

Final Evaluation Report

Your Details	
Full Name	Shreyashi Bista
Project Title	Distribution of Asiatic black bear and its co-existence with human in Gaurishankar Conservation Area, Nepal
Application ID	38121-1
Date of this Report	March 4, 2024

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
Assessment of the distribution of the Asiatic Black Bear in Gaurishankar Conservation Area.				The distribution along with habitat suitability has been completed.
Crop-raiding and human attack by the Asiatic Black Bear in the region.				Livestock killing have also been noted in the study area.
An overview of the types, scales, and locations of Human-Asiatic Black Bear conflict and its mapping.				Completed.
Conservation Awareness to local people via advocacies, school teaching and community teachings.				Completed.

2. Describe the three most important outcomes of your project.

a). The distribution of the Asiatic black bear in the Gaurishankar Conservation Area spans across three districts, with their preferred elevation ranging from 1500-3000 m, primarily within forest landscapes.

b). Crop-raiding by Asiatic black bears is a significant issue in the region, with maize and millet being the most raided crops. Additionally, yaks are highly targeted livestock, especially in grazing areas, leading to considerable economic losses for local farmers. Human-Asiatic black bear conflicts are prevalent, particularly during September-November and in forest vicinity areas.

c). The conservation awareness programme unveiled a lack of knowledge among many local people about national compensation policies concerning wildlife damage and the awareness campaign helped people learn about the policies related to compensation. We also educated students and the local community about the importance of black bears and how the Rufford Foundation supports conservation with grants.

3. Explain any unforeseen difficulties that arose during the project and how these were tackled.

One of the challenges I encountered in the conservation area was the prevailing negativity towards wildlife. Some local respondents were hesitant to respond to my questionnaire, and others expressed that the introduction of conservation area program had disrupted their livelihoods. Convincing people about the additional benefits of the conservation area posed a significant challenge. However, through extended stays in their homestays and constant interactions, we eventually conveyed the message that wildlife serves as an economic asset by attracting researchers, scientists, and tourists, thereby adding value to their existence.

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

We involved local guides in every aspect of our work. One instance is the local conservation area management committee accompanied us in conducting conservation education programmes and questionnaire surveys across different villages and also into the jungle for field surveys. We made sure they were compensated for their invaluable contributions, and our investment in their homestays provided them with additional economic support.

Through our conservation initiatives, these local guides gained a profound understanding of how wildlife can be a significant draw for tourism and the essential measures required to effectively manage conflicts between humans and black bears. It was enlightening to discover that the conservation area committee was unaware of the local community's limited comprehension regarding compensation schemes.

We took the initiative to communicate these insights and knowledge gaps to the officials, emphasising the importance of addressing such issues for the betterment of conservation efforts. Our recommendations aimed to bridge these gaps and foster stronger community engagement and understanding within the conservation area.

5. Are there any plans to continue this work?

Certainly, I am planning to continue this work. The significant human-black bear conflict prevailing in the area has led to confusion between conservation area officials and local communities. Therefore, I want to study the diet and reproductive ecology as well as DNA analysis of black bears in the Gaurishankar Conservation Area. By conducting this research, I aim to shed more light on the behaviour and ecological needs of these bears, which can contribute to the development of more

effective conservation strategies and mitigate conflicts between humans and wildlife.

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

I intend to submit the comprehensive results of my research as a detailed report to various institutions, including Kathmandu University School of Sciences, Department of National Park and Wildlife Conservation, Nepal, National Trust for Nature Conservation, Nepal, GCAP office, WWF Nepal, and the Zoological Society of London. Furthermore, to reach a broader audience, I am currently drafting a manuscript for publication in a top-tier journal within the Q1 category. Additionally, I am preparing a poster presentation highlighting my findings for an international media event.

Moreover, I have developed a presentation summarising my study, which I plan to deliver as a resource person during a national webinar focusing on Women in Conservation in Nepal.

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

- Studying the ecology of the Asiatic black bear: Understanding the feeding, reproductive, and habitat patterns of the black bear is crucial for implementing effective conservation strategies. By investigating these aspects, we can gain insights into the behaviours and needs of the species, which can inform management practices aimed at mitigating conflicts and preserving their habitat.
- Including a conservation book in school syllabus: Education plays a pivotal role in fostering a culture of conservation from a young age. Introducing a conservation book in school curricula around the conservation area will help raise awareness among children about the importance of wildlife and habitat preservation. This initiative can empower future generations to become stewards of their environment.
- Advocating for policy amendments: Government authorities must prioritise the recommendations derived from scientific research and community feedback. By aligning policies with the needs of local communities and conservation goals, authorities can effectively manage human-wildlife conflicts and support sustainable conservation practices.

8. 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?

I have actively utilised the support from The Rufford Foundation by incorporating the logo into 1000 brochures and 850 posters that I prepared. Additionally, in my presentations and slides, I have prominently featured the Rufford Foundation's logo. Moreover, I hosted a webinar on Women in Conservation, during which I introduced my project supported by the Rufford Small Grants (RSG) programme. I also took the opportunity to advocate for the organisation among my fellow researchers, both seniors and juniors, encouraging them to consider applying for conservation projects supported by the foundation.

9. Provide a full list of all the members of your team and their role in the project.

Shreyashi Bista: Project Leader

Urusha Lamsal: Conservation Awareness staff, Household Survey

Shreeya Manandhar: Field Research Assistant

Sandeep Oli: Field Research Assistant

Manisha Lama: Conservation Awareness Staff, Household Survey

Tirtha Khadka: Local Guide for Conservation Awareness

Yangti Sherpa: Local Guide for Field Survey

National Trust for Nature Conservation, GCAP: Implementation partners

10. Any other comments?

This project was a novel one in the study area, and it really made people aware about the significance of black bear conservation.