



Conservation Watch - Nepal

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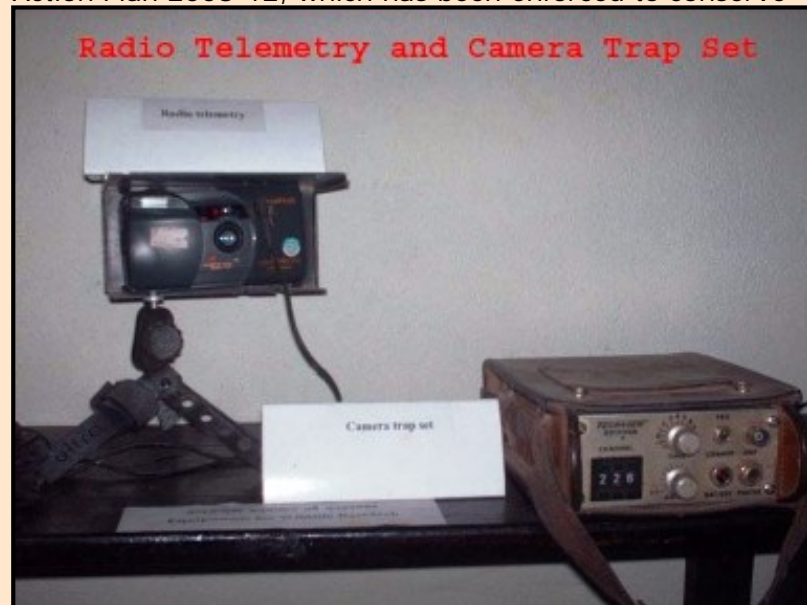
November 05, 2008

National Tiger census slated from mid November

In an effort to acquire up to date record of dwindling tiger population in Nepal, a nation-wide tiger census has been planned from November 15. The census is a part of Tiger Action Plan 2008-12, which has been enforced to conserve this rare species.

The Royal Bengal tigers that until 30 years ago roamed freely in the Terai forests of Nepal's southern plains are now confined in three protected areas in central and western Nepal in Chitwan National Park, Bardia National Park and Suklaphanta Wildlife Reserve. These are the only habitats of rhinos of Nepal too. According to last tiger census conducted in 2002, Nepal's tiger population is between, 350 to 370. Out of them around 40% are predicted in Chitwan National Park. A comprehensive management plan has also been envisaged to increase the tiger population in the country by 10 percent within five years.

According to Narendra Babu Pradhan, planning officer at the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation (DNPWC), the tiger census will be continued for three months. Census will be kicked off from Chitwan National Park (CNP) and then it will be conducted on Bardia National Park (BNP) and Suklaphanta



Wildlife Reserve (SWR). "Digital camera trapping system will be used for the first time to track the tigers. The census will also track the tigers living in the forest areas outside protected areas", he informed.

For the census, CNP, BNP, and SWR areas are separated into five, four and two blocks respectively. Besides digital camera method, camera trapping technique and patch occupancy method will also be used. "We will use camera trapping method inside national parks and patch occupancy method inside forest areas of the country," said Pradhan. Three hundred cameras will be mobilized for the census.

According to Wildlife Conservation Nepal, the number of tigers in Shuklaphanta Wildlife Reserve has declined to 12 from 26.



Poachers moving into the reserve were caught on camera used during a recent research programme in the reserve. This provides evidence that poaching is a significant reason behind the decline in the number of tigers in protected areas. There is a great demand of tiger skin and bones in East-Asian markets. The number of the endangered Royal Bengal tigers is estimated to be 4,000 in the world.

Forest survey of Nepal in January

The government will begin a survey of the country's forests in January to find out the extent of forest cover and make an inventory of products of these forests.

According to Deepak K. Kharel, forest survey officer at the Department of Forest Research and Survey (DoFRS), the last forest survey was conducted in 1999. The survey is part of the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) assessment of global forest resources, carried out every five years; Nepal has not submitted the status report to FAO in almost a decade.

The Master Plan for Forestry Sector (MPFS) 1989, recommends a national-level forest resource inventory every five years in the Tarai and every 10 years in the hills. There have been a lot of changes in Nepal's forests in the last 10 years through a number of interventions including community forest programmes, leasehold forestry, collaborative forestry, and buffer-zone management.

The introduction of all these forest conservation programmes is of great importance to the country in both national and international terms. "However, there isn't any research on the amount of contribution we are making to conservation of our forest resources," he said.

Meantime, World Bank has decided to provide three to four billion rupees annually to Nepal as a part of the carbon trade process, according to Alternative Energy Promotion Centre of the Ministry of Science and Technology. This means Nepal will be compensated for the amount of carbon absorbed by its forests. However, due to lack of status on recent forest cover, it is difficult to know how much our forests contribute to cut green house gases emission levels.

On the other hand, large amount of forest areas were encroached by freed Kamaiyas (bonded labourers) and a huge portion of forest land have been occupied by flood victims. It does not have exact data on the status of forest land encroached in the country.

The present assessment project will help study the status of forests and the impact of global warming on Nepal's forests. The project also aims to conduct in-depth study on the status of bio-diversity. Both national and international experts will be hired for the assessment that will use modern technology namely Remote Information System. The Finnish government is supporting the project. The first forest survey in the country was initiated in 1978 as part of Land Resource Mapping Project (LRMP), which was later updated by MPFS from 1985-1994.

According to LRMP and MPFS results, the forest area in the country decreased at an annual rate of 1.7 percent between 1978/79 and 1990/91. In the Tarai, the forest area decreased at an annual rate of 1.3 percent and hills at an annual rate of 2.3 percent during this period.

Arrival of migratory birds makes Jagdishpur lake pleasant

Migratory birds have started arriving at the Jagdishpur lake area here in Nepal which is a famous wetland site in the country. This area also has much tourism potential.

Various species of birds can be seen in this marshland with the arrival of the autumn season and the presence of birds has added to the beauty and pleasantness of the place.

Every year during the winter season many migratory birds come here and their arrival has already started with the beginning of the autumn season.

Thousands of birds arrive at this wetland area in the winter season. The wetland site is located at Niglihawa VDC which is 11 kilometres to the north of Taulihawa, the headquarters of Kapilvastu district.

Jagdishpur Lake, which is spread in an area of 157



hectares, is now teeming with birds of different species. The presence of these birds, their chirping and movement around the place has made the ambiance of the area lively and full of life. A lot of water fowls of various species can be seen sailing in the lake. Jagdishpur Lake is on the list of world Ramsar sites.

Similarly, the Fishery Development Centre in Hetauda (Makwanpur) said it is losing up to 150 Kg fish a day as the Siberian ducks migrated to the area to savour the fish grown by the centre.

Chief of the Centre Sanokaji Pachhai said Siberian ducks have started coming to the ponds due to the bleakly winter. Along with the onset of winter, up to 400 ducks throng the ponds daily. These migratory birds remain in the area until the last week of February.

Mai Pokhari designated as Ramsar Site

Mai Pokhari a permanent freshwater wetland located in Ilam district is designated as one of the Ramsar Sites of the internationally important Ramsar Convention on October 28, 2008. Mai Pokhari is the first mid-hill wetland of the country listed as Ramsar Site.

According to Jhamak Karki, ecological officer at the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation (DNPWC), Ramsar Secretariat officials handed over a certificate confirming Mai Pokhari as a Ramsar Site to Shyam Bajimaya, deputy Director General of DNPWC at a special programme organised during the Conference of Contracting Parties to the Ramsar Convention (COP10). The declaration came during the 10th Meeting of COP10 being held at Changwon, Republic of Korea from October 28 to November 4.



There are now nine wetlands including the recent one in the list of internationally important Ramsar Sites from the country. According to Karki, various concerned stakeholders including The East Foundation had been lobbying to include Mai Pokhari as Ramsar Site for the past three years.

Mai Pokhari, which is located 13 kilometres away from district headquarter Ilam is a major habitat for some indigenous animal species like tree frog, and Himalayan newt commonly known as 'Thakthake'. Similarly, it is a major habitat for more than 300 species of birds. On the other hand, Mai Pokhari holds great cultural and religious

importance for both Buddhist and Hindu pilgrims.

Mai Pokhari occupies 12 hectares of land with two hectares of it as wetland.

Meanwhile, the national report submitted at the COP10 meeting in Changwon has stated five more wetlands of the country will be included as Ramsar Sites in the next three years.

Animal parts found in palace

Thousands of other precious animal organs have been found at Gaddhi Baithak of Basantapur Palace of the erstwhile kings, a study report has revealed.

Around 5000 rhino hoofs are there in the palace, while four thousand hoofs are confirmed destroyed, Home Ministry officials said in the report. The items found are 43 elephant tusks, 4506 rhino hoofs, 81 rhino horns, 48 tiger and leopard claws, 4 leopard Baju, 46 strips of rhino leather and 2 human bones.

Earlier, a government panel, representing Home Ministry, the Department of Archaeology, and the Office of the Auditor General, was entrusted with the task of managing items found at the ancient palace. "But it did not complete its job," said Ram Sundar Sharma, an official deputed at the palace. No one was prepared to take the responsibility of listing and managing the precious materials.

are materials that cannot be received. Sharma said that three officials of the Home Ministry had prepared the report after the earlier committee could not complete the entrusted task. "But no one dared to sign on the report," he noted.

Modraj Dotel, spokesperson of the Home Ministry, said that the Ministry would do its duty to manage the found items, which he said was the responsibility of Nepal government.

50% of the crops destroyed around KCA

Wild animals from the Kanchanjunga Conservation Area (KCA) and the surrounding areas have destroyed about 50 percent of the crops last year. Owing to the increasing threats, more than 46 percent of the cultivable land remains barren during that period. Lelep and Tapethok VDCs around the KCA in Taplejung district have more suffered.

This conclusion is drawn in a recent survey conducted by Ambika Khatiwada on conflict between the locals and wild animals around the KCA area. She is a researcher from Institute of Forestry Science, Pokhara. She has also stated that due to the increased threats from the wild animals, villagers of four VDCs of the district surrounding KCA are involved in the killing of wild animals. These animals include black bear, reddish-black deer and porcupine. Sharp decline of the grassland inside the conservation is attributed that cause animals come out from the protected areas and graze in the fields of the locals.

An awareness campaign launched by KCA for the conservation of wild animals is not being effective. "There is a need of proper programmes with incentives along with the awareness campaigns among the locals to encourage them to protect some important wild animals in KCA", researcher recommended.

These findings were made The study states that with the decrease in grassland inside the conservation area, most animals including black bear, ghoral, deer, and porcupine, among others, According to the survey data, animals

Meanwhile, in an attempt to protect the endangered snow leopard in the Kanchanjunga area, the World Wildlife Fund had launched an animal insurance programme since 2005 as a part of compensation for the locals affected by the animals.

Tiger killed a rhino calf

A male baby rhino has been found dead in the Kumroj Bufferzone Community Forest at Kumroj in Chitwan. The dead body was found on 24th October near Lamotal in the community forest.

According to the locals, the dead body of rhino calf was found in unharmed situation. There were footprints of the tiger near the site. It has been predicted the tiger might have fled from the spot after the arrival of mother rhino. A dead rhino was born just a month ago. The local residents are now worried of untoward situation as the attacking tiger and aggrieved mother rhino might act more fiercely.

Meanwhile, a team of Chitwan National Park led by ranger Sujan Maharjan at shot dead a leopard that had entered into a poultry farm of a local farmer in Baghauda village. The leopard killed over 150 chicken of a poultry farm owned by Mukti Kafle. The ill fated leopard was locked in the farm for over six hours before it was killed. Megh Bahadur Pandey, Chief Warden of Chitwan National Park has regretted the incident. "Alternative measures could have been implemented had the key officials of CNP been at Chitwan. Junior staffs buckled amidst growing pressure of the locals", he said.



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