

Project Update: August 2020- August 2024

Non- Invasive Survey

We carried out intensive sampling in Jumla District where Human Bear conflict was frequently repeated. We opportunistically collected fecal and hair samples of the Bears from the potential bear habitat consisting of forest, pastureland, edge of the forest and agriculture land. We had about 14 fecal samples and 4 hair samples. Most of the samples were found in the apple and peach garden, and agricultural land. Bears were feeding on apples, peaches, and maize. Only those scats which were no longer than a week were collected for DNA analysis and hair samples were collected from the agricultural land and broken branches of trees where bear nested or made scratches which were visually identified as a Black Bear hair.





Conservation Awareness Program:

We conducted a series of conservation awareness programs in regions around Jumla district, Rara National Park, Dhorpatan Hunting Reserve, and Konjoyosom (Lalitpur district), where recent human-bear interactions had occurred. The activities included:

1. Community Awareness Program

A conservation awareness session on the Himalayan Black Bear was conducted for local farmers and herders, who are at higher risk of bear encounters. We discussed bear behavior, ecology, and their critical role in the ecosystem. Strategies for avoiding and safely escaping bear encounters were shared. Participants raised concerns about crop damage and other losses caused by bears, and we addressed these by showing informative videos and discussing bear-human interactions from around the world.





2. Student Awareness Program

We organized conservation education programs for secondary-level students in Dhorpatan Hunting Reserve and Konjoyosom, areas with frequent human-bear interactions. To engage the students further, a "Bear Mask Painting" activity was held to raise awareness and encourage interest in protecting this vulnerable species.





3. Conservation Genetics Workshop

At the School of Forestry and Natural Resource Management, students pursuing degrees in biodiversity and wildlife conservation were trained in DNA extraction techniques and taught various theoretical and practical aspects of conservation genetics.





Additional Notes (From field study and personal communication)

In many communities across Nepal, human-HBB interactions are a part of daily life, yet there persists a significant gap in understanding and perception regarding this species. Despite living in proximity to HBB, many communities remain isolated from one another, leading to limited exchanges of information and experiences regarding bear encounters. Consequently, misinformation and misunderstandings about bears are prevalent, even in areas where interactions are more frequent. An example of this misinformation is the perception of two distinct species of black bears among some communities: "ground bears" and "tree bears." Residents often describe encounters with bears based on where they observe them, mistakenly believing that the lumbering bears they encounter on the ground are incapable of climbing trees. This misconception reflects a broader lack of knowledge about bear behavior and ecology, highlighting the need for targeted education and awareness campaigns.