

Project Update: January 2012

The surveys have found that since the monsoon of 2008 (June-July) the larger flow of Karnali has been diverted to the western stream which has affected the aquatic biodiversity in and around the eastern channel commonly known as Geruwa. Thus dolphins are more frequently sighted in the western channel Kaurali as compared to Geruwa. The initial consultations have covered a total of 80 individuals representing conservation officers, game scouts of Bardia National Park, wildlife technicians from National Trust for Nature Conservation, nature guides, fishermen, local residents, media people, teachers and students living around the area. The recently conducted dolphin surveys reported a total of in increased frequency of sighting of dolphin around Batase Danda around 500 m upstream of Chisapani Bridge at around 300 m above sea level. It was last reported from this area in 2004.

Area	Number	Date
Batase Danda 12 th	2	30 December 2011; 10 th , 11 th and January 2012
Jagatpur (western channel)	2	4 th January 2012
Sannakatti (Geruwa)	1	11 th January 2012
Daulatpur (western channel)	2	11 th January 2012
Srilanka area (western channel)	5	17 th January 2012
Khagraula Ghat (western channel)	3	21 st January 2012

Based on the above figures, the December 2011-January 2012 surveys estimate a population of 2-5 dolphins in the western channel of Karnali and 1-2 dolphins in the Geruwa channel though these numbers are not precise as is the case with aquatic species such as dolphins where exact numbers are difficult to predict. The gharial population has not fluctuated in the survey period. The same number of animals, four were recorded from the Laguna machan area along the western boundary of Bardia National Park (i.e. Geruwa River). The most interesting fact during the surveys is the repeated sighting of dolphins at Batase Danda unlike in the past. At the same time, critically endangered species of gharials and crocodiles have been regularly sighted in the western channel since the larger water volume flows in that branch whereas initial consultations did not report this. A confluence of Karnali, Mohana River does not fall within the study area but it has shown an increased number of these species in recent months and will need additional studies and conservation awareness activities. This may make awareness of crucial species more comparatively significant as compared to publication of survey manual and this aspect is still under consideration. Awareness activities have been planned for the World Wetlands Day, February 2nd 2012 around areas identified as potential habitats and where the species has been recorded in these preliminary surveys.

