



Conservation Watch - Nepal

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Poachers hacked horn of alive rhino

Three rhinos found dead in Chitwan

In an incident what could be termed as a very rare, poachers have hacked the horn of alive rhino. On 4th February, a tourist guide noticed severely injured de-horned rhino at Junauli area in the Chitwan National Park. Following the information, Chitwan National Park deployed the teams in the search of de-horned rhino. Fortunately, after two days they were able to find it out in the community area of Patihani VDC.

After the investigation it was found that a female rhino of around 30 years had been shot with bullets by poachers before plucking out its horn. It has been suspected that poachers might have cut the horn after rhino fell unconscious from the gun-shot. The de-horned rhino was provided with essential treatment. It was released after the installation of radar equipment. CNP has deployed a team in two elephants for the close scrutiny.

According to the Chief Conservation Officer of CNP, Dr. Narendra Man Babu Pradhan, a similar incident happened 12 years ago when the ill-fated rhino died after three days.

The story doesnot end here. This incident raised the



hackles of bufferzone people. Bufferzone people along with Hotel Entrepreneurs' Association and Civil Society members resorted to protest against this incident. They even blamed connivance of some section of park and security force and timidity on security patrolling. They have padlocked the office of CNP for 25 hours and blocked the highway for couple of hours. CNP has committed to intensify the patrolling and consolidated collaboration against poaching.

On the other hand, three rhinoceros have been found dead in the month of December in Chitwan. On 3rd December, remains of 30 months old rhino was recovered in the Lami Lake area of Chitwan National Park. According to the CNP Eastern Sector Office, the baby rhinoceros might have been killed by the tiger.

Similarly, a female rhinoceros of around 20 years old was found dead at the Tower Block area of the Kumroj bufferzone Community Forest on 7th December. Horn and hooves were found intact. According to the CNP officials, poachers have gunned down the rhino.



On 25th December, a rhinoceros was found dead in the southern part of Chitwan National Park. Villagers near the area informed the park officials about the decomposed rhino body without a horn and hooves. Assistant conservation officer at CNP Lal Bihari Yadav said the rhinoceros might have been killed by poachers. The rhino is suspected of having been killed a month ago and its sex is not identified. Eight rhinos died in and around CNP after the Rhino Count 2008 (March) out of which only three died from the reason other than the poaching. The number of rhinos in Chitwan National Park is now reduced to 400.

One elderly man was killed in a rhino attack. On 27th January, Chandra Bote 70, at Gardi V.D. C. in Madi area (across the CNP) was injured by male rhino early in the morning near his house. He succumbed to death on the way to hospital. In Ilam district, Hari Maya Rai, 50, a resident of Chulachuli VDC-2 was crushed to death on the spot on 7th December after a wild elephant attacked her. One elderly woman at Chulachuli of the same district a few months ago and Hira Tamang-42, at Rampur of Udaypur district on 10th November also has been killed in the elephant attack.

Joint patrolling reduces poaching in SWR

Locals of Kanchanpur district claim that concerted efforts from government agencies of Nepal and India by launching joint patrolling of the conserved area have led to a decline in illegal poaching of animals. The decline in poaching comes after the initiation of joint campaign by Suklaphanta Wildlife Reserve (SWR), Western Terai Arc Landscape Development Project, representatives from India's World Wildlife Fund, District Forest Office and security forces.

"Conservation officers, security forces, buffer zone consumers' committee members and their Indian counterparts have started regular patrolling in the conserved area and the surrounding region lately," said SWR Chief Officer Gopal Prasad Upadhyay. He also said that the idea of joint patrolling by Nepal and India clicked after the observation of successful application of such programmes in conservation areas lying between the US and Canada. According to him, field meetings take place every three months between representatives of both countries for evaluating progress and setbacks as well as to set future goals. "Both countries exchange names and photographs of perpetrators to contain poaching," said Dinesh Karki, Conservation Officer. "Therefore, perpetrators find it difficult to hide anywhere in either country." He also said that officials from both the countries have been authorized to punish poachers belonging to either country, whenever arrests are made. "Poachers have been discouraged due to fear of punishment," said Satya Narayan Silwal," the Game Scout SWR.

"Two elephants, three game scouts, one ranger and two mahouts are deployed by SWR for joint patrolling, whereas the Indians have deployed four forest guards and two foresters," Upadhyay said. The patrolling team also comprises members of consumers' committee from both Nepal and India. "Growing awareness among locals in the buffer zone has reduced chances of escape to culprits," said Ashok Ojha, Field Project Director. "Information on poaching from Indians living close to the border area has also helped reduce poaching." SWR is spread over 155 square km. The reserve is a prime habitat for swamp deer, tiger, rhino, elephants and 349 different species of birds.

Government to compensate wildlife victims

Nepal government has prepared a guideline to provide relief for the wildlife victims. The Ministry of Forest and Soil Conservation is geared up to address the issues related to wildlife victims (death and injury) through "Wildlife Damage Relief Guidelines 2065". This guideline is yet to be endorsed officially.

Dharmaraj Kuinkel, the law officer at the ministry informed that Ministry of Finance has allocated the budget for the compensation against death and injury induced by the wildlife. According to him, the family members of the deceased will get Rs. One Lakh Fifty Thousand rupees, while injured ones will get Rs. Five Thousand to Fifty Thousand. Wild animals mostly rhinos, tigers, elephants, bears, boars and leopards trouble the people near by the park areas.

For the proper implementation of the guideline, the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation is running series of discussions with related government and non-government agencies. According to the Shiva Raj Bhatta, planning officer at DNPWC, this step has been initiated after flurry of wildlife attacks and growing resentment of the people. Presumably, the guidelines will be implemented from the running fiscal year.

Conservation related organisations have been advocating for the needs of policy to compensate the wildlife victims. In the current trend, few bufferzone management council are providing meager compensation to the victims. People of Chitwan, Bardiya, Banke, Jhapa, Rasuwa, Kavre, Sunsari etc have been hugely affected by the wildlife induced travails.

New wildlife farming policy in the offing

The government is preparing to amend the Wildlife Farming, Breeding, and Research Working Policy, 2003 to facilitate captive breeding and trade of animals and birds that are not endangered and protected.

According to Shiv Raj Bhatt, planning officer at the Department of the National Parks and Wildlife Conservation (DNPWC), a draft of the revised policy is with the Ministry of Forest and Soil Conservation. The government will introduce the amended policy after holding consultations with stakeholders and incorporating their inputs, he said. Unlike the existing policy, which allows captive farming of protected and endangered species, the amended policy will allow captive farming of the animals, which are not endangered and protected.

The amended policy will also allow trade of wild animals and bio-medical research within the country. Once the policy is amended, animal species like rabbit, barking deer, wild boar and monkey can be bred in captivity. The Wildlife Farming Policy, 2003 does not allow the trade of animals even within the country.

Meanwhile, a group of animal rights activists protested against what it called "the high death rate of rhesus monkeys" at the Monkey Breeding Centre in Lele, Lalitpur district. In a statement, Animal Welfare Network Nepal said, "At least 30 out of 310 captive monkeys have died of communicable diseases."

Manoj Gautam of Roots and Shoots Organization said the monkey breeding centre's objective was to provide rhesus monkeys for US laboratories, where they conduct bio-medical research. He said the practice was illegal. Gautam called for an immediate ban on capturing and breeding of the primates in the country. According to Gautam, the working policy on wildlife breeding farming and research had cleared the path for breeding of rhesus monkey for bio-medical research.

Gharials number plummets

Worst news about the gharials. According to the latest count, around only 81 gharials (*Gavialis gangeticus*) are found in several rivers in Nepal. According to a latest study conducted by National Park and Wildlife Conservation Department and World Wildlife Fund, 41 gharial crocodiles were found in Narayani River, 24 in Rapti River, 10 in Babai River and six in Karnali. In 2007, 117 crocodiles were counted from Rapti and Narayani River.

The study said 22 are adults and sex and age of nine could not be traced. Gharial head counts were carried out in 29.5 km section from Chatara to Koshi Barrage in the Koshi River at Koshi Tappu Wildlife Reserve; 102.5 km section from Devgath to Triveni in the Narayani River at Chitwan National Park and 50.9 km section from Khaganda Malli to Nayayani-Rapti convergence in the Rapti River.

Similarly, census was conducted in 53.8 km section from Chisapani to Nepal-India border in the Karnali River and in 39.5 km section from Chepang to Parewaodar in the Babai River.

The endangered species is a long-established group of crocodile-like reptiles with long and narrow jaws and the second-longest of all living crocodylians, after the saltwater crocodile. In 2007, The International Union for Conservation of Nature has enlisted gharial as "critically endangered" species from "endangered" following the discovery that there were less than 200 breeding adults left in the wild.



The government has set up reproduction center of gharial in Kasara at Chitwan National Park to conserve it. Since 1981, about 700 young gharials are released from the rearing centre. In spite of these efforts, the numbers of crocodiles are not satisfactory. Many factors contributed to the decline of the gharial population in Nepal. Habitat loss and disturbances, lack of strict enforcement of existing laws, entrapment in nylon gill nets introduced for fishing, construction of reservoirs and barrage in suitable habitat, and poaching of eggs by the local people for medicine and food. Collectively, these factors have resulted in the gharial becoming one of the rarest and most endangered crocodylians in Nepal.

Arnas facing extinction threats

The endangered wild buffaloes (*Bubalus bubalis*) (Arna in Nepali) are facing the risk of extinction due to threats to their habitats and unabated illegal killing of the animals. The animals are protected in Koshi Tappu Wildlife Reserve. Recently, locals of Sripur in Sunsari captured three animals which had entered human settlement areas for grazing. The usual grazing area in Sripur and Haripur area was destroyed during the Saptakosi floods last year. Though the locals had also captured another animal at Shivchowk of the village, the police managed to rescue it and release in the reserve area.

The animals are facing threats as the poachers are often found killing them. The locals sometime set mechanical and electric traps to control the animals' menace. Five wild buffaloes had died in the recent past in the traps set by the locals. The animals have recently faced more risks as the Muslim community living in Sripur and Haripur have been capturing and killing them. The number of the wild buffaloes in the reserve area is estimated to be around 500. Local conservationists said the animal will soon become extinct if the government and other stakeholders concerned did not take serious steps to protect the endangered wildlife.



EPRC-II launched in Nepal

After the successful accomplishment of the project Empowering People For Rhino Conservation (EPRC), Asian Rhino Project Australia has continued its support for the second phase of the project. EPRC-II will also be implemented by ARP's partner in Nepal Co-Action Nepal (formerly Media Consultancy Nepal). EPRC-II will be entirely focused on habitat management of the rhinos in bufferzone and community forests around Chitwan National Park. Apart from the park area, rhinos have noticeable presence in community and bufferzone forests of Chitwan. In CNP, rhinos occur in highest densities along the flood plain grasslands and riverine forests adjacent to the Narayani, Rapti, Dhungre and Riu river. Hence, the project will support four community forest and one bufferzone forest for the construction of the ponds and grasslands. These all are riverine forests and most suitable as the rhino habitat.

One of the selected areas, Kumroj Bufferzone Forest (Budirapti Bufferzone User Committee in Kumroj VDC) is the potential habitat of rhinos and tigers. During the Rhino Census 2008, 7 rhinos were counted there. According to the bufferzone people, this forest is also the breeding area of the rhinos. In western sector, there are four community forests adjoined with each other which covers 811 hectares. They are Setidevi, Gyaneshowr, Majhuwa and Siddhiganesh community forest. According to the forest officials, 13 rhinos dwell in this area. Due to the lack of food and wallowing spots, rhinos frequently stray into human settlements incurring loss of crops and human. This initiative will stop rhinos from foraging into human settlements and avert resultant loss.

According to Mr. Deepak Acharya, the project co-ordinator, the work has been already begun in two forests; Kumroj Bufferzone Forest (Kumroj) and Setidevi Community Forest (Mangalpur). At the moment, the work for pond construction in Kumroj and grassland management in Setidevi are underway.

Brief News

-Over six animals at the Koshi Tappu Wildlife Reserve have been killed in a wildfire that occurred last month. Two python and two deer are among the dead, said Major Purosottam Khadka, reserve security officer.

- With the rise in the demand of processed leather, poaching of wild animals has been increasing in Dailekh district. The hunters have targeted mainly Ghoral, antelope, rein deer and musk deer as these animals' skin is suitable for leather products.



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