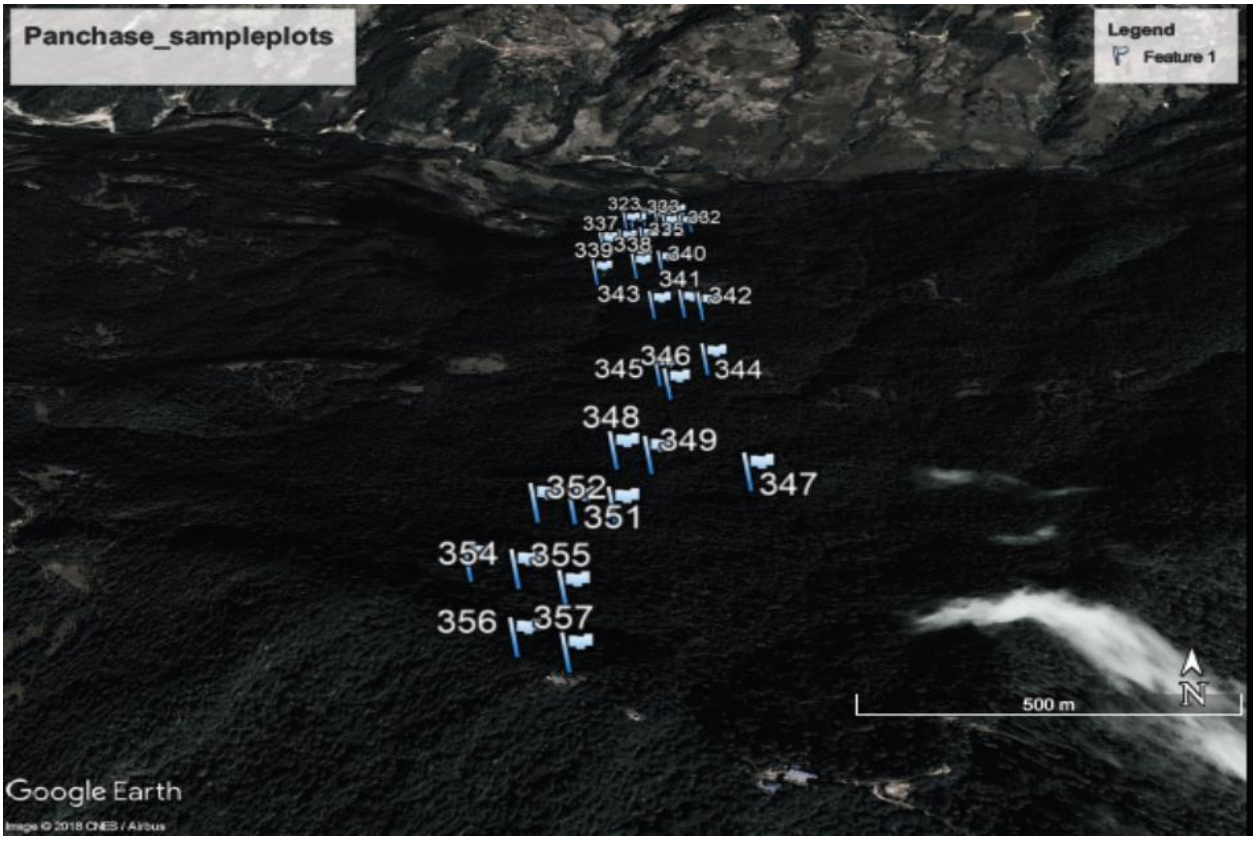
Project Update: December 2018

Background: Large-sized and old-growth trees are key structures in forest ecosystems. They provide a wide range of invaluable regulating, provisioning and cultural ecosystem services. They provide habitats to wildlife and play key role in conserving arboreal/epiphytic flora and fauna. However, role of gold growth trees are not well appreciated in conservation planning and forest management plans.

Activities (November 2018)
A field assessment was conducted in Panchase protected forest to analyse if tree size matters in epiphytic orchid abundance in diversity. Three field works were organised in Panchase forest in this connection, one each in June, September and November (10-21) 2018).

In the November visit, a very intensive fieldwork and assessment was organised. Three individuals, including project leaders, conducted the assessment. A vertical transect was established along elevation in northern aspect of the forest. Vegetation data was collected at 100 m interval band between 1500 and 2500 m. In each elevation band three locations were sampled, making a total of 33 sample locations. At each sample location a central tree was identified and five nearest trees were chosen for detail inventory of epiphytic species.

A total of 20 epiphytic orchid species were recorded and 16 of them were identifies during vegetation assessment. Experts have been consulted for confirmation of remaining four species. In November only eight species were captured with flowers.



GPS waypoints of sample location in Panchase Protected forest. ©Lila Nath Sharma

All the sampled locations are geo-referenced (above) and will be revisited again in pre-monsoon season to capture a complete list of epiphytic orchids.

Disturbance in the forests and trees (habitats) were also quantified during the field visits. Collected data has been entered and checklist of trees and orchids prepared. All orchid species encountered have been photographed.

Next plan: I will sample another site and work with communities in January and February 2019.

Project leader and field assistant including a botanist collecting field data in the Panchase forest. ©Lila Nath Sharma

Photograph of *Eria coronaria*, an epiphytic orchid species blossoming in winter (photograph taken at 2100 m above sea level in Panchase protected forest). Common hosts were *Daphniphyllum himalense* and *Schima wallichii*. ©Lila Nath Sharma