

Project Update: June 2016

Preliminary presence-absence survey was conducted among the park range staff and the villagers to get a sense of whether dholes were present in their locality or areas or jurisdictions. Dholes were considered present in a particular area if the locals and staffs reported it to be present, and absent if reported to be absent. This rapid assessment helped a lot in saving energy and resources, particularly with regard to avoiding places where the species was not found at all. For instance, the species has not been reported from Soe and Lingzhi geogs, and therefore these areas were not surveyed for distributional studies.

In order to estimate the distribution of wild dog in Jigme Dorji National Park, trail transect method was adopted, because dholes were known to leave vivid tracks and scats along the trails. All major human and animal trails in the areas selected during the preliminary survey were traversed for 90 days, starting from (1st February to 30th April 2016) to look for dhole signs, such as sightings, tracks or foot prints, scats or faeces, and calls or vocalizations. The attributes of scats, such as *scat biometrics* (length, width, and diameter), *freshness* (fresh-all parts present or old - some parts missing and contents deteriorated), and *number of signs* (meaning number of scats, tracks, or individuals sighted) were recorded in the sign survey format.

A total of 41 tracks or footprints and 522 scats or faeces were observed during a sampling effort of 90 days, which translated to a sign encounter rate of 2.2 signs per km of trail walked (computed from 563 signs and 256 km of total transect distance). For the remaining 30 days of the fieldwork I will be using for DNA samples data collection, because we were not able to collect enough DNA samples as it required fresh scats of dholes.

