Final Evaluation Report

Your Details	
Full Name	Simran Dhakal
Project Title	Assessing status, distribution, and conservation threats to Finn's weaver (*Ploceus megarhynchus*) in the last remaining habitat in the lowlands of Nepal
Application ID	41720-1
Date of this Report	29th March, 2025

1. Indicate the level of achievement of the project's original objectives and include any relevant comments on factors affecting this.

Objective	Not achieved	Partially achieved	Fully achieved	Comments
To assess whether Finn's Weaver is visitor or resident for Shuklaphanta NP.			■	Finn's weavers were observed and recorded in all three survey seasons (winter, summer, breeding).
To estimate the population size and density of the species.		■		A total of 90-point survey stations with 700m distance between the stations were planned pre fieldwork which were reduced to 71 after Key Informant Survey (KIS) and expert suggestions during the field work. All the survey stations were surveyed in all three seasons (winter, summer, and breeding). Nest counts were also done during the breeding season survey. Not enough observations were recorded from multi-season point surveys to carryout distance sampling analysis for estimating abundance and density of the species. Few areas with species presence were recorded as hotspot areas for the species.
To analyse the status and distribution of nesting sites and determine the underlying factors governing variability in microhabitat choices.			■	The breeding season data during the research period and previous breeding season surveys from other research works were compiled and the underlying factors governing variability in microhabitat choices were assessed. Also, the habitat characterisation data for point stations where the species were recorded during the multi-season surveys were analysed for habitat preference of the species.

To study nest and nest tree characteristics and identify characteristics of suitable nest trees.				The nest details and nest tree characteristics recorded during the breeding season survey were analysed and the false and active nest characteristics and nest trees features were assessed.
To identify current and future conservation threats for Finn's Weaver.				Monsoon storms destroyed the nest as well as nesting trees during the peak breeding time. High intense grassland fire recorded as threat. Natural predator species such as crows, Greater coucal and Lesser coucal etc. were identified as natural threats.
To develop local awareness and sensitize about the Finn's Weaver conservation among park staffs, local buffer zone committee members, nature guides and other conservation stakeholders.				Two result dissemination as well as conservation awareness training were organized in both sectors of the buffer zone of the park.

2. Describe the three most important outcomes of your project.

a) Finn's Weaver was found to be a resident species for Shuklaphanta National Park.

The species was observed during fieldwork in all three seasons (winter, summer, and breeding season) and photographs were taken as well. This confirmed the species as resident species for the park.

b). The presence of pole sized to small trees scattered in the open grasslands with proximity to water sources were main factors for nest tree selection for the species.

The main species preferred for nesting were found to be *Bombax ceiba, Dalbergia sissoo, Adina cordifolia,* and *Albizia procera* with Bombax having most of the nests. Low density pole sized to small trees stands which were near a waterhole or river or other form of water source were found to be preferred by the species. The factors governing selection of poles or small trees for active nests and false nests need to be further studied.

c). Forest fires, lack of nesting trees, floods and predators were identified as main threats to the species.

High intense forest fires during the pre-monsoon, unpredictable heavy rain and floods during the monsoon, removal of pole sized and small trees from grasslands as grassland management intervention, and large billed crow, lesser coucal, and other natural predators pose serious threat for the survival of the species. As the number of the individuals has been reported to be less than 250, these multiple threats are the main challenges for revival of the species population from the brink of extinction.

3. Explain any unforeseen difficulties that arose during the project and how these were tackled.

The massive flood during the monsoon season of 2024 (June-July) in the Chaudhar river floodplain grasslands lead to difficulties in survey efforts and postponement of our survey a week later. Moreover, bird nest was damaged by the storm which caused difficulty in identifying false and active nests as well as counting of individuals.

The rarity and clumped distribution of the species inside the park led to few detections across the survey stations was identified as major challenge for implementing distance sampling techniques for estimating abundance and density of the species.

4. Describe the involvement of local communities and how they have benefitted from the project.

Local people were directly involved in the project as team members. Local guide, Elephant staffs, survey team from the community participated in the field surveys as well as social survey in the buffer zone areas. Result sharing and Conservation educational training was conducted in participation of Buffer Zone Community User Groups and national park staffs.

5. Are there any plans to continue this work?

Yes, the breeding season count is recommended as the best and efficient way to estimate the species population inside the park. The park and relevant stakeholders are planning to follow this approach in coming years for monitoring of this species.

6. How do you plan to share the results of your work with others?
The work and the results have been shared through national media and community level workshops and further it will be shared through article publication in Scientific journals and report with recommendation will be submitted to relevant authorities.

7. Looking ahead, what do you feel are the important next steps?

The important next steps are to study the breeding ecology and nesting success of the species along with understanding movement ecology and habitat use pattern of the species during breeding and non-breeding.

8.Did you use The Rufford Foundation logo in any materials produced in relation to this project? Did the Foundation receive any publicity during the course of your work?

Yes, the logo of the Rufford Foundation was used in all the presentation slides and flex banner during introductory presentations to relevant authorities and Buffer Zone Community level result dissemination and awareness Program.

9. Provide a full list of all the members of your team and their role in the project.

Jhamak Bahadur Karki, PhD – Former Chief Conservation Officer , Principal of Kathmandu Forestry College, Wildlife Professor of Kathmandu Forestry College, Veteran Conservationist supported, and supervised overall the project design and the fieldwork. Without his help I wouldn't be able to complete this project successfully.

Manoj Ayer: Conservation Officer for Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation assisted in geospatial analysis and interpretation of result. He also guided in fieldwork planning, execution, and data collection. He is also assisting in preparing a scientific paper for the work.

Bimala Awasthi – She helped with questionnaire survey, data collection, and awareness program organization.

Gauri Negi: Same as Bimala she also recently finished her undergraduate studies. She supported data collection, data entry, and organization of awareness programs.
She is also one of the residents of Buffer zone of the National Park. Her network with the community people and her fluency in the local language helped us to collect the social as well other data regarding the species.

Mahananda Joshi- He has been working as a local nature guide at Shuklaphanta National Park for the last 12 years. He also worked as team member for previous Finn's Weaver monitoring works conducted by Bird Conservation Nepal (BCN). He contributed as observer and data collector for the fieldwork. His experience and knowledge about the bird was key to successful completion of fieldwork.

Arjun Joshi- He has been working as a Senior Scout in Shuklaphanta National Park for the past 30 years. He has experience of working in the field. He assisted in field work and organization of awareness programs.

Sabita Bam: Sabita assisted in the data collection of the Summer Field Survey.

Few field members of Bird Conservation Nepal and technicians from National Trust for Nature Conservation, Shuklaphanta Programme (NTNC-SCP) were also involved during the field period.

Park elephants with their handlers were also involved during the fieldwork.

During the result dissemination workshops national park staffs were also involved.

10. Any other comments?

During the fieldwork new record for Chinese Pond Heron (*Ardeola bacchus*) for Sudurpaschim province was also recorded.

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/376619099_First_record_of_Chinese_Pond_Heron_Ardeola_bacchus_for_Sudurpaschim_province_of_Nepal

Annex

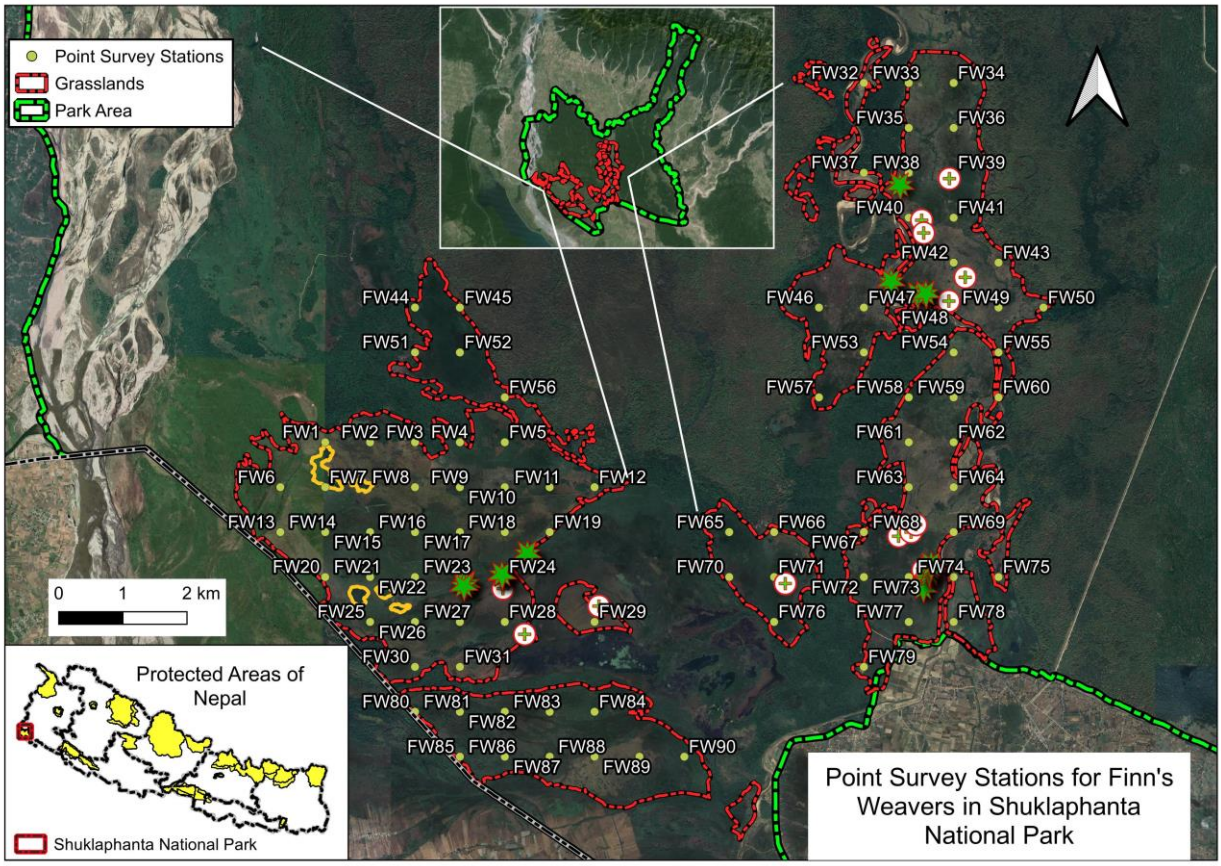
E-kantipur (national daily) publication link regarding project work

https://ekantipur.com/en/feature/2024/09/28/simran-chasing-cannon-bird-40-55.html

Video story by media on the work

https://www.facebook.com/share/v/1FAqZkLwb7/

Field photos



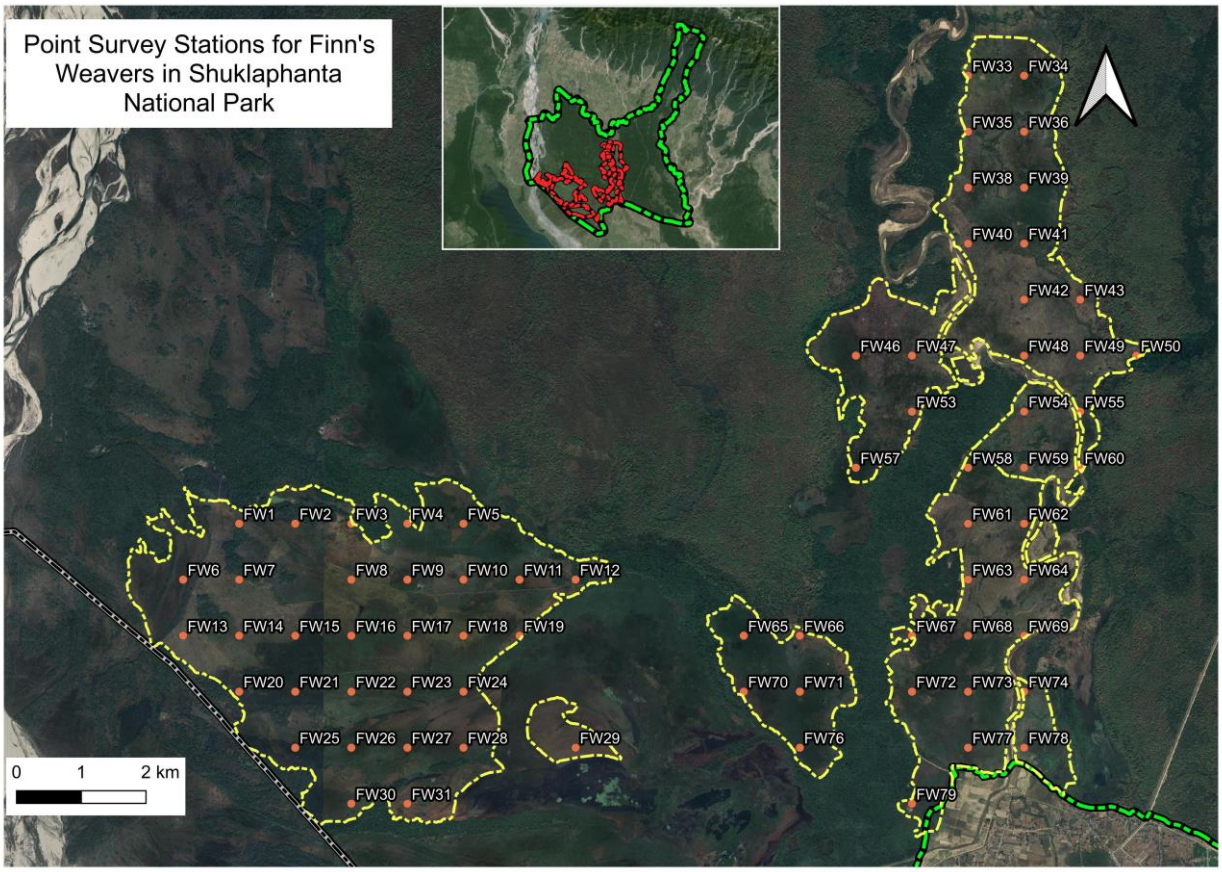

Point Survey Stations for Finn's Weavers in Shuklaphanta National Park
FW1 FW2 FW3 FW4 FW5
FW6 FW7 FW8 FW9 FW10 FW11 FW12
FW13 FW14 FW15 FW16 FW17 FW18 FW19
FW20 FW21 FW22 FW23 FW24
FW25 FW26 FW27 FW28 FW29
FW30 FW31
FW33 FW34
FW35 FW36
FW38 FW39
FW40 FW41
FW42 FW43
FW46 FW47 FW48 FW49 FW50
FW53 FW54 FW55
FW57 FW58 FW59 FW60
FW61 FW62
FW63 FW64
FW65 FW66 FW67 FW68 FW69
FW70 FW71 FW72 FW73 FW74
FW76 FW77 FW78
FW79
0 1 2 km

Figure: Finn's weavers sighted in winter survey (Jan, 2024)

Figure: Finn's weavers sighted in summer survey (April, 2024)

Figure: Breeding photo of Finn's weaver (Jul, 2024)

Figure: Result dissemination workshop cum Bufferzone Community Awareness Program

Figure: Social Survey in rice mill in buffer zone of the park


ASSESSING STATUS, DISTRIBUTION, AND CONSERVATION THREAT TO FINN'S WEAVER (सुनौली तोप चरा)
AWARENESS AND RESULT DISSEMINATION WORKSHOP
Shuklaphanta National Park
Kanchanpur
Rufford