

Project Update May 2024

This report provides an update on the fieldwork carried out to date in the study area. Multi-season point surveys were planned in the project for each of the summer, monsoon, and winter seasons. The main objective for conducting multi-seasonal point surveys was to assess whether the bird is migrant or resident to Shuklaphanta National Park (ShNP). As ShNP is the last remaining habitat in the lowlands of Nepal, this study is crucial for planning future species conservation works, developing population monitoring protocols, identify critical habitats for carrying out habitat management activities and develop the species conservation action plan for its long-term survival and conservation.

Orientation Training

One orientation training was organised for the field survey team to make them familiar about the locations of the point survey stations, distinctive features of the bird species helpful for its identification, schedule of the field visits, equipment to be used and its handling, data recording, and observation protocol. This orientation training also provided a good opportunity for the team members to get to know each other and share their past field experiences.



Figure 1: Team members interacting during the orientation training

Preliminary field visit

A 2-day preliminary field visit to Shuklaphanta grassland was made to familiarise the team members with the study area and practice some mock point station surveys to get real field experience and check for any shortcomings regarding the equipment (binoculars, rangefinders, GPS) and bird species identification.



Figure 2: Preliminary visit to Shuklaphanta grassland inside the park

Summer season Point station survey

A total of 90 point stations with 700m distance between each were visited over 10 days. A team with eight members was involved in the field. Two flocks of Finn's weavers were found in two different points in its non-breeding plumage.

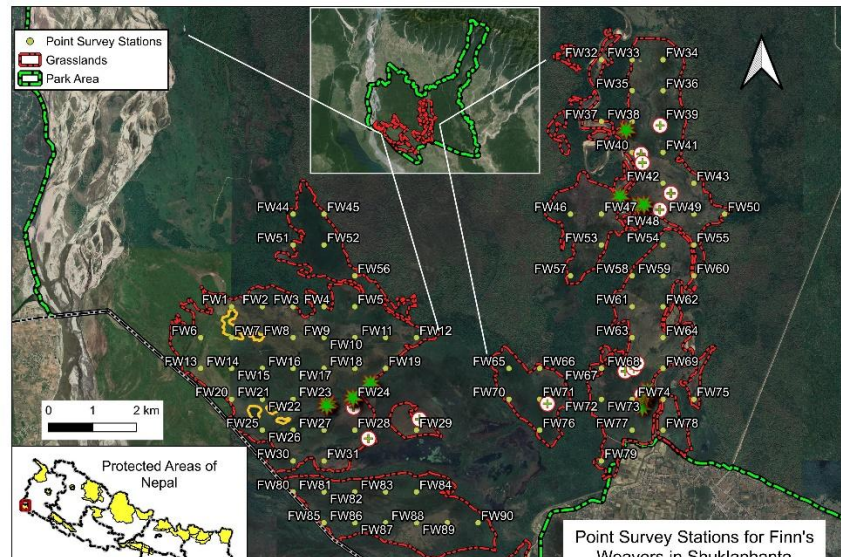


Figure 3: Map showing distribution of point survey stations



Figure 4: Field photos during the point station surveys

Rice Mill Visit and interaction with the local people in Buffer Zone

Four rice processing mills around the buffer area of the national park were visited and the staff working there were questioned about Finn's weaver sightings during this season. We showed them the photos of Finn's weaver's breeding and non-breeding plumage. One of the rice mill staff reported that he has seen a flock of yellow birds feeding in the mill residues in the morning and evening time but was unable to differentiate whether it was a Finn's weaver flock or other weaver flock.

There will be more visits to these mills during the monsoon season fieldwork.



Figure 5: Team Leader interacting with one of the rice mill staff in the Beldandi buffer zone area

Finn's weaver sighted in Hattisar

A mixed flock of 40 individuals consisting of Finn's weaver with streaked weaver was sighted in an elephant holding camp of park in the Shukla post. The elephant caretakers in the post also informed us about the daily visits of weavers in flocks to feed on the scattered grains, elephant dung and other remains in the elephant holding camps in the morning and evening. Since, the park elephants are fed grains daily by the caretakers which provides weavers a good source of food thus attracting the weaver flocks in the camp.



Figure 6: Mixed flock of weavers observed in the Elephant Holding Camp at Shukla Post

Finn's weaver flocks spotted during the survey

