

Final Evaluation Report

| Your Details | |
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| Full Name | Bhuwan Singh Bist |
| Project Title | Call for the Wild Survey: Habitat Preference and Status Assessment of Fishing Cat (<i>Prionailurus viverinnus</i>) from Western Nepal |
| Application ID | 24843-2 |
| Grant Amount | £5000 |
| Email Address | bhuwanbistaiof@gmail.com |
| Date of this Report | May, 10 2019 |

1. Indicate the level of achievement of the project's original objectives and include any relevant comments on factors affecting this.

| Objective | Not achieved | Partially achieved | Fully achieved | Comments |
|--|--------------|--------------------|----------------|---|
| (Preliminary, Camera Trapping & Transect Survey) | | | | Preliminary survey was carried out among the long people around the Jagdishpur reservoir and adjacent Banganga River. Focus group discussion was done intensively among the fishermen, sand excavators, cattle herders around the river about the fishing cat and its associated species. Camera trapping survey was done in Kapilvastu district started from the foothills of Chure Banganga river to the southern most part opportunistically. The whole study area was divided into three blocks. The northern block was above the Mahendra highway and second block below the highway however the third block was the Tilaurakot Community Forest where the maximum wildlife was supposed to concentrate as per discussion with the District Forest Office (D.F.O). A total of eight camera traps were laid opportunistically in three different blocks taking into account the habitat consideration of fishing cat near the reservoir and river. The total survey was carried for 75 days including all the blocks targeting the fishing cat. However, due to technical reasons and permission problem, based on key informant and preliminary survey we used transect survey in the probable habitat. We didn't record the fishing cat in any of the blocks though the species was camera trapped few year back by |

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| | | | <p>(Dahal, 2014) in Kapilvastu however this time we couldn't record any of the fishing cat. This may be due to the least number of camera traps as well as the major threats of wetland degradation, excessive sand excavation from the Banganga river and habitat fragmentation around the rivers along with the urbanisation around wetlands. In each block we camera trapped the jungle cat (<i>Felis chaus</i>) frequently near the wetlands and rivers. Similarly, in Ramapur, Kapilvastu an opportunistically laid camera trap aimed near the fish pond captured the jungle cat, masked palm civet and golden jackal in human dominated landscape. Similarly, small mammals like Indian hare, large Indian civet, small Indian civet, masked palm civet, Indian grey mongoose, golden jackal, common leopard, monkeys, langur, blue bull, spotted deer, and wild boar were captured in the camera traps.</p> |
| <p>Distribution and Habitat Preference</p> | | | <p>Previous records of fishing cat were from Jagdishpur reservoir, Sagarhawa river, Banganga river and fish ponds in Kapilvastu. Fishing cats were mainly found to be in the Salgaudi site, Pipariya near Mahakali river, Shuklaphanta, Chaudahar river side, Tara Tal, Kalikeech and near the Ghumauna Tal. In all, the sites where fishing cat signs were recorded from riverine forest, Sal forest, wetland with sparse Sal forest, grassland with marshy area in Shuklaphanta National Park however in Kapilvastu the species has been recorded in and around human dominated wetlands, rivers. Despite the pressure of human urbanisation, they are co-</p> |

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| | | | | existing in such harsh condition as well. |
| Conservation awareness Outflow | | | | We organised three workshops at three different venues i.e. Institute of Forestry Pokhara campus, Nepal, Far-Western University, Kanchanpur, Shree Prabhat Vidya Niketan, Basantpur, Kanchanpur among the university level and secondary level students focusing on the status of fishing cat and other small mammals in Nepal. Similarly, wildlife quiz competition was organised highlighting different small mammals and their role in ecosystem during the quiz contest in the schools. Different arts and illustrations of fishing cat were made and shown among the students from different level during the project tenure. Knowledge about the status of fishing cat and small mammals in Nepal was fired thought the Shuklaphanta F.M, Kanchanpur. |
| Poster dissemination | | | | We presented the poster of our species in the industrial fair in Kanchanpur district, Nepal where more than 10,000 people were present. |

2. Please explain any unforeseen difficulties that arose during the project and how these were tackled.

Since, we covered the large portion of western lowland, the survey was itself complex to complete the project in limited budget.

Though we received the permission grant from Department of Forest for working outside (Kapilvastu), it was difficult to receive the camera trapping permission in Shuklaphanta National park for which we adopted transect survey.

We had limited number of camera traps placed opportunistically which reduced the probability of detection of the species.

Loss of data due to theft of the camera traps during the survey.

3. Briefly describe the three most important outcomes of your project.

- Three workshops were organized among the students from secondary level to

university level in different institutions (Far-Western University, Institute of Forestry, Pokhara campus, Shree Prabhat Vidya Niketan, Kanchanpur, and Retina International School).

- Training given to the forest officials about the methodology of camera trapping, working mechanism and production of citizen scientists in Kapilvastu.
- Publication on press about the recording of small mammals from western lowland, Nepal

4. Briefly describe the involvement of local communities and how they have benefited from the project.

Local people of the study sites especially in Kapilvastu district collaborated very effectively after they were sensitised and strengthened about the use of camera trapping for wildlife monitoring and the information sharing about the elusive fishing cat and the wetland habitats. Four locals from the local community of Kapilvastu were hired for assisting us in the field for the entire period of our research. Two of them were the foresters and two of them were citizen scientists; they were intensively described about the use of camera trapping and objectives of our research on fishing cat and its associated species. Since, the livelihood of the people in Kapilvastu is directly or indirectly influenced by the wetlands, therefore we urged them to protect the wetlands to ensure the healthy living of the wetland dependant species along with the living standard of the local people around the wetland.

5. Are there any plans to continue this work?

Indeed, we are glad to continue our same reach with more focus on the community research and finding some more presence-absence locations of the elusive fishing cat habitat, find co-existence in the human dominated landscape via different approaches and also initiated long term monitoring plan of the suitable habitat of the species.

6. How do you plan to share the results of your work with others?

First of all, we are about to complete the draft of camera trapping recording of small mammals community from western lowland and share it online via publication.

Secondly, we are preparing the detailed final report to submit it to the concerned stakeholders Department of National Park and Wildlife Conservation, Babarmahal, Nepal; Department of Forest, District Forest Office, Kapilvastu, Shuklaphanta National Park, Far-Western University, Institute of Forestry, Pokhara campus, Nepal. We have also shared results of our work via class presentations in schools, in workshops at different venues.

7. Timescale: Over what period was the grant used? How does this compare to the anticipated or actual length of the project?

This RSG was used for 14 months.

8. Budget: Provide a breakdown of budgeted versus actual expenditure and the reasons for any differences. All figures should be in £ sterling, indicating the local exchange rate used. It is important that you retain the management accounts and all paid invoices relating to the project for at least 2 years as these may be required for inspection at our discretion.

| Item | Budgeted Amount | Actual Amount | Difference | Comments |
|---|-----------------|---------------|------------|---|
| Food and Accommodation + Field Allowance | 2325 | 2550 | +225 | Due to the increased field days and wages for the field assistants. |
| Travel Expenses | 360 | 400 | +40 | Due to increased fare and our regular monitoring in different sites time and again. |
| Conservation Outreach (Workshops, Wildlife Quiz and presentation classes) | 2140 | 1600 | -540 | Organized three workshops in three different venues: a) Institute of Forestry, Pokhara campus, Nepal b) Far-Western University, Kanchanpur c) Shree Prabhat Vidya Niketan. Wildlife Quiz contest was organized among the secondary level students at Prabhat Vidya Niketan. Though we had mentioned to organize only one workshop but at the end we managed in total three workshops which costed more. |
| Miscellaneous (Equipment, Fuels, Maintenance cost and Report writing) | 175 | 450 | +275 | We had to buy huge number of batteries for the camera traps, maintain the bikes, used petrol during the field survey. |
| TOTAL | 5000 | 5000 | | * £1 = NRs. 138.21 |

9. Looking ahead, what do you feel are the important next steps?

Monitoring of the species in its habitat is key step to save this species from brink of extinction with conservation education programme among the local community. Sensitising the local community about the species in detail and its importance to the health of ecosystem is necessary. Establishment of conservation warriors would be efficient to save the species and its habitat. Searching new areas of fishing cat presence and monitor it effectively.

10. Did you use The Rufford Foundation logo in any materials produced in relation to this project? Did the Foundation receive any publicity during the course of your work?

The logo was used in almost all the programmes we organised for the research and conservation awareness. It was used in the posters, flex, presentation slides, informative video about fishing cat and in the final detailed report as well.

11. Please provide a full list of all the members of your team and briefly what was their role in the project.

Prashant Ghimire and **Nabin Pandey**: Co-investigators of the research. Involved in the study design, data collection and habitat selection for camera trapping installation and other surveys.

Man Singh Bist: Acted as the coordinator and manager while organizing workshops in Far-Western University and Shree Prabhat Vidya Niketan.

Ram Gulab Kewat, Tauleswor Yadav, Naresh Chaudhary & Pradip Chaudhary: Field assistants during the project period. Involved in the data collection and camera trapping installation.

12. Any other comments?

Thank you Rufford for believing in us and providing the support continuously. Special thanks to all who are directly or indirectly involved in this project and helped us in as many possible ways as they could. I would like to provide my sincere gratitude to Yadav Ghimirey and Karan Shah who time and again helped me in identification of the camera trapped photos of different species. Thanks also goes to Department of Forest (DOF) for providing us the camera trapping permission. Thank you all.



Left: Photo of fishing cat clicked in Baba Taal, Shuklaphanta National Park, Nepal. Right: Banganga River, Kapilvastu during winter.



Workshop organized among environment science students at Far-Western University & Shree Prabhat Vidya Niketan, Kanchanpur.



Left: Illustration of Fishing cat. ©NVillustration. Right: Wildlife Quiz Contest -2019.



Left: Knowledge about Fishing Cat was fired via. Mahakali F.M. Right: Presentation on "Status of Fishing cat".



Students learning about camera trapping both in field and class.



Left: Jungle Cat trapped in camera. Right: Jagdishpur Reservoir.



Left: Indian hare. Right: Small Indian Civet.



Left: Blue bull. Right: Golden Jackal.