

Updated Report for Rufford Foundation

Activity 1: Engagement with Shuklaphanta National Park (ShNP) Officials and Buffer Zone Users' Committee Members

After securing the research permit from the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation (DNPWC) in Babarmahal, Kathmandu, I proceeded to the Shuklaphanta National Park (ShNP) headquarters to obtain park-specific permissions. During this visit, I engaged in consultations and discussions with park officials and the buffer zone users' committee. I presented my research objectives, outlining data collection strategies and procedures, and initiated a dialogue with key local stakeholders. Our discussions primarily focused on the current status of human-elephant conflict (HEC) in the region, the mitigation measures being implemented by park authorities and local communities, and strategies for elephant conservation in the study areas. I also formally requested access to records of HEC incidents from the past decade (2014-2024) for a comprehensive review. These records, provided by the national park wardens and buffer zone committee members, will aid in analyzing patterns and assessing the effectiveness of mitigation efforts.

Activity 2: Examination of Relief Money Claim Files Related to HEC Incidents (2015-2024)

We conducted a detailed review of registered cases related to HEC incidents, including human injuries, crop damage, and property destruction, spanning the past decade (2014-2024). The review took place at the Shuklaphanta National Park headquarters and the Buffer Zone Management Committee (BZMC) offices. Using a pre-designed Excel data sheet, we systematically extracted relevant data such as the names of victims, incident location (district, municipality, ward), buffer zone committee names, date of the incident, type of damage (human injury, crop, or property), details of the complaint, and the relief amount claimed versus received. This data is critical for assessing compensation patterns and evaluating the impact of HEC on local communities.



Photo: Key informant survey with Buffer Zone Management Committee staff reviewing registered cases related to Human-Elephant Conflict (HEC) incidents.

Activity 3: Conservation Awareness Programme

To commemorate **World Elephant Day 2024**, the **Human-Elephant Conflict (HEC) Mitigation and Awareness Project** supported by the Rufford Foundation organized a series of awareness events, including an interaction program aimed at fostering discussions on elephant conservation. The interaction program took place at **Tribhuvan University's Siddhanath Science Campus**, Kanchanpur (Seminar Hall), featuring a banner highlighting World Elephant Day. The event saw active participation from 90 individuals, including faculty, staff, students, and local media representatives. This event was successfully organized in collaboration with Siddhanath Science Campus, Shuklaphanta National Park (ShNP), the National Trust for Nature Conservation (NTNC)/Suklaphanta Conservation Programme (SCP), and the Buffer Zone Management Committee (BZMC), with additional support from the Microbiology Students' Association (MISA), SNSC IT Club, and SNSC Eco Club.

Distinguished guests included **Dr. Gaj Ram Damai** (Campus Chief, Siddhanath Science Campus), **Mr. Manoj Ayer** (Conservation Officer, ShNP), and **Mr. Laxmi Raj Joshi**

(Senior Conservation Officer, NTNC/SCP), Mr. Lav Bahadur Bisht (chairperson BZMC, Shuklaphanta National Park), The program featured three key presentations:

1. **"An Overview of Elephants"** by **Dr. Balram Awasthi** (Lecturer at SNSC and Rufford Grantee),
2. **"Elephant Conservation and its Importance"** by **Mr. Laxmi Raj Joshi** (Senior Conservation Officer, NTNC/SCP),
3. **"Human-Elephant Conflict Scenario in Far-West Nepal"** by **Mr. Manoj Ayer** (Conservation Officer, Shuklaphanta National Park)

These presentations shared information of elephant and explored elephant ecology and conservation challenges, HEC scenarios, and strategies for mitigation. Special emphasis was placed on cross-border elephant movements from India into Kanchanpur and the complex local expectations surrounding compensation.

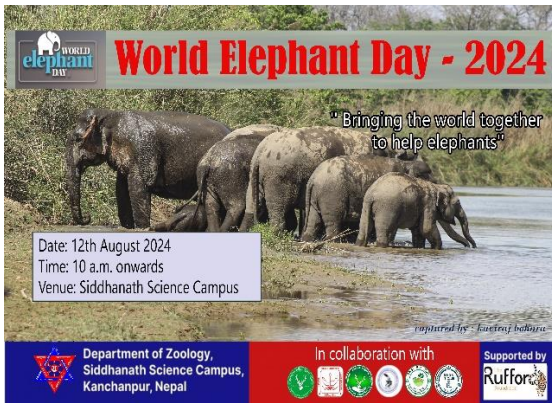
Associate Professor Dr. Mahadev Bista (Head of the Department of Zoology, SNSC) provided closing remarks, emphasizing the role of students in research related to HEC mitigation. The local media's involvement helped extend the outreach of these messages to a broader audience.



Presentations on World Elephant Day by Dr. Balram Awasthi (left) & Mr. Laxmi Raj Joshi (Right) with Chief Guest, guest and other participants.



Presentations on World Elephant Day by Mr. Manoj Ayer (Left) & Dr. Gaj Ram Damai, Campus chief (right) & with Chief Guest, guest, and other participants.



कञ्चनपुर । सिद्धनाथ विज्ञान क्याम्पसले आज विश्व हात्ती दिवस मनाएको छ। विश्व हात्ती दिवस, हात्तीको महत्व, संरक्षण र रक्षा गर्ने उद्देश्यले क्याम्पसले फिल्म निर्माता प्याट्रिक सिम्स र एलिफेन्ट रिड्युन्डन्स फाउन्डेसनको

Photos: Banner (Left) and Local media coverage for World Elephant Day program (Right)

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Photo@Balram Awasthi & Suraj Joshi



Field Survey

During the first field survey in Suklaphanta, we engaged with local residents about elephant visitation patterns. Traditionally, elephants migrate to the area from August to October, returning by early November. On our first night in Gobariya and Padkheri, we sighted sixteen elephants. Unfortunately, the following morning, we found that they had trampled several rice plants in nearby fields, causing severe damage. This incident highlights the ongoing challenges of human-elephant conflict (HEC) in buffer zones. In response, our team has maintained close communication with park authorities and local communities to mitigate HEC impacts. We are collecting data on elephant movements and crop damage while integrating local knowledge into our research. This approach aims to develop effective coexistence strategies, benefiting both local farmers and elephant conservation efforts in the region.



Local people's complaints about damage caused by wild elephants (left), and fencing wire damaged by an elephant (right).



Local people blocking the elephant's path using fencing and fire.





Local people harvesting their crops by blocking elephants with fire (left), displaying an elephant-chasing instrument (right)



Wild elephant (Left), and Dung and Footprint of elephant at crop field (right)

Photo @Balram Awasthi & Suraj Joshi

Questionnaire survey and data collection

In July, the first phase of the field survey was completed in Shuklaphanta National Park and its buffer zones. The survey aimed to gather empirical data on human-elephant conflict (HEC) across five blocks based on the buffer zone user committee, Sagarmatha and Himalaya Bufferzone user committee, the Shuklaphanta user committee, Betkot and Trishakti user committee, Shovatal and Sundevi user committee and Kalikitch and Bageshwori user committee. we used structured questionnaires to collect data on crop damage, human casualties, property damage, and other relevant variables. The survey also recorded the timing and locations of incidents, along with demographic details of the

affected individuals. GPS coordinates for several HEC sites were gathered through a combination of questionnaire surveys, group discussions, key informant interviews, and direct observations. Additionally, information on past HEC events and elephant movements in Kanchanpur district was documented. The questionnaire survey is ongoing, and the field data will be crucial for understanding the spatial distribution of HEC and shaping future mitigation strategies tailored to the most affected communities.



Questionnaire survey with local HHs

Conclusion

The project's initial activities have successfully laid the groundwork for deeper engagement with local communities, park authorities, and conservation stakeholders. Moving forward, the collected data will facilitate a thorough analysis of HEC patterns and the effectiveness of current mitigation measures. At the same time, the awareness programs will continue fostering a collaborative environment for elephant conservation in Nepal.