

Project Update: July 2012

A baseline study was conducted investigating its genetic identity, distribution, prey choice and conflict issues with humans in trans-himalayan Dolpa, Nepal. The study on taxonomic status was carried out by aligning and comparing the DNA patterns obtained from the wolf-scats with Himalayan wolf and other wolf sub species obtained. These scats were also used for prey analysis by comparing the hair patterns obtained from it. The distribution pattern was developed through geographic modeling validated by the wolf signs recorded during the field survey. Lastly the conflict issues were assessed by conducting questionnaire surveys to the locals in the wolf dominated settlements.

The study revealed the wolf of Nepal to be closely associated with Himalayan wolf rather than Tibetan wolf, very much deviated from the general wolf-dog group. Furthermore, we could also suggest that it is a genetically unique population and possibly a species on its own isolated from the common grey wolf since quite some time. The distribution model predicts its occurrence around the upper Dolpo region characterised by alpine steppe and patches of shrublands. Preferably Himalayan wolf tend to occur around six major VDCs of rain shadow upper Dolpo region viz. Bhijer and Dho (study sites), Saldang, Charka, Tinje and Mukot. A serious conflict was observed between the local community and the wolf with wolf attributing mass livestock depredation more than snow leopard and almost half of the local population acknowledging to have been involved in retributive killings. The principal reasons behind this chaos were the marginal economy of the locals and wolf's diet shift as it preferred domestic ungulates rather than less abundant wild preys assessed from prey analysis. An instantaneous action of extensive researches and conservation campaigns is imperative to preserve this species accentuating its uniqueness and significant role in regulating sparse biodiversity of Himalayan ecosystem.





