

Project Update: June 2018

Field survey and questionnaire survey

The new possible sites of the red panda presence were identified in the Salpa-silicho block after the consultation with the local stakeholders. Transects were overlaid in these possible sites including chanauta, gurashe, kulupankha, Runa, Nikas, laure danda. However, red panda pellets were recorded only from kulupankha (near to salpapokahari) and laure danda sites between the altitude of 3000-3500 m asl. The team also conducted the field survey in previously surveyed area of Sadananda block and recorded the fecal pellets as well as the direct sighting of red panda. This was the first photographic evidence of red panda presence in Bhojpur district, a great achievement of the project. Furthermore, one sick red panda was rescued by team on May 26th 2018 from the Tinsanje village of Sadananda Municipality. After co-ordination with forest officials, it was immediately brought into Dingla bazaar for treatment. But unfortunately, the red panda died during course of treatment. A structured questionnaire was made with local and key informants (livestock herders, forest officials, and teachers) to gather information on the major threats, ethno-biology and people's perception toward red panda. Household survey was conducted covering 15% of all families living within the project area.



Red panda presence evidences - Left: Red panda. Right: Fecal pellets.

Conservation awareness programme

Conservation awareness programmes and environmental education activities were conducted in schools and communities highlighting the species' ecological importance, species' legal provision concerning conservation and need for habitat conservation in order to prevent deforestation, species illegal trade and poaching. Moreover, posters, brochures, leaflets, flex boards, t-shirts/caps etc. with conservation messages regarding red panda were produced in Nepali language and distributed to the herders, community forest users, students, teachers, Nepal police, forest officials

and others organisations. Six hundred posters and brochures were kept at the district forest office to distribute the visitors as a part of mass awareness campaign. A flex board containing information on red panda ecology, need for species conservation, challenges of species conservation and its conservation status was installed in the different locality of project area for public awareness and consciousness. A co-ordination meeting and discussion was organised at Tinsanje with local stakeholders on the issues of species' status, threats to species conservation, its importance in ecological and tourism prospect, future challenges and our responsibilities in conserving species.

A different event of drawing and essay competition were conducted in four different schools of the Bhojpur. A total of 93 and 50 students from class 6-10 were participated in the drawing and essay competition respectively. Three students were declared winners on the basis of attractiveness, shaping, theme and combination of colors. Furthermore, essay competition entitled "student role and responsibility in biodiversity conservation" was held in Chandra-Surya secondary school, Kimalung. Formation of red panda eco-club in schools and club members were oriented by training and meeting.



School based Conservation awareness program at Salpa-Silicho rural municipality-5, Salpa fedi.



Left: Installation of flex board for public awareness. Right: Consultation with local people



Handover of awareness materials to the forest official

Capacity building training

A 1-day capacity building training on science-based wildlife survey and monitoring techniques (theoretical and practical approach) was conducted in Kimalung and Dobhane area of Bhojpur District. The community forest members, *Chauri* herders, students, and teachers actively participated the training. The principal investigator and research assistants were taught them about techniques of red panda sign identification, use of GPS, compass, camera traps, quadrat sampling and field data collection procedures. These participants learnt to gather information on red panda

and other associated wildlife in the field using survey techniques and methods as a citizen scientist.

Furthermore, a bio-briquette trainer gave the training on bio-briquette production to the forest-dependent community using crop/plant residue and livestock dung as a source of fuel instead of firewood hoping to reduce deforestation of red panda habitat.



Left: Citizen Scientist training event. Right: Giving instruction of using GPS in the field.



Left: Checking out red panda pellets in the tree. Right: Scanning for red panda using binocular.