

Project Update: September 2010

A field visit was carried out in August 2010 in Gosaikunda section of the research site. During this field visit, ecological sampling of *Berberis* sp. and *Rhododendron anthopogon* shrubs was done from an altitude of 3725 m (close to Cholangpati) to 4650 m (SuryaKunda). Altogether, 126 (63 pairs) plots in three different altitudinal belts (~ 3730 m, ~3870 m, ~4000 m) were sampled for *Berberis* shrub. A total of 120 (60 pairs) plots were sampled for *R. anthopogon* shrub in six different altitudinal belts with an altitudinal interval of 150 m. Along with environmental, soil and physical parameters, species present inside shrub and open control plots were recorded.

The field visit coincided with "Janai Purnima" (a Hindu festival in the full moon day of August). Thousands of people visited the place. There was high resource depletion due to harvest and trampling by the pilgrims. This occasion became an excellent platform for us to conduct an awareness programme. We discussed with the people the importance of shrub species showing a poster and brochure we had taken (additional value of the project, not mentioned in the proposal). Most of the festival attendants showed a keen interest in our programme and even raised many questions about positive interaction. We discussed with them the environmental, economic and cultural perspective of the plants. We demonstrated the protected and un-trampled plant species inside the bush even during the high-pressure time like festival. People seemed highly convinced with us.



Left: A long procession of Pilgrims visiting Gosaikund during Janai Purnima festival. Right: A man hanging a flex prepared by project team on the wall of a house in the Mundu village of Lantang-Kyangjing Valley

An observation field visit was organised separately for the local people. All together nine people were involved. We demonstrated the protection of delicate plant species by the shrub and explained physical, environmental and physiological mechanism of the protection by shrub. After the field visit, participants committed for the dissemination of what they learned to their community members and to protect shrub species.

Similarly, Kyangjing section was visited in the mid-September to the first week of October 2010. Ecological sampling of *Astragalus* sp. shrub (in cushion form) was done. The area of 82 patches was measured separately and a number of control plots having equal area were also sampled. All the individual species falling within the sample were noted. Sampling was done in the altitudinal range of 4260 m to 4410 m asl.

An awareness campaign was organised in Langtang village. Ten village leaders and conservation activists belonging to Langtang Snow Leopard Conservation Group, local health post in charge, and local Lama were present in the programme. The importance of shrub species was highlighted through a poster, brochure and group discussion. People share each other's observed experience with high number of important plant species inside bush. They also shared that medicinal herbs growing inside have high quality, quantity and effectiveness. They share their high level of impression towards our programme and committed to share the knowledge they learned to community members. They asked us to be present and share our ideas and experiences to rest of the community members in all type of educational outreach programme in the coming days. We expressed our commitment towards this direction.



Left: *R. anthopogon* sampling (close to Suryakunda, LNP). Right: Harvested *R. anthopogon* and Juniper for incense.

An agreement was made between Langtang Snow Leopard Conservation Group, Langtang, Rasuwa and Positive Interaction in Alpine Communities: Implication for Conservation in Langtang National Park, Nepal research team for the collaboration in future for effective biodiversity conservation and sustainability of the project.