



Conservation Watch - Nepal

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Rhino numbers severely depleted in Bardia

67 rhinos disappeared !

Bardia National Park, the second most rhino dwelling habitat of Nepal, has witnessed the loss of 67 rhinos during the time period of seven years, the latest survey revealed so. Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation (DNPWC) has conducted "Rhino Status Monitoring" from 17 to 27 of May, 2007 where 31 rhinos were counted. The last rhino count in Bardia dates back to 2000 which have numbered 67 rhinos. After the rhino count of 2000, 31 rhinos were translocated to Bardia National Park from Chitwan. It means if the rhinos had not been translocated, Bardia would utterly devoid of rhinos.

Rhino Count year	No. of rhinos
2000	67
2007	31
Difference in numbers	36 (a)
Rhino Translocation to Bardia after Rhino Count 2000	
2000	6 (3 male, 3 female)
2001	5 (2 male, 3 female)
2002	10 (5 male, 5 female)
2003	10 (3 male, 7 female)
Total Translocation	31 (b)
Total missing numbers (a+b)	67

The numbers of rhinos are much less than expectation in recent count. The last rhino census in 2000 found 37 rhinos in the Geruwa River floodplain and 30 in the Babai River floodplain. But not a single rhino was numbered in the Babai River floodplain which is the main habitat of rhinos. There was neither natural disaster nor habitat problem for rhinos enough to decline in such rapid ratio. The remaining rhinos are found in a good health. The reason behind the sharp declination in number is virtually a poaching.

With the support of WWF Nepal and National Trust for Nature Conservation., Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation has attempted to acquire fresh data on the numbers, distribution, sex ratio and habitat status of the rhinos in Bardia from the 10 days monitoring.

The conditions triggered by a decade long arm struggle should be made responsible for the depletion of rhinos. Security posts were reduced to 6 from 15 to safeguard 968 square kilometer of park area. In Babai River flood plain, no national park officials and security persons were seen for a period of three years. During that period, a huge number of wild animals were poached. On the other hand, Bardia National Park immensely lacks resources. Reflecting the dire situation, even anti-poaching unit couldnot be established in Bardia hitherto.

According to the rhino count 2005, Chitwan National Park is largest rhino dwelling habitat of Nepal encompassing 372 numbers. Around 100 rhinos are estimated dead after the count primarily due to the poaching, disease and habitat problems.

Captive breeding of rare Siamang succeed

An endangered Siamang, a tree dwelling ape, was born recently at the central zoo in Kathmandu, the capital city of Nepal. The exotic Siamang pair Kale, 16, and Kali, 17, gave birth to a baby inside the zoo premises on September 1. Siamangs are mostly arboreal habitants, climbing big trees and living in dense forests.

Kale and Kali were brought from Malaysia seven years ago under an exchange program. Zoo officials were driven to despair about birth since Kali had already crossed the reproductive age between 7 to 11 years. Siamangs usually live to the age of 35 or 40 and start breeding at as early as 7 years.

"We had almost lost hope. But the baby was finally born and we feel very proud," said RK Shrestha, director at Central Zoo. Zoo officials had been trying for the past few years to captive-breed the species but to no avail. Captive breeding not only increases the numbers of species but also preserves the genes of the endangered.

Some factors, which according to the Zoo officials, were the major stumbling blocks for captive breeding. Behavioral abnormalities and space constraints of zoo cause difficulties to rear Siamang in a captive environment. However, the climatic variety of Kathmandu valley contributed to the successful breeding of the rare species in captivity.

Kale, the father of the newborn, is too protective and won't allow anyone to come close to the baby ape. It is a common character of male Siamang to be very loyal and protective of spouse and children. Male Siamangs are very devoted to their females and have only one partner all their lives.

Zoo staffs have experienced dangerous behaviour of Kale. Once a zoo-keeper was seriously attacked when he inadvertently interrupted the Kale (male) and Kali (female) when they were hugging tightly to each other. He happened to reach there to serve food but Kale thought zoo-keeper was trying to obstruct them and eventually attacked him.

Central Zoo has successfully carried out the breeding of other exotic species including the hippopotamus. Zoo officials are also trying out captive breeding of the endangered rhino.

Human snow leopard conflict in Nepal Himalaya - Janak Raj Khatiwada

The harmonious coexistence between snow leopard and subsistence herders in the Nepal Himalaya and Central Asia has become a top concern for conservationists. But yet the down to earth inter-relation between the two livings has to be well understood very specifically for each of the villages and pastures. The Snow Leopard (*Uncia uncia*) is a legendary elusive mega - species across the wild spread mountains of central Asia. It is referred to as the "Queen of the mountain". It is also listed on the IUCN Red list as an endangered category and in Appendix I of CITES, which subjects to the international trade restrictions.



Unless the interfaces of the existence are understood and appropriate strategies are applied harmoniously, the coexistence cannot withstand. The greatest anger of the herders against snow leopard arises when the elusive and endangered cat depredates on livestock in heavy number. It has been understood that the depredation amount differ by season, livestock species, location and very importantly by the herding practices which are site specific.

Snow leopard predation on livestock remains a highly complex and hotly debated issue in Nepal Himalayas as depredation cannot be confirmed. Irrelevant claims by herders, differences of opinion over depredation and exaggeration of the facts only worsen the issue. These factors should therefore be studied for each site separately and coexistence strategy should be developed and applied specifically for each site.

(Mr. Khatiwada is a team member of EPRC/MCN)



Baby siamang rests with its mother, 'Kali' at a zoo in Kathmandu
REUTERS/Go Chitrakar (NEPAL)

Wild elephants go on rampage in Bardiya, Saptari

The wild elephants of Bardia National Park have wreaked havoc to the local community. With the expansion of the corridor linking Bardia National Park (BNP) by Terai Arc Landscape, the number of endangered elephants has increased now. It has reached to 200 from 60.

Most of the elephants have migrated from Dehradun and Jimkarwat National Parks of neighbouring India. Some elephants have migrated along with their calves. Locals are being surprised to see 50-60 elephants roaming in a group.

On the night of 17th September, wild elephants of Bardiya National Park have demolished 26 houses of freed Kamaiyas in Neulapur VDC-4, Khimarhawaphant. They ate the food grains and damaged all the clothes and utensils in the house. Victims said the administration of national park has not shown any interest towards preventing the elephant rampage in Neulapur, Nagnaha, Gaula, Thakurdara and Shivapur VDCs of the district. But according to the national park office necessary human resource has been sent to various areas of the district as to prevent the rampage.

In another district of Nepal, Saptari, farmers of Phattepur VDC and other adjoining VDCs of Saptari district have been terrorized from the wild elephant and tiger. They have been compelled to stay awake during the night when elephant from Sagarmatha Community Forest area nearby Phattepur VDC entered the settlement in the evening and caused damages in paddy plantation and house as well, said the farmers.

The elephants have damaged 12 houses and crops planted by local people during last four months, they added. Likewise, patrol members, shepherds and those collecting grass and firewood in the community forest area have also been in problem owing to the rampage of tigers here.

Suspected horn traders arrested in Chitwan

Attempts of rhino traders to sell a rhino horn have been foiled in Nepal. On 12th September, district police Chitwan have arrested two persons with a rhino horn from Ratnanagar of Chitwan after getting information from the intelligence unit. The arrested were heading for Sauraha of Chitwan, a prominent touristic destination of Nepal contiguous with Chitwan National Park.

The arrested were Ram Pravesh Mahato and RamChandra Prasad of Bara district. According to the arrested persons, they got horn from Dev Narayan Chamar of Bara district. They were lured from the money of NRs.10,000 (US \$ 154) for carrying the horn from Bara to Chitwan district which is just 3 hours traveling route in bus. They have been told that someone will contact them at the lodge of Sauraha to receive the horn. The confiscated horn weighs 541 gram. But the originality of the horn is yet to be confirmed.



Preliminary investigation suggests Ram Pravesh Mahato might have previously involved in these sorts of activities. Both the arrested were from economically poor family. They were handed over to Chitwan National Park authorities on 13th September. More information about poaching and horn trade are expected from the arrested persons.

This incident reflects the momentum of horn traders around tourist areas. Being a touristic hub, hundreds of new faces arrived here daily and hence it has been easier for rhino traders to complete their business remaining incognito and with lower risk of interrogation. It is imperative to more aware hoteliers, tourist guides and also local community to stay vigil.

The arrest of these people provides some respite at the time

when these types of news have been rare.



Students embarked on rhino conservation

Students of bufferzone area of Chitwan National Park (CNP) are embarked on rhino conservation activities in and out of their schools. With the support of Empowering People For Rhino Conservation (EPRC) program launched by Media Consultancy Nepal and Asian Rhino Project Australia, rhino clubs have been established in five secondary level schools of rhino threat areas.

The selected schools are Sajhapur Secondary School, Meghauri-4, Chitwan, Shree Secondary School, Patihani-8, Chitwan, Shree Kapiya Secondary School, Kumroj-8, Chitwan, Shree Kumarwanti Secondary School, Kolhuwa-5, Nawalparasi and Shree Saraswoti Secondary School, Kumarwanti-6, Nawalparasi.

The schools were selected on certain basis such as intensity of poaching and rhino-human conflict in school covering areas, similar types of clubs not established before, so as to avoid replication.

In each school, students of class 8, 9 and 10 were focused to be involved in rhino clubs. Students from poaching vulnerable indigenous and minorities groups are especially initiated to involve in rhino club. With the co-operation of the school team, school talk programs were completed in four schools.



Rhino clubs will organize rhino conservation oriented school level competitions such as essay, oratory, quiz competitions or other initiated by the clubs. Rhino clubs will take out a rally in bufferzone areas awaring community people on rhino conservation.

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