



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.

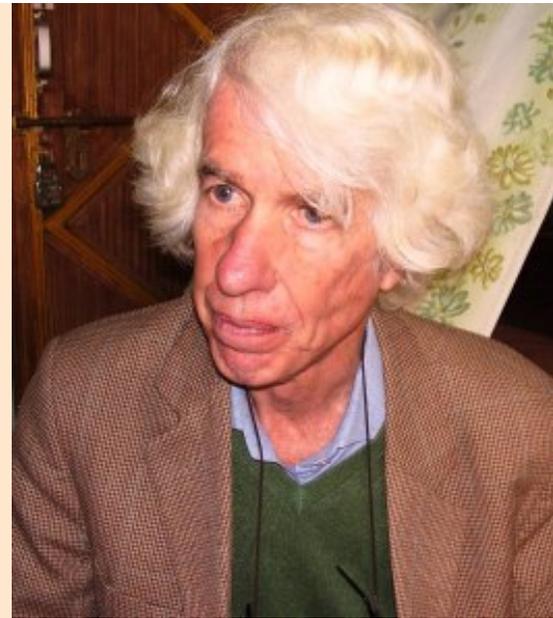
According to Sameer Singh, head of Ranasher Army Batallion (army unit to safeguard BNP), without arm park officials and army personnel are unable to enter the bufferzone area due to heavy presence of armed poachers there. 'Poachers roam freely in the buffer zone and sometimes even target park officials 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.