



# Conservation Watch - Nepal

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## Human-wildlife conflict surges in Chitwan

### Five people killed in February

Conservation initiatives face another blow in Chitwan National Park (CNP) area as rhinos and tigers killed five bufferzone people in the month of February. Conservation activists of Chitwan have termed February 2009 as one of the disastrous months in the history of CNP in terms of human loss. All deceased belong to indigenous and Dalit community.

The series of incidents began on February 5 when Suman Pariyar from Mukundapur VDC-8 was killed by the tiger in the early dawn. He was attacked by the tiger while entering Chitwan National Park to collect fodder and thatched grasses. He encountered the tiger at Baluwaghat but his dead body was found at the distance of 200 meter.

On February 11, Maghi Bote, 59 years old male from Gardi VDC had similar fate. A rhino attacked him at Banakatta while he was safeguarding his crops. Bufferzone people make small hut in the field in an attempt to protect crops from the rhinos. They torch light and make large sound to drive off the rhinos. Local people found Bote in an injured condition. He was immediately admitted to local health centres but breath his last on the way to Bharatpur hospital.

In another incident, Shivaram Mahato, 55, from Meghauri VDC-5 was attacked to death by rhino. The incident occurred on 12th February at Belarikhola where he went to collect firewood.

Every year, CNP administration allows limited days for the collection of thatched grasses needed for making a roof and other certain forest products. This year three days were allowed starting from February 26. Unfortunately, two bufferzone people lost their lives while entering Chitwan National Park Area for this purpose. Yam Narayan Shrestha of Meghauri-5 was killed by rhino at Bhimle Post on February 27, whereas in the next day tiger mauled Gangaram Mahato, 31, of Dibyanagar VDC-3.

In Udayapur district, the drove of four elephants demolished one house and damaged winter crops in Jogidaha VDC of Triyuga Municipality on 4th March. The elephants which are being spotted in the village every year, have demolished the house owned by Tilak Bahadur Pariyar of Bagaha-8 for the first time this year and also scattered the food stuffs. Due to this, people are terrified here. Some 25 persons have been killed so far in the elephant- attack in the district. The locals complained that the concerned body did not pay any heed to control the elephant- terror.

In Nuwakot district, porcupines have unleashed terror at Chautara VDC since first week of March. According to local residents, half-a-dozen of porcupines have entered the village and destroyed agricultural crops. A local, Bal Krishna Pandey, said the animals having long sharp quills destroyed potato planted in his fields. He said locals have been chasing away porcupines. Amidst the growing hostility between human and wildlife, Nepal government has prepared a guideline to provide relief for the wildlife victims. Though it is yet to be endorsed officially, it is hoped that it could assuage the antagonism to some extent.

After its implementation, 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.

## Animal hides confiscated in several districts

Police arrested a person on the charge of involvement in illegal trade of leopard hides on February 16 in Rukum district. The Shova Area Police, Office, arrested Khadak Bahadur Sunar, a resident of Morabang Village Development Committee-4, from Rupalbari jungle along with the animal hides. Police claimed that Sunar was involved in illegal trade of leopard hides for the past five years, inspector at Rukum District Police Office, Ghanshyam Shrestha, said. The District Forest Office said Sunar faces four to 10 years of jail or a fine of Rs 100,000 or both if he was proved guilty. However, Sunar refuted the charges as baseless.

A team of Nepal Police personnel seized tiger skins from the traders at various parts of the capital Kathmandu. The police confiscated one tiger skin and one leopard skin from Bhaktapur and arrested Radheshyam Karmacharya, 40, from his residence in Bhaktapur Municipality-13. Karmacharya was trying to sell these wildlife products. Likewise, police arrested a Tibetan lady along with two tiger skins from Boudha.

On February 26, police arrested five persons, including two women, with leopard hides and musks from Narayangarh, Chitwan. Those arrested were Mubarak Dewan (52, Nawalparasi), Rishi Bahadur Thapa (28, Kapilbastu), Jayabir Gharti (45, Kapilbastu), Pyari Gharti (36, Baglung) and Subita Gharti (30, Kapilbastu). According to Pyari Gharti, one of the detainees, they bought two leopard hides and three musks from Dhanbir Kami who lives near Dhorpatan National Park. 'We bought each item in NRs 6,000 but apprehended while trying to sell it in hefty sum', she admitted. Police handed over them to District Forest Office, Chitwan.



## Nagarjun forest under the aegis of SNP

Government of Nepal has formally handed the Nagarjun forest over to the Shivapuri National Park (SNP). The park has been renamed as Shivapuri-Nagarjun National Park. On August 20, 2007, Government has decided on it. Nagarjun forest is spread over Kathmandu and Dhading districts covering an area of 1,500 hectares of land.

The handover marks the inauguration of Nepal Nature Conservation Year 2009, which attempts to advocate a policy on climate change and global warming.



Krishna Chandra Paudel, a senior official from Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation, said the flora-rich area was the glory of Kathmandu.

He informed that the government had declared Bardiya National Park as 'black buck conservation area' and said plans were afoot to set up a 'zoology park' in Gokarna.

He said the ministry was working to establish an 'orphan animal centre', adding that an agreement had been reached to declare 'Chure area' for the conservation of land fertility. Similarly, Pokhara has been proposed for establishing a biodiversity

museum and research centre.

The year-long celebration would also preserve bio-diversity and encourage locals to conserve the forest and uplift the living standard of the marginalised people through development in tourism.

Annapurna Das, spokesperson for Ministry of Soil Conservation said the final draft of the directive to use Sajiwan oil in petroleum products was being readied in a bid to reduce dependency on imported fuel.

## First orphanage likely in Chitwan

For the first time in Nepal, the government is working to establish an animal orphanage within the year 2009. An orphanage will provide shelter to injured or abandoned wild animals. However, the government is yet to allocate funds for the project.

This project is a part of the Ministry of Forest and Soil Conservation (MoFSC)'s programmes to mark 2009 as the National Conservation Year. Minister for Forests and Soil Conservation Kiran Gurung said the government had decided to develop the 21-room Diyalo Bungalow complex, which covers around 57 bigha of land on the banks of the Narayani River in Chitwan district, as an orphanage for the protection of wild animals.

Officials are finding it hard to rehabilitate injured and orphaned wildlife into natural habitat due to lack of orphanage. Most of the rescued animals and birds are sent to the zoo after treatment. Laxmi Prasad Manandhar, conservation education officer at the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation (DNPWC) said, "Wild animals find it difficult to live in their natural habitat after prolonged contact with humans during treatment. Orphaned, sick, displaced or injured native birds and animals will be examined and treated at the orphanage". After treatment, these animals will be kept at the Zoological Park, which the government plans to establish this year," he said.

Manandhar said DNPWC had been temporarily using the proposed musk deer research centre in Godavari of Lalitpur district for the rehabilitation of injured and orphaned animals rescued in the valley. According to him, the centre has a few rescued animals, including barking deer and leopards. Kasara of the Chitwan National Park has an orphaned tigress "Narayani". Central Zoo in Jawalakhel is keeping rescued wildlife due to lack of animal orphanage.

"But we can't afford to have more leopards or deer in the zoo because of space and financial constraints. Unlike in our country, governments in other countries allocate funds to the zoos for the treatment and rehabilitation of injured and orphaned animal", Sarita Gyawali, zoo director said.

Jawalakhel Zoo, the only zoo in the country in Lalitpur district has established a wildlife hospital on its premises. The hospital is equipped with an x-ray room, operation theatre and a modern lab. There are currently one veterinarian and two technicians in the zoo to look after the health of the animals. The hospital has also arranged isolation facility for the treatment of animals infected with communicable diseases.

## Hacked off rhino died after two weeks

An ill fated 30 year old female rhino-which was robbed of its horn inside the Chitwan National Park (CNP)- succumbed to death on 13th February, after two weeks of the incident. Poachers had plucked the rhino horn without killing it. On February 2, a tour guide had first noticed the de-horned rhino straying around Junauli checkpoint.

Chitwan park officials said the female rhino died though a medical team had been attending to it round the clock. CNP's Chief Conservation Officer Narendra Babu Pradhan said, "the rhino died of wounds as a medical team, despite repeated efforts, failed to take out a bullet embedded inside its neck." Earlier 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 observation of injured rhino.

Ashok Bhandari, assistant conservation officer at the CNP, said a rhino was robbed of its horn 12 years ago and that it lived for three days. "This is the first time a rhino lived so long without its horn," he said.

According to Basanta Parajuli, a conservation journalist, rhino could have been saved if CNP had well veterinary facility. Parks and Wildlife Reserves of Nepal have poor veterinary capacity. Only one veterinary doctor has been appointed by Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation (DNPWC) to look after all national parks and wildlife reserves across the country. A veterinary doctor and technicians receive rare opportunity of training and professional growth. Veterinary Unit has been established in five parks and reserves where availability of veterinary equipment and drugs is very poor. "We are even using date expired drugs", a veterinary technician reveals in the condition of anonymity.

## **Forest area turns into habitat of wildlife**

A forest area at Kanchanpur district, turned into a human settlement 10 years back has now become a habitat of wildlife, thanks to an awareness programme.

Formed some 11 years ago, the environment buffer zone forest consumer committee has brought about changes in the local forest that covers 283 hectares of land at Kamalnagar of Jhalari Village Development Committee (VDC) Ward No. 2.

Many species of wild animals such as elephants, jackals, leopards, rabbits, monkeys and wild boars are found in the forest. The consumer committee earns about Rs. 1 million from the forest. Agriculture forest covers about 50 hectares of the total forest area.

"We had started the conservation efforts after all the water sources were dried and the forest area became barren," said chairman of the forest consumer committee Madan Raj Joshi. Joshi added that the sonorous chirping of birds in the jungle had enthralled the local residents.

According to him, the forest has become a vital source of fuel wood and fodder for the locals. "We also sell out bamboo-made furniture, as we have planted hybrid species of bamboo," he said. Member of the consumers' committee Janaki Bam informed that the Nepal Federation of Environment Journalists (NEFES) contributed Rs. 1 million to the conservation of the forest.

The District Development Committee (DDC) also made available around Rs. 500,000 to the committee. Now, the forest has become a good habitat of wildlife from the Shuklaphanta Wildlife Reserve. The forest is on the foot of the Churiya hill. It has helped in protecting wildlife as well as local environment.

In the agriculture forest, a number of fruit species such as mango, lemon, litchi, jackfruit and orange are found. The forest has imparted Rs. 180,000 to a school, Rs. 25,000 each to childcare home and a temple, and Rs. 20,000 to a gynecology serve centre. Joshi said that the remaining incomes were utilised for the development of the forest.

In sharp contrast, Kichchakbadh Kunda, a historical pond mentioned in the epic Mahabharata, in Jhapa district is at the risk of losing its natural and historical charms, thanks to constant erosion by Deunia River in the north and Mechi River in the east. Situated at 10 km far from Bhadrapur, the pond is spread over 10 bighas of land and borders Maheshpur and Prithvinagar VDCs.

The Department of Archaeology had excavated the place three times and had claimed to have found traces of a bungalow near the pond. The place wears a festive look on the full moon day of February, drawing visitors from many parts of Nepal, India and Bhutan.

## **Poachers active in Annapurna Conservation Area**

Poaching of endangered Musk Deer and other protected wildlife like Lophophorus Pheasant (Danphe), Blue Sheep, Lophophorus Impejanus (Moonal) and Jharal is going unchecked in the forests covering the high Himalayan Mountains.

Briefing on the situation faced by Annapurna Conservation Area Project (ACAP), Bijay Raj Poudel, district forest officer, said to Kiran Gurung, Minister for Forests and Soil Conservation that "an organised armed group with SLR guns is actively involved in the poaching of protected animals in and around the forest areas".

According to him, due to lack of security, District Forest Office have failed to control the poaching activities. During the briefing session, Poudel said there is a need for a separate security unit to patrol the affected areas.

Meanwhile, Minister Gurung said the government is soon planning to introduce the concept of Dhaulagiri Conservation Area covering Dhorpatan Hunting Reserve and ACAP. According to Jag Bahadur Kishan, a local, animals like Black Bear, Musk Deer and Danphe which were seen abundantly in the forest areas three years ago have started to disappear at present. Poaching activities are more active in the months from September to October and February to May. Usually, poachers kill the animals and birds by spreading nets and starting wild fires in the forest areas. Locals claim that Chimkhola, Dowa, Mudi, and Gurja of the district have become prime areas for poaching activities.

In the likely manner, experts say many kinds of endangered birds and animals in Nepal are facing extinction. According to Animal Reproductive Division under the Nepal Agricultural Research Center (NARC), local animals and birds are endangered.

Division Chief and Senior Agriculture Scientist Dr. Shree Ram Neupane informed that among 25 types of animals and birds, seven kinds of cows, three of buffaloes, four of goat, four of sheep, three of fowl, three of pig, and one kind of horse are vanishing.

According to Dr. Neupane, Sree Jat, a local cow, the world's shortest Achhami cow, dwarf pig and long tailed sheep are in danger.

The number of Lulu cow, hurra pig, mountain goat, bhyabung sheep and yak is said to be very few. According to senior NARC scientist Bhola Man Singh Basnet, there are 7 million cows, 3.5 million buffaloes, 6 million goats, 850,000 sheep, 880,000 pigs, 18,000,000 fowls. Around 350,000 people have been earning their livelihood from animal farming in Nepal. Among the animals, buffalo farming accounts for 60 percent and cow 24 percent.



### Brief News

- One of the three dolphins rescued from Sripur-4 of Sunsari on 2nd February found in ponds created after the Koshi River was diverted to its original course, died on 5th February while it was being taken to Koshi for release. Army men deployed for Koshi Tappu Wildlife Reserve had rescued the rare animal. Reserve officials said the dolphin died as the locals had poured poison in the pond where it was stranded before it could be taken to safety. Conservation officer Nilambar Mishra also admitted that the dolphin could not be rescued on time as the officials were busy in bird festival. Army men said the reserve officials did not pay sufficient heed to their requests to save the stranded dolphins on time.

- A trapped leopard in Siddhipur VDC of Lalitpur was handed over to Central Zoo, Jawalakhel. The leopard was spotted around 7:30 in the morning of 22 February. Chased by the locals, the beast took refuge in a store room of Don Bosco School located in the area.

- An injured leopard was found in Foksing Community Forest at Byas Municipality -6, on 5th March. The six-foot long leopard was found by locals while they were there to cut grass, and later they handed it over to the District Forest Office. The injured leopard will be treated at the Livestock Office and will be sent to the forest after it recovers, said Assistant Forest Officer Mohan Shrestha.



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