Introduction

Nobody thinks much of it, but actually the best birdwatching can be done at home. Because we live in the territories of the birds around our home, it is easy, cheap and intensive. We can get to understand our “own” birds far better than any babbler at Shivapuri or duck at Taudaha of which we get a glimpse during a birding trip.

The most easy urban area bird to study is probably the Oriental Magpie Robin *Copsychus saularis* the dhobi chara. It is black and white, it sings a lot, and it moves around quite visibly. I learnt a lot the last few years from regular but very simple observations of this Robin, mostly done while drinking my morning tea on the roof of my house and glancing over the top of my newspaper. I found on the internet that others had studied its song, and breeding behaviour (Ali and Ripley 1997, Kumar and Bhatt 2001), but I could not find anything about the size and shape of its territory. So I started mapping its movements and its singing. This article is to share the results.

Study Area

The study area is what I can see of the neighbourhood: roughly 100 by 250 m from my house in Saibu Bhaishepati Village Development Committee. Some areas are hidden from me because of houses and slopes. The study area is a slowly urbanizing village area on a hill ridge at the edge of Kathmandu. Half of the area consists still of cultivated fields, with maize in summer, mustard in autumn, and fallow in winter. Cherry Pie *Lantana camara* shrub grows on most terrace edges, but these are cut or burnt in spring. There are some trees near houses and on terrace slopes, but very few large ones since they are cut regularly and the small ones grow tall.
Methodology
Although some birds already start to sing even from end of December, the best time to start monitoring is from February when birds sing daily. I made a map of my area. I started with a sketch, but soon started to use one based on Google Earth images of my area. My methodology goes like this. I looked for singing Magpie Robins. If I saw one male sing on the Doctor’s house and another in the tree next to Mr Giri’s house, I gave each another colour with a highlighter pen and then you have your first two territories: Blue (Doctor or A) and Orange (Giri or B). If Blue flew from its perch to the willow, I indicated that on the map with a blue line. If Blue, the Doctor, flew to the young Nettle Tree Celtis australis locally known as Khari and Orange, Mr Giri, came to chase him away, I marked it with a conflict symbol on the map and I knew one of my first territory border points. I knew I am in the core of a territory if I saw a bird singing there at ease or hopping on the ground in search of food. Soon my map will be filled up with singing points, conflict symbols and coloured arrows and the shape of the various territories started to show. Very useful information can be obtained from the occasional stray Robin passing through the area. These are “received” by the residents at one border and “delivered” at the other border to the next neighbour who again “passed it on” to the next territory. February to April is best, as in May too many trees get leaves while young birds also start to appear, both confusing the picture. In this article I used the maps of 2008, 2009 and 2010, supported by data from incomplete maps for 2007 and 2011 and observations up to the day of writing.

This methodology has limitations. Nearly all observations were done from one house and often from a chair on a roof that is positioned in one direction (often sun in the back) most of the time leading to more observations in one corner of the area than in others. Trees and houses further obstructed views of some territory parts, and often you have to refrain from using binoculars because no neighbour will understand that you are watching birds and not them. Happily Magpie Robins can be followed quite well up to 100 m away.

Results
Life, Song and Death
Males used both trees and houses as song perches. While singing they liked to watch their borders. If houses and trees are of equal height they preferred trees. Birds also sang from lower perches close to the nest where a more contented and soft song can be heard. Border points are also used for song, but only for the more frantic “battle song”.

Singing started hesitantly as early as end of December, but full singing and territorial behaviour did not get under way till end of January, while some robins got only active in March or even April. Full singing continued till end of June. Singing was sporadic and soft in July and August, and increased in September and October. Autumn singing and occasional quarrels observed then might concern a cleaning up of their areas, chasing any left-over young ones away.

Robins breed normally once or twice a year in our area, having their first young in May. The two nests of Blue and Orange that I was able to detect were both in wall holes of low, older houses. One year my son saved a young Eurasian Cuckoo Cuculus canorus from our dogs to find that actually Magpie Robins were its parents. After one night keeping it with us, it was put back in the trees, and the Robins immediately continued feeding.

It was of course not possible to find out what happens when birds are replaced or when a bird dies, e.g. whether and how it is replaced. I had to assume the pairs remained alive all through the season. I know our dogs have killed young robins, but never adults. Other potential predators are Spotted Owlet Athene brama, Shikra Accipiter badius, various snakes, Jackal Canis aureus, domestic cats and Jungle Cats Felis chaus.

Territory Shape
Territories consisted of nest and feeding areas. The Magpie Robins do not have neutral areas in between territories where all can feed undisturbed like is reported for their cousins Eurasian Robins Erithacus rubecula; also not in winter. The areas in between were unused and treated as no-fly zones, where the birds did not allow others to sing, feed or hang out. Figure 1 shows the core areas during May 2009.

So the gross territory consisted of a safe core and a no-fly buffer zone, the outer boundary of which is marked by the places where the Robin ventures farthest during raids and attacks. Figure 2 shows the gross territory of Blue (A) during the 2009 season. Only the trees (round grey symbols), the houses, the border lines and conflicts (X) are shown. The map shows that the core area (area without conflicts) stayed roughly the same during the season, but that the no-fly buffer zone varied by
month according to whether and where the bird liked to pick a fight with neighbours and stray intruders. E.g. during February Blue did not venture in to the upper left area, which are fallow fields in winter, but got increasingly interested in that area as other Magpie Robin territories started to form nearby and the maize started to grow, providing new potential feeding areas for after the young would fledge.

Some territories stayed roughly the same also over the course of years. Figure 3 shows that Blue (A), Orange (B) and Pink (G) territories actually stayed quite stable over the years. Minor variations included e.g. one house on the A-B territory border, marked X in Figure 3 that belonged to Orange (B) in 2008 and has since been conquered by Blue. It was noted that birds with stable territories also tend to be the first ones in the season to start singing and to establish their territory.

Figure 2 Blue’s Territory Shape by Month, 2009 Spring Season

As can also be seen on the map, other territories like C and F changed considerably over the years. Some were split over two or three competing birds for one or two years, before one of those apparently would win out and return the territory to its old size and glory. E.g. the Yellow territory (F) was one territory from 2007 till March 2009. Then in April 2009, quite late in the season, a new bird (F-2) established itself in the lower left corner of its territory and in spite of five weeks of daily furious fighting the original occupant F-1 could not dislodge the newcomer. F-2 even slowly expanded its territory although it stayed relatively small. A female was never seen with F-2 in 2009. During the 2010 and 2011 seasons the territory F took the same shape as in 2008 again. Was F-2 a young infighter sensing the weakness of an old hero in 2009 and ultimately replacing him in the total territory in 2010? Or did F-1 manage to expel F-2 after the breeding season?

Territory Size

As can be deduced from the previous chapters, territory sizes varied between birds and between years. The core territory that was probably one of the biggest (Blue, A) was about 0.4ha (8 ropani), while the 2009 infighter (F-2) only had about 0.1ha although that seemed without female or brood. Blue’s gross territory, which of course overlapped with others, was about 1.0 ha with about 40% core area and 60% buffer zone. In the whole study area, an irregular shape of about 5 hectares, there were 7 to 9 territories, some of which extended out of sight and might be actually bigger than what I could see. This translates to an average gross territory size of at least 0.5 to 0.7 ha and densities would be around 1.4 to 1.8 pair per hectare.

Discussion

The size of Oriental Magpie Robin spring territories (0.1-0.4ha core area and 0.5 to 1.0 ha gross area) is comparable to territory sizes of similar birds for which data are available. E.g. the Indian Robin Saxicoloides fulicata is quoted to occupy territories (core or gross?) of average 0.67 ha (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indian_Robin). Eurasian Blackbirds Turdus merula can have territories as small as 0.2 ha (www.rspb.org.uk) and the Eurasian Robin Erithacus rubecula has reportedly winter territories between 0.07 and 1.34ha (Johnstone 1997). The territories of the endangered Seychelles Magpie Robin Copsychus sechellarum are 1-2.5 ha, but this concerns pure forest (Birdlife International 2011).

Magpie Robins thrive in rural village areas, gardens and open broadleaf forests and total numbers for the country could be high. It is tempting to extrapolate these figures for an estimate of Oriental Magpie Robin numbers for the Kathmandu Valley and Nepal as a whole, like is done for birds in many other countries as basis for monitoring and conservation efforts. We should at least start working out the numbers, so I tried to make some very first wild estimates of one very common bird, so that we know at least the rough figure in thousands or millions.
In the absence of territory size for different habitat and accurate habitat acreages for areas below 1500m (the Magpie Robin’s normal altitudinal range in Nepal), such estimates can only be made on basis of many assumptions and be of necessity inaccurate. Average densities for below-1500m Nepal and even Kathmandu valley will be much less than the study area, e.g. because of too dense habitation, lack of trees or unsuitable forest. An estimated densities of e.g. 5% and 25% of the Saibu Bhaisepatis figures, the whole Kathmandu Valley below 1500m (roughly 75%*40,000ha) would still be home to 2,500 and 12,000 pairs respectively. Likewise for Nepal, the area below 1500m is about 7,100,000ha, i.e. 48% of the total 14,800,000 ha (Lilleso et al 2005, Gurung et al 2008). At an estimate of 10% of the Saibu Bhaisepatis densities, there would be still about 2 million Magpie Robins in Nepal, and many more at the end of the breeding season.

This study did not have the pretention of being comprehensive or detailed in all aspects. It also raises many new questions, many of them suitable subjects for further research by professional and amateur ornithologists. E.g. how are the Robin densities in inner city areas and forests? Where do all the young Robins go if there is no place in Pa and Ma’s territory anymore? How many territory holders are replaced each year by newcomers? How can we make more accurate estimates of bird populations for Nepal? How does that work for birds that urgently need protection? Some of these questions anyone can study right away sitting on their roofs or during a little stroll in the neighbourhood, others need resources or professional skills while again others will require high-tech solutions not yet available. I will happily support anyone ready to do further studies, e.g. studying densities in the inner city or other parts of the Kathmandu Valley.

References
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indian_Robin
email: arendvanriessen@gmail.com
Population, Breeding Success and Conservation of Himalayan Griffon Gyps himalayensis in Khodpe, Baitadi, Nepal

Dikpal Krishna Karmacharya

Background

Vultures are the natural scavengers that are placed in the taxonomical order Falconiformes under Class Aves. They are the large preying birds that habitually feed on carrion (American Heritage Dictionary 2010). Although feeding largely on meat which would classify them clearly as a raptor, generally they do not kill their own prey. They are the primary consumers of carrion in Asia and Africa, with an individual Gyps vulture consuming around one kilogram of tissue every three days (Mundy et al. 1992).

Gyps vultures in the Indian subcontinent have undergone dramatic decline in numbers since the mid 1990s, with decline in excess of 97% for three species i.e. Oriental White-rumped Vulture (OWRV) Gyps bengalensis, Long-billed Vulture (LBV) Gyps indicus and Slender-billed Vulture (SBV) Gyps tenuirostris (Prakash et al. 2003; Green et al. 2004). As a consequence, these were listed as Critically Endangered by IUCN in 2000 (Birdlife International 2000). Recent research shows a sharp decline also in the population of Red-headed Vultures Sarcogyps calvus and Egyptian Vultures Neophron percnopterus (Cuthbert et al. 2006).

In India, numbers of OWRVs have declined by 99.9% from 1992 to 2007 (Prakash et al. 2007). In 2007, Red-headed Vultures were declined by 91% and Egyptian Vultures were declined by 80%. So, these were also listed as ‘Critically Endangered’ and ‘Endangered’ respectively (Birdlife International, IUCN, The Peregrine Fund, and Vulture Rescue 2010). The non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug (NSAID) Diclofenac has been identified as a major cause of their declines (Green et al. 2004; Oaks et al. 2004; Shultz et al. 2004). These are exposed to Diclofenac when they feed on carcasses of livestock that have died within a few days of treatment and contain toxic residues of the drug (Oaks et al. 2004). The Himalayan Griffon was listed as unspecified (DNPWC/MoFSC/GoN 2009) due to lack of sufficient data. Hence, this study adds some data regarding this vulture.

Study Area and Methods

The study was carried out in the cliffs of far western mid hills of Khodpe, Siddheshwor VDC, Baitadi, Nepal (29°25′5.1″N, 80°37′50.7″E to 29°26′29.2″N, 80°36′56.9″E). It is surrounded by Darchulla in North, Bajhang and Doti in East, Dadeldhura in South and Uttarpradesh of India in West. It is located at an altitude of 2260m covering 8km long trail and 835 km far from Kathmandu.

As the study area is small, it was practical to count regularly and accurately all nest and roost sites. Four cliffs were monitored and counted all vultures seen on nests or roosting early in the morning (06h30–09h30) and late in the evening (17h30–19h30) fortnightly from January to May 2010. Jacknife Technique (Rodgers 1991) was used to estimate population size assuming that with repeated counts theoretically there is the probability of counting all the animals in the area at one time. This method uses the difference between the highest count nmax and the second highest count nmax-1 to calculate N, the estimated total number N= 2nmax - nmax-1. The nesting and roosting sites were also thoroughly searched for dead vultures to take their liver and kidney samples for postmortem. Binocular, telescope and digital camera were used wherever necessary. The numbers of animal carcasses encountered were also recorded to assess the availability of food for vultures in the study area. To study breeding success; occupied, active and productive nests were counted based on Postupalsky (1974), according to which an active nest is the one in which eggs had been laid, an occupied nest is the one in which eggs have not been laid but some nest building activity must have taken place and a nest from which a chick has fledged is termed as ‘successful or productive nest’.

The breeding success was determined using following formula.

\[
\text{Breeding success} = \frac{\text{Productive Nest}}{\text{Active or Occupation Nest}} \times 100
\]

Nests monitoring were made every fortnightly to assess the nest status and breeding success. A general survey of the Agro-vet shops as well as questionnaire survey with veterinary professionals was done regarding the status of Diclofenac in the market and the effectiveness of Diclofenac replacement by Meloxicam.

Community outreach and conservation education programme were launched for the local villagers, school children, teachers...
and veterinary professionals regarding the role of vultures in nature. Pamphlets published by Bird Conservation Nepal displaying the role of vultures in nature and save vulture—the natural scavengers were also distributed to the community people.

Different reports and journal papers were referred wherever possible, however literatures related to Himalayan Griffon are very few. Different experts were contacted to obtain additional information on Himalayan Griffon. Secondary data collection was done through internet browsing.

Results
Four potential cliffs as nesting sites of vultures were recorded in Khodpe of Baitadi (Table 1). Using Jacknife technique the estimated population size of vultures in study area was found to be 20 individuals for 2010 field season. Among them Himalayan Griffons (HGs) were estimated to be 12. A minimum of 8 vultures were recorded in February while a maximum of 17 were recorded in January. The minimum of 6 HG were recorded in February and March similarly maximum of 11 HG were recorded in April. The average flock size of vultures recorded was 11.2 with standard deviation (S.D.) 2.83 and the average flock size of HG recorded were 7.9 with S.D. 1.58 (Table 2). Vulture individuals and nests were recorded only in the cliffs near Siddheshwor Temple while in the cliffs near Siddhadeep School, Harichan Mod and Ranga Jujuna no vulture but, only old droppings were recorded during observations.

During observation three species of vulture including Himalayan Griffon, Egyptian Vulture and Lammergeier were recorded. Lammergeiers were recorded only in the month of January (Table 2). In 2010 field season a total of 11 occupied nests of HG were recorded in the cliffs near Siddheshwor Temple. In January, 9 including 3 incubating and in February, 2 new including 1 incubating nest were recorded. Among 4 active nests (having eggs) only 3 nests were productive (fledged chicks). The first chicks of HG were observed on 28 February 2010 in 3 nests. Based on active nests as primary unit the breeding success was 75% while based on occupied nest as primary unit the breeding success was 27%. Altogether 8 nests were unsuccessful (Table 3). Out of 8 unsuccessful nests, 7 (i.e. 88%) failed during egg laying and 1 (i.e. 12%) during incubation period.

A total of 3 carcasses were recorded of which two were of ox and one of buffalo. Ox carcasses were recorded in January and May while buffalo carcass was recorded in February (Table 4). These carcasses were buried out immediately after their death by local people for sanitation purpose. So these were not available for the vultures. No dead vulture was found during the study period.

Altogether 96 local secondary level students and teachers participated in the education and outreach programme which covered topics like identification, significance, main causes of decline and need of conservation of vultures. Beside this awareness was also raised among the local respondents and the agro vet professionals during the questionnaire survey.
Table 1. Nest census in Khodpe, Baitadi for field season 2010.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SN</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Cliff No.</th>
<th>No. of Nest</th>
<th>Altitude</th>
<th>State</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Siddheshwor Temple</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2140m</td>
<td>4-Incubating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Siddhadeep School</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>2183m</td>
<td>7-Resting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Harichan Mod</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>2070m</td>
<td>*= Droppings records</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Ranga Jujuna</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>1990m</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Flock size of vultures in Khodpe, Baitadi for field season 2010.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vulture Species</th>
<th>January</th>
<th>February</th>
<th>March</th>
<th>April</th>
<th>May</th>
<th>Average flock size</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>16th</td>
<td>30th</td>
<td>13th</td>
<td>28th</td>
<td>14th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Himalayan Griffon</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egyptian Vulture</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lammergeier</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3. Occupied, active, productive and unproductive nests and breeding success of HG for the 2010 field season in Khodpe, Baitadi.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location of cliff</th>
<th>Occupied Nests</th>
<th>Active Nests</th>
<th>Productive (Successful) Nest</th>
<th>Unproductive (Unsuccessful) Nest</th>
<th>Breeding Success (Active Nest as Primary Unit)</th>
<th>Breeding Success (Occupied Nest as Primary Unit)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Near Siddheshwor Temple</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4. Carcass records in various months in Khodpe, Baitadi.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sites</th>
<th>January</th>
<th>February</th>
<th>March</th>
<th>April</th>
<th>May</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Panighatta</td>
<td>Ox</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Ox</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ranga Jujuna</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Buffalo</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Discussion and Conclusion

Most of the previous studies carried on Vultures are of OWRV and SBV. Only very little studies have been done of HG Vultures and that is only from Lower Mustang so it was difficult to compare the results of this study. This is the first intensive study of HG Vultures in mid hills of far western Nepal. This study has set the foundation for the long term study on HG vultures. There is no report of any other large HG colony in the mid hills of Nepal till date. Most of the HG colonies are recorded from the higher Himalayan regions so this is the first records of large HG Vulture nest colony in mid hills of Nepal.

On the basis of Jacknife technique the estimated population size of vultures in Khodpe, Baitadi was 20 individuals among them HG was estimated to be 12. The average flock size of vultures recorded was 11.2 with Standard deviation (S.D.) 2.83 and that of HG recorded were 7.9 with S.D. 1.58 for 2010 field season. The size cannot be considered as small or large and population cannot be concluded as increasing or declining due to lack of previous study in this area but according to locals these are rapidly declining from the area.

During the study period only three species of vulture (Himalayan Griffon, Egyptian Vulture and Lammergeier) were recorded. The survey conducted by BCN in 2009 recorded the three species along with Cinereous Aegypius monachus and Red headed Vulture in the study area.

Altogether 11 nests of HG were recorded in the cliff near Siddheshwor Temple, Khodpe, and Baitadi. Therefore, the site is an important nesting site of HG. Based on active nests as primary unit the breeding success was 75% indicating the site is favorable breeding site while based on occupied nest as primary unit the breeding success was 27% showing low breeding efficiency of HG vultures for 2010 field season at Khodpe, Baitadi. The failure of the breeding success may be due to the age factor as the young does not lay eggs and may be a response to environmental conditions (temperature
Unoccupied nests (59%) in 2005 (Acharya and nine active nests (15%), 16 occupied nests (26%) and 36 vertical cliffs of Annapurna Conservation Area in 2004 and population declines of Himalayan Griffon (Gyps himalayensis) et al. 2009). Increase in the nest is due to the more coverage of the area.

**Recommendations**

Though HG is least concerned species, conservation measures should be given equally to protect them and prevent them from being endangered in the near future.

Following consideration should be made to conserve the vultures and prevent from extinction in the area.

1. The regular monitoring of vulture population and study of breeding success in the area is highly recommended.
2. There is an immediate need to establish vulture safe feeding site near Ghatekhola, far from the human resident to provide sufficient food.
3. Efforts should be made to identify other potential nesting sites in the nearby area.
4. Awareness programme should be conducted to local villagers and Agro-vet professionals regarding the lethal effects of Diclofenac to Vultures and the role of Vultures in the environment.

**Acknowledgements**

This project was funded by Bird Conservation Nepal, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) and Darwin Initiative, UK. I am very much grateful to my supervisor, Dr. Ramesh Shrestha, Associate Professor, Central Department of Zoology, Tribhuvan University, co-supervisor Dr. Surya Paudel, Veterinary Officer, Vulture Conservation Programme, Bird Conservation Nepal, Dr. Mukesh Kumar Chalise, Associate Professor, Central Department of Zoology, Tribhuvan University, Mr. Ananda Chaudhary, Mr. Ganga Ram Regmi and Mr. Kamal Kandel for their continuous guidance and supports throughout the study.

**References**


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**Membership**

Mr. Bikram Rai, Principal of Prasadi Academy joined BCN as a Patron. He shows great interest in birds and is very much devoted towards nature and biodiversity conservation.

Mr. Binay Basnet, Managing Director of Koshi Tours and Travel Pvt. Ltd. joined BCN as a Life Member. He is a bird lover and shows great interest in activities related to conservation of birds.

Mr. Rajendra Khanal, In-Charge of IUCN Nepal joined BCN as a Life Member. He has been working in conservation field for several years and is very keen on conservation of birds.

Mr. Binay Shrestha joined BCN as a Life Member. He is working as BCN’s Veterinary Officer at Vulture Conservation Breeding Centre, Kasara.

Mr. Pramod Khatiwada, working as overseas marketing agent of Nepalese travel agencies, joined BCN as a Life Member. He keeps a very good interest in wildlife conservation, climate change and sustainable tourism as well as travelling and nature photography.

Mr. Puran Shrestha joined BCN as a Life Member. He is the former Senior Conservation Officer of DNPWC and has immense knowledge and experience on wildlife conservation and protected area management.

Mr. Raj Kumar Rai joined BCN as a Life Member. He is currently associated with GIZ as a Head of Agricultural Sector under Improvement of Livelihoods in Rural Areas (ILRA) project. He has contributed a lot in community forestry programme also while working with GTZ/ChFDP and also supported BCN in developing skills of the CFUGs in bird monitoring in the ChFDP working areas.

Mr. Mohan Chandra Bishwakarma joined BCN as a Life Member. He is working as a Vulture Conservation Officer at BCN.

Mr. Sudarson Karki, a film maker by profession has joined BCN as a Life Member. He enjoys taking videos and photos of birds.

**Friends of BCN**

BCN acknowledges the strong support of international friends throughout its inception. Recently we have developed different category for international friends and supporters and encourage them to join as “Friends of BCN” by contributing small amount for the conservation of birds.

**Categories of “Friends of BCN”**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>US $</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>Green Category</td>
<td>750</td>
<td>US $ 750 or above (equivalent to Patron)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blue Category</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>US $ 130 or above (equivalent to Life member)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brown Category</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>US $ 15 or above (equivalent to General member)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

His Excellency, Scott H. Delisi, US Ambassador to Nepal joined Blue Category of Friends of BCN. He is a keen birdwatcher and shows great interest in bird conservation.

Ms. Alison Stattersfield, biologist by profession working as Head of Science in BirdLife International Secretariat, UK joined Blue Category of Friends of BCN. She has a great contribution in Important Bird Area conservation in Nepal.

**World Wetlands Day 2011 Celebration**

BCN actively participated in celebration of World Wetlands Day 2011 along with Government and other partner organizations at the premises of Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation (DNPWC) on 2 February 2011. The theme for this year was “Forest for Water and Wetlands”.

The programme began with inauguration of the billboard of Wetlands of Nepal by Chief Guest, Honorable Minister Deepak Bohora, Ministry of Forest and Soil Conservation. Several documents, books, posters and a documentary related to wetlands in Nepal were launched on the occasion. Prizes were also distributed to winners of the art competition amongst school children, which was held earlier during the week.

**Saving Asia’s Vulture from Extinction (SAVE) Launch**

As a part of the second phase of the ongoing vulture conservation efforts in Asia, the ambitious “Saving Asia’s vultures from extinction (SAVE)” consortium was launched at Kathmandu on 22 February 2011 by Subash Nemwang, Rt. Honorable Chairperson of Constituent Assembly, Government of Nepal. Department of National Park and Wildlife Conservation (DNPWC), Bird Conservation Nepal (BCN), National Trust of Nature Conservation (NTNC) and UK-based Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) and Zoological Society of London (ZSL) will carry forward the strategy chalked out to conserve vultures, having successfully initiated world’s first Vulture Safe Zone (VSZ) across the Terai belt of Nepal. The major task going forward is to ensure required number of critically endangered vultures in captivity and their breeding. Professor Ian Newton is the chair of the SAVE board.

Subash Nemwang, Rt. Honorable Chairperson of Constituent Assembly, Government of Nepal delivering his speech during SAVE launch.

The consortium is responsible for providing strategic coordination, across international borders, of a conservation work programme for Gyps vultures in Asia. The programme will involve elements of research, aviculture, advocacy and action. Initially, the focus will be on India and Nepal but there will be increasing efforts to integrate recovery work in other countries, primarily Pakistan, Bangladesh and Cambodia.

The launch was attended by key government agencies including Mr. Yubraj Bhusal, Secretary of Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation, conservation organizations, community partners, veterinary associations and media were present on the occasion.

International delegates for the SAVE launch, Professor Ian Newton, Prof. Rhys Green, Dr. Tim Stowe, Jemima Parry Jones, Dr. Vibhu Prakash, Dr. Chris Bowden, Dr. Richard Cuthbert, Dr. Andrew Routh
Behavior within and outside the Vulture Safe Zone. This study was carried out by BCN with support from DNPWC and RSPB, UK.

New Poster for Vulture Conservation Awareness

An awareness poster depicting the role played by the vulture king ‘Jatayu’ to save a goddess in a Hindu scripture Ramayana has been published to counter the local people’s concept of vultures as ‘bearers of ill luck’. Three thousand copies of this poster were published and are being distributed widely.

Also 6,000 copies of an awareness leaflet have been published. This leaflet, in Nepali language informs the public of vulture decline, its cause and conservation efforts to conserve vultures in the country.

Darwin Ecosystem Services Project

Data collection and analysis in Shivapuri, Nepal

Field work was conducted at Shivapuri–Nagarjun National Park (SNNP; an Important Bird Area) from November 2010–March 2011. Surveys were conducted focusing on carbon storage, water provision, tourism/recreation and cultivated goods using a quick and efficient assessment approach. The data are currently being analysed, but preliminary results illustrate that the long-term value of SNNP in its intact state is much greater than the value of conversion.

Table: Districts declared as Diclofenac Free Zone, date and area

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SN</th>
<th>District</th>
<th>Date of declaration</th>
<th>Area (Sq Km)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Dang</td>
<td>26-Nov-10</td>
<td>2,955.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Chitwan</td>
<td>25-Dec-10</td>
<td>2,218.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Kanchanpur</td>
<td>28-Dec-10</td>
<td>1,610.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Banke</td>
<td>1-Jan-11</td>
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<td>Nawalparasi</td>
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<td>Palpa</td>
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<td>Kailali</td>
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<td>Kapilvastu</td>
<td>26-Jan-11</td>
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<td>Bardiya</td>
<td>28-Jan-11</td>
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<td>Rupandehi</td>
<td>17-Feb-11</td>
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<td>Kaski</td>
<td>28-Feb-11</td>
<td>2,017.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Ilam</td>
<td>12-Mar-11</td>
<td>1,703.00</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Total Area</td>
<td></td>
<td>24,733.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Catching Vulture Chicks for Vulture Conservation Breeding Centre

Twenty Oriental white-rumped Vulture Gyps bengalensis chicks were collected from the wild (Dang, Kapilvastu, Rupandehi and Arghakhachi district) for the Vulture Conservation Breeding Centre and transferred to a quarantine aviary at Biodiversity Conservation Centre, NTNC, Sauraha. This activity was jointly carried out with DNPWC, NTNC, RSPB-UK and ZSL.

Satellite Tagging of Vultures

Six White-rumped Vulture chicks from Kapilvastu and Rupandehi Vulture Safe Zones were fitted with satellite tags to monitor their movements and learn about their dispersal behavior within and outside the Vulture Safe Zone.
Documentary on Ecosystem Services
A documentary on Ecosystem Services was telecasted by Akhijyal programme of NEFEJ in Nepal TV on Tuesday 22 March 2011 and also in Avenues TV.

Bird Education and Awareness at Nawalparasi Important Bird Area
Bird conservation awareness was conducted at west Nawalparasi area among local communities and school students. Altogether four local community groups and 12 schools were involved in the awareness programme. Altogether 2500 copies of awareness brochures were produced and distributed. Similarly, two information billboards are placed, one at Sunwal and another at Bardaghat. Prizes were also distributed to the winners of essay competition on the occasion of World Wetlands Day 2011. The project is supported by Oriental Bird Club, UK.

Staff Appointment
Mr. Mohan Chandra Biswokarma has joined BCN as the new Vulture Conservation Officer. He has a MSc. In Forestry from IOF-Pokhara and is recipient of prestigious Chandra Gurung Memorial Scholarship for his MSc. Degree. He comes from Hetauda, Makwanpur.

Dr. Sagar Paudel has joined BCN as the new Veterinary Officer, Vulture Conservation Programme. He has a BVSc. Degree and comes from Sunawal, Nawalparasi

Dr. Binay Shrestha has joined BCN as a Veterinary Officer, Vulture Conservation Breeding Centre. He will be based in Kasara, Chitwan national Park. He has a BVSc. Degree and comes from Ilam.

BirdLife International is a global conservation federation with a worldwide network of Partner organizations, Representatives and committed individuals.

BirdLife International seeks to conserve all bird species on earth and their habitats and, through this, it works for the world’s biological diversity. It recognizes that the problems affecting birds, their habitats and our global environment are linked inseparably with social, economic and cultural factors and that these can only be resolved if human societies function in an ecologically sustainable manner and if the needs, welfare and aspirations of people form a part of all conservation action.

Birds provide BirdLife International with a uniquely valuable focus: they are sensitive indicators of biological richness and environmental trends and fulfill many key ecological functions; they contribute greatly to our understanding of natural processes; they are an important economic resource; and they have inspired and delighted people of many cultures for centuries, which makes them excellent ambassadors for the promotion of conservation awareness and international collaboration.

BirdLife International pursues a programme of:

- Scientific research and analysis to identify and monitor worldwide the most threatened bird species and the most critical sites for the conservation of avian diversity;
- Advocacy and policy development to promote the conservation of birds and biodiversity through sustainability in the use of all natural resources;
- Field action and country conservation programmes, ranging from community-based land-use and management projects to species recovery programmes benefitting both wildlife and humans;
- Network and capacity building to expand and strengthen the global partnership of conservation organizations and to promote worldwide interest in the conservation of birds and the wider environment.

Staff Training
Khadananda Paudel, Field Biologist completed a GIS training with support from SOS Conservation Leadership Programme.

Veterinary Officers of the Vulture Conservation Programme, Dr. Sagar Paudel and Dr. Binay Shrestha participated in a week-long training (8-12 February 2011) on vulture veterinary management by Dr. Andrew Routh from ZSL. They received further one-month (March 2011) training on veterinary care and breeding centre management from Dr. Melissa Nollet of ZSL with support from Prince Bernhard Fund for Nature. During the training they carried out a complete health check up of all the birds at the Vulture Conservation Breeding Centre and also started work on hematological database for the birds.

BCN Veterinary Officers also volunteered at the Kite Festival in Ahmedabad, India (7-19 January 2011) to rescue and pride treatment for birds injured during the festival. During the period, they handled hundreds of injured birds and received first-hand training. Their visit was supported by the RSPB and Darwin Initiative.
The newsletter is produced quarterly for members of Bird Conservation Nepal. The aim of the newsletter is to inform BCN members on the recent development of ornithology in Nepal and any other relevant news on birds. It is circulated to all members free of cost. The individual annual membership is NRs. 300 for any SAARC nationals and equivalent Nepali rupees of US$ 15.00 for others to join as Friends of BCN.

Those who would like to donate to or be a member of BCN can do so by a direct bank transfer, to the bank details below, or via cheque. Cheques should be made payable to Bird Conservation Nepal and sent to the address below.

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Hari Sharan Nepali ‘Kazi’

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Bird Conservation Nepal (BCN) is the largest and oldest civil society organisation dedicated to the interests of ornithologists, birdwatchers and conservationists in Nepal. It seeks to promote an interest in birds among the general public, encourages research on bird biology and ecology, identifies the major threats to birds’ continued survival, and acts to conserve birds and their habitats. It also provides the most authentic information on birds and their habitats all over Nepal.

BCN is a membership-based organisation. At present, it is supported by a Founder President, 23 Patrons, 196 life members and several ordinary members. Members are the major strength of this organisation and people from various backgrounds viz. students, teachers, professionals, bird enthusiasts, conservationists, and the general public are involved.

BCN is committed to educate the public on the value of birds and the relationship between birds and people. It has also prioritized the significance of peoples participation as future stewardship to attain long-term national conservation goal.

Our staff form the heart of BCN but the lifeline is provided by the invaluable contributions of volunteers and supporters. Both financial and in-kind support is greatly appreciated and we welcome any kind of help that can be offered. For further information, please write to:

Bird Conservation Nepal
Post Box 12465, Lazimpat, Kathmandu, Nepal
Tel 4417805, 4420213, Fax 0097714413884
Email bcn@mail.com.np
www.birdlifenepal.org

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