

Project Update: February 2014

Reconnaissance field survey was carried out from 12th to 24th February 2014 in Syaubari Buffer Zone Community Forestry followed by a consultation meeting at Park Office and Buffer Zone Support Project Office at Dhunche, District Headquarter of Rasuwa. The objectives of the reconnaissance survey were: i) to inform the local community about the project and carry out transect survey for potential game proof fencing; ii) to discuss with Syaubari Buffer Zone User's Group about how to go about it in terms of local contribution; and iii) to discuss with Chief Warden of Langtang National Park and Project Manager of Buffer Zone Support Program funded by WWF Nepal for their respective support. The survey team comprises myself, a GIS expert, a forest guard, Syaubari CF, the Secretary of the Syaubari User's Group and a game scout from the park office. The following are outcomes of transect walk, discussion with communities and park office respectively:



Photo 1: Transect walk for assessing wildlife habitats. Photo 2: Dominant pine forests in western aspect.

Forest Transect walks:

A transect walk was done in all four blocks in order to get general impression of forest types, wildlife habitats and potential location of establishing game proof fencing. The total forest area is approximately 142 ha and includes *Quercus* forest and pine forests in southern and western aspect respectively. In the degraded land, interspersed by soil erosion and gully erosion, alder (*Alnus nepalensis*) species dominate the forest. Direct observation of wild boar was made along with numerous indirect signs such as pellets, rooting signs, rubbing signs, scats of common leopards.



Photo 3: Oak trees abundantly found in southern aspect. Photo 4: Scats of common leopards



Photo 5: Pellets of barking deer. Photo 6: Rooting signs by wild boars in forest (Syaubari)



Photo 7: Abandoned crop field with livestock shed. Photo 8: Bell to scare away wild animals, Syaubari.



Photo 9: Reconnaissance survey team

Outcomes of the discussion with the Community Forest User's Group, Syaubari:

The discussion was basically on the modality of implementation of proposed activities, how project activities should be implemented and the roles and responsibilities of grantee, local community and park office. The community was positive about the project as local farmers have been suffering from wild animals in terms of crop raid and livestock depredation. Appropriateness of location of game proof fencing and criteria for identifying households for livestock improvement were discussed. Appropriateness were identified in terms of: i) most affected households who will re-cultivate crops if fencing will be in place; ii) those mostly affected by wild boar, black bears and barking deer; iii) who resides nearby the forest; and iv) who is willing to contribute labour support. The forest boundary along the south-western direction appeared to be most appropriate for game proof fencing as this is near to community settlement and close to the wildlife habitats. Concrete cement pillars also came as an alternative in place of iron angles. A transect walk was made and sighting and signs (indirect methods) of coordinates were recorded, which will be used later for brochure. The communities will inform the exact location (west-south boundary) for fencing by early April, 2014.

Outcomes of the discussion with Chief Warden, Langtang National Park, Rasuwa

The objectives and expected outcomes of the proposed project were shared with Mr. Bed Dhakal, Chief Warden, Langtang National Park, Rasuwa on 16th February 2014. The consultation with park officials was very crucial in order to ensure the institutional buy-in for the Rufford project and future support in improving/extending the mitigation measures targeted to problem animals. The utmost importance of the process was to get an approval on the suitability of location of game proof fencing that it doesn't hinder the free movement of wild animals along biological corridors and the wider connectivity of wild animals.

It was decided that working committee meeting of Syaubari CF will be organised around early mid-April 2014 and launch the project officially. The same meeting will discuss and finalise a list of farmers for livestock improvement, location of fencing and responsible representatives/sub-committee for ensuring the local participation for unskilled labour for establishing fencing. In addition, immediately after the meeting, there will be a 2-day orientation workshop to roll out

Wildlife Damage Relief Guidelines (2012). A total of 50-60 local farmers/wildlife victims representing various age-classes and socio-economic classes will participate in the workshop. These guidelines outline the human wildlife situation, relief coverage and claim procedures for damages caused by wild animals covered by policy. The park office will arrange resource persons for orientation while necessary support will be given by the Rufford project. Resource persons should be park staff as they are the authorised ones for legal interpretation of the guidelines and legal provisions. The following are photos of grantee having discussions with Chief Warden of Langtang National Park and Buffer Zone Support Project Manager respectively.



Photo 10 and 11: Discussion on Rufford Project in Langtang National Park (from left: Chief Warden and Rufford Grantee).



Photo 12: Langtang Buffer Zone Support Project funded by WWF Nepal; Photo 13: Discussion with Project Manager, Langtang National Park and Buffer Zone Support Project, Rasuwa.



Photo 14: Dhunch - district headquarter covered by snow; Photo 15: Pine forest stunted by forest fire at western aspect; Photo16: Syaubari crop field with background hills.

Annex-1: Coordinates of location of signs

S.N	Date observed	Description of indirect signs	Coordinates	Wild animals	Remarks
1	13 Feb, 2014	Direct sighting	N28°00'56.7" E85°12'54.4" Elevation:2093 m	2 Wild boars	
2	13 Feb, 2014	Rub signs against tree trunk	N28°00'56.7" E85°12'54.4" Elevation:2093 m	Wild boar	Near dried water hole
3	13 Feb, 2014	Pellet	N 28.01852 ⁰ E 85.21069 ⁰ Elevation: 1877 m	Ghoral (<i>Naemorhedus goral</i>) -suspected	Bigger pellets than barking deer
4	13 Feb, 2014	Pellet	N 28.01868 ⁰ E 85.21055 ⁰ Elevation: 1873	Barking deer	Photo 5
5	13 Feb, 2014	Pellet	N 28.01663 ⁰ E 85.21149 ⁰ Elevation: 1930 m	Barking deer	
6	14 Feb, 2014	Pellet	N 28.01 ⁰ E 85.21 ⁰ Elevation: 2080	Barking deer	
7	14 Feb, 2014	Pellet	N 28.01711 ⁰ E 85.21830 ⁰ Elevation: 2106	Barking deer	
8	14 Feb, 2014	Rooting signs	N 28.01678 ⁰ E 85.21931 ⁰ Elevation: 2169	Wild boar	Photo 6
9	15 Feb, 2014	Pellet	N 28.01310 ⁰ E 85.21199 ⁰ Elevation: 1863 m	Barking deer	
10	21 Feb, 2014	Pellet	N 28.02019 ⁰ E 85.22851 ⁰ Elevation: 2488 m	Barking deer	
11	21 Feb, 2014	Rooting sign	N 28.02265 ⁰ E 85.22663 ⁰ Elevation: 2295 m	Wild boar	
12	21 Feb, 2014	Scats	N 28.01883 ⁰ E 85.21729 ⁰ Elevation: 2000 m	Common leopard	Photo 4

