

1<sup>st</sup> Quarterly Report

Assessment of Distribution, Habitat Characteristics and Awareness of Eurasian otter (*Lutra lutra*) in Kali Gandaki River, Nepal



**Submitted to:**

The Rufford Foundation

**Submitted by:**

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## Introductions

Nepal is home to three species of otter i.e., smooth-coated otter, Eurasian otter, and small clawed otter. Eurasian otter is a little studied small mammal in Nepal and has been sighted only once in any of Nepal's river streams since 1991 despite having favourable habitat conditions. The species is rarely prioritised for the research and conservation work due to which, very little information is available about their status, distribution, threats, and ecology in Nepal. Their numbers are decreasing steeply from their natural habitat driving them towards the brink of extinction across regions owing to habitat destruction, loss of prey species, poaching, and water pollution. Therefore, it is very essential to develop the database from across the country to devise and formulate the appropriate and pragmatic conservation activities to help conserve the species. Therefore, our research and conservation effort aim to identify the distribution, threats, and habitat ecology of the species along the Kali Gandaki River and its adjacent sub-watershed. We will also conduct school and community teaching programs to help spread the knowledge and awareness among students and local people about the Eurasian otter.

In the first quarter of the project, we proposed to conduct the activities listed in table 1. So, coming to the end of the first quarter, we have been fully successful in accomplishing the proposed activities timely and effectively.

**Table 1: Accomplished Activities**

| S. N | Activities   | Time Frame               | Status    |
|------|--|--------------------------|-----------|
| 1.   | Permission procurement completed from the government authorities for the implementation of research project. | June-July                | Completed |
| 2.   | Questionnaires survey and awareness materials (Posters and leaflets) is drafted.                             | June-August              | Completed |
| 3.   | Reconnaissance survey  | Third week of the August | Completed |

## Summary of the Activities

- 1) Received Permission letter for the project implementation  
After the acceptance of the project, we applied for a permission letter from the Department of National Park and Wildlife Conservation (DNPWC), Department of Forest and Soil Conservation (DoFSC), and Social Welfare Council (SWC). It took almost 1 month for the processing, and we received a permission letter from all the concerned authorities, which means our project is legally recognized and now, we can execute our activities in the study area without any legal hindrance.
- 2) Questionnaires survey and awareness materials (Leaflets and Poster) is drafted.  
The draft of the questionnaire survey and awareness materials required for the social survey and awareness programs are prepared. After reviewing from the referees and advisors, they will be finalised and will be printed.

3) Reconnaissance survey

We conducted a reconnaissance survey in the mid-August 2022. In a survey, we met with the relevant stakeholders (Annapurna Conservation Office, Kaski, Division Forest Office of Myagdi, Division Forest Office of Mustang, Local government body, and Local people) and we inform them about our project objectives. They responded to us positively and shows an encouraging interest in our project plan and activities. Further, they also vowed to support us during the project activities implementation. While having meetings and interactions, we build robust networking and linkage with stakeholders in order to develop a conducive environment for the implementation of the project activities later in the winter season. The main purpose of the reconnaissance survey was to interact with the relevant stakeholders and local people in order to build good relations and extract the general information about the study area for planning further activities, so we have been successful in achieving the goal of the reconnaissance survey.

**Table 2: Planned Activities for the second quarter of the project**

| S. N | Planned Activities   |
|------|--|
| 1.   | Finalisation and printing of questionnaires survey and awareness materials |
| 2.   | Sign survey and camera trapping survey                                     |

Annex 1: Photo captured during the reconnaissance survey



Our team leader (Mr. Pravin Giri) with the ranger of Annapurna Conservation Area Check point at Mustang, Ghasa.



Our team leader (Mr. Pravin Giri) talking about the Eurasian otter with the local people around the study area in Myagdi district.