

Strengthening People for Pangolin Conservation in the human-dominated landscapes of Nepal



3rd Project update

Submitted To

The Rufford Foundation

UK

Submitted By

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Women for Conservation (WC)

15 July 2024

Preparation and publication of Pangolin conservation calendar

We recently organized an art competition among students, with a total of 28 participants creating beautiful pictures of pangolins. These artworks depicted various aspects of pangolins' lives, including the behavior of pangolin, their habitat and diet. To encourage and recognize the students' efforts, we selected the best pieces to be featured in our publication materials, including a special pangolin calendar.

A total of 2,000 copies of the calendar have been produced and distributed during our project activities. The calendar has a unique design, with two sides: one side showcases six Nepali months along with the students' artwork, and the other side includes remaining six months, images of local policymakers, and government officials such as ward presidents, community forest user groups, school head teachers, artists and community members. This diverse representation helps to highlight the collective effort in pangolin conservation.

In addition to the visuals, the calendar contains brief descriptions of fascinating facts about pangolins and guidelines on what to do when encountering one. During our community interview surveys, we discovered that many people were unaware of the updated legal measures, fines, and punishments for illicit activities involving pangolins. To address this gap, we included a section in the calendar highlighting the new legal restrictions on pangolin activities.

Our target audience for the calendar is local communities, so we used the Nepali language and culturally relevant symbols to ensure that the information is easily accessible and understandable. This approach not only raises awareness but also fosters a sense of stewardship and responsibility among community members towards pangolin conservation.

By integrating art and education, this calendar serves as a creative and informative tool to engage the community and promote the protection of the critically endangered Chinese Pangolin. We believe that this initiative will have a lasting impact on raising awareness and encouraging proactive conservation efforts.



Fig:1. Pangolin calendar with pangolin amazing facts and updated legal messages in red circle on both sides along with conservation partners

Empowering Graduates: A Comprehensive Two-Day Program in Pangolin Conservation and Capacity Building

Involving graduate youths in pangolin conservation significantly contributes to their personal and professional development while enhancing overall conservation efforts. Participation in demonstration trips is particularly beneficial, providing practical knowledge and experience. In this connection, in collaboration with Khwopa College, we organized a two-day program aimed at educating graduates about the critically endangered Chinese Pangolin of the nearby Community-based Pangolin Conservation Area.



Fig:2. Trainers for the graduates workshop



Fig: 3. Students attending the program sessions in the hall

The program was structured to provide comprehensive training and education in pangolin conservation. It began with a Conservation Education Session, emphasizing the importance of conserving the critically endangered Chinese Pangolin. This session covered the ecological and cultural significance of pangolins, the threats they face, conservation strategies, an overview of their biology and behavior, best practices for conducting field research, and ethical considerations for interacting with wildlife.



Fig: 4. Talking about the pangolin and their ecological aspects



Fig:5. Students during queries sessions after the session

We also organized a capacity-building program for graduates, featuring a team of young women who are experts in their respective fields. Among them was Ms. Binika Mathya, an emerging botanist known for her research and contributions to plant science. Her sessions provided in-depth knowledge on plant conservation, highlighting the importance of biodiversity and sustainable practices in botanical studies.



Fig:6. Ms Binika Mathya in her sessions



Fig: 7.Hands-on training on the ground

Another prominent expert was Ms. Sasmini Basnet, a National Taekwondo player and a passionate advocate for child and women welfare. She brought a unique perspective to the program, combining her athletic discipline with her dedication to social causes. Ms. Basnet conducted workshops on self-defense techniques and personal safety, empowering participants with practical skills and strategies to protect themselves. Additionally, she led discussions on the importance of mental and physical resilience, sharing her experiences and inspiring graduates to pursue their goals with determination and confidence.



Fig: 8. Ms Sasmini Basnet in her session



Fig: 9. Sasmini Basnet, Taekwondo ITF Nepal demonstrating on safety and self-defense techniques

The program aimed to equip graduates with a diverse set of skills and knowledge, fostering both personal and professional growth. Through the expertise of Ms. Mathya and Ms. Basnet, participants gained valuable insights into their fields and were motivated to contribute to conservation and community welfare initiatives.

The outcomes of the field trip were highly positive, marking the program as the first of its kind and exceptionally well-received by both students and volunteers. The field trip fostered a deeper understanding of conservation practices among the students, and the involvement of local community members provided valuable insights, enhancing the learning experience and highlighting the importance of community involvement in conservation efforts.

The field trip successfully acquainted the students with practical conservation techniques and underscored the value of community-managed conservation areas. This experience will enable the students to convey the significance of these areas to other interested visitors, thereby promoting further engagement and support for pangolin conservation.

The program included 27 graduates, and lecturers from Khwopa College, with students from various districts such as Kavrepalchowk, Bhaktapur, Kathmandu, and Sindhupalchowk. These districts all have community-managed forests where the critically endangered Chinese Pangolins are found. Providing hands-on training to these students is particularly beneficial, as they have a higher chance of direct encounters with pangolins in their local areas. We believe that our teaching and training will not only equip these students with practical skills but also enable them to spread conservation messages to wider audiences through their communities.

Collaboration with Khwopa College

Khwopa College, a non-profit educational institution, is the only community college in the country operated by the local government, aiming to establish Bhaktapur as a center of excellence. In recognition of their collaboration with our pangolin conservation efforts, we presented a Certificate of Appreciation to the Khwopa College family. Principal Mr. Prakash Kumar Shrestha received the certificate on behalf of the college in-charge and other faculty members. This gesture symbolizes our ongoing partnership, which we plan to continue in the coming years.



Fig: 10.Certificate of Appreciation to the college principal, Mr Prakash Kumar Shrestha

Pangolin Conservation Outreach Program

We organized a community visit program where we engaged with local shopkeepers, forest users, and community members to discuss the pangolin conservation program and update the general public on the latest conservation measures. During these visits, we distributed our pangolin calendars to raise awareness among those residing near the pangolin range areas. The communities were happy to receive the calendars, as they serve a dual purpose: providing details on months, important events, and dates, while simultaneously raising awareness about pangolin conservation and appealing for the continued dedication to this cause.



Fig:11. Communities with calendars

World Environment Day Celebration and Pangolin Cycle Rally

The World Environment Day celebration, featuring a pangolin-focused cycle rally, highlighted environmental awareness and pangolin conservation. Jointly organized by the Divisional Forest Office, Chuchekhola Community Forest Users, Himalayan Cycle Association, and local and national conservation partners, the event underscored pangolins' crucial ecological role. Starting at the Divisional Forest Office and concluding at Chuchekhola Community Forest's Pangolin Park, the rally included a talk by Prativa Kaspal, emphasizing community action for pangolin conservation. Educational materials distributed during the event enriched participants' understanding, fostering a commitment to conservation. Over 300 cyclists and more than 1,000 local community members from diverse backgrounds benefited directly. Significant media coverage and social media campaigns extended the event's impact, encouraging global participation and support.



Fig: 12. World Environment Day Celebration with conservation interested cyclists and forest and ward officials

Juvenile Chinese Pangolin Released into Pangolin Park

In a major conservation effort, a juvenile female Chinese Pangolin was rescued from Makhwanpurgadhi and released into Pangolin Park. This operation, led by Prativa Kaspal in collaboration with Divisional Forest Officials, cyclists, local communities, media, and enthusiastic local youths, marked a pivotal moment in pangolin protection. The young pangolin was carefully transported and released into Pangolin Park, providing a safe and suitable environment for its growth and well-being.



Fig:13. Some glimpses of Juvenile Chinese Pangolin release in the natural forest, Makwanpur

Human-Wildlife Conflict and Coexistence Event

I recently spoke at the "Human-Wildlife Conflict and Coexistence" event organized by Bardia National Park with the Divisional Forest Offices of Banke, Bardia, and Karnali Province, local governments, ward presidents, Chief District Officers, and security officials including the Nepal Army and police. The event included researchers, local conservationists, indigenous peoples, women representatives, and the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation.

The two-day program featured presentations and speeches from various stakeholders, including local and provincial government representatives, security officials, park authorities, students, and media partners. It was structured into an inaugural session, technical sessions and a closing ceremony.

Chief District Officer Mrs. Durga Devi Sharma led the inaugural session with mayors, ward presidents, and conservation partners. Presentations covered topics like human-wildlife conflict involving tigers, elephants, bears, crocodiles, birds, rhinos, primates, and pangolins.

Over 200 participants from national parks, buffer zone communities, women's groups, community forest users, researchers, and community leaders engaged in interactive sessions. As a speaker, I presented on

people-pangolin coexistence in Nepal, highlighting cultural, ecological, social, and religious beliefs. Despite threats from poaching, direct conflict with pangolins is minimal, but are taken as a bad spirit and as incarnations of God in various ethnic communities, showcasing a history of coexistence. In all of these program, I have acknowledged the Rufford Foundation and other conservation partners for the continued support.



Fig:14. Prativa Kaspal presenting on Pangolin Human Coexistence & the participants in formal program



Fig:15. Indian Pangolin rescue. Photo@Parwoti Acharya, Bardia

National Conservation Forum (NCF) 2024

The National Conservation Forum (NCF) 2024, led by IUCN NNC in Nepal, aimed to unify government agencies, conservation partners, and stakeholders to tackle environmental challenges through nature-based solutions. It featured thematic sessions by IUCN commissions, research presentations on biodiversity and conservation, round-table discussions, and breakout sessions. The forum aimed to establish strategic national conservation priorities outlined in a white paper to influence global conservation agendas and enhance Nepal's role in global efforts. Women for Conservation, an institutional member of IUCN, played a significant role, with Prativa Kaspal, Vice President of IUCN National Nepal Committee, advocating for pangolin and fishing cat conservation, wetlands, and women's voices. The event, inaugurated by Honorable Minister of Forest and Environment Nawal Kishor Shah, included keynote speeches from ICIMOD, WWF Nepal, and others, attracting over 450 participants from diverse backgrounds, including IUCN Nepal office, commission members, and all 26 national institutes of IUCN. The forum served as a platform to elevate public voices to policymakers and stakeholders, addressing critical issues faced by endangered species like the Chinese and Indian pangolins, top wetland predators, Fishing Cats, and the challenges of indigenous peoples, youth, and women in conservation efforts.



Fig:16. Formal opening session of National Conservation Forum



Fig: 17. Prativa Kaspal presenting community-based conservation initiatives

Media Updates

The event received significant media coverage, further amplifying its impact and spreading awareness about human-wildlife coexistence and conservation efforts in Nepal. National and local newspapers featured news about the rescue of a juvenile female Chinese Pangolin from Makhwanpurgadhi, which was subsequently released into Pangolin Park. This coverage highlighted the collaborative efforts of conservationists, local communities, and authorities in protecting this endangered species, emphasizing the ongoing commitment to pangolin conservation.

https://gorkhapatraonline.com/news/110405?fbclid=IwZXh0bgNhZW0CMTEAAAR318kdQG24whqGd6jFF3Xx-MBTqgBQj9F5vVwVhFDvbnGivPMwYn6pj-do_aem_h-VTIItREZ995SIIJCnie3Q

https://www.praharkhabar.com/news/67327043665b3bb4c4b8c6?fbclid=IwZXh0bgNhZW0CMTEAAAR2SYERUSAMntcd0y_0v3VJrJu4i1U1kBV956qjZ6LsHHa-K665hzbWWMnU_aem_T7saRSybwQOYZCeM_g_eWQ

Moreover, our graduates' program on pangolin conservation was featured in the newsletter of Khwopa College, showcasing the educational and practical contributions to Pangolin and other wildlife conservation efforts.

Article on Pangolin Conservation

An article on our pangolin conservation efforts has recently been published by our local conservation partner, Samkranchan Manch. Written in Nepali, the article acknowledges the contributions of various conservation partners who have been instrumental in making our pangolin conservation work a success.

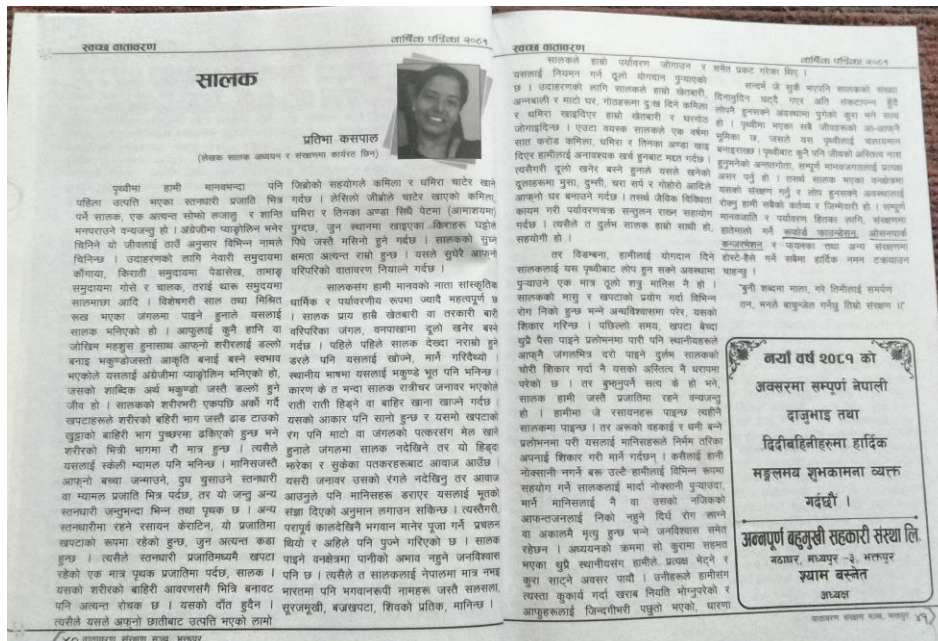


Fig:18. Article written about the Pangolin conservation works and community initiatives in Nepali Language to ease local readers

Thank you so much!