



Wildlife Conservation Nepal

Newsletter

IN THE NEWS

Wildlife Trade Issues

- An Interaction Meeting



The recent wildlife seizures and arrests in Nepal, China and India indicate that wildlife crime has become a well oiled organized system. An interaction meeting was organized by WCN in Kathmandu on June 16, 2006. The meeting was held to develop networks amongst different national enforcement agencies to share information in combating illegal wildlife trade.

The participants were from Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation, Nepal Police, Nepal Ex-Police Association, Natural History Museum, Saugat Legal Firm, Regional Environment Office for South Asia, US Embassy, Wildlife Protection Society of India, and Environment Investigation Agency, UK .

Prior to this interaction, a meeting was held at the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation with Mr. Naryan Poudel, Director General, Mr. Shyam Bajimaya, Chief Ecologist and Mr. Diwakar

(MORE ON THIS AND RELATED IN PAGE 2)



WCN's small initiation towards urban wildlife conservation.

www.wcn.org.np/youth/urban

Leopards in Our Backyard

Common Leopards (*Panthera pardus*) of Felidea family are muscular, shy cats with a lifespan of about 12 to 17 years. They are athletic and agile carnivores weighing between 80 to 200 pounds with magnificent orange coats and distinct black spots. Found in South Asia to Central Africa, Nepal has leopards residing in its tropical to temperate forests.



The status of *Panthera pardus* in many countries is endangered or critically endangered while in some, it is considered threatened. Placed in Appendix II of CITES, this animal is poached for skin and bones. The common leopard is not in Nepal's protected list of mammals however Nepal being signatory to CITES, it provides protection complying CITES regulation.

Apart from poaching, another threat to the common leopard is habitat fragmentation that forces them to venture into urban settings in search of prey, resulting in attacks on human beings - leading to conflict and sometimes loss of life. Every two to three months, news of people being mauled by leopards in and around Kathmandu Valley indicate that human settlements are infringing in wildlife habitat and their prey base have become limited leading to such forays into city areas in search of food. Conflicts with humans often lead to offensive action resulting in injury or death of the leopard. However, to strike a balance between conservation and human safety, research must be conducted on why leopards stalk cities? To find out mitigating measures for such attacks, we need to study its population dynamics, habitat fragmentation, if its prey base have indeed come down? or whether old or young leopards have been edged out from its habitat by new territorial males?



WCN's Urban Wildlife Program initiated a research, based on the number of attacks by leopards in the last five years, referencing it with attacks in different parts of the world, and has designed an awareness program for people living at the edge of forests such as Dakshinkali, Balaju, Dhapasi, Naikap, etc. Though there have been leopard attacks on humans and cattle in different parts of Nepal, which are sometimes fatal, this awareness campaign will be initiated from Kathmandu to sensitize people on how to avoid conflict with leopards and what precautionary measures can be taken in case leopards are sighted in their localities. Usually locals do not have information on who and where to contact in such encounters which lead to more chaos and serious injuries. Mostly, leopards that stray into people's homes are shot or killed by locals and if tranquilized, finding a new home for them is a difficult proposition, because the central zoo has exceeded its capacity for maintaining big cats. It is time to address this issue through policy so that leopards can be rehabilitated in the wild while protecting people and their livestock and leopards in our backyards are not in conflict with us any more but live to coexist with us. They are after all an integral part of our natural heritage. ■

Otter trade in Nepal

The wildlife of South Asia peninsula is at a great risk than ever before due to the meteoric rise in illegal wildlife trade. Poaching and hunting was inconspicuous in the past and associated with wildlife pest species (chital, wild pigs, porcupine and rabbits). Today, illegal hunting is more pronounced because opportunities come easily with very low risks and high demand for wildlife product. Mega vertebrates are subject of charisma and are provided with full protection and conservation measures while little and under represented species such as otter are overlooked.

The top food chain predator in a wetland ecosystem is represented by otter and little has been done towards its conservation in Nepal. Otters are small carnivores that seek refuge near river banks. Nepal has 3 otter species, well adapted to the place it dwells. However, habitat fragmentation, over hunting and natal mortality have put constraint in its population growth.



Otter skins seized during a raid in Kathmandu

A study carried out by WCN showed that all three otter species were found in Kailali, Kapilvastu, Makalu and Taplejung districts. They have been found to be evenly distributed from north to south in these districts that have wetland ecosystems. Today, due to intensive hunting in India, the population have declined there. Now, poachers from India are stepping up their activities in Nepal. In recent times, poachers of Indian origin arrested in Makalu Barun National Park mentioned that they poach otters for their skin and meat.

Otter trade survey conducted by WCN indicates summer and monsoon as lean periods for poachers and traders, because they are unable to sell otter skins that are used to make hats, jackets and fur linings in Tibet. Come autumn, the prices escalate.

Otters are top carnivore in the wetland ecosystem and if displaced, wetlands could face dire consequences. It is time for us to sensitize to policy makers and civil societies about otter conservation. ■

A SPECIES PROTECTED IS A HERITAGE MAINTAINED -WCN

(...CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)



Chapagain, CITES unit, to share information on international wildlife crime and strengthen ties between Nepal and India on ways to counter the ever growing wildlife trade. During the interaction it was suggested to appoint and strengthen local organizations to coordinate with different government agencies in Nepal to act as a focal point to collect, share information from India and vice versa about traders and poachers.

To illustrate the gravity of the trade nexus, a short tiger trade film was screened. This film made by Environment Investigation Agency, UK and Wildlife Protection

Society of India had an overwhelming effect on the participants. On this occasion issues on increasing wildlife crime and the need for adequate measures to be addressed politically were probed in order to bring down wildlife crime and limit Nepal as a conduit for international wildlife trade for South East Asia and beyond. The meeting deliberated establishing a database center in Kathmandu. Such will strengthen the ongoing effort of line agencies and WCN in controlling environment crime. ■



Representatives of different organizations at the interaction meet

"BAWARIAS" - SET IN THEIR TRADITION TO LIVE OFF OUR ENDANGERED ANIMALS



Camping out in the outskirts of the city - the Bawarias

Bawarias and Behaliyas are nomads of India. Today, they live in small cluster groups. Originally, the Bawarias were from Rajasthan while Beheliyas were from Andhra and Madhya Pradesh. These two different group of people are hunters and gatherers. Professional hunters, they have abilities to read tracks and pugmarks of wild animals. Due to their activities, the name Bawaria has been derived from the word *bawar* or noose used for snaring wild animals. The Indian Census of 1881 describes Bawarias as "hunting community " and further adds that they are "much addicted to crime" and "thieving comes naturally to them". Their skill in tracking wild animals is notorious." Such articulated characteristics allowed them to survive from generation to generation, killing wildlife to sustain their livelihood. The East India Company, under the provision of Criminal Tribal Act 1871 gave Bawaria the title of "Criminal Tribe" because of their innate criminal instinct. They would kill travellers for money to appease Goddess Kali so that their community would be protected against natural calamities.

With no permanent address, the Indian Government has yet to distribute ration or voting cards to Bawarias which means that they do not have citizenships. Most practice hunting as a form of a regular job. Sariska National Park in India lost all of its tiger population to Bawaria poachers in 2004-2005. Prosecuted in India, many find their ways into protected areas of Nepal especially where the occurrences of animals like tigers, leopards and otters are high.

Incidents of arrests and seizures linked with Indian nationals indicate an alarming rise in transborder wildlife crime in Nepal. Most arrested Indians in Nepal are found belonging to the Bawaria and Behelia tribes from India. A wanted Indian wildlife criminal, Jagdish Lodha was arrested in Kathmandu on June 4, 2006 in connection with the international illegal trade in tiger, leopard and otter skins by WCN field operatives.

Authorities at Chitwan National Park issued a warrant for the arrest of this wildlife trader, believed to be the kingpin of a major network of poachers and dealers operating across India and Nepal. Lodha was captured under citizen's arrest by WCN and handed over to Kathmandu Police. "The capture of Lodha illustrates how vital it is for India and Nepal to exchange enforcement intelligence, however it's sad that he was set loose by the Nepalese



Jagdish Lodha

authorities, so a dangerous wildlife trader is still at large", said Prasanna Yonzon, CEO of WCN. "Hailing from the Bawaria community in India he used to bring skins from central and northern India, now he and his gang is targeting our big cats", he added. The information provided by Wildlife Protection Society of India had led to Lodha's arrest.

In a separate incident on April 5, 2006, Ishalu Loddha, Chander Loddha, Prem Loddha and Prem Singh of Hanuman Basti, Haryana, India were apprehended with a leopard skin and 40 kg of tiger bones which they were wanting to sell from their open camping ground (**photo above left**). The skin and bones were put in small plastic bags and then placed in a wicker basket, wrapped up in a bed sheet and placed 40 inches below ground. On top, they had placed idols of Gods so that nobody would disturb it.

Jagdish Lodha, is believed to manage 50 families of Bawaria poachers, many of whom are now camping out in different places in Nepal. In the last ten years, Lodha is reported to have sold over 30 tiger skins to dealers in Nepal who supply the products to lucrative markets in Tibet and western China. This year alone, he sold 7 tiger skins and 15 otter skins to Tibetan traders in Kathmandu. His father too is involved in poaching and was arrested following the seizure of iron traps in a wildlife sanctuary in India in November 2005. Despite the setbacks associated with Nepal's current political situation, enforcement authorities have continued to target these organized networks of criminals, cooperating with WCN who has assisted the Police with provision of actionable intelligence in a timely manner. "Building trust, transparency and the will to collaborate on trans-national enforcement issues between governments and NGOs is vital in the fight against international wildlife crime, and we must look for alternates to bring these notorious tribes and traditional poachers into conservation rather than condemning them" says Prasanna Yonzon. ■

Annual Poster Competition 2006



Students participating in the 2nd Annual Poster Competition 2006

To celebrate World Environment Day (June 5) WCN ECAP conducted a poster competition amongst schools of Godavari at Godavari Botanical Garden on June 4, 2006. A team comprising two students from each school painted a poster on the theme "Importance of Trees in our Surroundings". This competition was held at the base of Phulchowki illustrating the importance of the remaining forests within the valley. The posters were focused to create awareness about the importance of trees in our environment. The posters were exhibited during nature and wildlife photography exhibition,

Nature Through Lens – 2 of WCN at Nepal Art Council, Babarmahal from June 5-9, 2006.

The posters were open for public voting throughout the exhibition. Kingdom Star High School (picture below) won the first position followed by Pushpanjali Secondary School followed by Crescent Academy. The other participants were from Children's Paradise Secondary School, Dolphin English School, Everest School and Vidya Sagar Boarding School, Godavari. ■



Poster of the Year 2006

MEETINGS

An interacting meeting was held between representatives of Wildlife Institute of India (WII), Dehradun and WCN members at WCN office on March 10, 2006 to discuss future cooperation and trainings to WCN staff. Dr. A. Hussain and Dr. R. Badola of WII discussed facilities on identifying genetic samples of wildlife at WII which could not be investigated in Nepal. ■

Ms. Katharine Koch, Director for Regional Environment Office for South Asia and Mr. Jay Pal Shrestha Regional Environmental Affairs Specialist of US Embassy visited WCN Office on June 20, 2006 to learn about WCN and its activities. ■

WORKSHOPS

A training workshop was conducted on identifying rhino horn at WCN office for field staffs. This was critical because in earlier incidences of surveillance of illegal wildlife trade - WCN team encountered many simulated rhino horns which was being sold as genuine. Today, our field staff have adequate knowledge on how to distinguish genuine rhino horns from stimulated ones. The intensive training was provided by Kamal Kunwar, Head of anti-poaching unit of Royal Chitwan National Park. ■



Ms. Amala Tuladhar and Mr. Buddhi Ratna Dangol, WCN attended a two day workshop (May 19-20, 2006) on how to enhance speaking on the radio. For the past six months they have been hosting Footprints, a presentation of WCN on Times FM 90.6. The workshop was organized by the Times FM at Nagarkot. ■

WILDLIFE TRADERS ARRESTED

Bacchu Rai, a resident of Hetaunda has been the key element in enticing people to poach large and endangered mammals. He has been supplying rhino horns and tiger products to Tibetans in Kathmandu for more than five years.



Bacchu Rai

This trader has a wide connection. On March 19, 2006, WCN team and Nepal Police arrested him in Kalimati.

In another incident, WCN with the help of Nepal Police arrested a notorious tiger skin and rhino horn trader Sonam Bhote Lama - a Tibetan with a high profile on illegal wildlife on March 18, 2006.

The Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation has moved Sonam to Shivapuri National Park for security reasons. With his arrest, a Tibetan mountain trade ring has been broken. ■



Sonam Bhote Lama

Similarly in February 2006, field operators of Wildlife Conservation Nepal were assigned in Chitwan to track down a group of rhino horn poachers who had been poaching rhinos in Chitwan National Park for a long period of time. The group consisted of 16 members and each was assigned specific task. The ring leader of this group was Sanu Lama, a resident of Jutpani, Chitwan. Rest of the members were stakeouts and informers. WCN field operatives took more than a month to track Sanu Lama at his hideout. The Chitwan National Anti-poaching team had been on Sanu Lama's trail for more than 2 years. Today, most of the individuals from this group are serving time in prison including Sanu Lama. ■

MUSK PODS SEIZED

On January 13 2006, WCN team acted as genuine buyer for musk pods and set up a sting operation with District Forest Office in Kathmandu. Even though the case was complex WCN was able to nab three traders in Balaju, Kathmandu.



Seized Musk Pods in Balaju, Kathmandu

WCN has come to know that there has been a steady demand for bear bile by foreigners as well. WCN has also been monitoring bear bile trade in Nepal. ■

TUNE INTO FOOTPRINTS EVERY TUESDAY FOR NEWS, VIEWS AND WILDLIFE RELATED ISSUES ON TIMES FM 90.6 MHz, 8 AM ONWARDS



Nature Through Lens 2

Wildlife Conservation Nepal has been organising nature and wildlife photography workshops, trainings, competitions and exhibitions to promote photography talent and the legacy of natural heritage of Nepal. Thus on the occasion of World Environment Day 2006 WCN organized a Photography Exhibition "Nature Through Lens 2".

Nepali photographers like Mani Lama, Raj Bhai Suwal and Nripa Dhoj Khadka. The official sponsor of the program was Photo Concern Pvt. Ltd while the event was supported by various other organisations like Safari Narayani Lodge, Park Village Resort, Godavari Village Resort, WAVE, ECS, Golchha Organisation, Nebico Pvt. Ltd.



Top three winning photographs of the Competition

The Five day long exhibition(5-9 June 2006) was held at the Nepal Art Council, Babarmahal, Kathmandu. The exhibition featured over 130 photographs of 58 participants of WCN Annual Nature and Wildlife Photography Competition for Amateurs.

Om Prakash Yadav, a web designer won the first prize for his fabulous picture of a cricket. Dinesh Shilpakar and Rajendra Dev Adhikari won 2nd and 3rd prizes respectively. The rest of the Top Ten Photographers included Binod Rai, Denjola Bhutia, Gaurav Dhvaj Khadka, Gautam Dhimal, Gehendra Dhimal, Sanjay Lama and Vikash Pradhan while Anil Maharjan got the Consolation Prize.



Ms. Katharine E. Koch inaugurating the exhibition

Katherine E. Koch, Director, Regional Environment Office for South Asia, US Embassy, KTM, inaugurated the exhibition and awarded the winners.

All participants were given certificates and gift vouchers from Photo Concern Pvt. Ltd.



Young students enjoying the photographs.

Documentaries on Conservation themes were also shown and a 2 Day Photography Basic Training for Beginners was also conducted during the five days of Nature Through Lens 2. About 2000 people visited the exhibition. The Competition Jury comprised of prominent

All top ten pictures were published into greeting cards. The proceeds from their sales will be logged back into conservation programs of Youth Environment Program (YEP) throughout the year. You can buy these greeting card by writing to us at mail@wcn.org.np. ■

Taudaha Conservation



-Celebrating World Wetlands Day

From the third week of January 2006, WCN Urban Wildlife Program (UWP) celebrated World Wetlands Day till 2nd Feb 2006. On January 23, 2006 a *Clean Up* Campaign was conducted in Taudaha along with the local conservation groups. On January 28, with eight other conservational NGOs, namely Friends of Bagmati, BCN, TYC,



Cleaning Up

Nature Jamboree at Taudaha was organized with UWP's active participation in coordinating nature hikes, green map making, workshop on Nepali traditional art form known as Mithila

Art and DNPWC's On the Spot Art Competition. Much care was taken so that these activities do not disturb the migratory birds in the pond.

More than 150 people participated in the Nature Hike organized by UWP on the hill known as *Boson Danda* overlooking Taudaha. Chocolate Power bars like Snickers were



Prominent photographer Mr. Nripa D. Khadka and Mr. Shashindra Shrestha, Nebico Pvt. Ltd inaugurating the nature hike

provided to the hikers. The hike was participated by an interesting mix of people. From businessmen to professors, journalists, radio jockeys to students and teachers actively climbed *Boson Danda* with the hopes to conserve Taudaha.

Bird watching was conducted by BCN, cycle rally by NCC (from Bhrikuti Mandap to Taudaha circling the ponds of Kathmandu like Kamal Pokhari, Nagpokhari). About 500 people came to participate in this one day event. The funds collected from the Jamboree was donated to Taudaha Youth Club, a local organisation for conservational activities in Taudaha.



Ms. Nepal- Sugarika KC. encouraging students making green maps at WCN Stall

On World Wetlands Day, February 2, 2006 as a follow up of the Jamboree, a workshop "Conservation of Wetlands in Kathmandu Valley" was organised at Nepal Tourism Board. There were 176 participants in the workshop from different conservational organisations, media houses, universities and colleges. The workshop was organised by Friends of Bagmati with active participation of WCN and other Jamboree partners.

There were two parallel workshop sessions in which deliberations on subjects like protecting biodiversity in wetlands, status and value of the ponds in Kathmandu Valley, role of media, communication, culture and education in conservation and success stories of local initiatives of two natural ponds Nagdaha and Taudaha of Kathmandu Valley were made. ■

Upcoming ECAP INTER-SCHOOL OUTREACH PROGRAM AT SAAKHU

ECAP will be conducting a month long interactive outreach program in Sankhu VDC in August. Six local secondary schools of three VDCs will be participating in a series of workshops learning about tiger conservation, local plants, birds, photography and many more aspects of natural heritage. They will learn to identify their natural resources and look for means to conserve them locally. Sankhu is a farming community situated in the eastern corner of the Kathmandu Valley.

Wildlife Conservation Nepal proudly announces its 3rd Annual Amateur Nature and Wildlife Photography Competition 2007. The competition is, as always, a fund raising event for conservation activities of Urban Wildlife Program at the local level.



For more information log onto our website.

"A Species Protected is a Heritage Maintained" -WCN

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