

Project title	Status Assessment and Conservation of Critically Endangered Elongated Tortoise in Southeastern Nepal
Project ID	42887-1
Lead Investigator	Sabin Adhikari
Implementing organization	Wildlife Conservation and Research Endeavour (WILD CARE) Nepal, Pulchowk, Lalitpur



The project is being carried out in Jhapa district, located in southeastern Nepal. Our focus is on the Elongated Tortoise, a critically endangered species that inhabits Sal forests in the lowlands and Chure range of the country. Since its development, the project has increasingly prioritized conservation efforts due to the pressing threats faced by this species in the region.

To ensure a measurable impact, we have set the following objectives:

- a. To assess the current status and conservation challenges of the Elongated Tortoise in Jhapa district.
- b. To implement targeted conservation interventions to mitigate these threats.

This report highlights the progress made so far and outlines our upcoming activities to further our conservation efforts.

1. Permit acquisition

Two tiers of permits, each from Department of Forest and Soil Conservation (Permit no. 080/81-1318; Annex I) and Division Forest Office, Jhapa (Permit no. 081/82-380; Annex II) were obtained before carrying out the project activities.

2. Informal interviews & Questionnaire surveys

Consultations and surveys were made with subject experts, forest office, community forest offices and local people to obtain information on the potential occurrence of species in the region. Based on that, four major sites from Arjundhara, Bhadrapur, Kankai and Mechinagar municipality were finalized for the field survey. Within these areas, following CF were set as high priority areas for Elongated tortoise occurrence.

S.N.	Municipality	Community Forest
1.	Arjundhara	Dahijhoda CF
2.	Bhadrapur	Ranakali CF, Ratmate CF, Diyalo CF
3.	Kankai	Jamunkhadi CF, Sukedangi CF
4.	Mechinagar	Telpani CF



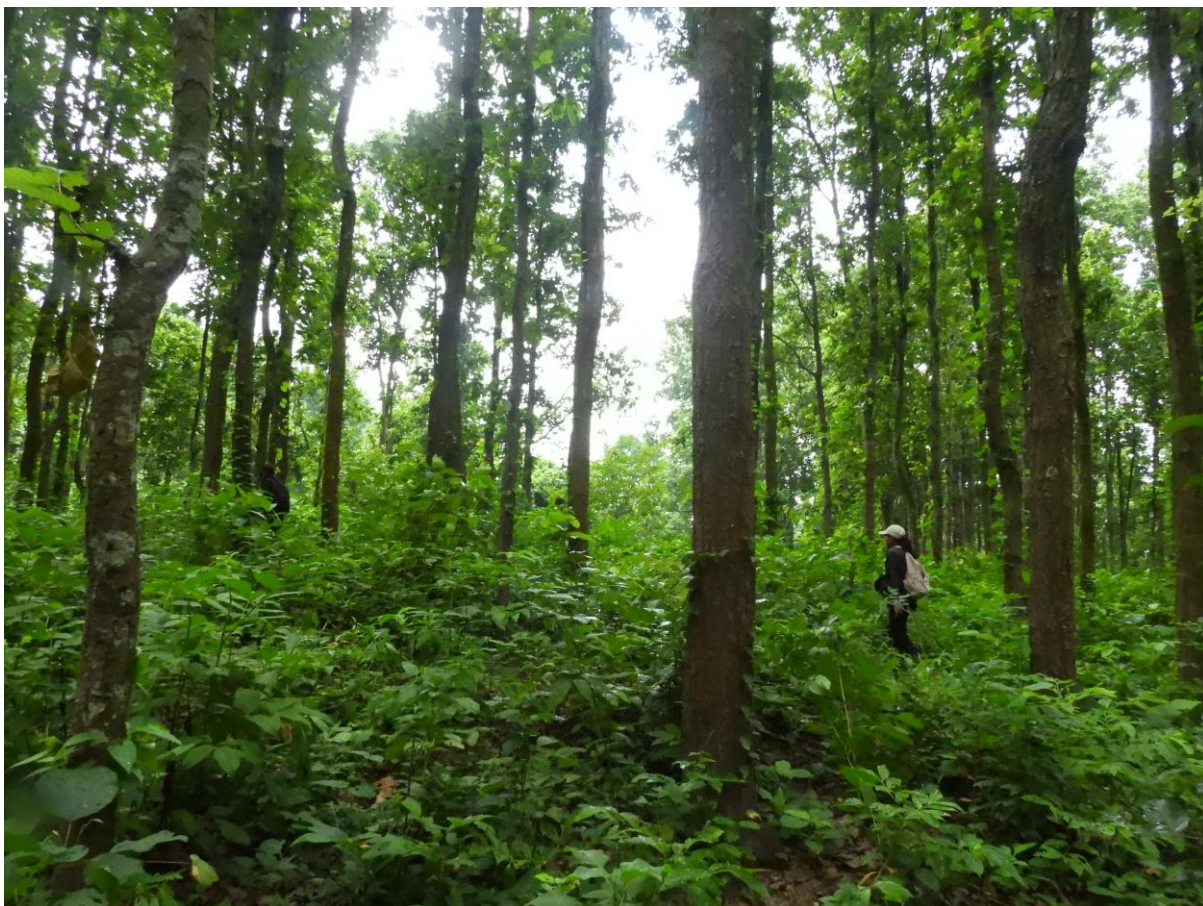
Picture 1: Informal interview with the officials of Ranakali CF before carrying out the survey

3. Field surveys

Six field surveys were conducted between August and November across the known and potential habitats of the Elongated Tortoise in Jhapa district. The primary objective of these surveys was to explore the habitats and document live specimens. However, due to the species' elusive nature and the dense forest cover, we were unable to record any individuals during this effort. To enhance our chances of success, we have planned follow-up surveys in March and April, when vegetation is drier and visibility is expected to improve.



Picture 2: Team of researchers, including local forest guards at Dahijhoda Community Forest



Picture 3: Sweep survey across the forest floor in search of Elongated tortoise



Picture 4: PI checking potential hideouts of elongated tortoise in its natural habitat

4. Development of conservation materials

A total of 1,000 posters, 500 stickers, and 50 t-shirts have been printed to support conservation awareness efforts. The conservation poster provides information on the species' general introduction, ecology, conservation needs, and the legal implications of its exploitation. All promotional materials share a common slogan in Nepali, which translates to English as: **"Do not keep, Do not kill, Do not eat."**



Picture 5: Conservation poster of Elongated tortoise



Picture 6: Conservation sticker



Picture 7: T-shirt design (front)

ठोटरी संरक्षण गरौं!



Picture 8: T-shirt design (back)

5. Training of Trainers (ToT) program

A one-day Training of Trainers program was held on December 25, 2024, for 11 university-level students. The event took place at the Turtle Rescue and Conservation Centre (TRCC). During the session, participants learned in detail about the elongated tortoise, including its biology, conservation status, and the urgency of protecting the species. They also received training on how to conduct outreach sessions effectively. Each participant was provided with resource materials, including posters, stickers, and a T-shirt, along with a modest allowance to support school education programs in their local areas. They were assigned to conduct sessions in 3–5 schools. The detailed list of individuals participating in the program is listed below.

S.N.	Name of participant	Address	Institution
1.	Aasma Dahal	Shivasatakshi-5, Jhapa	Kathmandu Forestry College
2.	Aabha Pokharel	Bhadrapur-7, Jhapa	Mechi Multiple Campus
3.	Anisha Shrestha	Bhadrapur-8, Jhapa	Mechi Multiple Campus
4.	Anjila Khatiwada	Bhadrapur-10, Jhapa	Mechi Multiple Campus
5.	Aman Sherpa	Mechinagar-10, Jhapa	Mechi Multiple Campus
6.	Shiva Gupta	Mechinagar-10, Jhapa	Mechi Multiple Campus
7.	Sushan Budathoki	Haldibari-02, Jhapa	
8.	Shishir Bhattarai	Mechinagar-10, Jhapa	Mechi Multiple Campus
9.	Sapana Rimal	Buddhashanti-02, Jhapa	Mechi Multiple Campus
10.	Bibhu Lamsal	Bhadrapur-10, Jhapa	Mechi Multiple Campus
11.	Gaurav Jha	Mechinagar-10, Jhapa	Mechi Multiple Campus



Picture 9: Participants of Training of Trainers (ToT) program engaged in a session



Picture 10: Group photo with participants of Training of Trainers (ToT)

6. Radio jingle production and broadcast

A radio jingle with a conservation message for the elongated tortoise has been created and is currently being broadcast on Aagan FM 89.6 MHz at the following times.

Shift	Time
Morning	5 a.m. (news), 8 a.m.
Day	11 a.m., 3 p.m.
Evening	5 p.m. (news)
Night	8 p.m.
Total	6 spots/day

About jingle: The radio jingle follows the story of a woman who unexpectedly finds a tortoise at her doorstep. Tempted by the belief that it brings luck and wealth, she turns to her neighbor for advice. The neighbor, however, sees an opportunity to consume the tortoise, citing its supposed medicinal benefits. Just as they consider their next move, a young schoolchild interrupts, offering an important lesson on the vital role of tortoises and freshwater turtles in nature.

Radio link: <https://nepalipatro.com.np/nepali-radio/aagan-fm>

Jingle link: <https://soundcloud.com/wild-care/tortoise-conservation-radio>

7. Conservation outreach program at schools

Soon after the ToT program, the participants actively started reaching various schools to conduct educational program. So far, they've successfully reached around 15 schools across different parts of Jhapa district, engaging with and inspiring over 700 students.



Picture 10: Student pasting information during schools sessions



Picture 11: Trainer explaining about the internal anatomical structure of a tortoise



Picture 12: Group photo with students after taking a session



Picture 13: Trainer taking a session at a school in Mechinagar

8. Conservation outreach at community level

On January 3, 2024, a session was held at Dahijhoda Community Forest in Arjundhara Municipality to raise awareness about the conservation of the elongated tortoise among community members. A total of 17 individuals attended the program, where participants appreciated the efforts to spread knowledge about this critically endangered species.



Picture 14: Project Leader explaining the community members about elongated tortoise

Way forward

Following tasks are scheduled to take place within the coming months aligning with the project objectives:

1. Community-level programs (n=2)
2. Continued school-level education programs
3. Conservation hoarding board installation
4. Roundtable discussion with stakeholders