

Project Update: February 2018

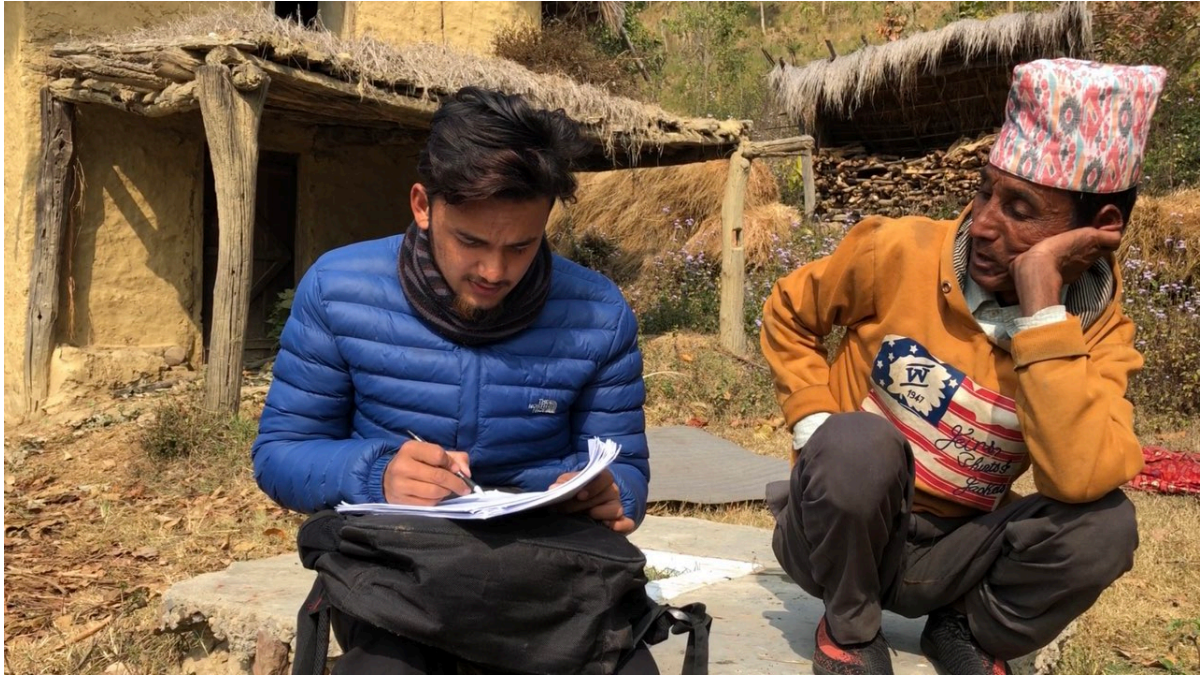
First of all, the permission to carry out the research was received from the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation (DNPWC), Babarmahal, Kathmandu and later on this permission letter was taken to Bardia National Park (BNP) headquarters at Thakurdwara where I received the permission to carry out this research. In order to gather detail information about the distribution and habitat of smooth-coated otters, our research team conducted one week reconnaissance survey along the bank of Babai River, and near by villages within the project area.

After reconnaissance survey, focus group discussion meeting was conducted at five different places, focusing especially on the fishing community residing in buffer zone area of Bardia National Park. Especially, the Tharus were in the meetings. Also key informants' survey with the park staff, especially the rangers and game scouts was conducted. The Tharus and Chepangs were also contacted as key informants as they are the one to rely on fishing and hunting in that area. Prior to conduct detail field survey our research team decided to carry out social survey to collect both qualitative and quantitative data on socio-economic status and attitudes of local communities towards otters. Questionnaire surveys were conducted with 200 respondents in communities near the Babai River. Respondents were mainly general public and the local fishermen. The places where the questionnaire was conducted were Rammapur Sector Office of BNP, Rammapur Ward No.: 07, BaraBardiya, Harnauwa, Shjunia, Ghushra, Janata High School area, Shree BhanuBhakta Secondary School, Magaragadi, Seuinya Ward No.: 07 of Bara Bardiya, BaraBardiya Ward No.: 07 Office area, Shree Bhagwati Primary School, Harnawa, BaraBardiya, Shree Saraswoti Secondary School, Jyodhipur Ward No.: 01, BaraBardiya, Shiva Temple, BaraBardiya, Babai-River-Irrigation Channel near Babai bridge, Bardada and Sainawar. Also different other locations were surveyed towards the north side of the Babai river, such places were Babai bridge at Chepang, Bardiya, Laxmi Secondary School, Chepang Ward No.: 01, Bardiya, Basgadi Municipality Ward No.: 01 of Babai Chepang, Babai Diversion area and Gerwani Ward No.: 05 Bheriganga of Surkhet district were surveyed. After completing 1 month period questionnaire surveys, our team have done rapid field observation to finalise the transect route for detail field assessment.

Beside this our research team member, Dr Dhruba Bijaya GC also attended the RSG Nepal Conference 2018 from 29th to 30th, January, 2018 at Kathmandu, Nepal which was organised by Tribhuvan University, Institute of Forestry, Hetauda Campus and presented the poster.

Other works under progress

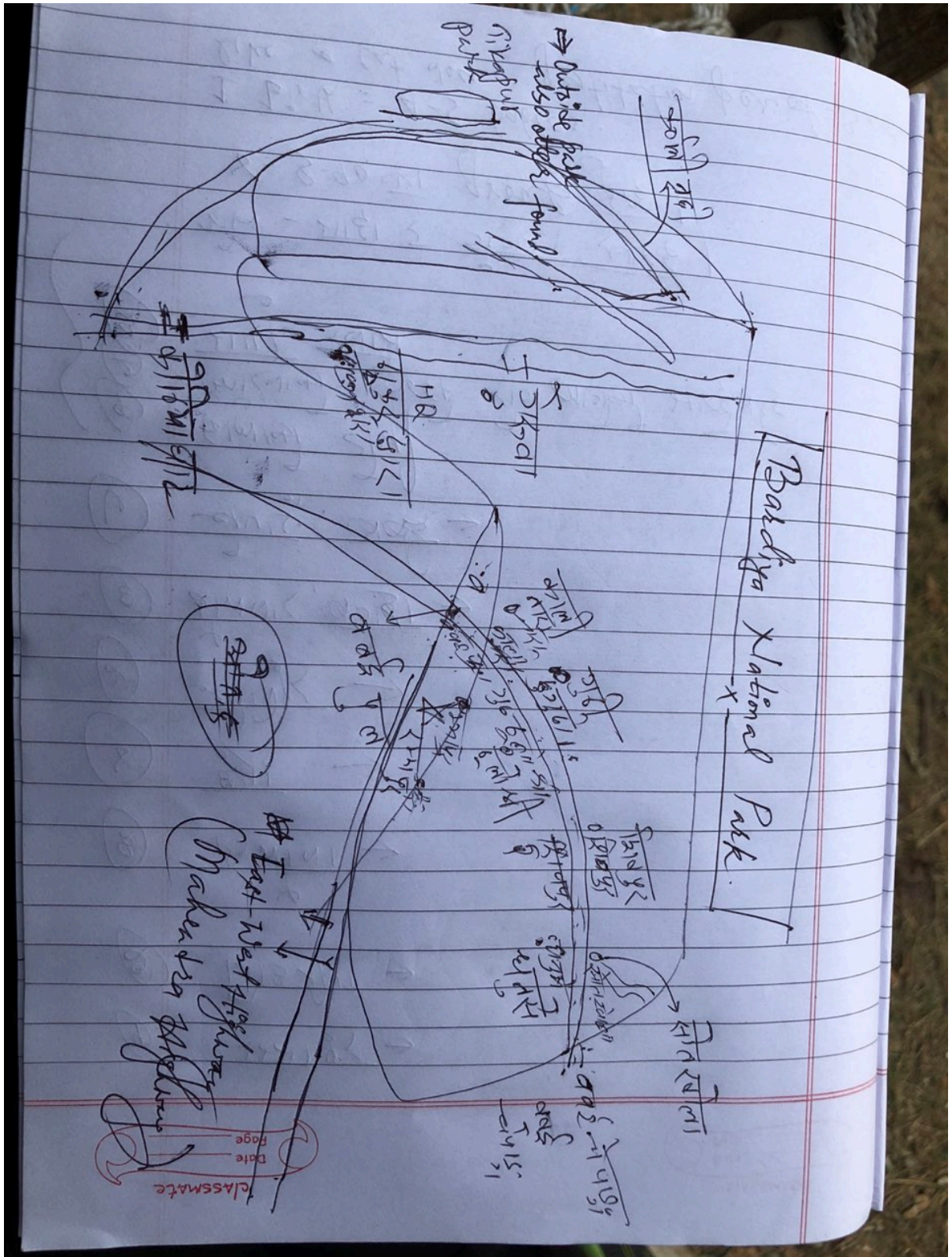
Different available literature on otter are being reviewed to collect the first hand information on otter distribution and habitat condition in Nepal. Our research team is preparing to carry out detail field survey to identify the distribution and habitat of smooth-coated otters. After detail field survey a GIS based potential habitat map will be created and finally awareness and education programme for local communities will be conducted in different localities where there are otter are found and also where the questionnaire survey was conducted.



Household Survey



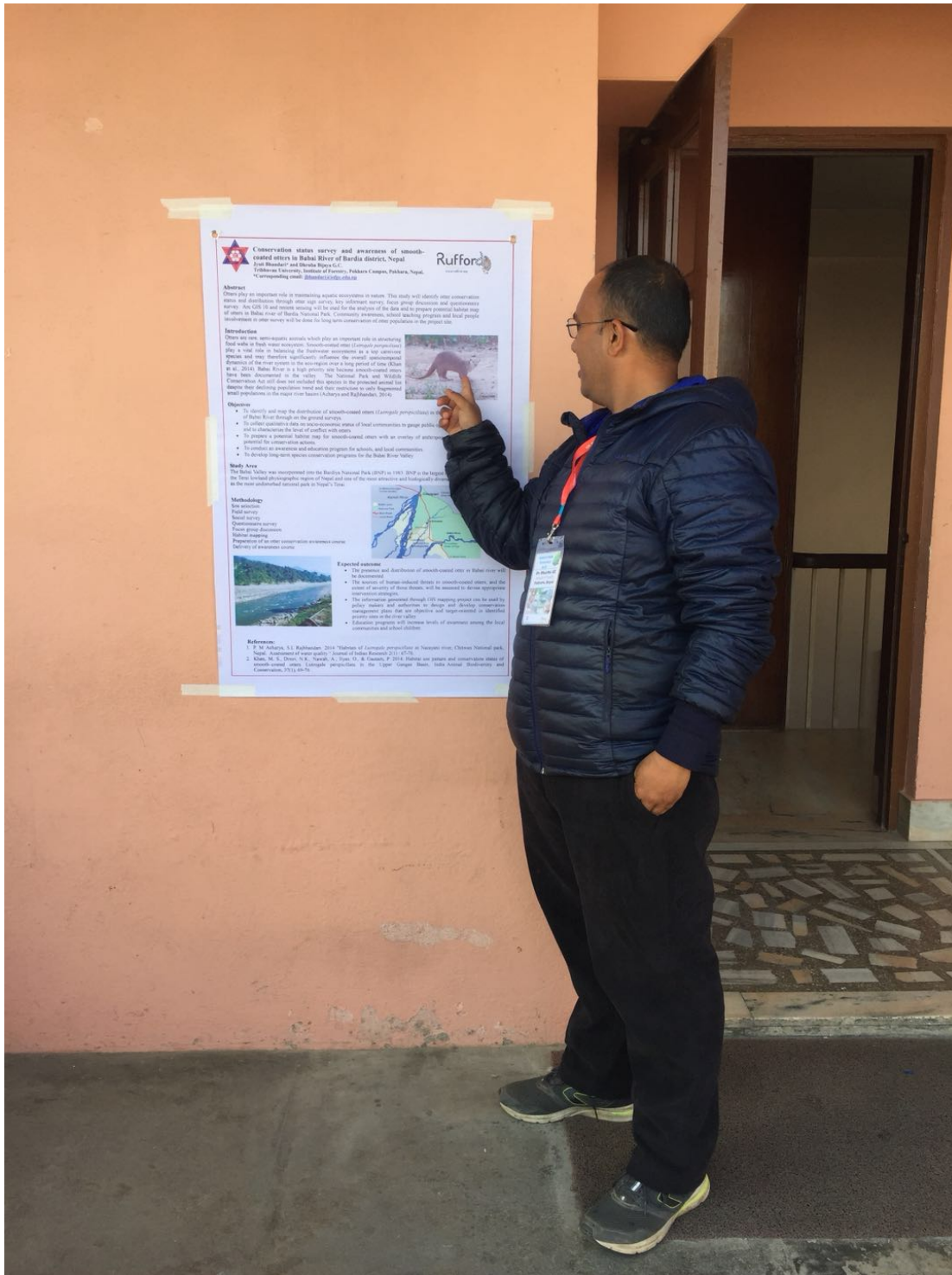
Key Informant's Interview



Possible study to be conducted in the Babai River



Babai River at Chepang Area



Poster Presentation at the RSG Nepal Conference-2018