



NTNC

ANNUAL REPORT

2024

© NTNC 2024 (FY 2023/24)

Published by:

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NTNC Projects : ACAP, BCC, BCP, Central Zoo, MCAP, SCP, GCAP, KCC

Cover photos (front/back): Snow leopard camera trapping in Manang, Annapurna Conservation Area, ©NTNC

ABOUT NTNC PROJECTS

MOUNTAINS

ANNAPURNA CONSERVATION AREA PROJECT (ACAP)

Launched in 1986, the Annapurna Conservation Area Project (ACAP) is the largest undertaking of NTNC. ACA is also the first 'Conservation Area' and largest 'Protected Area' in Nepal covering an area of 7,629 sq. km. It covers 5 districts and includes 15 rural municipalities. Together with its remarkable biodiversity, with 1,884 plants, 128 mammals, 521 birds, 49 reptiles and 29 amphibians, 384 butterflies, and 28 fish species, it is also home to some of the most well-known mountains in Nepal where diverse cultures and peoples reside. This makes it an area of high eco-system sensitivity and the country's top trekking destination. It is here where NTNC pioneered the ICDP model which integrates biodiversity conservation and sustainable development through maximizing community engagement, ownership and opportunity.

MANASLU CONSERVATION AREA PROJECT (MCAP)

Manaslu Conservation Area (MCA), declared on December 28, 1998 is the second conservation area to come under NTNC management. MCA encompasses an area of 1,663 sq. km. of Tsumnubri Rural Municipality, with all its seven wards except Sirdibas adjoining the Tibetan Autonomous Region of China. Located in the northern part of the Gorkha District, the area is made up of two major mountain valleys—Tsum in the east and Nubri in the west. Ecologically, MCA is home to a diverse range of rare flora and fauna, also serving as a healthy habitat for the snow leopard and its prey. Socio-culturally people are of Tibetan origin who follow Buddhism, observing a profound sense of wildlife compassion, notably in Tsum valley. With far-flung communities living in pristine wilderness, NTNC has replicated the successful ICDP model of ACA in MCA.

GAURISHANKAR CONSERVATION AREA PROJECT (GCAP)

Gaurishankar Conservation Area (GCA), declared on January 11, 2010 is the third conservation area under NTNC management. GCA covers an area of 2,179 sq. km. encompassing two municipalities and eight rural municipalities in three districts, namely, Sindhupalchok, Dolakha and Ramechhap. The area serves as a biological corridor connecting two crucial protected areas of the country, Sagarmatha National Park and Langtang National Park. Together with its interesting faunal diversity, the area is home to 695 types of floral species and 16 major vegetation types. The region is rich in water resources and is the catchment of Khimti, Bhotekoshi, Sunkoshi, and Tamakoshi rivers that are major water sources for large hydropower projects in the country. To sustainably manage the richly resourced area NTNC has replicated the success of its ICDP model in GCA also.

KATHMANDU VALLEY

CENTRAL ZOO

The Central Zoo, located in Jawalakhel, Lalitpur is the oldest zoo in Nepal, its origination dating back to 1932 as a private collection of late Rana Prime Minister Juddha Shumser JBR. After it came under the Government of Nepal in 1956, its management was eventually entrusted to NTNC in 1995. Covering an area of 6 ha, today, the zoo houses more than 1100 animals of 112 different species of mammals, birds, reptiles and fish. The zoo is a centre for recreation, conservation education and wildlife research. Already more than 100,000 students from more than 300 schools inside Kathmandu Valley are a part of our Friends of Zoo (FoZ) membership-based conservation education programme. Today the zoo has also become a focal point for rescue, rehabilitation and treatment of wild animals from in and round Kathmandu Valley, and it continues to promote animal welfare, conservation learning and environmental activism among all sections of the society.

TARAI

BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION CENTRE (BCC)

Biodiversity Conservation Center (BCC), formerly known as Nepal Conservation Research and Training Center (NCRTC), was established in 1989 to conduct biological research and monitoring in the lowland (Tarai) protected areas of Nepal. BCC is among the largest and oldest undertaking of NTNC, and over time, it has been at the forefront of Nepal's milestone achievements in conservation—increase in threatened and endangered wildlife species such as Royal Bengal tiger, Greater one-horned rhinoceros, Asian elephant; restoration of wildlife habitats and key biological corridors; and significant increase in participation of local communities in conservation. Although the centre's services extend across Nepal, its support presently concentrates on providing technical proficiency to Chitwan National Park, Parsa National park and Koshi Tappu Wildlife Reserve for wildlife management activities like wildlife translocation, survey of flagship species, ecological research within and outside the park, among others.

BARDIA CONSERVATION PROGRAMME (BCP)

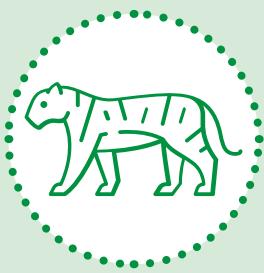
NTNC started engaging in Bardia National Park in 1986 to monitor the first batch of translocated rhinoceros from Chitwan National Park. Subsequently, Bardia Conservation Programme (BCP) was launched in 1994 as a regular project of NTNC focusing on biodiversity research and sustainable community development in the western lowlands. Its role particularly in wildlife research and monitoring, habitat and corridor restoration, and capacitating local institutions have been key for the increase of endangered wildlife species. Today the Barida-Banke complex is seen to have the highest density of the Royal Bengal tiger among Nepal's protected areas today. BCP works mainly in three protected areas: Bardia National Park and its buffer zone, Banke National Park and its buffer zone, and Blackbuck Conservation Area (BCA); including biological corridors of Khata, Karnali, and Kamdi, and adjoining community forests.

SHUKLAPHANTA CONSERVATION PROGRAMME (SCP)

NTNC started its conservation in the Shuklaphanta National Park (ShNP) in 1999, mainly focusing on biodiversity conservation along with research and monitoring. SCP's main objective is to safeguard endangered wildlife species and their habitats in and around ShNP, and to improve the livelihood of marginalized communities around the park premises. The park is known to have the biggest patch of continuous grassland in Nepal and holds the largest herd of swamp deer in Asia. Serving as a remarkable space for rhinos, tigers, leopards, and other prey species, together with the unique indigenous cultures, ShNP represents the glory of far western Nepal. SCP's programmes are focused in Shuklaphanta National Park (ShNP) and its buffer zone along with the Laljhadi and Branhadev Corridors.

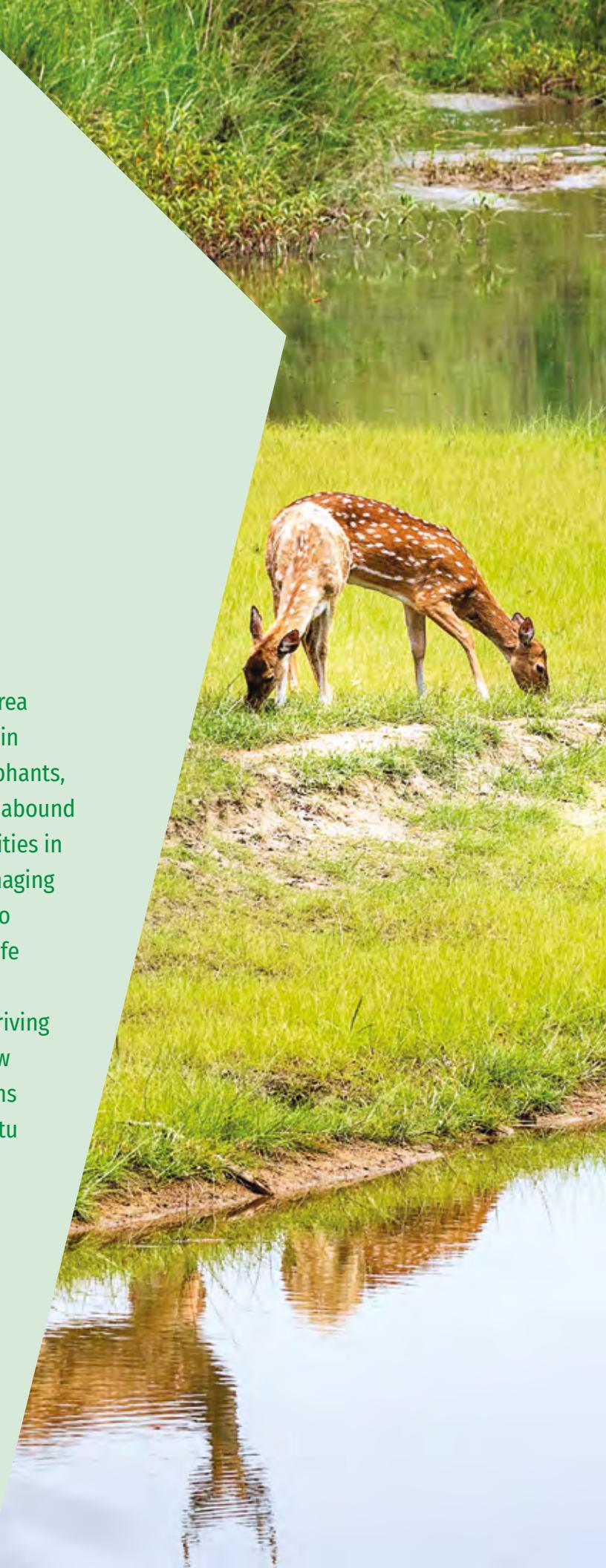
KOSHI CONSERVATION CENTER (KCC)

Koshi Conservation Center (KCC) is NTNC's eight and most recent project under operation. It was set up as an independent project officially from September 2021. Prior to that, the Trust's Koshi-related operations were managed from its Biodiversity Conservation Center (NTNC-BCC) office in Sauraha, Chitwan. A dedicated project focusing on Koshi Tappu region now ensures NTNC's physical presence across all the protected areas in the Tarai region of Nepal, extending much necessary conservation support into eastern Nepal, where human-elephant conflict are the severest in the country. The project is meant to support the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation (DNPWC) and local communities enhance the conservation value of Koshi Tappu Wildlife Reserve (KTWR)—a 175 square kilometre protected area situated in the Saptakoshi River plain of south-eastern Nepal that serves as a prime habitat for diverse wildlife and wetland ecosystems.



SPECIES CONSERVATION & RESEARCH

Species conservation continues to be NTNC's core area of intervention. Although our collaborative efforts in conservation of key species like tigers, rhinos and elephants, have seen encouraging results, this endeavor remains abound with challenges. This necessitates increasing our activities in controlling wildlife crime, protecting habitats and managing conflict between people and wildlife. We have aimed to address these challenges by focusing on human-wildlife conflict management, wildlife crime control, species management and wildlife rescue and rehabilitation. Driving innovation and informed decision-making through new scientific knowledge and actions on the ground remains a priority for us. Combining our expertise in both in-situ and ex-situ management, our work remains important for long-term survival of critical populations. As a key scientific partner, we continue to support the government through our technical backing. This chapter highlights some of our efforts in species conservation.



■ **Six rhinos were internally translocated** this year inside Chitwan National Park (CNP) from the high density western sector of the park to the low density eastern sector. This is part of the biological rhino population management strategy in CNP to secure healthy rhino populations by ensuring genetic diversity while managing habitat pressures and resource competition and conflict with nearby communities, which risks their long-term population viability. The translocated rhinos will be monitored through individual-based tracking systems to ensure their adaptation and well-being in the new environment.

■ **ID-based Rhino Monitoring**

Our regular rhino monitoring exercise this year confirmed 231 individual rhinos through direct sightings – in Chitwan-Parsa complex (172), Bardia NP (36) and Shuklaphanta NP (23). NTNC together with the parks continue to bring more rhinos into the ID-based system where individual rhinos are systematically recorded and monitored based on their unique body features.

■ **Blackbuck reintroduction site** in Shuklaphanta NP is successfully breeding and managing blackbucks. Its population is in steady increase, now with 309 individuals.





■ **Captive elephant management**

Serving as an important resource for park management and research activities, as well as a tourist attraction, the Elephant Breeding Center in Chitwan is NTNC's long-term program. The center currently has 18 adult elephants. In addition to this, there are more than 100 captive elephants in Chitwan (government and privately-owned). NTNC supports to provide them with regular veterinary care. This year through our health camps, veterinary services were provided for 80 captive elephants of Chitwan and Bardia.

■ **To control the booming feral dog population** in Manaslu Conservation Area, 88 dogs were sterilized and 238 dogs received vaccinations. Growing feral dog populations can become potential disease threats in the local community and to wildlife. The initiative is being pursued through the

locally-led Cham Nyingje Dog Welfare Program, which follows the one-health approach, prioritizing the unity of healthy people, animals, and ecosystems.

■ **Reintroduction of Gharials in Shuklaphanta National Park**

25 gharials bred at the Gharial Breeding Center were released in Chaudhar River, in the section between Piterghat and Gohikunda which is identified as a suitable habitat.

