

Project Update: August 2019

The second field survey was conducted in April 2019 after grassland burning. In the initial field period, a pellet survey was conducted in systematic strip transects having a transect length of 100 m and a strip width of 2 m in the grasslands within the study area. It was easier to search for the pellets after grassland burning. During the pellet survey, indirect evidence such as pellets as well as feeding signs of hispid hare were recorded (photo plate 2). GPS locations of the probable sites were recorded. After the pellet survey, five camera traps were set in the most probable sites where abundant pellets of hispid hare were recorded. Camera trapping was done in May 2019 and traps were placed in the field for 15 days. Along with the camera trapping, a habitat survey was also carried out. Habitat parameters of the potential areas of hispid hare were recorded. Besides the pellet survey, habitat survey and camera trapping in the field, we also recorded some potential threats to the hispid hare such as uncontrolled and unmanaged grassland burning in some grassland patches, collection of grasses for the elephants, illegal thatch cutting, flooding, invasion of grassland by some invasive species and lack of active concern for elusive species like hispid hare.

After completion of the field survey, community and school awareness programmes were carried out. School awareness programmes included presentations, drawing, essay and speech competition. Winners were awarded with exciting prizes. A semi-structured questionnaire survey was once again carried out after the completion of awareness programmes to know the present knowledge about the hispid hare. Questionnaire survey focussed mainly to the key informants (park authorities, elephant mouths, members of community and forest user group, etc.) and local people living nearby the park. Moreover, radio programme related to introduction of hispid hare and its status was conducted through Radio Thaha Sanchar.

List of schools where awareness programmes were carried out:

1. Shree Sajhapur Secondary School, Sajhapur, Chitwan.
2. Shree Saraswati Higher Secondary School, Jitpur, Chitwan.
3. Shree Janaki Secondary School, Meghauri, Chitwan.
4. Shree Rastriya Adharvut School, Birendranagar, Chitwan.
5. Shree Prembasti Higher Secondary School, Prembasti, Chitwan.



Photo plate 1: Pellet survey after grassland burning. © Pratichya Shrestha.



Photo plate 2: Pellets (Red circle) and feeding signs (Yellow circle) of Hispid hare. © Praticchya Shrestha.



Photo plate 2: Camera trap installed at potential site.



Photo plate 3: Habitat survey.



Photo 5: Grassland habitat of Hispid hare.



Photo plate 6: School awareness programmes



Photo plate 7: Questionnaire survey

Link of Radio awareness programme:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bOdUzWNG1Is&feature=youtu.be>