



Conservation Watch - Nepal

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Poaching looms large in Bardia

Infant rhino poached heinously

On December 19, a 15-day-old male rhino was found killed at Janakpur Buffer zone area under Pathabhar Forest Users' Committee in the Karnali Flood Plain. The baby rhino was hit in the head with a bullet and its four legs were found cut. The poachers took all four legs along with the infant rhino's tail.

Out of the 12 developing hooves of the infant rhino, six are missing while the rest were left alone by the poachers. The infant rhino was yet to develop the valuable horn and hooves for which poachers generally kill rhinos. Mostly, the horn becomes developed after the rhino crosses the age of one year. The reason for killing the baby rhino is unknown but it might happen due to the increasing conflict between park and people.

"This is probably the first time a baby rhino was killed at the park in such a heinous fashion," Laxmi Manandhar, Chief Education Officer at the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation (DNPWC) said.

Poaching in BNP has now astoundingly upsurged. On last week of November, a tiger and a rhino was also shot dead here.

Poaching activities have escalated in Bardia National Park after the government decided to halt armed patrolling inside bufferzone area of Bardiya National Park (BNP). Abiding by the peace agreement reached with the former rebels Maoists, Nepal government has directed the Nepal Army (NA) personnel not to carry out armed patrolling inside the BNP buffer zone and other parts of the park. Though the decision is conducive for the on-going peace process, it has produced dire consequences eventually increasing wildlife vulnerability to poachers.

According to Sameer Singh, head of Ranasher Army Batallion (army unit to safeguard BNP), without arm park officials and army personnel are unable to enter the bufferzone area due to heavy presence of armed poachers there. 'Poachers roam freely in the buffer zone and sometimes even target park officials and NA soldiers', he asserted. Most wild animals of the park come out to graze in buffer-zone areas, which are prime spots for poaching.

According to Fanindra Kharel, Chief Warden of BNP, park has been unable to arrest anyone involved in criminal activities in the buffer zone due to this reason. However, BNP has arrested 22 poachers in the last eight months. According to the Ranger Ramesh Kumar Thapa, one valuable rhino horn, 25 kilograms of tiger bones, six leopard skins and eight sets of guns were confiscated from wildlife traders. Similarly, BNP arrested 13 tourists for illegally trying to enter BNP premises during the period.

Focus more on intelligence gathering networks: - Dr. Esmond

Dr. Esmond Bradley Martin, a Kenyan national, is a prominent conservation activist and a researcher. In 1978, he stepped in the field of conservation in Yeman.. From 1979, he was given responsibility by WWF to survey the market

of animal trade in Asia and Africa. He was appointed 'UN Special Envoy For Rhino Conservation' in early 1990s. He is the first personality to be recognised by UN as an wildlife ambassador. He has gained expertise in wildlife policy, wildlife trade; specifically on rhino horn and elephant ivory. He loves writing on conservation issues and has 14 books in his name.



Recently Dr. Martin visited Nepal with his wife Dr. Chryssee Perry Martin. She has been working for Mama orphanage in Nairobi, Kenya since three decades. They have visited EPRC/MCN project office in Chitwan and Conservation Watch Nepal team conversed with Dr. Esmond on rhino conservation related issues. Here are the excerpts:

1. Please elaborate about your Nepal visit this time.

I first came Nepal in 1968 as a tourist. Aftermath, I have been visiting here regularly. For the last couple of years, I am investigating on rhino situation and rhino trade of Nepal. For this purpose, I am here now after two years. I am visiting Chitwan National Park, Bardia National Park and Suklaphanta Wildlife Reserve. I have discussed with and sought information from different related individuals.

2. You have substantial knowledge on rhino conservation practices of the world. How do you compare and contrast rhino conservation initiatives of Asia and Africa ?

The major point I have noticed is the difference in management practice. African countries have successfully executed 'Private Management Practice' where a rhino could be bought from the government and nurtured under prerequisite provisions. South Africa, Zimbabwe and Kenya has successfully entertained this practice. For e.g. in Kenya, white rhinos could be bought for 20,000 US \$ and in South Africa black rhinos costs 60,000 US \$. This practice has promoted conservation along with tourism. In Asia, we cannot found this practices.

3. Would you please share on global trade of the rhino horn.

It is disgusting that horn of Asian rhinos are drawing 8 times more money than African though horns of latter are much bigger. Horn of Asian rhinos are reckoned to be more robust and effective for the medicinal purpose. In wholesale, per kg. horn of African Rhinos worth around 1700 US \$ whereas Asian rhino's horn have market value of around 12000-15000 US \$ per kg. Asian rhinos are more vulnerable for poaching due to it's value in the international market.

4. What is your recommendations to turnaround existing conservation situation of Nepal ?

First of all, I recommend to focus more on intelligence gathering networks. Nepal is spending meagre amount on intelligence. Nepal should expend at least US \$ 1000 per sq. km. in protected areas. West Bengal government of India is spending 4000 US\$ per sq. km now. Likewise, number of human resources looking after the protected areas should not be less than 1 person per sq. km.

I have found the tourist charges in the national parks of Nepal are less while comparing with other countries. It can be doubled thus more fund will be available for the conservation. Government should focus on electric fencing to reduce wildlife induced circumstances. Lastly, equal attention should be given to avert corruption, corruption would hinder all attempts of the conservation.

Vulture breeding centre in limbo

Vulture breeding centre slated to establish in Kasara, Chitwan has been in limbo from three years. National Trust For Nature Conservation (NTNC) with the support from Zoological Society of London (ZSL) was supposed to instigate breeding centre in 2005, but the sluggish process has protracted the plan.

According to the National News Agency (RSS), ZSL has already provided Nepalese Rupees 2.5 million for the purpose.



"Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation (DNPWC) asked us to amend the proposal twice but still doesnot approve it", RSS cited the version of Bimal Kumar Baniya, Member Secretary of NTNC. NTNC has planned to start breeding centre with 10 pairs of vulture by keeping them in a special fence.

In other report as mentioned by Nepalese media, some 40 white rumped vultures considered to have become extinct a decade ago has been found roosting in Beli Patela forest at Kailali district in the western part of Nepal. According to statistics collected by International Union for the Conservation Nature and National Resources (IUCN) five years ago, white-

rumped vultures went extinct worldwide. Their sighting in Kailali is nothing short of an ecological miracle. A local bird lover Rupak Malla said he found a vulture incubating its eggs and added that it had not left the nest for three days without a break.

Birds protect the lake, make it ever pristine

A lake possibly only one in the world which is protected by a bird in Myagdi district, the Barahakuna puzzles every tourist reached there. The lake located near Dhaulagiri Base Camp is the centre of attraction for the foreign tourists as well. The Myagdi river flowing down the lake has added extra beauty. Very strange about the lake is that birds are always active to make the lake neat and tidy and ever pristine. The birds with black and blue color remove the fallen leaves from the lake, sometime even diving deep into it.

Similarly, the rotundity is another peculiarity of the lake in blue colour. Tourists reached there are astonished a lot seeing the lake on hill encircled with dense forest without any apparent origin. The lake is very deep with some 8 to 20 meter length, it is guessed. It takes almost three days journey on foot to reach the lake from the District Headquarters Benibazar.

The locals have regarded the lake as a divine form and pay worship to it. Many more tourist visit the lake due to its quaint feature, said a priest. It is a matter to everyone's astonishment that why the same bird is devoted to the protection of the lake. A French citizen Garrard Duwan with much surprise said he went there after his friend informed about the quaint lake. The locals say the bird busy at keeping the lake pristine is very different from the birds found in other places. Similarly, the cattle reached near the lake do not drink water here, the shepherds said. No drop of water has oozed ever in the landslide adjoining the lake.

The concerned sectors should pay attention to protect and study on this wonderful lake, said Headmaster of a local school, Dirgha Bahadur Khatri. If the publicity of this strange lake is far and wide, it will undoubtedly be a popular tourist destination in our country.

Conservation related book exhibition for students

A two-day book exhibition and food festival was concluded on 30th December at the Central Zoo, Jawalakhel, Lalitpur. The event was organized on the occasion of National Trust for Nature Conservation's 12th anniversary of handling the management of the zoo. Around 10 publishing houses and various nature and wildlife conservation organizations have put up their stalls offering students book at discount rates and information regarding conservation.

"We really liked the programme on the protection of amphibians they showed on the computer. We also got to know about different species of birds," shared class nine students Rephika Maharjan and Sakshi Mulmi, who were also the volunteers at the exhibition. The books put on sale under good discounts by the publishing houses created to students of various ages and fictions. Students came mostly with their parents. Various food stalls were also seen busy serving their customers.

"In the initial stage, the publishing houses and we were also not sure whether it would be a good idea to have an exhibition in the zoo. But in the end, it turned out to be unique and successful," said RK Shrestha, Director, NTNC, Central Zoo.

Cops arrest five for smuggling wildlife skin

In Surkhet, midwestern district of Nepal, police arrested three persons red-handed on 3rd January in possession of tiger skin. The police team dispatched from the District Police Office arrested Keshar Bahadur Shamshedi and his brother Hira Lala red-handed on basis of tip-offs provided by locals. Leader of the team, Prem Lama, Khumjung, Uttarganga-8 was arrested from Gandaki tole, S.P. Ramkumar of District Police Office, Surkhet said .

Confessing to crime, Lama said that he brought tiger skin from India and was about to take it to China for sale. The Samshedi brothers admitted that they brought it as porters at the wage price of Nepalese Rs. 2,000/-. Lama admitted that he had purchased the 10 feet four inch long skin as well as 125 bones and 22 dried meat at the price of Nepalese Rs. 3,0000/-. The skin brought from Birendnagar via Babiyachaur entry point of Surkhet, west of India was about to be taken to Kathmandu, Lama said in his statement.

Similarly on 17th December, Nepal Police arrested two individuals in possession of four leopard skins. Phulman Lama of Kakanmi VDC-5 and Buddhi Bahadur Tamang of Kumarini VDC-6 of Nuwakot district were arrested at Balaju along with the leopard skins.

Commitment for more fund allocation

Chairpersons of Bufferzone User Committees (BUCs) around Chitwan National Park (CNP) have committed to allocate more funds from available for the conservation than development activities. During the interaction program organised by Empowering People For Rhino Conservation/Media Consultancy Nepal, president of Bufferzone Management Council, Mr. Krishna Prasad Bhurtel relented that bufferzone resource has not been spent on conservation as per the requirement. He said communities strongly demand for development activities as they are less aware about the benefits of conservation.

In the program, EPRC had presented BUCs related issues raised during it's activities on grassroot, community and district level. The major issues were: inappropriate and protracted compensation, for being apathy on people's aspirations, budget prioritization on development rather on conservation activities, coordination dearth with related stakeholders, good governance in BUC's etc.

Most of the BUC chairpersons opined that the compensation is a intractable problem since the crop loss is difficult to evaluate. They said compensation claim is much higher than the actual loss though BUC resource is largely inadequate to compensate even the genuine claim. Regarding the issues of budget priorities, they said buffer zone user's group (BUG) demand for development activities than conservation and the work plan is prepared according to the BUG recommendations. However, they have committed to improve this situation.

Mr. Basudev Dhungana (chairperson, Mrigakunja BUC) said that BUC's are unable to fulfill people's expectations also because it has very limited rights and responsibilities. Mr. Bishnu Bahadur Sen (Chairperson, Sisawar BUC) said, 'the most complains of people are related with compensation, policy and practices, which cannot be changed overnight neither we can solve it. I think activities like EPRC's would help to yield the result more sooner'. Mr. Raj Kumar Bhatta of Lothar BUC opined BUC's are being interpreted as 'development agency' in grassroot rather than conservation oriented people organisation.

Mr. Bhurtel conceded BUCs chairpersons and members are not equally competent and thus BUCs profoundly need support to develop institutionalism and capabilities in order to ensure good governance. He said EPRC reports, feedbacks will be seriously taken. Chairpersons of 22 BUCs of CNP participated in the program.

