Secretary of Zoological Society of Pokhara and Snake Conservation Society Nepal and is a life member of Bird Conservation Nepal and four other organizations.



Mr. Gautam's journey in the conservation sector started nearly 20 years ago with his work on Kalij pheasant. Since 2002, he has been involved in vulture research and conservation and has conducted 20 vulture conservation camps in schools of Kaski, Syangja, and Palpa districts. He has over 20 publications including eight research articles, four of which are peer reviewed. His opinion and advice on national conservation issues has been often quoted in news media, including Kantipur Television, Kathmandu Post, Annapurna Post and Kantipur Daily. He has also given many interviews on local radio stations. Recently he has been actively involved in snake conservation in the country.

He has given 30 speeches on snake conservation and has been involved in over 30 snake rescue and release operations. He has led several research projects on herpetofauna, vultures, water birds and Kalij pheasant in Pokhara valley which has tremendously helped to document the richness of biodiversity in the valley. He was instrumental in initiating weekly hikes to teach students about wildlife identification and is also an editor of the scientific journal published by Prithvi Narayan Multiple Campus.

Mr. Gautam has facilitated two owl rescue operations and two owl conservation camps. He recently helped establish artificial nests in his campus premises when the residing owls were displaced due to ongoing construction works. Mr. Gautam's grandmother has been highly influential in shaping up his love for nature conservation. His hobbies include observing wildlife behavior, rescuing wildlife and imparting conservation awareness to students.

## Nature Conservation Award 2019

### YADAV PRASAD ACHARYA

**Yadav Prasad Acharya** was born in 1978 A.D. in Bagalamukhi Mandir Tole of Gulariya, Bardia. He is the eldest member of his family of five. It has been 12 years since he started his career as a journalist working for local media. Over the years he has worked for many reputed news organizations including Image Channel Television, Himalaya Times Daily,

Hamrakura.com and Bageshwori FM (Nepalgunj). He is currently working as the Bardia correspondent of Annapurna Post, one of the nation's leading daily. For the past seven years, under his leadership, *Churekunja*, weekly newspaper has been publishing news addressing various local environmental issues.



So far, Mr. Acharya has published over 100 news articles including featured articles and documentaries. He has been covering issues such as tiger status/census, rhino translocation/census/issues, Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), dolphin conservation, blackbuck conservation, vulture conservation, status of protected areas, human-wildlife conflict, illegal hunting and trade, etc. He has published four owl related articles and has also been involved in two owl rescue events. He has also participated in over 24 conservation awareness camps.

One of his main goals is to highlight issues on biodiversity conservation through news media. He wants to establish a media house in the future and has already taken the initiative by starting the *Churekunja* weekly. He believes that to conserve nature, the efforts of few is not enough, which is why he wants to urge the government to work with the local people and conservationists to achieve this goal. He believes that much work is needed to address issues on human-wildlife conflict in Nepal, and that the government should help conservationists and provide wholehearted support to them.

## Nature Conservation Award 2019

### BIRD CONSERVATION NEPAL

Established in 1982, **Bird Conservation Nepal (BCN)** is the leading organization focusing on the conservation of birds and their habitats in Nepal. It seeks to promote interest in birds amongst the general public, encourage research on birds and identify major threats to birds' continued survival. As a result, BCN is the foremost scientific authority on birds and provides scientific data and expertise for the Government of Nepal for overall bird conservation in the country.

As a Birdlife International partner, a network of more than 110 organizations around the world, BCN is engaged in monitoring the status of Nepal's bird and ensuring their protection. With the identification of 37 critical sites of birds known as Important Bird Areas (IBAs) – occurring in forests, grasslands and freshwater ecosystems – BCN is playing a key role in conserving nationally and globally threatened birds.

BCN is also committed to showing the value of birds and their special relationship with people. They work with communities, conservation partners, government agencies, civil society and the general public and advocate the need for peoples' participation as future stewards to attain long-term conservation goals. It has played a pivotal role in helping vultures bounce back from extinction by advocating the ban of diclofenac use in the country. It is currently working on releasing captive bred vultures in the wild which will be a landmark in species conservation in Nepal. It also promotes vulture research and conservation among youths through Jatayu Scholarship program.

BCN has conducted over 3700 Bird Conservation Camps and over 2500 Bird Watching Events. The number of scientific publications exceeds 100 and number of bird checklists, book and newsletter publication is around 375. This includes the 2010 Red List assessment for birds of Nepal which was published in the book *State of Nepal's Birds 2010*. BCN has also been actively disseminating bird related information to public with over 90 interviews and radio programs and over 5000 news articles. Among them, work related to owls include around 10 articles, 25 conservation camps and over 50 owl rescue events.



## LOCAL CONSERVATION AWARD WINNERS 2019

### Red Panda Conservation Network Committee

Red Panda Conservation Network Committee is based in Kepilasgadhi-1, Phedi village and has been tirelessly working for conservation of globally threatened Red Panda in the area through public participation and launching other activities.

### Rawa Khola, Tap Khola and Lidung Khola Conservation Forum

Rawa Khola, Tap Khola and Lidung Khola Conservation Forum are locally based organisations which have been working diligently to discourage destructive fishing practices and conserve aquatic biodiversity (especially fishes) in the area.

## ORGANIZATIONAL CONSERVATION AWARD WINNERS 2019

**Himalayan Nature**, based in Kathmandu, is one of the most active organizations in the field of wildlife conservation in the country. It has been contributing immensely in wildlife conservation through researches, publications and other conservation initiatives.

**Mithila Wildlife Trust**, an organisation based in Mithila Bihari Municipality-3, Dhanusha district, has been in the forefront of wildlife conservation especially their rescue and rehabilitation in central lowlands of Nepal.



**PHOTOS:** (From Left) Representatives of Rawa Khola, Tap Khola and Lidung Khola Conservation Forum; Himalayan Nature; Mithila Wildlife Trust and Red Panda Conservation Network Committee

## Poster presentation

Eight presenters including one from Bangladesh participated in poster presentation during Nepal Owl Festival, 2019.

List of the presentation title and presenter are as follows:

- a. Roost preference and colony monitoring of *Hipposideros armiger*; A case study in bat cave and Mahendra cave, Pokhara, Sanjeev Baniya.
- b. Land sparing enhances bird diversity and abundance in North-eastern Bangladesh, Akib Hasan
- c. Status, distribution and conservation initiatives of owls in Raghuganga, Anoj Subedi.
- d. Inventory of Butterflies and conservation initiatives in Rara National Park, Sanej Prasad Suwal
- e. Distribution of Striped Hyaena (*Hyaena hyaena*) in Nepal, Chiranjeevi Khanal.
- f. Modeling nesting habitat for White-rumped Vulture (*Gyps bengalensis*) in Dang district, Suman Ghimire.
- g. King Cobra: A majestic yet threatened snake species, Kul Bahadur Thapa.



## Stalls

Bird Conservation Nepal (BCN), Himalayan Nature and Pokhara Bird Society (PBS) had their organization stalls at the premise of the festival site. Representatives from each organization were present in their stalls with posters, booklets and books and explained about their ongoing work in the field of conservation.

Friends of Nature (FON) Nepal also had set up its stall during the festival. It contained owl books (Latokosero ki Bathokosero), owl key rings and owl T-shirt for sale. This stall was more of a souvenir shop from Friends of Nature.

Locals from Jalapa also had kept their huge stall containing souvenir of Jalapa for sale to the visitors. Local products like basket, ropes, sculptors, musical instruments, khukuris, as well as dry foods and vegetables were kept for sale.



**PHOTOS:** (Top Left) Students looking at the posters in stall of Bird conservation Nepal; (Top right) Mr. Kul Bahadur Thapa setting up the stall of Himalayan nature; (Bottom Left) Visitors at the stall of Pokhara Bird Society; (Bottom Right) Mr. Samundra Ghimirey as a representative of Friends of Nature at the stall.

## Face and Nail Art



Face painting with theme of owl was done by Mr. Manoj Shakya Panju, Rajendra Deshar and Mr. Ram Prasad Itani for both days of festival.

Ms. Hunny Manandhar painted owls on the nails of audience during the festival.

## Temporary Owl Museum

Owl museum remains as the major attractant during the festival. Parallel to other programs like cultural dance, games, speeches and award function, audience of festival visits the museum developed temporarily by Friends of Nature.

This museum displays information, curios, activity related with the owls. Dozens of volunteers are employed in preparation of this museum and they also explain the visitors about the items, equipment, information and owl related activities during the festival. From small locket and pendant of owl to big owl sculptures, from framed pictures of owl to the owl portraits made on stones, from electric lights glowing as owl to owl origami; temporary owl museum entices huge crowd throughout the festival.



Beside these, interesting information on owls, glimpses of previous owl festival, highlights of owl festivals from USA and Italy, owl robots, owl call devices are major part of museum which holds the audiences.

This museum acts as a display center to deliver the conservation message of owl to the local community. Creativity, knowledge and rigorous hard work of the volunteers make this museum as a center of attraction where the community visits and explores the avenue of owl conservation.

Two separate rooms and a medium sized hall of Jalapa Secondary School were used as temporary museum. Open spaces in the premises of the Jalapa Sec. School were also used for activities like owl dart board and owl photo booth.

Image profiles of temporary owl museum are presented in subsequent pages.



**PHOTOS:** Making of temporary owl museum begins with arranging furniture and cleaning them. Volunteers including local students make the museum hall as well as its premises clean & attractive.



**PHOTOS:** Unpacking boxes, repairing damaged curios, checking electrics and electronics, cutting, and pasting goes on for next two three days.



**PHOTOS:** Volunteers work tirelessly and make the owl museum as a center of attraction at the festival. After four days of complete hard work, volunteers make the museum ready for the visitors.



**PHOTOS:** Students and local youths spend more time in the museum. They go through displayed items and carefully listen to the description of those items provided by our volunteers. Around 2500 visitors passed through the hit counter while entering museum in the first day.



**PHOTOS:** Owl robots, video call device, owl specimen, fancy owl curios, photo booth and owl research equipment were often crowded by the visitors during the second day of the festival. Visitors were making notes of interesting information from the museum as volunteers briefed about the item displayed.

## Owl Dart Board

Owl dart board was another major attraction of the festival. The dart board had an owl and a hunter painted on it. Player who hit the hunter with a dart would get an owl mask whereas those who strike the owl would have to pay the fine. The amount of fine solely depended on wish of the player. This raised a total of NPR 4985 (\$ 45) which will be used in the next Nepal Owl Festival.



## Statue of Indian Eagle Owl

Mr. Rajendra Deshar had arrived Jalapa a month prior the festival to build a statute of Indian Eagle Owl at the Premise of Jalapa Secondary. School. This statue was completed few days before the festival as Manoj Shakya Panju colored the statue. Formal opening of the festival was done by unveiling this statue by chief guest on the first day of the program. This statue became major attraction for the visitor as the local had built temporary garden around this statue.



**PHOTOS:** (Left) Rajendra Deshar and Manoj Shakya Panju coloring the statue. Chief Guest, Mr. Bishal Bhattarai, honorary member of House of Representative, formally unveiling the statue.

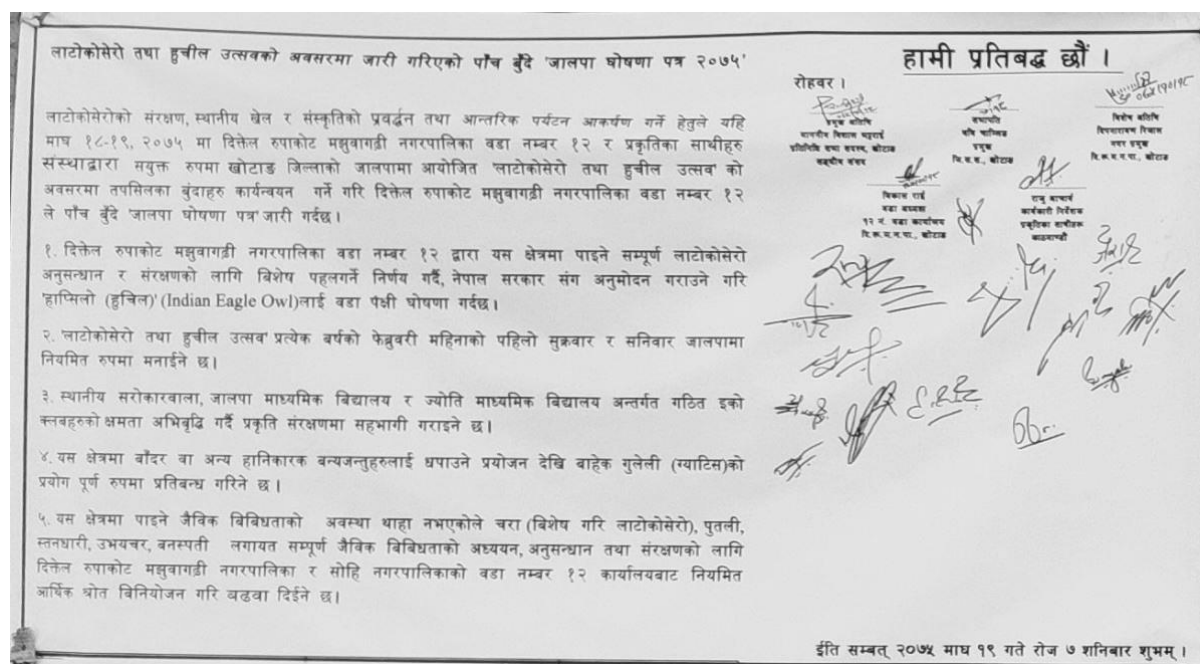
## Jalapa Declaration, 2075 (2019)

Nepal Owl Festival, 2019 can be marked as huge success because of the cooperation and dedication of the ward no. 12, Diktel Rupakot Majhuwagadhi Municipality towards the conservation of owls. In addition to organizing the Nepal Owl Festival 2019 successfully, ward no. 12 of Diktel Rupakot Majhuwagadhi adopted a five-point implementing statement for conservation of biodiversity with primary focus on owl, as Jalapa Declaration 2075 (2019).

The declaration was signed by chief guest, honorary member of Federal parliament, Mr. Bishal Bhattarai, House of representative, Khotang; Special guest, Mayor of Diktel Rupakot Majhuwagadhi Municipality, Mr. Dip Narayan Rijal; Chairman of ward no. 12, Diktel Rupakot Majhuwagadhi Municipality, Mr. Bikash Rai and Executive Director of Friends of Nature, Nepal, Mr. Raju Acharya.

With signing of this declaration, ward no. 12 of Diktel Rupakot Majhuwagadhi municipality has stated following five implementing points:

- Propose Indian Eagle Owl as representative bird of the ward on approval of Nepal Government.
- Organize Nepal Owl festival every year at ward no. 12 on second week of Magh.
- Conduct capacity enhancement program of local stakeholders, eco clubs of Jalapa Sec. School, Jyoti Sec. School for nature conservation.
- Prohibit use of catapult in ward other than using to scare away conflicting animals like macaques from agricultural field.
- Allocate regular budget from ward no. 12 to conduct continual assessment of biodiversity including birds (especially owls), butterfly, mammals, amphibians and vegetation.



**PHOTO:** Signed Declaration displayed during the festival This declaration exhibits the dedication of local government on biodiversity research and conservation which itself defines the success of Nepal owl Festival, 2019.

## Nepal Owl Festival volunteers 2019



Our team of volunteers earns special acknowledgement as they worked relentlessly to make this festival successful. Volunteer team at Kathmandu continued preparation two week before the festival until the final day before leaving for Jalapa. After 14 hours of bumpy ride to Jalapa they started the final preparations of the festival at the site. During the festival our volunteers made sure that the events ran smoothly. We would like to thank for their dedicated hard work and passionate spirits.



## Local volunteers from Jalapa

We had an extra helping hands for Nepal Owl Festival 2019. Students from Jalapa and Jyoti Secondary school and youths from Jalapa were present with us throughout the festival to support us.



Cleaning the premises of festival, making places for poster presentation and organizational stalls, hanging banners and many more works went swiftly because of these local volunteers. They also helped us to manage the visitors who visited during the festival. We thank every volunteer from Jalapa for their support and cooperation throughout the festival.



## Owl festival in Media



The events of Nepal Owl Festival 2019 was covered by several national as well as local media. Featured news and videos of the festival was broadcasted by several individual and Medias.

### National Daily

- Kantipur National Daily
- Annapurna National Daily
- Nagarik National Daily
- The Himalayan Times
- Gorkhapatra National Daily
- Rastriya Samachar Sansthan

### TV channels

- AP1 TV
- Kantipur TV
- Avenues TV

### Online News (English)

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#### YouTube videos

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See you in next year! 7-8 Feb, 2020