

## **Project Update: July 2010**

### **1. Socio-economic and behavior change survey**

A survey to investigate the perception of local community towards vultures and their conservation, their knowledge about the cause and consequence of vulture declines along with additional socio-economic data was carried out in the two project sites at Lumbini and Dang. Prior to the survey, a graduate university student carrying out research on vultures was trained. After his training, four local youth were selected as field assistants for the survey and oriented in survey techniques and questionnaire modality.

A total of 600 questionnaires were administered, 300 each at the two sites. In addition, focus group discussions were carried out with key individuals in the two project communities. The survey data is being compiled for further analysis.

### **2. Critically Endangered white-backed vulture (*Gyps bengalensis*) and Himalayan griffon vulture (*Gyps himalayensis*) rescued and released by local community**

A white-rumped vulture rescued on 10<sup>th</sup> March 2010, recovered in captivity at our project site and was released back into the wild. For just over a month, the vulture was kept at our centre under close supervision of our veterinary officer.

Similarly, a Himalayan griffon vulture was observed in poor conditions by locals near the project site. Project staff captured the vulture and found that its right wing had a fracture. The vulture was treated by our veterinary officer and kept in captivity until it recovered. It was recently released back into the wild.

### **3. Infrastructure development**

This project aims to expand the cow rescue centre and add an annex to the current grazing area at the Lumbini project site. An agreement has been reached between the local Gaidatal Community Forest in this regard. The community Forest will support the project by providing timber for construction as well as land for grazing. The project will bear the costs of construction and labour and the local management committee will be responsible for the management aspects. The management committee has now distributed responsibility among its members and work is underway.

### **4. Nest monitoring**

Nest monitoring was carried out jointly by our team member and members of local community at both project sites. Near Lumbini site, there were two colonies with a total of 25 nests and 19 were successful in fledging chicks. Similarly, there were two key colonies and a few scattered nests. Of the 59 nests in the area, 46 had breeding success. While all other nests were of

critically endangered white-rumped vulture, one nest in Dang site was of the endangered Egyptian vulture. This year's breeding season ended in May and the next breeding cycle will begin around September.

## **5. School and Community Awareness**

Awareness events were held at three local schools in Lumbini on 27<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> June, 2010. In total 174 school children (117 girls) were sensitised about the importance and roles of vultures in our environment, their decline, conservation efforts and on how they can help. Posters and leaflets were distributed to the children and schools.

Additionally, on 16<sup>th</sup> March 2010, 19 members of Rudrapur Community Forest were sensitised about vulture conservation. The community forest is important as the largest colony of vultures in the Lumbini area (with 18 nests) have settled there. The community forest has been oriented and supported in nest monitoring as well.

## **6. Publication**

A leaflet warning against illegal use of diclofenac for veterinary purpose has been published. The leaflet carries the logo of Nepal Government and five government agencies, namely Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation, Department of Drug Administration, Department of Livestock Services, Nepal Veterinary Council and Veterinary Standards and Drug Administration Office. The leaflet also carries the names and logos of Nepal Veterinary Association and Nepal Para-veterinary and Livestock Association. Logos of key conservation organizations supporting vulture conservation in Nepal including that of Rufford Small Grants is included. The leaflet is two-sided with the same information in English and Nepal on the two sides. 30,000 copies have been printed and sent for distribution in all ten project districts as well as other parts of Nepal. They have also been sent to partner organizations for distribution.

## **7. SOS Future Conservationist Award**

The project team also recently won the SOS Future Conservationist Award for vulture conservation work in another site in Nepal. This award, worth \$12,000, is administered by the Conservation Leadership Program, a joint initiative of Fauna & Flora International, Birdlife International, Conservation International and Wildlife Conservation Society and is funded by Save our Species Programme of IUCN, World Bank and Global Environment Facility. Our team is the first Nepali team to receive this award in the 25-year history of this program and only the second project funded in Nepal. A member of the team traveled to Canada to participate in a training course organized by the CLP and also attended the 24<sup>th</sup> International Congress of Conservation Biology.