

Project Update: July 2018

Kangchenjunga – Singhalila Complex (KSC) encompasses an impressive mountain landscape and is recognised as a biodiversity hotspot. Despite continued conservation efforts, human-snow leopard conflict is a major threat to snow leopard populations in eastern Nepal. Local herders live traditional subsistence livelihoods in these high altitude areas, practising rotational herding. Snow leopards often prey opportunistically on livestock which ultimately results in retaliatory killings. The overall aim of this project is to assess the human-snow leopard conflict in the corridor landscape and to implement snow leopard conservation outreach programmes engaging local communities. The following activities were conducted from December 2017 to April 2018.

1. One district level consultation meeting was organised to brief the project objectives, its implementation plan and general issues related to wildlife conservation at local level.
2. Semi-structured questionnaire was developed and conducted interview survey with local herders to collect the information on number of livestock sheds in the pasturelands, number of livestock, livestock depredation and human-snow leopard conflict situations in Kalikhola and Surumkhim villages. There are 28 herders in Kalikhola and Surumkhim and we interviewed them all.
3. The interview survey provided the following information:
 - The herders have sighted SLs, dhole, common leopard, Himalayan black bear and clouded leopard in the study area.
 - Fifteen livestock sheds were noted between elevations of 2295 to 3273 m in Kalikhola while 13 sheds were found between elevations of 2231 to 3180m in Surumkhim village.
 - Altogether, 1167 livestock were found in 28 livestock shed of Kalikhola and Surumkhim's pastureland which include yak, sheep, goat, cow and oxen.
 - This study found that 99 livestock were killed by snow leopard, wild dog and other carnivores with total monetary loss of USD 37000 in last 10 years which was cross verified with neighboring herders.
 - The most depredated livestock were sheep and cows.
 - Local people were known about the presence of SL in the area but the herders were reluctant to share more information about them.
4. We are conducting pre questionnaire survey to understand the awareness level of herders' and local households in the study area.
5. Other remaining activities will be conducted from mid-September to November 2018

Note: Heavy rainfall in eastern Nepal which leads to flooding in rivers, streams and sometimes landslides have halted all our activities which we will continue from mid-September.



Research Assistant doing interview survey with local herders in Surumkhim



Livestock grazing in the pastureland of Surumkhim



Livestock in the poorly constructed livestock shed in Kalikhola