

Rufford 1st Booster Project update

Project ID – 41641-B

Boosting nationwide vulture conservation by connecting people, government and development projects through monitoring and awareness workshops.



July to December, 2024



A. July, 2024

1. Promoting bird Tourism and vulture awareness:

A summer bird hike was conducted to promote bird tourism and aware locals about vulture. Pokhara Bird Society leaded the program. A meeting was conducted with co-workers, Bird watchers, Citizens Scientists, University Students and Bird Conservation Nepal representatives and Local people to understand the issues related birds and Vultures in that locality. Program was conducted at Ringe Homestay, Armala Kaski. Total 44 participants joined the program.



2. Data collection by mobile software:

Wing Watchers, a mobile application was successfully applied to collect data about population of vultures. A preliminary data from 12 sites were collected and is ready to be implemented for September IVAD 2024 count. A total more than 100 users on that day monitored population of Vultures from 23 different parts of Nepal during IVAD 2024.

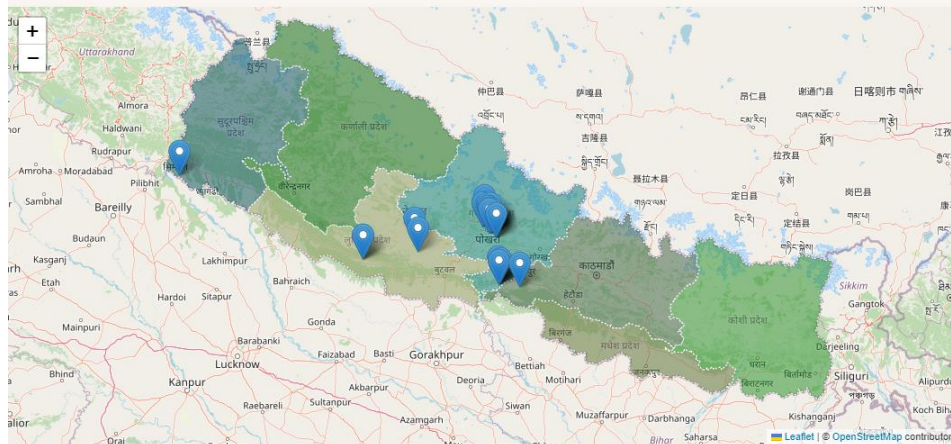


Fig: Vulture monitoring sites during IVAD 2024, Using Vulture population monitoring application, Wings Watchers in different parts (23 observation sites) of Nepal

B. August, 2024



I had the opportunity to visit the IT Innovation Center, where I worked on developing essential skills in data entry and analysis, alongside the teaching staff from Srijana Secondary School. The session at the center was focused on equipping us with the tools and knowledge to effectively handle and analyze data, which is crucial for organizing and presenting information in a clear and meaningful way.

This experience was particularly valuable as it not only improved our technical skills but also enhanced our ability to brainstorm and develop innovative ideas for spreading awareness about vulture conservation. By incorporating these new skills, we are better equipped to create engaging and informative materials that can effectively communicate the importance of vulture conservation to students at both the school and university levels.

Through this collaboration, we explored various ways to integrate technology and data analysis into educational programs, allowing us to present conservation messages in a more interactive and impactful manner. The knowledge gained from this visit has significantly expanded our capacity to engage younger audiences and inspire them to take action in protecting vulture populations, which face numerous threats. Ultimately, this initiative aims to foster a deeper understanding of vulture conservation among students, empowering them to contribute to ongoing efforts in preserving these vital species.



C. September 2024

IVAD 2024 Celebration

Introduction

On September 7, 2024, the Pokhara Bird Society together with Rufford booster program, organized a Vulture Conservation Awareness Program in celebration of International Vulture Awareness Day. The program aimed to enhance public awareness about vulture conservation and engage the community in active monitoring efforts.

Vulture Monitoring Activities

- **Monitoring Locations and Methodology:**

Vulture population monitoring was carried out at seven locations in Kaski and two locations in Tanahun districts, Gandaki Province, Nepal. The counts were conducted simultaneously from 7:30 am to 9:30 am to ensure consistency in data collection.

- **Volunteer Participation:**

A total of 62 volunteers, comprising members from green organizations and university students, participated in the monitoring efforts.



- **Data Collection:**

This year we practice modern technology developing mobile application. This application was developed under the funding of Rufford grant granted to Mr Hemanta Dhakal for vulture conservation project. The primary data collection was facilitated using the **newly launched mobile application, "Wing Watchers,"** developed by the Pokhara Bird Society. This application was instrumental in streamlining the data recording process and improving accuracy.

Survey Results

- **Vulture Count:**

During the survey, a total of 471 vultures were recorded. The breakdown of the vulture population was as follows:

- **Adults:** 312
- **Subadults:** 120
- **Juveniles:** 39

- **Species Recorded:** The monitoring identified six vulture species:

- White-rumped Vulture
- Slender-billed Vulture
- Egyptian Vulture
- Red-headed Vulture
- Himalayan Vulture
- Cinereous Vulture



Specifically, the seven counting points in Kaski recorded a total of 471 vultures, while the two locations in Tanauan recorded 95 vultures.



Participants in monitoring vulture population during IVAD 2024

Educational and Awareness Activities

- **School and University Programs:**

In addition to the monitoring activities, the program included educational outreach through photo exhibitions, interaction and audio-visual sessions. These sessions were conducted in schools and universities in Pokhara to further educate students and the community about vulture conservation and the ecological importance of vultures.

Outcomes and Impact

- **Increased Engagement:**

The program successfully engaged a diverse group of volunteers and local communities in vulture conservation efforts. The use of the "Wing Watchers" app facilitated efficient data collection and increased volunteer participation.

- **Enhanced Awareness:**

The educational programs helped raise awareness about the threats faced by vultures and the importance of conservation efforts. The photo exhibitions and audio-visual presentations effectively communicated the significance of vultures in maintaining ecological balance.

Participation in telemetry tagging of Egyptian Vulture:



Five individuals were captured and were successfully tagged with telemetry tags with a team from Bird Conservation Nepal and Rufford Grantee Krishna Prasad Bhusal in Pokhara, Nepal. Tagging was done near new Landfilled site and Old land filled site in Pokhara. This help in capacity build up that will help me proper handling of vulture as my future plan is also concerned with tagging Slender-billed vulture.

D. October

Rufford E-learning Event



Presenting the overall progress of my Rufford booster project and future plan at Nepal Learning Event.

I was honored to be selected as one of the Rufford grantees to participate in the Rufford Learning Session, which took place over four days in Chitwan, Nepal. The program was organized by Greenhood Nepal and funded by the Rufford Grant, providing a unique opportunity for grantees like myself to enhance our project management skills and learn effective strategies for conservation work.

During the session, I gained valuable insights into how to develop a well-structured and impactful project, as well as how to implement proper monitoring techniques to track progress and ensure that the project generates the expected outcomes. The training emphasized the importance of clear objectives, regular assessments, and adaptive management to achieve long-term conservation goals.

Additionally, I had the opportunity to present the detailed progress of my own Rufford-funded project focused on vulture conservation in Nepal. This allowed me to share the steps I've taken so far, the challenges encountered, and the successes achieved. It also provided an excellent platform for receiving feedback and suggestions from fellow grantees and experts in the field, which will be invaluable for refining and strengthening my project moving forward.

Overall, the Rufford Learning Session was an enriching experience that not only broadened my knowledge and skills in project management but also deepened my commitment to vulture conservation in Nepal, equipping me with the tools to make a more significant impact in the field.

Monitoring vulture movement and its impact at Pokhara Regional International Airport

After an extensive and prolonged process of engaging in discussions and coordinating with officials from Pokhara Regional International Airport (PRIA), our team has finally secured the necessary permits to monitor the movement of vultures within the core area of the airport. This development marks a significant step forward in understanding the behavior of vultures and other raptors in relation to the airport's operations. The periphery of PRIA is known for hosting a substantial number of vultures and other raptor species, which actively use the area for foraging and movement.

Given that PRIA is located in a region where bird activity is relatively high, the airport faces an increased risk of bird strikes, which pose a serious safety concern for aviation operations. In fact, in 2023 alone, the airport recorded 23 bird strikes, highlighting the urgency of addressing this issue. To better assess and manage the risk of bird-plane collisions, I am also mentoring and funding a Master's student who is conducting a detailed study on the potential risks associated with these collisions at PRIA. The goal of this study is to gather data on bird movement patterns, specifically vultures, and to evaluate how these patterns could increase the likelihood of bird strikes.

The findings from this research will be instrumental in providing the airport authorities with actionable recommendations on how to reduce the risk of bird strikes in the future. By understanding the vultures' movement and behavior within the area, we will be able to suggest strategies for bird management and mitigation that could make the airport safer for aviation while still preserving the local wildlife. This research not only aims to protect the airport's operations but also contributes to our broader understanding of vulture ecology in areas surrounding airports, ensuring that we can find a balance between wildlife conservation and aviation safety.

Provincial Workshop: Lumbini, Suhur Paschim and Karnali:

To achieve the primary objectives of the project, our team embarked on a journey this month, traveling 400 kilometers west of Kathmandu, the capital city. The journey took us a full 14 hours to reach Dang Valley, located in the heart of the Lumbini Province. Two days prior to our departure, we had been in communication with officials from the Ministry of Forest, Environment, and Tourism of Lumbini Province. After discussions, they agreed to support the initiative and organize a workshop that would bring together all relevant stakeholders from across the province.



Once the arrangements were finalized, a team of seven of us set off by Jeep from Pokhara, making the long drive to Dang Valley. Upon arrival, the workshop was held at Hotel Pauwa, a centrally located venue that provided a comfortable setting for the event. The program attracted 48 participants, who came from various sectors within the province, including government agencies, local environmental organizations, and other key stakeholders involved in forest management and tourism. The diverse range of participants underscored the importance of collaboration between different groups to address the environmental challenges and opportunities in Lumbini Province. The workshop not only facilitated knowledge sharing but also fostered a sense of collective responsibility for the sustainable management of the region's natural resources.



Workshop at Lumbini Province



Workshop at Lumbini Province



Workshop at Lumbini Province



With senior ornithologist Dr.Hem Sagar Baral, Hattan Chaudhary and Manshanta Ghimire

Interaction program at Bardia



To address vulture monitoring in Karnali province a short presentation was done together with the tour guide and officials of Bardia National Park in the office of Bardia National Park. We requested the use of application Wing Watchers to promote vulture monitoring during their trip to different parts of the country. Posters of Vultures were also distributed among the participants.

E. November 2024

Participation in 2nd Asian Ornithological Conference 2024, Beijing, China



I had the honor of participating in the 2nd Asian Ornithological Conference 2024, held in Beijing, China, from November 14th to 17th. This prestigious event, organized by the Institute of Zoology at the Chinese Academy of Science, brought together ornithologists, researchers, and conservationists from across the globe to discuss the latest advancements in the field of ornithology



Offering posters and some souvenirs to Asian Ornithological Conference Organizing committee, Secretary

During the conference, I had the privilege of presenting a research paper that focused on the status and conservation challenges faced by the Slender-billed Vulture (*Gyps tenuirostris*) in Nepal. This species, which is critically endangered, faces numerous threats, including habitat loss, poisoning, and a general decline in food availability. My presentation aimed to shed light on these challenges and to explore potential strategies for the conservation of this vulture species in Nepal, which plays a vital role in maintaining the ecological balance of the region.

In addition to presenting my paper, I was also invited to chair a session titled *Multifaceted Advances in Ornithology*, where I facilitated discussions on recent breakthroughs and innovative approaches in the study of birds. This opportunity allowed me to engage with experts from diverse backgrounds and to foster a deeper exchange of knowledge on various ornithological topics, including bird behavior, ecology, and conservation.

As part of my commitment to promoting bird conservation awareness, I distributed posters highlighting the importance of vultures and their role in the ecosystem. I also handed out souvenirs related to bird conservation to both the participants and the event organizers. These materials were intended to help raise awareness about the critical need for vulture protection and to encourage further support for conservation efforts.

The program was a remarkable opportunity to connect with fellow ornithologists, share insights, and collaborate on initiatives to safeguard bird populations across the World. It was an enriching experience that not only broadened my understanding of global ornithological research but also reinforced the importance of international cooperation in addressing the challenges of bird conservation.

F. December 2024

Participation in Nepal Zoological Congress 2-day conference at Lumbini Province:



I had the privilege of participating in the Nepal Zoological Congress, an esteemed event organized by the Nepal Zoological Society. During this congress, I had the opportunity to present my research paper, which focused on the potential risks of vulture-aircraft collisions at the Pokhara Regional International Airport (PRIA) in Pokhara. In my presentation, I highlighted the critical issue of bird strikes, specifically the threat posed by vultures and other large birds, and the implications this has for aviation safety in the region. My research aimed to bring attention to the movement patterns of these birds and their potential interactions with aircraft, underscoring the importance of proactive measures to mitigate such risks.

The event saw a diverse and engaged audience, with a total of 109 participants in attendance. These included researchers, conservationists, wildlife enthusiasts, and professionals from various sectors of the zoological and environmental fields. The congress provided a platform for exchanging ideas, sharing research findings, and discussing pressing issues related to wildlife conservation and management. My presentation was part of a broader dialogue on human-wildlife interactions, and I was able to engage with experts and colleagues who share a similar passion for wildlife protection and aviation safety. The event not only allowed me to share my findings but also to learn from others' experiences and to contribute to the collective effort to address the challenges faced by both wildlife conservation and aviation industries.



NSAIDs Monitoring and Nest Monitoring

NSAIDs Monitoring:

During these 4 months other provinces Lumbini and Sudhur Paschim were also visited and NSAIDs monitoring was also done. In total 100 vet practitioners were monitored informally. University students helped me complete this monitoring. No use of Diclofenac was found in all the monitoring sites. There was also no use of Veterinary drugs like Ketoprofen and Nimesulide.

Nest Monitoring:



Till 2019 six nests of SBV were recorded, and all the sites were visited. Among them one site in Kaski has changed to a new site and it bred successfully in 2024. Similarly, we recorded that till 2024 5 nests were active among those six. Together with Bird Conservation Nepal and local Volunteers there is regular monitoring of nests.

Nest locations: Bhimad-Kaski, Dhovilla, Kaski, and rest 3 in Terai Arc Landscape.

Overall project progress (Jan 2024- December 2024)

1. National and Provincial Workshops – Work progress- 100%
 2. Vulture Awareness Programs- Work Progress -100%
 3. NSAIDs monitoring – Work Progress- 90%
 4. Nest Monitoring – Work Progress- 90%
 5. Book Publication- Work Progress- 90% (Draft ready to print)
- Journal Article – Work Progress – Submitted and Accepted by Journal – Environmental Monitoring and Assessment
- News articles- Work Progress- News articles related to our works are published in national level newspapers.

Overall Progress- 94% work completed

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ठुला र समानान्तर भौतिक संरचना गिद्धलाइ चुनौती बन्दै



विकास निर्माणका ठूलो र समानान्तर भौतिक संरचना गिद्धका लागि चुनौती बन्दै गर्दासँगै गिद्धको विकास गर्न । लुम्बिनी प्रदेशको उत्तरपूर्व भेगमा, गिद्धा अर्थात् गिद्धाको विकास गर्न । लुम्बिनी प्रदेशको उत्तरपूर्व भेगमा, गिद्धा अर्थात् गिद्धाको विकास गर्न । लुम्बिनी प्रदेशको उत्तरपूर्व भेगमा, गिद्धा अर्थात् गिद्धाको विकास गर्न ।

कार्यक्रममा नेपालका गिद्धाको विकास र वर्तमान चुनौती बारे जानकारी गराइएको थियो । कार्यक्रममा सहभागीहरूले गिद्धाको विकास र वर्तमान चुनौती बारे जानकारी गराइएको थियो । कार्यक्रममा सहभागीहरूले गिद्धाको विकास र वर्तमान चुनौती बारे जानकारी गराइएको थियो ।



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