



Conservation Watch - Nepal

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Cruelty on dead rhino in Nepal

On 14th August, 2007, an old aged male rhino was found dead in paddy field at Meghauri Village Development Committee, contiguous to Chitwan National Park, Nepal. It was died by infection of wounds. Chitwan National Park staffs took away horn, hoofs and provided money to local villagers to bury the dead body. Soon after the departure of the park staffs, local people began to apart the dead body brutally with domestic weapons, inspite burying it. The neighboring villagers also rushed to the site to grab an 'opportunity'. It's like a feast for whole village for having a chunk of rhino body as a meat, free of cost. This is not a first case, it is a usual practice here since long.

In Nepal, rhino body is not used as a meat traditionally. But the poor and indigenous bufferzone people, who can rarely afford meat of domestic animal and avian such as goat, duck, hen, are making merry with the flesh of dead rhinos. The more menace to the conservation is the cruel way they apart the body. This sort of activities are diminishing love and sensitivity for not only rhinos but to all faunas. Pathetically, this practice is culminating pleasure to the bufferzone people when rhinos die.

The issue is not raised effectively to curb on this harmful practice hitherto. Both policy level and grassroot level intervention is needed to address this problem. Pressure should be exerted to the government and lobbying should be undertaken to fill the policy gap regarding these practices which are detrimental to the conservation crusade. Similarly, grass root people should be aware not to indulge in this type of activities, firstly with the rhino conservation aspects and secondly the risk of acquiring diseases with the decayed and rotten bodies of rhinos.



Media Consultancy Nepal is now implementing the project "Empowering People For Rhino Conservation" (EPRC) with the support of Asian Rhino Project, Australia in five bufferzone VDCs of Chitwan National Park, including Meghauri.

Urgent need to displace Diclofenac

Globally threatened vulture has no respite in Nepal too. In key breeding areas, their population has been reducing by 90%. Though it resides from Himalaya to low land, its main habitat is found in Central and Western Nepal. Nawalparasi, Palpa, Dang, Bardia, Kailali, Kaski, Chitwan, Kanchanpur districts are amongst them.

Various reports stated that South Asia's vulture population plunged by an alarming 95 percent since 1995. In the context of Nepal, numbers of the white-rumped vulture *Gyps bengalensis* and the slender-billed Vulture *G. tenuirostris* have plunged by 90 percent in ten years.

Diclofenac, which is widely used to treat many types of ailments in farm animals, is the main cause that is dragging vulture towards extinction. Vultures die from the kidney failure when they eat carcasses of animals that earlier got Diclofenac. Meloxicam has been introduced and produced in Nepal from last year, as a safe alternative of Diclofenac available in a same price but the prevalence of Diclofenac is still rampant. Moreover, Government of Nepal has banned production and import of Diclofenac. This initiation is a major breakthrough for the recovery of vulture nonetheless monitoring and assessment needs to be intensified to retain its essence.



The widespread and intensive campaign on promotion of Meloxicam, displacement of Diclofenac and awareness on vulture conservation could rescue endangered vultures of Nepal.

Vultures along with the carcass in Nawalparasi district, Nepal.

Threats on crocodile in CNP

Human disturbances are continuously posing threats to the gharial crocodiles (*Gavialis gangeticus*) of Rapti and Narayani river around Chitwan National Park, Nepal. The indigenous people from Majhi, Musahar, Kumal and Bote community entirely and traditionally depends on fishing as a single livelihood means. Their fishing practice is destructive and intensively exploiting fish resources, a key prey species of crocodile.

Though illegal and defined as a punitive cause, these community are unabatedly using poison, electrocuting for the fishes. The wide practice of long drifting fishing nets are reducing and displacing the prey (fish) of gharial. During the reproduction period of crocodile, CNP has prohibited fishing in Narayani and Rapti river, but the trend couldnot be stopped. Human induced pollution in river like sewage and chemicals substances are further deteriorating the habitat of crocodile and aquatic species in these rivers.

Chitwan National Park has initiated to preserve the crocodile by establishing two reproductive centers in Kasara and Amaltari. In Nepal, within the Chitwan National Park, the gharial has been prevented from extinction through captive rearing program "Gharial Conservation Project" in Kasara since 1978. It aims to breed gharials from a captive population and also from wild eggs collected on Chitwan National Park river bank.

Every year, during the program of Wildlife Week, the grown up crocodiles are released to the natural habitat. This year also CNP has released 26 gharial crocodiles. Since 1981, about 700 young gharials are released from the rearing centre. In spite of these efforts, the numbers of crocodiles are not satisfactory. This year CNP has counted only 117 crocodiles from Rapti and Narayani River. Previously, the gharials are extremely poached for medicinal usages. The big males have a ghara and were favourite preys of the poachers. But total control on poaching cannot be assumed yet. To avoid the human factors for gharial threats, community awareness programs needs to be more expedite.



A picture of majestic gharial crocodile floating in Rapti river, Chitwan.

In Nepal, Bardia and Karnali river (Bardia National Park) and Koshi River (Koshi Tappu Wildlife Reserve) are the other major habitats of gharial crocodile.

Nepal craves for wildlife orphanage center

Nepal is in dire need of wildlife rehabilitation center in natural habitat for injured and orphaned wild animals. After the treatment or rearing period, it has been difficult to adapt them in their natural habitat, past experiences reveal so. Till now, rescued animals are being treated in human captivity for a long period which gradually habituate them with domestic nature. It mostly happens in the rhino case.



A captive rhino in Kasara
Chitwan National Park (2006)

Junge, Shiva Ram, Kumar are some names of rhinos who were reared for more than five years in Chitwan National Park from the babyhood. They found themselves comfort with human than jungles, as a result they preferred more on human colony. The story did not turnaround even after they were translocated to Bardia National Park. "They were treated as buffalo, donkey by the people, kids enjoyed riding on them", Chief Conservation Officer Laxmi Manandhar of Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation (DNPWC) said.

Similarly, officials tried to send rescued leopard back to its habitat after four years of captivity which was reared from three months in Kaski district. It was left far in the jungle, but the attempts were of no avail and it returned back within a week. Now, the DNPWC is planning to establish an orphanage center at Godavari, Lalitpur. Similarly, due to frequent cases of rescue operations in

Chitwan, DNPWC has also planned for Chitwan National Park.

EPRC launched in Nepal

With the support of Asian Rhino Project, Australia, Media Consultancy Nepal has been implementing a short term project entitled "Empowering People For Rhino Conservation" (EPRC) in five bufferzone village development committees (VDCs) of Chitwan National Park. The project has started from August, 2007. The project intends to enhance participation of bufferzone people in rhino conservation effort. Various researches and reports stress on need of widespread conservation education in bufferzone areas of Chitwan National Park. Among arrested suspected poachers, more than 50% are from bufferzone areas.

The major expected outputs from the project are to i) improve rhino-human relationship through conservation education ii) to increase advocacy level of CBOs of bufferzone area for rhino conservation iii) to influence practice and policy of governmental and nongovernmental organizations on rhino issues iv) to strengthen local and national co-ordination and collaboration and v) to widely disseminate information on rhinos.

The major activities include focus group discussions with vulnerable community, establishing and strengthening rhino clubs in schools, , interactions with mother groups and farmer groups, truth sharing programs by ex-poachers, training of trainer (ToT) to selected CBOs members, public hearing, workshop with bufferzone committees, interaction with local political parties, discussions with VDC chairpersons, district and national level co-ordination meeting, production of informative materials, constructing rhino conservation website, establishing rhino information desk on VDCs offices, forming conservation journalists network and so forth.



EPRC Team consulting with
Kerunga Bufferzone Committee