

Project Update: August 2016

The permission for the project was received at the end of May 2016 and we were ready to depart for the field in the first week of that month. The objective of this visit was to talk with people in the villages to get an overview of people's knowledge of the forest and animals in order to make our camera trapping work after monsoon more effective and also to select probable sites for the upcoming intensive camera trapping.

We reached Sikles village on 12th May 2016 and stayed around the village for 2 days talking with people and acquiring information on their perception of animals. We searched local people to help us in the field during that time and left for Hugu-Kori forest on 15th May. We stayed in the forest area for a total of 10 days doing sign surveys and opportunistic observations trying to select the important camera trapping sites.



Photo 1: Sikles village (Photo: Friends of Nature)

Common leopard *Panthera pardus* was the largest felid recognised by the local people as well as shown by the sign surveys. Though the presence of clouded leopard *Neofelis nebulosa* in the area has already been confirmed, in our previous survey people were unable to identify the species owing to its very elusive nature. Leopard cat *Prionailurus bengalensis* was another felid which was also mentioned as a resident species.



Photo 2: Principal researcher and his co-investigator on the way to the field (Photo: Friends of Nature)

Muntjac *Muntiacus vaginalis* was the most common prey species – we found signs frequently and saw them on a couple of occasions. Other prey species in the area, as identified by past hunters and herders, included serow *Capricornis himalayensis*, goral *Naemorphaedus goral* and Assamese macaque *Macaca assamensis*.

Other mammals said to be present in the area according to the local people were yellow throated marten *Martes flavigula* and porcupine *Hystrix brachyura*.



Photo 3: Barking deer photographed during the survey (Photo: Friends of Nature)

We have also finalised the final camera trapping and sign survey design in the area that will be carried out after the monsoon. Cameras have also been ordered and will arrive in a month's time. We will start the final work from the middle of October 2016.