

Project Update: April 2017

We made our third visit to Manaslu in the early spring of 2017 after our second attempt was unsuccessful in September 2016 due to disastrous landslide but this time we completed our activities in the first three weeks of March. Manaslu is one of the dangerous montane habitats for amphibians characterised by deep gorges including raging torrents of Budhi Gandaki River, precipice, cascades with rock fall areas and towering cliffs wrecked by the massive earthquake in 2015.



Rugged Landscape of Manaslu Conservation Area (MCA), Gorkha District, Nepal

We did follow-up survey of amphibians in Manaslu despite the weather turned unpredictable and unfavorable throughout March with frequent storms, strong wind and incessant rain at the lower reaches of MCA (Philim, Lokpa and Bihi) while the upper regions snowed heavily (Prok, Chumchet and upper VDCs). The weather was cold and ambient temperature went rather down. Surprisingly, we came to know that this was the only snowfall that occurred in spring season instead of winter as informed by the local community.



Unpredictable weather at Manaslu

We walked a trail transect of 46 km from Jagat to Lokpa, Dyang and Prok villages and returned the same route doing Visual Encounter Surveys (VES), did stream surveys in previous sites and quadrat surveys (10 x 10 sq m.) in forest and farmlands. Since the weather was intensely cold for frogs to be seen or come out, we didn't see any adult amphibians. However, we observed tadpoles and egg mass of amphibians in Sirdibas.



Amphibian Survey involving locals at streams of Manaslu

We observed egg clumps of stream dwelling frogs - Paha which are found clinging underneath of rocks in rivulets. However, eggs of the toad (*Duttaphrynus*) were found in long chains of jelly coated membrane in still water. This could be the breeding season for amphibians in Manaslu but we didn't find any adults or heard any croaks during the night

time. Locals informed that the unpleasant weather for amphibians could be the limiting factor.



Clockwise from top left: Paha egg mass, developed tadpoles inside egg mass, eggs of toad in a long jelly chain and unidentified tadpoles

We conducted Amphibian Conservation Dissemination Workshops at four Village Development Committees (VDCs - an administrative unit) viz; Sirdibas, Bihi, Chumchet and Prok of Manaslu Conservation Area (MCA). We involved students, teachers, Women’s Group, Manaslu Conservation Area Project (MCAP) officials, Conservation Area Management Committee (CAMC) members, local youth, religious leaders, villagers, hoteliers and even tourists visiting MCA in our workshops. We distributed color posters ‘Stop Indiscriminate Killings of The Paha! Instead Help for Their Conservation’ created in Nepali language to the local community. We even supported the formation of Amphibian Conservation Committee (ACC) under the initiative of local people and MCAP.





Amphibian Conservation Dissemination Workshop at different locations of Manaslu

Local communities of Manaslu are positive about saving stream dwelling paha frogs (genus *Amolops*, *Nanorana* and *Ombrana*) after attending our workshops as their lack of understanding earlier about paha's importance to the environment have led to unsustainable exploitation from the region. The attendees have expressed concern and commitments to stop paha hunting at Manaslu through Amphibian Conservation Committee, awareness, penalty and environmentally responsible practices.



Local people with our paha conservation poster

On our return to Gorkha city, I gave a radio interview at Choice FM 90.4 MHz titled 'Amphibian Conservation Talk' and shared our conservation effort along with cool interesting facts.

Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1T-uNUcv9B0> (Radio Talk Show)

Link: ujyaaloonline.com/news/72670/paha/ (Ujyaalo Online News)

Blog: theherperwrites.blogspot.com



Choice FM 90.4 MHz Studio, Gorkha