

Wildlife Conservation Nepal Newsletter

IN THE NEWS

Rhino Conservation - LOOKING BACK at 2006

by Prasanna Yonzon

Two thousand six was a bad year for conservationists trying to protect rhinos. This mega vertebrate was being poached at an alarming rate of 1.5 per month. Furthermore, to add fuel to the fire, the Home Ministry released 10 rhino poachers from Nawalparasi penitentiary for good behavior and convicts that had served 50 percent of their sentence. The release of these poachers resulted in more rhino poaching.

As rhinos were poached, the focus was on how Nepal could develop a strategy to save the remaining rhinos? Amidst meetings, many suggestions were made towards the conservation of rhinos like taking up immediate precautionary measures such as moving in army personnel in vacated posts, upgrade armed personnel and strengthen anti-poaching team with logistic support.

One of the reasons for the escalating rhino poaching was the ongoing Maoist conflict. The guard posts manned by army and national park personnel were either vacated, or



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destroyed by the Maoists. Chitwan National Park had 37 posts and between two posts is a 28 km gap. These security personnel were forced to regroup and move into new locations where they could ward off the Maoists in case of engagement.

Poachers have developed many skills to poach rhinos. Today, most poachers use rifles to poach rhinos. Some use electric wire to electrocute rhinos – Sita Khanal admitted electrocuting a rhino and was found with 5 kg of electric wire in her possession. A few poachers hide guns in forests or bury it in the ground. WCN has been able to locate guns hidden in the park and have handed it over to the authorities. The table below shows the number of poachers arrested by WCN over the last six months.

Table 1. Name of people arrested from August to December, 2006

Date	Name	Arrested for
28.12.06	Buddhi Ram Chaudhary	Rhino poaching
17.12.06	Dil Bahadur Praja	Rhino poaching
16.12.06	Sukh Dev Bote	Rhino poaching
15.12.06	Min Bahadur Lama	Rhino poaching
13.12.06	Raj Kumar Praja	Rhino poaching
31.10.06	Sita Khanal	Electrocution of rhino
31.10.06	Gharti Kumal	Providing guns and selling rhino horn
31.10.06	Gaja Maya Kumal	Accomplice in rhino poaching
27.08.06	Gyalbo Gurung	Rhino horn trader

Source: Wildlife Conservation Nepal, 2006



WCN's small initiation towards urban wildlife conservation.

www.wcn.org.np/youth/urban

WCN STARTS PHOTO CLUB



OM PRAKASH YADAV

With an objective to bring nature photographers together in one forum to share pictures, experiences and thoughts on nature and conservation, WCN organised a photography interaction program on December 27, 2006. It was attended by ten nature and wildlife photographers. The program was moderated by Mr. Nripa Dhoj Kadhka, winner of WCN's first annual photography competition. The participants included Mr. Om Prakash Yadav, winner of the second competition.

More than a hundred photographs were shared and the role of photography on nature conservation were discussed.

WCN plans to conduct such interactions on a periodic basis by involving many photographers- novice and professionals. ■

(MORE ON THIS AND RELATED IN PAGE 2)

The poachers know the penalty of poaching a rhino. But this does not deter them- it could be due to extreme poverty, lack of opportunities and the lure of money from traders. Such vortex of greed pushes them to poach more rhinos presuming it to be their last job which will continue till they are arrested.

Today, a poacher gets Rs. 60,000 to 100,000 for poaching a rhino, a big amount compared to five years ago. On the other hand, the government provides an award of Rs. 5,000 to Rs. 50,000 to any person that informs the government leading to arrests and seizure of rhino horn, tiger skins, etc. The award system of many years does not reflect the present poaching scenario. Perhaps, it is time for policy makers and authorities to upgrade the award system. Alternatively, if adequate policies are incorporated in the National Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act, 1973 to provide opportunities to poachers family, poaching could come down and turn poachers into protectors.

With WCN intelligence, national park authorities and the district forest office arrested nine rhino poachers along with guns in Chitwan. Rhino poaching has been checked to some extent, however a holistic approach is needed if the remaining rhinos are to be protected.

In such extreme cases of rhino poaching, Nepal needs to take immediate action. The Department of National Park and Wildlife Conservation can address rhino poaching and bring poachers and traders to justice, who are always under political umbrage, provided political parties do not interfere when meting justice. ■



Caring about our small neighbors



House sparrows (*Passer domesticus*) are widespread resident birds except in North East and North West of the Indian subcontinent. They are perhaps one of the few birds whose appearance are familiar across the globe. Once abundant, today house sparrow populations have declined in many areas of the world including Kathmandu Valley. Since no research in its population declination or status had been carried, Urban Wildlife Program conducted a pilot project on house sparrows from June 2005.

The research was conducted in Khokana, a small traditional village of Lalitpur district of Kathmandu Valley. The residence are Newars, the first settlers of Kathmandu valley and predominantly Khokana newars are farmers. As house sparrows are mostly dependent upon cultivation products, they have been a dominant bird species in the village and also have been a part of the way of life of the people of Khokana. Traditionally, the houses of Khokana used to have

specially built house holes on its walls for house sparrows. Traditional houses of Khokana were built with mud, bricks and wood. UWP's research showed that this tradition is fast disappearing in the new cemented houses built within last fifteen years. Only 7.5 % of new houses have such holes for sparrows undermining the importance of birds in the villagers lives. This connotes that the tradition is fast disappearing. On the other front, the high usage of DDT in agriculture field could have stunted reproductive cycle which eventually have brought down the population. As Khokana prepares for higher harvest turnover, the result is high use of pesticides which directly definitely effects the sparrow population.

Building bird nest holes is a time old tradition in Khokana connected with religious values. It is believed that one must live in harmony with nature and respect all creatures of God. However, with changing times, such ethics, culture and values are diminishing. During construction and maintenance of houses, people have started to phase out this age old custom of having bird holes in buildings. The houses that had 14 inches wall are now they are 9, which cannot support bird holes in the buildings. The house owners confirm that they would have to put more resources if they are to maintain the age old tradition and that is not possible.

So both ways we are edging out sparrow population from amidst us. We use high pesticides and simultaneously remove nests that limits the sparrow population. Because of our small negligence towards our neighbor, sparrows are in greater peril today than ever before. ■

Sensitizing Environment Crime to the Judiciary and Enforcement Agencies



Right Honorable Supreme Court Chief Justice Dilip Kumar Poudel addressing the workshop participants and media

Representing more than sixteen institutions, a two day workshop was organized by Wildlife Conservation Nepal on "Sensitization of Environment crime to the Judiciary and Enforcement Agencies" from November 3-4, 2006. This workshop was designed by Saugat Legal Research and Consultancy (SLRC) with National Judicial Academy(NJA) and WCN. This workshop was supported by US Fish and Wildlife Service and Rufford Maurice Laing Foundation.

Prasanna Yonzon, Chief Executive of WCN deliberated on how the legislative body can control crime through proper court hearing. Urban wildlife crime has been integrated with political system and if Nepal is unable to address it through legal system, it has much to lose. Addressing the workshop participants, he stressed that it is important that judiciary and enforcement agencies take active roles in fighting illegal wildlife crime. He sought cooperation from all sectors and emphasized that intelligence sharing is vital if Nepal is to curb trade of its endangered wildlife.

The Right Honorable Supreme Court Chief Justice Dilip Kumar Poudel said that legal experts should make sure that wildlife traders and poachers are brought to justice. Furthermore, he added that there is a need for trainings and workshops to legal experts in order to sensitize them on the gravity of environmental crime. Addressing the workshop, Honorable Justice Tope Bahadur Singh, Executive Director of National Judicial Academy said, it was time for all sectors of society including the legal apparatus to work cohesively in conservation to save wildlife. On behalf of the Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation, Mr. Shyam Bajimaya spoke on Nepal's contribution towards biodiversity

conservation and the role it has played in maintaining it.

The workshop had five technical sessions with paper presentations and discussions on subjects ranging from bridging legal aspects of wildlife crime among concerned agencies, investigative procedures related to wildlife crimes, role of government prosecutor for prevention and prosecution of wildlife crime in Nepal, role of Appellate Judiciary on prevention of wildlife crime, etc. The sessions were chaired by eminent individuals of the judiciary community such as Hon'ble Justice Keshari Raj Pandit, Judge Appellate Court, Hon'ble Justice Dr. Ananda Mohan Bhattarai, Judge Appellate Court, Hon'ble Justice Tope Bahadur Singh, Executive Director of National Judicial Academy Nepal and Hon'ble Justice Ishwor Khatiwada, Judge Appellate Court.



Participants from Judiciary and Enforcement Agencies during group discussions

Technical papers were presented by Mr. Shyam Bajimaya, Director General of DNPWC, Mr. Tika Ram Adhikary, Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation, Dr. Chuda Bahadur Shrestha, SLRC, Deputy Attorney General Mr. Chet Nath Ghimire, Honorable Chief Judge, Ram Bahadur Bam, Appellate Court Patan.

Several important subjects were dealt such as empowerment, inclusion & participation of people in the management of protected areas; awareness & education, develop appropriate strategies, criminal investigation & prosecution of wildlife crime, strengthen adjudication of wildlife crime: develop coordination & communication between quasi judicial & judicial sector.

The workshop added a new chapter by involving the Judiciary and different Enforcement Agencies, the most important component to stop the ever growing trade of our endangered wildlife. A follow up of the workshop was conducted two weeks later at the DNPWC. ■

One Month Outreach Program in Sankhu



E CAP (Environment Conservation Awareness Program) conducted a month long Outreach Program in Sankhu from August 15 to September 22, 2006. All six public and private secondary schools of Suntol, Pukhulacchi and Bajrayoginee, the three Village Development Committees of Sankhu area participated in this month long program. More than four thousand students of Bhagyodaya H.S. School, Shree Bajrayoginee Sec. School, Serene Hill Sec. School, Vijaya Academy, Shree Bhagwati Sec. School and Evergreen English School benefitted from this outreach program.

Sankhu, originally known as Sankharapur - a sleepy town nestled in lush green fields with mountains on north, seventeen kilometres west of the Capital is rich in culture.



Students exhibiting a collage "The fate of Nepal is in our hands"

This town is famous for its natural beauty, agriculture, cultural heritage and colourful festivals. Sankhu is depicted as one of the holy places for *Swasthani*, - a tradition where women undergo fasting for one month by offering prayers and fruits.

The resource centre for the program was provided by Shree Bhagyodaya Higher Secondary School for the entire month. The program was based on the ECAP module with the objective of providing opportunity to learn and involve in the hands on experience that helps them understand their classrooms lessons better and allow them to think beyond text books. Orientation workshops, ice breaking games,

documentary screenings, photography training, research, etc were conducted. The workshop focused on the importance of endangered mega vertebrates such as the tiger and the One Horned Rhinoceros. Students debated on various environmental topics. The students made impressive presentations about their projects at the end of the month amongst friends, colleagues, school principals, teachers and village development committee representatives.

"*Youth Voice-Dedicated to Nature*", a newsletter was also launched on the occasion by the News Reporting Group. The paper contains articles written by students themselves on environmental and social problems prevalent in their town. It was distributed amongst guests present in the closing ceremony of the program. ■



"This ECAP outreach program has proven to be an opportunity for young minds of our town to unleash their creativity and voice their opinions regarding Sankhu, its environmental problems and its conservation and I am very impressed." Mr. Arjun Adhikary, Secretary of Suntol VDC

MORE NEWS

MEETINGS

CRISIS MEETING TO PROTECT RHINOS

On December 6 and 15, 2006, two meetings on rhino conservation were organized by Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation with all stakeholders for saving rhinos from poachers. The meeting brought forth alliances and support of different department including administrative, logistics, antipoaching, patrolling and infrastructure development. Within 10 days of the meeting, 9 notorious poachers were arrested in various parts of Chitwan. Amongst them was a poacher named Raj Kumar Praja, a strapping Chepang youth who admitted to poaching five rhinos while Dil Bahadur Praja admitted poaching 3. The arrests of 5 poachers including Praja were achieved through WCN intelligence. Today, Chitwan District Forest Office has opened a hotline to address rhino poaching.

WILDLIFE RESCUE OPERATIONS

Pangolin Rescued

Volunteers of the Wildlife Conservation Nepal and District Forest Office rescued two pangolins from Kiran Syangden of Hetauda on 29 November, 2006 in Kathmandu.

Both types of pangolins found in Nepal and South East Asia are protected species. The scales are used in medicine and are also used as pendants, a belief that people who wears them are guarded from evil spirit.

Python Rescued

A python found in a dirt track close to a community forest in Chitwan was hurt and maimed. Chitwan WCN unit took the injured reptile to the park authorities, where later it was treated and released in the park.

A Himalayan Palm Civet Rescued

A Himalayan Palm Civet cat was rescued by the locals of Kirtipur on December 1, 2006. The cat was taken to the zoo with the help of District Forest Office and WCN. Forests around Kathmandu valley still have wildlife in them. But with rapid urbanization, Kathmandu urban wildlife are being edged out. It is time for policy makers to provide space for wildlife as well.

WILDLIFE TRADERS ARRESTED

Sita Khanal, a woman poacher involved in the electrocution of a rhino at Dibya Nagar, Chitwan was arrested on October 25 through WCN intelligence, in coordination with Chitwan National Park and Nepal Army. Similarly, intelligence provided by WCN led to the arrest of two women traders Gharti Kumal and Gaja Maya Kumal who used to supply guns to poachers and sale rhino horns as well.

Kathmandu

Officials from the Kathmandu District Forest Office and WCN field operatives arrested two men with a tiger skin and two leopard skins in Tinchule, Boudha on November 6, 2006. Babu Ram Lamichane of Makwanpur and Raj Kapur Mahato of Parsa had been working in wildlife trade for quite sometime.



Babu Ram Lamichane and Raj Kapur Mahato

WCN field operatives had been intensively searching for a wildlife trader for more than a year. WCN tracked him in Kathmandu after a eight weeks of intensive monitoring. With the help of Nepal Police, the trader was arrested in Dhumbrahi on August 27, 2006.

The trader Gyalbo Gurung alias Dil Bahadur Gurung was wanted by park authorities for quite sometime. Gurung gave money to local around Chitwan to poach rhinos and was involved directly or poaching 7 rhinos. Gurung admitted having hands in recent poaching of rhinos in Chitwan.



Gyalbo Gurung

VISITORS TO WCN

Fred Bagley of US Fish and Wildlife Service visited WCN on 19 October, 2006 to discuss the ongoing project of Rhino Conservation in Nepal. WCN organized a meeting with Shyam Bajimaya, Director General of DNPWC and WWF Nepal team and later at a reception, Mr. Bagley met with Secretary of Ministry of Forest and Soil Conservation, Nepal Police officials, Nepal Army spokesperson and other dignitaries in conservation.

John Q. Adams, Director and Jay Pal Shrestha, Regional Environmental Affairs Specialist of Regional Environment Office for South Asia, US Embassy visited WCN on November 2, 2006. Mr. Adams was briefed by Prasanna Yonzon, CEO, WCN.

CHITWAN PROGRAM



To bring awareness in conservation, control poaching and to promote conservation values to civil society living near Chitwan National Park, WCN conducted various conservational activities and campaigns focussed on environmental issues and on wildlife crime in bufferzone of Chitwan National Park.

Twelve resource persons travelled across Chitwan visiting remote villages and conducted various programs on conservation.

Outreach Program:

WCN conducted two day outreach workshops for grade ten of the government schools of Buffer zone of Chitwan National Park. The outreach Program focussed on environment conservation by enhancing leadership qualities in students so that they could be proactive in conservation and serve the nation by promoting conservation values while protecting natural heritage.

Conservation Awareness Program:

WCN conducted a comprehensive awareness program amongst various groups in Chitwan. Documentaries were shown to these participants regarding wildlife crime and trade. Giving seminars on poaching was an eye opener for the participants - it was sensitization, conservation and awareness program. Before the program, majority of the participants had no knowledge on legal aspects, costs of poaching to Nepal's environment. These people interacted and debated actively in group discussions. They shared their thoughts and views regarding wildlife. Thus this pilot program was well received because the participants had never participated such program. After the program, they understood the values of conservation.

Educational Program:

WCN conducted educational program mainly designed for young students of grade seven, eight and nine. Slide shows, informative lectures were given. The importance of wildlife in our ecosystem and why they need to be conserved were

discussed. Posters and book marks with interesting facts on rhinoceros and tigers were distributed among the enthusiastic participants.

Scholarship Award:

WCN identified thirteen outstanding students, who were unable to pay their school fees and stationeries. WCN discussed this issue with school teachers and principals prior to providing scholarships. WCN tends to cover one year tuition fee and stationeries. This is a novel beginning for WCN to embark with "Promising Student in Environment Conservation Award." This award has ushered a positive attitude towards conservation by students and schools that participated in WCN program.

WCN believes that awards must be provided to outstanding students who can be future leaders. Such support can add value to conservation.

Women in Conservation:

Women from different cultural backgrounds from thirteen Village Development Committee participated in a leadership program conducted by WCN that focused on livelihoods and conservation. WCN identified these women on the basis of their dependency on forest products and landholdings. ■

In 2006 WCN established a satellite office in Chitwan to protect and conserve rhinos in bufferzone and provide intelligence to park authorities to bring wildlife crime down. WCN has nine field staff working in Chitwan Branch. They have undergone training on intelligence gathering and on surveillance. By December 2006, WCN Chitwan provided intelligence to park authorities that led to the arrests of nine poachers and traders. Today, rhino poaching has come down in Chitwan.

Elephant Race in Chitwan



The annual Elephant Race was organized jointly by Baghmara Community Forest and Hotel Association of Chitwan from 27 to 29 December 2006 in where more than 24 elephants took part in the event. The event promoted rhino conservation and the indigenous *Tharu* culture of Chitwan Valley. WCN participated in the event to raise awareness on rhino conservation. WCN's stall exhibited photographs and ethnic art prepared by students on how nature conservation is possible through local participation.

A flex depicting number of rhino poached with a map was on display for the people to see and notice in which area that poaching had been taking place.



WCN stall at the fair in Chitwan

WCN provided information on how people could support conservation by bridging gaps and sharing knowledge on conservation value. Similarly brochures, posters, fliers and bookmarks were also distributed.

Sensitizing women in conservation

Over thirty women from 20 districts of Nepal gathered at the Nepal Ex-Police Association hall where an interaction program was conducted by WCN. WCN deliberated on how women could play a pivotal role in conservation. Discussions ranging from active participation to resource allocation and finding investment opportunities were discussed in the meeting. ■

WCN UPCOMING PROGRAMS

3rd Taudaha Jamboree

WCN Urban Wildlife Program (UWP) is celebrating World Wetland Day, 2007 where more than 17 NGOs are joining hands. UWP is actively participating in the 3rd Taudaha Jamboree where it will undertake major activities including the coordination of Nature hikes and Mithila Art Workshop. The main objective of the Jamboree is to create awareness amongst people about Taudaha (a small water body) as an important habitat for migratory birds.

ECAP in Bardia

ECAP will be conducting an interactive Outreach Programs in schools of Bardia National Park and the adjoining buffer zone. The objective of the program is to create awareness on environment degradation and conservation of the one horned rhinoceros and other endangered animals.

Two Day Workshop on Contemporary Issues

ECAP is organizing a workshop on environment for young students interested in nature conservation. This workshop is designed to sensitize young leaders on contemporary environment themes.

Sensitization and Training on Wildlife Crime

WCN is organizing a one day workshop with Nepal Ex-Police Association on how wildlife crime can be controlled through intelligence sharing in February.

Third Annual Nature and Wildlife Photography Competition for Amateurs

Urban Wildlife Program is holding the 3rd Nature & Wildlife Photography Competition, 2007 for Amateurs.

The Competition has been announced through our website, posters and from FM radio stations. The photographs will be judged by a panel of prominent photographers. The ten best photographs will be featured in greeting cards.

SUPPORT TO WCN IN 2006

Various organisations, local business houses and individuals have supported WCN in its mission towards nature conservation for which we are most grateful. WCN has received special support and help from organizations which are Care for the Wild International, The Rufford Maurice Laing Foundation, Save the Tiger Fund, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Wildlife Protection Society of India.



NEW FACES AT WCN



Brinda Dewan joined WCN in August 2006. Brinda has a Master degree in Botany from Tribhuvan University, Kathmandu and currently runs the outreach program with 15 colleagues. She has successfully carried out 35 outreach programs in more than 4 districts.



Bal Mukunda Pokharel joined WCN in November 2006 as a Field Officer. Bal has completed his Masters in Environmental Science with specialisation in Wildlife Management. He is wanting to map rhinos that have moved into buffer zone to identify what causes them to move beyond their natural habitat.

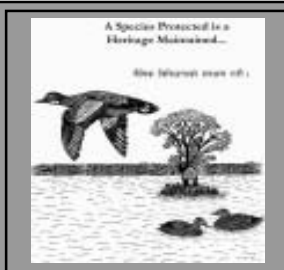


Nabin Gopal Baidya joined WCN in November 2006 as a Field Officer. Prior to this, Nabin was a volunteer for WCN field activities. Nabin has a post graduate degree on Environmental Science with specialisation in Wildlife Management.



Sheelva Shakya joined WCN in October 2006 as a Conservation Intern. She is currently doing her Masters in Environmental Management from SchEMS, Kathmandu.

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