

Project Update: February 2021

Preparatory Works: (Reconnaissance Survey, Key Informant Survey): We conducted a reconnaissance and key informant survey at the beginning of project to create an effective project plan. After conducting a series of discussion with park officials and local communities, we created a framework that would allow us to work efficiently even during the COVID-19 pandemic.



Photo: 1 Group Discussion with local communities of Dang around Banke National Park (BaNP) Buffer Zone.

Outreach Materials Preparation and Distribution: For the successful completion of outreach and extension programmes of our project, we designed stickers and batches with conservation messages of tiger-leopard conservation, prey base conservation, Chure Conservation printed in them. We then distributed those materials to school level students, community groups and park officials.

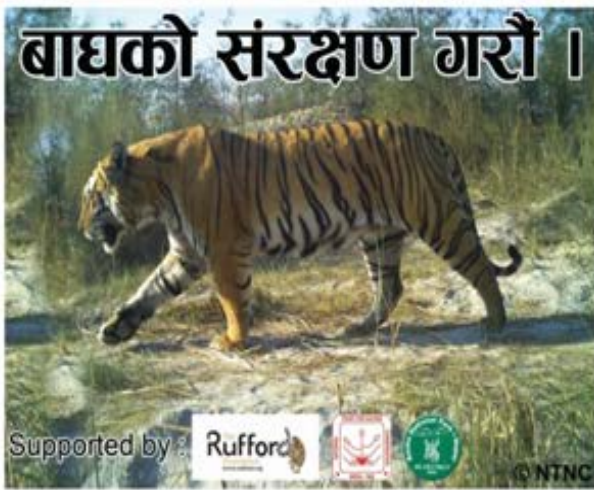


Photo: 1 Stickers with conservation messages of tiger- leopard and their natural prey.

Outreach Campaign: With an aim of spreading conservation awareness, we conducted school teaching programmes and organised events like a poem competition and drawing competition. We also organised interactive class with presentation in order to educate students about the necessity of conservation and the importance of big cats in maintaining balance in the ecosystem. The presentation was conducted for an hour where many students put questions on what species were big cats and why we needed them in the environment. We even discussed with students about the problems of illegal timber extraction and depredation of Chure hills. As the local stakeholders and real custodians of any forests, teaching the villagers and local stakeholders about conservation importance of Chure forests is noted as one of the important outcomes of the project.



Photo: 3 School awareness programs about conservation of tiger and leopard.



Photo: 4 Prize distribution of drawing competition.

Human Disturbance Survey in Chure: We have conducted human disturbance occupancy survey in the Chure range. We included the Chure range both inside and outside the Banke National Park (BaNP) in order to gather good information. The data we have collected includes the severity, forms, extent of the disturbance caused to the range because of various anthropogenic activities. During the survey we came across various illegal timber extraction points, traps for wildlife, and even found people deep inside the forest collecting timbers and firewood. However, the analysis of the impact of human disturbance in the occupancy is yet to be conducted.



Photo: 2 Forms of disturbances (a), (b) traps for wildlife and (c) timber extraction

Camera Trap Survey: Due to the COVID crisis we were unable to conduct the community engagement part of the project and hence we channelised the funds allocated for community works towards jointly conducting camera trapping survey for monitoring big cats and prey base with National Trust for Nature Conservation, Bardia Conservation Program. Camera trapping will be started from mid-February 2020. And our team will actively participate in the fieldwork along with other park officials and NTNC staff. Also, we are yet in discussion with the park authorities and NTNC regarding our involvement in the camera trap and scats collection survey in BaNP.

Scat Collection started: We have collected 29 scat samples to date. The scats were mainly collected from forests (core and buffer zone area of national park), animal tracks, roadside and riverbanks. However, we could not collect as many samples from BaNP as suggested by the local resource persons, which could be due to the fire line construction work being done in BaNP. Hence, we waited for the work to be over and now we will start collecting the samples in the field from mid-February 2020 along with the camera trap survey that the national park is planning.



Photo: 3 Scat collection (a) and (c) by team members, (b) Pugmark d) Scat of big cat.