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Status of Wetlands and Wetland Birds in Nepal

Hem Sagar Baral

Introduction

About 5% of Nepal's total area (743,756 ha) is covered with wetlands (Anon 2008) and half of this is said to comprise the wet paddyfields (BirdLife International 2005). Rivers, lakes, ponds, marshes and seasonal water bodies characterize Nepal's wetlands (Bhandari 1998). Generally speaking lakes in the higher mountains, above 3000m tend to be oligotrophic, and those situated in the midhills are mesotrophic and almost invariably eutrophic if they are in the lowlands. There are four major river systems in Nepal that are snow-fed and run down south through the whole breadth of Nepal until they touch India. These are Koshi river in the east, Narayani river in the central, Karnali in the west and Mahakali in the far west. These rivers in turn are fed by several other snow-fed rivers and spring waters. Babai,

Rapti, Kamala, Mechi, Bagmati are the main rivers that originate from the middle mountain region. Many of these are smaller rivers but very important in terms of sustaining local people's livelihoods. Shorter slow flowing streams originate from the Siwalik hills, eg Reu River at Chitwan valley. These too have been the main source of daily use of water for many thousands of people living in the lowlands. All the rivers in Nepal travel south and finally join the holy river Ganges of India.

There are nine Ramsar Sites in Nepal and more sites are being proposed in the near future (Bhandari 2008, Shailendra Pokharel pers comm. 2011). BirdLife International (2005) has pointed out that few additional wetlands in six Important Bird Areas (IBAs) may qualify as Ramsar Sites in Nepal.



Gaidahawa Lake (Photo archive: Himalayan Nature)



This paper aims to look at the state of the wetlands and the birds dependent on it, sites that already have some designation and recognition and those sites that are considered less important but warrant further management and conservation.

Methods



Black-necked Stork by Prasad Ganpule

Various literatures on the wetlands and birds of Nepal were collected to find out information on status of the avian diversity (see also References). Birds were taken as the focal faunal group to compare status of particular wetlands over different periods. Data archive collected for the last 25 years during the midwinter waterbird count from the wetlands of Nepal were re-visited to find out status of wetlands and water birds. The State of Nepal's Birds (BCN and DNPWC 2011) was a key reference for citing species' updated status. Regular field visits were made to several wetland sites to assess the condition of wetland biodiversity during different years since 1987. Information was carefully analyzed to find out changes in bird populations and status of wetlands.

Tune in to Panchhi Sansar

on *IMAGE FM 97.9*
at *7.45 am*

*Second and Fourth Saturday
of Nepali Month*



Results and Discussion

Wetland research and conservation work initiated by IUCN Nepal in the 90s form major milestone for wetland conservation in Nepal. More or less same time another project funded by Dutch government published a brief inventory of Nepal's lowland wetlands (BPP 1995). An inventory of wetlands of lowland Nepal (Bhandari 1998) published by IUCN Nepal was a major outcome of IUCN's wetland conservation programme and perhaps the most comprehensive lowland wetland book to exist in Nepal. Since then several activities from Government of Nepal and its conservation partners have been implemented aiming to conserve wetlands.

Nepal's nine Ramsar Sites encompass an area of 34,455 ha, nearly 22% of the total wetland area in the country. Four of the nine Ramsar Sites lie outside the protected area system, rest are inside the protected area. More than 82% of the total area of the Ramsar Sites in Nepal is located within the protected areas. Eight Ramsar Sites represent lentic eco-system and only one, the Koshi River represents both lotic and lentic ecosystems. All four Ramsar Sites of the lowland and Rara Lake situated at the 2990 masl are important wetlands for bird conservation.

Table 1. List of Ramsar Sites in Nepal with various details (adapted from Poudel 2008, Anonymous 2012)

Ramsar Sites	District(s)	Coordinates	Ratification date	Area (ha)	Physiographic Zone/locality relating to a PA	Altitude (m)
Koshi Tappu	Sunsari, Saptari and Udaypur	26°39' N 086°59' E	17/12/1987	17500	Terai, Protected area	90
Jagdishpur Reservoir	Kapilvastu	27°35' N 083°05' E	13/08/03	225	Terai, outside protected area	195
Ghodaghodi Lake Area	Kailali	28°41' N 080°57' E	13/08/03	2,563	Terai, outside protected area	205
Beeshazari and Associated Lakes	Chitwan	27°37' N 084°26' E	13/08/03	3,200	Terai, outside the core protected area but in the buffer zone of CNP	285
Rara Lake	Mugu	29°30' N 082°05' E	23/09/07	1,583	Himal, in protected area	2990
Phoksundo Lake	Dolpa	29°12' N 082°57' E	23/09/07	494	Himal, in protected area	3610
Gosaikunda and Associated Lakes	Rasuwa	28°05' N 085°25' E	23/09/07	1,030	Himal, in protected area	4700
Gokyo and Associated Lakes	Solukhumbu	27°52' N 080°42' E	23/09/07	7,770	Himal, in protected area	5000
Mai Pokhari	Ilam	27°00' N 87°55' E	20/10/2008	90	Midhills, outside protected area	2122



In case of the wetland IBAs, BirdLife International (2005) has advocated that the entire area identified as the IBA should be the area of the particular Ramsar Site. Often IBA area is bigger than the officially declared area of Ramsar Site. Six additional potential IBAs have been identified in the terai region of southern Nepal (BirdLife International 2005). All these potential

IBAs contain globally threatened species, five of them also meet two additional criteria to be a Ramsar Site. Many of the sites recommended by BirdLife are representative of the typical lotic ecosystems of the terai region, an ecosystem currently underrepresented within the existing network of Ramsar Sites in Nepal.

Table 2. List of the IBAs that qualify for becoming a Ramsar Site (adapted from BirdLife International 2005).

IBAs	Area (in hectors)	Wetland characteristics
Sukla Phanta Wildlife Reserve	30500	mostly lakes and marshes, few rivers
Bardia National Park	96800	mostly rivers
Dang Deukhuri Foothill Forests and West Rapti Wetlands	150000	mostly rivers
Farmlands in Lumbini area	141367	Paddyfields, rivers and small lakes
Chitwan National Park	93200	Rivers and oxbow lakes
Dharan Forests	50000	Paddyfields, small lakes and rivers

Ramsar designation has been important for drawing attention of public and government agencies for wetland conservation. It gives added responsibilities to the government agencies for wise use and management of the resources. Ramsar has included many important wetland sites already, however there are some important and outstanding omissions that need to be addressed. What if a species of globally threatened water bird breeds in a loose colony of nest trees and has no water? Umlabari Forest Groves is an IBA where 1% global population of Lesser Adjutant *Leptoptilos javanicus* can be regularly seen (Baral and Inskipp 2005). Such globally important sites have been omitted in Ramsar Site designation. Inclusion of such site by creating an additional criterion is very important.

Government of Nepal has steadily progressed towards increasing the total area of protected landscape (Baral *et al.* 2012). Within the 40 years' of Nepal's modern conservation history, significant progress has been made by the government to ensure biodiversity protection and also to fulfill the commitments made after signing international treaties and agreements. The Government of Nepal has set up a network of 20 protected areas covering over 20% of country's total area (Figure 1). However, this alone does not seem to have reduced threats to birds as many of them are rapidly declining (BCN and DNPWC 2011).

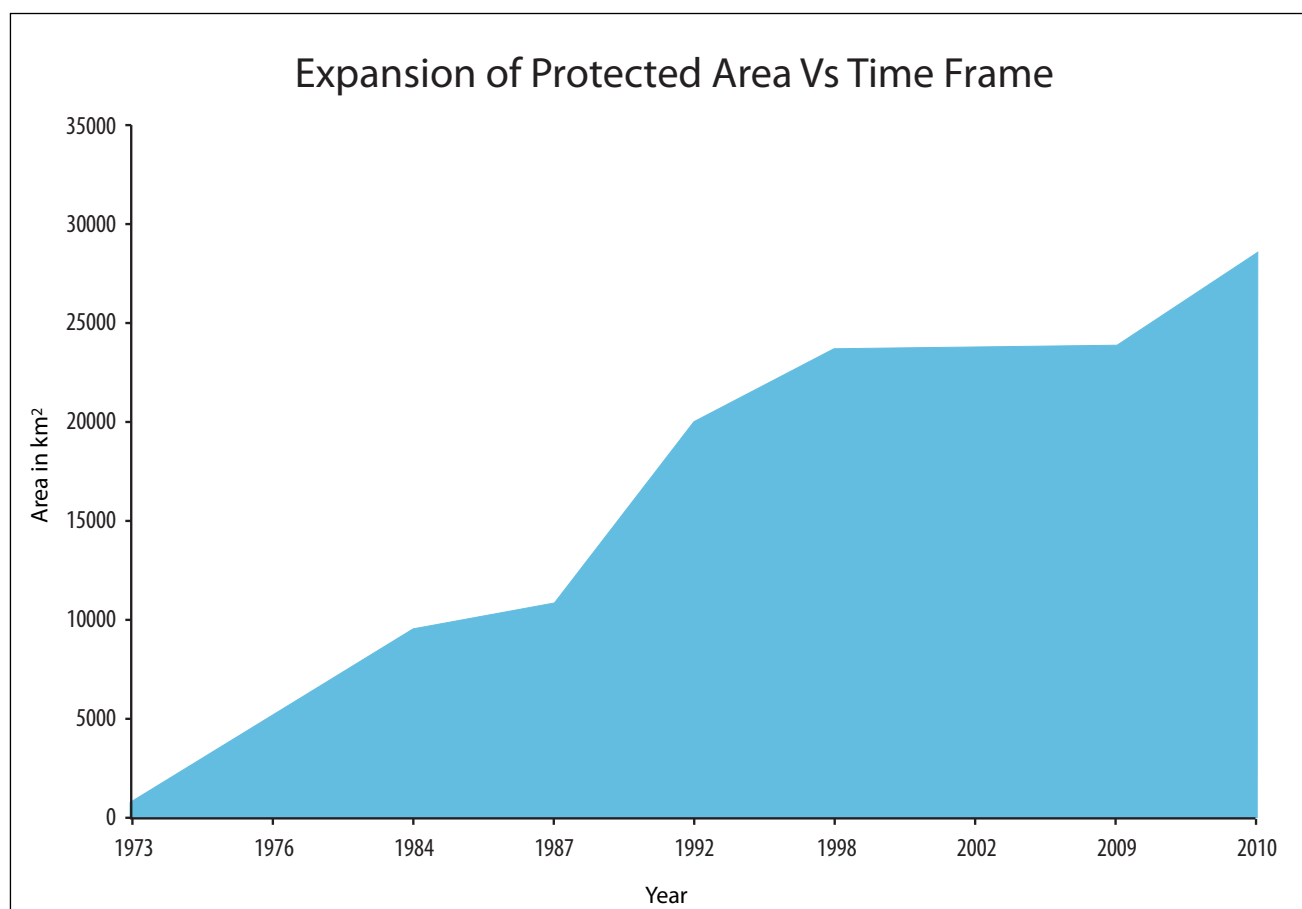


Figure 1. Protected area coverage in km² over different periods of time since 1973.



An analysis of the results on Nepal's birds over the period of last 25 years (from 1987 till 2012), indicates that bird populations in Nepal has continued to decline rapidly in spite of various conservation efforts by the government and several non-governmental organizations.

More and more birds have been added as threatened in the national red data lists in the periodical assessments, 129 species in 1996 (Baral *et al.* 1996), 133 species in 2004 (Baral and Inskipp 2004) and 149 species in 2010 (BCN and DNPWC 2011). Analysis of these three national red data lists shows an alarming increase in the number of birds identified as Critically Endangered (CR) over the last 15 years (Figures, 2, 3 and 4). A comparative analysis of the CR birds and their dependency in the habitat reveals that as many as 19 species listed under this category are water birds and additional 9 wetland dependent species (Inskipp *et al.* 2013).

Further, as many as 35% of total wetland bird species Nepal are considered threatened, far more than other habitat types (Inskipp *et al.* 2013). This totals to 28 species of birds or 46% of all the Critically Endangered birds in Nepal. This situation raises a fundamental question why, in spite of so many conservation efforts, the status of wetland birds have continued to deteriorate in Nepal?

Midwinter waterbird count results suggest that many migratory birds are declining rapidly. Several species of migratory birds eg Eurasian Curlew *Numenius arquatus*, Eurasian Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia*, Caspian Tern *Sterna caspia*, etc have seen precipitous decline in their numbers (BCN and DNPWC 2011). Ongoing work led by Zoological Society of London and National Trust for Nature Conservation on assessing Nepal's birds shows that more birds may be threatened than currently known.

Wetlands in many lowland protected areas are facing severe threats mainly from anthropogenic activities (Karki and Thomas 2004, Kafle 2005, Bhandari 2008). A total of 17 km stretch of Koshi River is protected as part of the Koshi Tappu Wildlife Reserve. Its immediate vicinity southwards (Koshi Barrage: part of the IBA but not Ramsar Site), the river and the seepage area lie outside the protected area. Similarly north of the Koshi

Tappu for a stretch of 15 km there exists vast wetlands –all these sites which are extremely important for waterbirds are outside protected area. Renewed knowledge on important biodiversity sites suggest that even IBAs boundary need to be re-mapped and revisited. Human disturbances and illegal activities are causing population declines of waterbirds outside as well as inside the Reserve. Similarly, in Chitwan National Park, rivers like Rapti and Narayani form the natural boundary for the Park. In Bardia National Park, the Karnali river is the natural boundary between the Park and the human settlements. For a large human settlement that lives adjacent to these rivers, the wetlands boundary act as interface. This interface is heavily used and misused: very little consideration is given for the bird fauna of the area.

Furthermore, the midwinter waterbird count data suggest that wetlands like Phewa and other lakes of Pokhara Valley, Badhaiya Lake of Bardia District, Gaidahawa Lake of Rupandehi District, Chimdi- the manmade reservoir of Sunsari District, are other important wetlands which qualify at least one or several Ramsar Criteria. All the lakes contain at least one species of globally threatened species except the lakes in Pokhara Valley that qualify the Ramsar criterion of supporting animal species at a critical stage in their life cycles. Badhaiya Lake lies in Bardia District with an area of 105ha (Bhandari 1998) and is advocated as one of the most important national wetlands of Nepal (BPP 1995). Current midwinter waterbird monitoring schemes have consistently shown that this lake is the most important single unit of wetlands outside protected areas or Ramsar Site network. Gaidahawa Lake represents an important lentic wetland in the Farmlands of Lumbini and there are also other important lotic ecosystems eg Kothi, Dano, Telar and Tinau. For conserving, the mosaic of wetland habitats in Lumbini Farmland IBA the area as a whole should be declared as a Ramsar Site (BirdLife International 2005). This will further alleviate the status of Lumbini farmlands and wetlands as important wildlife habitat. The ornithological value of Chimdi Lake has been recently highlighted (Surana *et al.* 2007) and continues to be an important man made wetlands in the east Nepal. Therefore, the above mentioned three nationally important wetland areas outside the IBA network (Phewa, Badhaiya, Chimdi) and one within an existing IBA may further qualify the criteria to become a Ramsar Site.

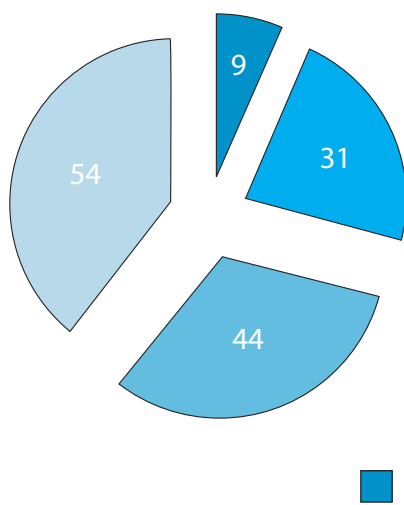


Figure 2. Birds of Nepal under different IUCN threat categories in the first assessment (Baral *et al.* 1996). RE: Regionally Extinct, CR: Critically Endangered, EN: Endangered and VU: Vulnerable

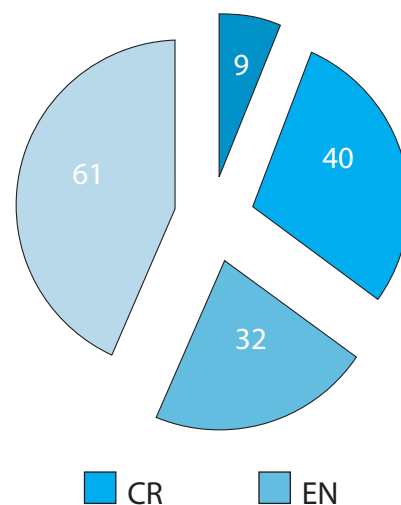


Figure 3. Birds of Nepal under different IUCN threat categories in second assessment (Baral and Inskipp 2004). RE: Regionally Extinct, CR: Critically Endangered, EN: Endangered and VU: Vulnerable

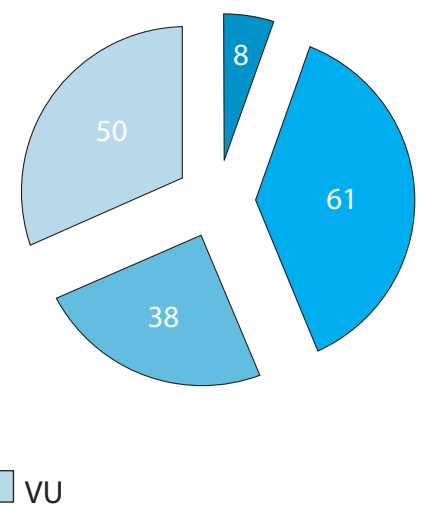


Figure 4. Birds of Nepal under different IUCN threat categories in 2010 assessment (BCN and DNPWC 2011). RE: Regionally Extinct, CR: Critically Endangered, EN: Endangered and VU: Vulnerable



Threats to wetland birds are aggravated by protected area policy to provide fishing license to wetland dependent communities. This decision is taken to respect the tradition of the marginalised and wetland-dependent communities living in the fringes of Parks or Reserves. The wetlands are heavily depleted of fish and other aquatic resources for these communities to barely make their living by just depending on natural wetlands. Wetland dependent people should be given alternative livelihood options for a more comfortable living. If people are not given permission to fish in wetlands within protected areas, there is a huge hue and cry from so called human rights organisations or social organisations. Many of such entities in this country are cultivating and experimenting unsustainable alien ideas, in fact destroying the age old tradition and the cultural values that existed in Nepali society. Their experiments have often resulted with unbalancing the harmony of society and respect to nature. Right-wrong is forgotten –what they say is the correct one. When things go wrong, the answer may be 'oh well did not work'. Such practice that give no long term benefits to people should be stopped.

All in all, wetland birds are facing severe threats from loss and degradation of habitat, overharvesting of wetland resources, unwise use of wetlands, eutrophication, abstraction, siltation, gravel extraction, proliferation of invasive species etc (BCN and DNPWC 2010). There is also need to find out what is happening to the migrating waterbirds in their breeding quarters. Some threats may be operating remotely and we may be able to see this only when we look at the global scenario. Such responsibility will fall onto the working areas of Wetlands International and BirdLife International.

IUCN Nepal in the mid-1990s was able to put enormous thrust to ensure conservation of Nepal's wetlands. Important milestones achieved were the inventory of Nepal's lowland wetlands, education and awareness, organising national seminars and most importantly documentation of all these valuable information. In 2003, backed up by the IUCN Nepal and WWF Nepal, Government of Nepal brought National Wetland Policy 2003. Bird Conservation Nepal (BCN) gave added inputs to conserve wetlands in Koshi Tappu Wildlife Reserve and buffer zone as well as Jagdishpur Reservoir (Baral and Thapa 2008, Thapa and Dahal 2009). Conservation and Sustainable Use of Wetlands in Nepal (CSUWN) since its beginning has been a driving force in wetland conservation and has taken the work further ahead. The impact has been at the policy level to form and activate National Wetland Committee and provide several guiding documents for wetland conservation eg CEPA strategy, inventory and monitoring, education and awareness etc. It has taken the lead in revising and getting approval for the National Wetland Policy 2012. Currently ground work to bring a separate Wetland Act is underway (Top Bahadur Khatri pers. comm. 2013).

It is expected that many of the threats discussed above would be addressed through a proper implementation of the National Wetland Policy 2012. There is need to review the existing network of Ramsar Sites in relation to recommendations put forward by various conservation partners on scientific merits and for practical purpose of conservation. Declaration and providing legal protection status to these potential Ramsar Sites for wetlands within existing IBAs or breeding colonies of waterbirds in dry lands is vital to safeguard the populations of Nepal's declining waterbird populations. This can be achieved by providing strict protection measures to all wetlands that are important, timely revision of laws and policies that govern

wetland conservation and management and enforcement through clear institutional mechanism.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Prof Karan Bahadur Shah, Chairman of Himalayan Nature and Dr Shalu Adhikari of the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Wetlands in Nepal for their comments in this paper. Many of the facts presented here are work of the Wetlands International through the annual midwinter waterbird count, BirdLife International and Bird Conservation Nepal through the State of Nepal's Birds, Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation, Himalayan Nature, National Trust for Nature Conservation and Zoological Society of London through the Bird Red Data Book project. I would like to thank them all.

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A Pair of Breeding Desert Wheatear *Oenanthe deserti* Reported in Upper Mustang

Ramesh Chaudhary



A Female Desert Wheatear carrying worm to feed its chick

Several Desert Wheatears, *Oenanthe deserti*, were seen in my recent visit to Upper Mustang, which is located in the northwest of Nepal. A pair of breeding Desert Wheatear was also observed near the Lo Manthang (3,800m) on 13 June 2012. This is the first record confirming that Desert Wheatears are not only passage migrants, but also are breeding residents to semi desert regions like Upper Mustang.



A chick of Desert Wheatear in its nest

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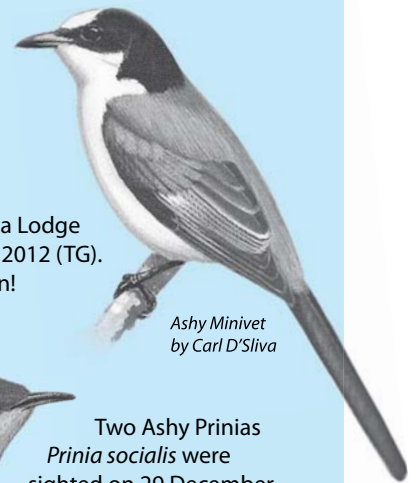
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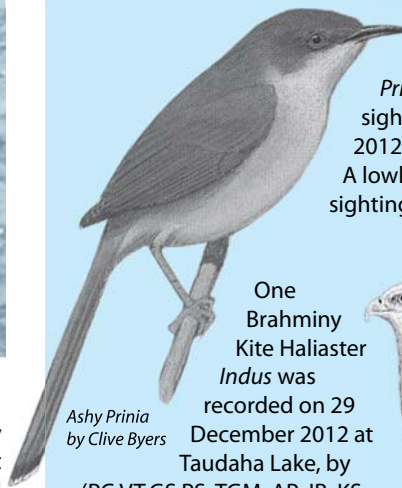
Additional Sightings!

A pair of Ashy Minivet *Pericrocotus divaricus* was sighted in Chitwan Gaijda Lodge premises on 7 December 2012 (TG). A new species for Chitwan!



Ashy Minivet
by Carl D'Silva

Two Ashy Prinias *Prinia socialis* were sighted on 29 December 2012 at Chobar (RC and GS). A lowland species and a new sighting for Kathmandu Valley!



Ashy Prinia
by Clive Byers

One Brahminy Kite Haliaster *Indus* was recorded on 29 December 2012 at Taudaha Lake, by (RC,VT,GS,PS, TGM, AP, JB, KS, RB, BNB and BB). A lowland species and a new sighting for Kathmandu Valley!



Brahminy Kite
by Alan Harris

AP: Anil Prajapati, BB: Bipin Bajracharya, BNB: Bhaskar N. Bhattarai, GS: Gopi Shrestha, JB: Jaya Bhandari, KB: Krishab Shrestha, PS: Phurkel Sherpa, RB: Rojal Baidya, RG: Ramesh Chaudhary, TG: Tika Giri, TGM: Tek Gharti Magar, VM: Vimal Thapa

Compiled by Tika Giri and Hathan Chaudhary



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अभियानमा सहकार्य गरौं।



a BCN initiative to save Nepal's endangered birds.

PLEDGE AND DONATE TODAY

News

Membership

Mr Hari Dhoj Tulachan, Chairman of Dragon Hotel, Pokhara joined BCN as a Life Member. He is very keen birdwatcher and shows great interest in birds.

Mr Ram Babu Bastakoti joined BCN as a Life Member. He is running tourism business and working hard on promoting birdwatching tourism in Pokhara Valley.

Mr Ganga Bahadur Ghale, trekking guide by profession joined BCN as a Life Member. He has great interest on birds and loves birdwatching. Also he is keen on promoting birdwatching tourism.

Mr Hari Marasini joined BCN as a Life Member. He is designer by profession but also keen in bird conservation.

Dr Nava Ratna Shakya, Veterinary Officer at BCN joined as a Life Member. He is managing the Vulture Conservation and Breeding Centre in Chitwan National Park.

Mr Krishna Bhushal, Field Biologist of BCN's Vulture Conservation Programme also joined as a Life Member. He has done his Master's in zoology and has been conducting several research on birds especially raptors.

Mr Dayaram Thapa, Administrative Chief of Marushin Shitaka Inc. joined as a Life Member.

Mr Ashok Bahadur Malla joined as a Life Member. He is member of BCN's Executive Council and shows great interest in bird.

Mr Tek Bahadur Gharti Magar, Branch Officer of Nepal Kaze Travel Pvt. Ltd joined as a Life Member. He is very keen birder and has been continuously involved in various birdwatching events organised by BCN.

Dr Amir Sadoula working as Veterinary Officer at BCN joined as a Life Member.

The following local NGOs/CBOs have joined BCN's Nepal Bird Conservation Network (NBCN) member:

- Narti Community Forest Coordination Committee (NCFCC), Lamahi, Dang
- Nature Guide Association Suklaphanta, Majgaun, Kanchanpur
- Bishwojyoti Bikash Pratishthan, Panchanagar, Nawalparasi
- Andheri Charchare Community Forest User's Group, Madanpokhara, Palpa
- Environmental Sustainable and Rural Development Centre (ESRDC), Dang
- Bardiya Nature Conservation Club, Bardiya,
- Livestock Association, Kapilvastu

Education and Awareness

Art Exhibition "Nepal: A Sense of Place"

A day long art exhibition was held in Kathmandu Guest House



on 1 July 2012 in partnership with BirdLife International and Darwin Initiative. Esther Tyson, an artist from UK exhibited 43 paintings and sketches reflecting people, landscape and birdlife. The exhibition also reflected on ecosystem services which are extremely broad, and represent all that nature provides and on which humanity depends. The paintings were also exhibited on November 2012 in the Mall Galleries in London.

Birdwatching Tourism Training in Pokhara

Birdwatching tourism training was organised for tourist guide working in various tourism organisations at Pokhara from 9 - 11 August 2012. The main aim of the training was to provide bird identification techniques to people involved in nature tourism and also make them aware on status of birds of Nepal. Altogether 43 participants were benefited by the training. Some of them joined BCN membership also.



Bird Photography Competition

BCN organized bird photography competition and exhibition on 31 August 2012 on the occasion of 4th International Vulture Awareness Day at National Academy of Fine Arts, Naxal to promote bird photography and raise awareness among the general public. Winners of the competition Mr. Susheel Shrestha,



Mr. Seejan Gyawali and Mr. Yatra Thulung received cash prize of Rs. 15,000 Rs. 10, 000 and Rs. 5,000 for first, second and third positions respectively from Mr. Hira Lal Dongol, Senior Artist and the Chief Guest of the programme. The exhibition lasted for two days and almost 300 visitors visited the exhibition.



National Conservation Day

BCN with other consortium members celebrated the 4th National Conservation Day with the theme for 'Stop the Trade: Save the Rhino' in order to highlight the immediate threats to rhinos in Nepal and the need to take collective action to combat poaching and illegal wildlife trade to protect this magnificent species.

On the occasion, BCN provided its Jatayu Scholarship to two individuals: Manoj Ayer and Jeevan Cheetri to pursue research on vulture conservation in Nepal. BCN also placed exhibition stall and displayed its publications, merchandises, newsletters and brochures to spread awareness on birds of Nepal.

BCN representation on Third Asian Bird Fair

Mr Bheshraj Ghimire, General Secretary and Ms Menuka Basnyat, Membership and Education Officer participated on 3rd Asian Bird Fair and 11th Thailand Birdfair 2012 held at Bangpu, Samut Prakarn Province, Thailand from 10 to 11 November 2012 organised by The Bird Conservation Society of Thailand (BCST). This year theme was "The Right to Live", to emphasize the importance of conservation.

BCN publications were on display and sold various bird items such as bird badges, bird key rings, tshirts, mugs, jacket, hats etc. We were able to spread the information on birds of Nepal and conservation efforts taken by BCN to around 2000 visitors. An interview with Mr. Bheshraj Ghimire about birds of Nepal and work of BCN was broadcasted on Channel 3-a national Channel of Thailand. They highlighted on endemic bird of Nepal, Spiny Babbler in the programme.

Programme/Project Update

Vulture Conservation Programme

East- west Highway Vulture Survey

8th Annual vulture survey was completed on 7 July 2012 following east-west highway covering 1010 km from Kakarvitta in Jhapa to Gaddachowki of Kanchanpur. In addition to east-west highway, the survey also covered the mountain routes of Palpa- Gulmi-Argghakhanchi-Pyuthan, Doti- Dadelhdura-

Baitadi- Darchula and Dang-Salyan-Rolpa. The current survey observed 43 Oriental White-backed Vultures across the Terai lowland from east to west and 120 Vultures including 5 species across the mountain routes.

Himalayan Griffon Survey in Upper Mustang

Field biologist Krishna Bhusal conducted Himalayan Griffon Survey in Upper Mustang this year from 12-29 August 2012. NSAID survey as well as some questionnaire survey to explore people's perception on vultures was also done during the survey.

Construction of New Colony Aviary

All the construction work has been completed and 15 pair of birds has been shifted to the new colony aviary in early October 2012 with technical support from Jemima P. Jones from National Birds of Prey Trust. The old colony aviary was also renovated in November 2012.

Translation of Breeding Centre Management Guidelines in Nepali

Guideline has been translated in to Nepali and provided to all of the keepers and staff involved in the project at VCBC, Kasara. Also we are planning to develop a brochure for VCBC and publish it.

Nepali Subtitles for Saving Asia's Vultures from Extinction (SAVE) Documentary

The translation of documentary has been completed targeting to Nepalese community people. Now community people here can view the documentary in Nepali too. 100 copies of the documentary has been produced and distributed to concerned stakeholders.

Second Issue of Vulture Newsletter

Second issue of Vulture Newsletter "Giddha Sandesh" has been published and distributed widely for the concerned stakeholders. Articles relating with SAVE initiatives, VSZ activities, community engagement, VCBC, Diclofenac issues are included in this issue. The newsletter is aimed to disseminate the efforts and challenges in vulture conservation to the general public.



Tourism Promotion Brochure

1000 copies of tourism promotion brochure for Six Vulture Safe Feeding Sites of Nepal and 1000 copies containing message only about VSFS, Ghachowk has been printed. The brochures have been very useful in promoting tourism in Vulture Restaurants of Nepal.

Eco-tourism Promotion Workshop, Lumbini

As a part of sustaining Vulture Safe Feeding Sites, BCN in collaboration with Nepal Tourism Board (NTB), Lumbini Development Trust (LDT), Lumbini Hotel Association (LHA) and Vulture Restaurant Management Committee (JRMC), Gaidatal organized a one day Eco-tourism Promotion Workshop on 12 August 2012 at Lumbini. Thirty two participants representing the organizing partners and journalists used an opportunity to discuss on promoting eco-tourism on Vulture Safe Feeding Sites (VSFS) of Nepal as well as sustaining them in long turn.

Bhupal Nepali and Puja Gurung from BCN explained on BCN's vulture conservation work and sustaining VSFS in Nepal. Likely, Ishwari Adhikari from JRMC Gaidatal, Pradip Basnet from NTB, Mithun Shrestha from LHA and Saroj from LDT presented about main tourist attraction points for tourist and its possibility and challenges in and around Lumbini area. Moreover, Representatives from District Development Committee and District Livestock Service Office, Rupandehi, journalists and hotel owners used the floor to keep their thoughts and providing their suggestions on sustaining VSFS through tourism promotion.

SAVE meeting in Kathmandu

The second annual meeting of Saving Asia's Vultures from Extinction (SAVE)" consortium was held in Kathmandu from 5-6 November 2012 where major progress from the ten national and international partners were reported. Opened by guest of honour Director General of Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation Mr. Megh Bahadur Pandey chaired by UK's world renowned raptor expert, Professor Ian Newton, who described the meeting as highly successful and despite the progress, bringing the partners closer than ever in focusing on how to remove the killer drug diclofenac from the environment

Representatives came from all four South Asian countries Nepal, India, Bangladesh and Pakistan and several from UK. Department of National Park and Wildlife Conservation (DNPWC), National Trust of Nature Conservation (NTNC) and BCN were the organisations participated from Nepal.



An advocacy strategy and action points were developed through the meeting that all ten partners can implement to combat the ongoing use of diclofenac. Similarly the meeting worked out on the specter of other untested veterinary drugs being allowed to take their place and undo the progress to date in getting the veterinary diclofenac formulations banned.

Vulture and its Habitat Conservation and Management Training for Partners at Lumbini

In a bid to stop the dramatically declining numbers of vultures in Nepal, BCN organised two day training on Vulture conservation and management from 22-23 November 2012 and major discussions were centered on conserving vultures in Nepal. The training was inaugurated by CEO, Ms. Sushila Chaterjee Nepali who described the training as highly useful and effective on bringing the partners closer than ever in focusing on how to remove the killer drug diclofenac from the environment and manage the data on vulture monitoring in Nepal. Thirty four participants representing 15 community based organizations from 12 districts of lowland and mid-hills of western Nepal used the opportunity to discuss on vulture conservation issues at local level and strategies for future actions on vulture conservation in Nepal. Vulture experts from BCN facilitated the training. Nepal has piloted the concept of 'Vulture Safe Zone' and the first of its kind in the world has been established in the western Terai and mid-hills of Nepal. In collaboration with local community, 21 diclofenac free districts encompassing 39,122 square km have been declared in Nepal.

Darwin Ecosystem Services Project

Launch of Ecosystem Services National Report at CBD COP11, Hyderabad

At the Convention on Biological Diversity's COP11 in Hyderabad, India, Dr Krishna Chandra Paudel, Secretary of Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation launched a report entitled Conserving biodiversity and delivering ecosystem services at Important Bird Areas in Nepal.

The report—the first of its kind—presents the results of a three-year Darwin Initiative study conducted by Bird Conservation Nepal (BirdLife Partner) who piloted a new practical 'toolkit' for assessing ecosystem services (the benefits that nature provides, such as clean water and crop pollination) at 27 Important Bird Areas (IBAs) across the country. It is designed to help decision-makers recognise the value of nature, increasing awareness of the consequences of human actions, and ultimately leading to a more sustainable future in which biodiversity is conserved and the benefits from ecosystem services are better realised and more equitably distributed.

BCN plans to work with the Government to build on the recommendations put forward in the report. The challenge now is to integrate these into key policy sectors so that the true value of Nepal's diverse ecosystems are taken into account when considering, for example, management of the protected area system, the expansion of the tourism industry and plans for climate change adaptation.





IBA Monitoring Data Update in World Bird Data Base (WBDB)

IBA monitoring data of 2011 has been completed of all the 27 IBAs in Nepal and state, pressure and response data for all IBAs were entered into the BirdLife WBDB to establish a baseline for monitoring in future

Community Based Nature Conservation A Source of Sustainable Livelihood Project

With funding from the Canadian High Commission's Canadian Fund for Local Initiative (CFLI), BCN implemented nature conservation and sustainable livelihood project at Ghachowk, Kaski where BCN has been managing the Vulture Safe Zone.



This project focused on improving the livelihood of the local people through active participation in sustainable nature conservation, and the promotion of ecotourism and Income Generation Activities (IGAs). It sought to achieve the mentioned goals for example to contribute to community based nature conservation through the promotion of ecotourism and IGAs. It also aimed to provide training to community members in order to provide them with the knowledge and skills to earn income through tourism related activities. With support of the project three different groups were formed: Tourism Promotion Group, Organic Farming Group and Animal Husbandry Group. Homestay Management and Hospitality Training were provided

to 24 household (13 Female and 11 Male). Exposure visit of one night (17 December 2012) to homestay at Lwang Ghale was organised for participants to give them ideas on how to operate homestay in a sustainable way. After completion of the training, participants formed Ghachowk Homestay Management Committee with nine members. Likewise trainings on beekeeping and organic farming were also organized and also some seed money given to the local communities that will help them to immediately put their skills into practice and support the livestock breeding program.

Koshi Wetland Conservation

BCN has been constantly supporting the Ramsar Fisheries Cooperative at Koshi established by the BCN-WWT Darwin Initiative project. With coordination support from our field staff, Ravi Shanker Pandit, the cooperative has been successful in receiving financial support for hatchery construction and fish pond renovation from the District Fishery Development Office, Sunsari and the wetland project CSUWN respectively.

Darwin Bengal Florican Project

Various desk studies have been carried to gather all the available research data on Bengal Florican that will help in the implementation of the Bengal Florican project.

Ian Barber from RSPB, Charlotte Packman (Bengal Florican expert) and Jyotendra Thakuri from BCN made a preliminary field visit to Bengal florican project sites, Suklaphanta Wildlife Reserve and Bardia National Park from 6-9 November 2012. Main aim of this visit was to get the general impression of project sites, the GPS locations of project sites for GIS modeling purpose and to meet the Park officials to discuss the project.

Publication

Ghodaghodi Lake Area Bird Checklist and Threatened Birds Poster Published and Launched

A checklist of GLA birds was launched during a special event organized jointly by Conservation and Sustainable Use of Wetlands in Nepal (CSUWN) and BCN on 19 September 2012 at Forestry Complex in Babarmahal. The checklist was launched by Mr. Braj K. Yadav, Director General, Department of Forests, the chief guest of the function. CSUWN and BCN conducted an inventory of all bird species found in and around GLA to update the existing checklist. The updated checklist with 226 species represents birds from 50 families and 13 orders including 18 nationally and globally threatened birds and shows the record of additional 86 species from the previous 144 birds recorded in 1992. Likewise the poster of "Threatened Birds of GLA" was also launched by the chief guest. The poster depicts 18 threatened birds.

Annual General Meeting

30th Annual General meeting of BCN was held on 22 December 2012. There was huge presence of BCN's advisors, members and staffs. Yearly program and financial updates were presented in the meeting. Discussion was made on several issues raised by the participants.





Staff Capacity Building

- Ishana Thapa, Senior Conservation Officer attended Economic Tools for Conservation training hosted by Conservation Strategy Fund in USA from 20-31 August 2012 in Stanford University, California.
- Jyotendra Jyu Thakuri, Conservation Officer attended Monitoring and communicating biodiversity, Darwin Scholarship programme in UK from 21-31 August 2012.
- Ishana Thapa, SCO participated in IBA monitoring and EAAF partnership meeting from 24-29 September 2012 in Bangkok, Thailand.
- Dr Nava Ratna Pradhan, Veterinary Officer at VCBC participated in the avian incubation training from 25-27 September 2012 at Pinjore, Haryana.
- Sushma Shrestha, Administrative Officer attended CCI Capacity Development Workshop from 12-14 September 2012 at BirdLife International Global Secretariat, Cambridge, UK.
- Bhesraj Ghimire and Menuka Basnyat attended 3rd Asian Bird Fair in Bangkok from 9-12 November 2012.
- Ishana Thapa and Dr. Sushila C. Nepali attended CBD COP10 meeting in Hyderabad from 9-12 October 2012.
- Ishana Thapa attended Refresher Course on Conflict management in Wetland and River Basin Management Planning Processes from 23 November to 12 December 2012 in Windhoek, Namibia.

Staff Appointment and Departure

- Dr Amir Sadaula has been appointed as Veterinary Officer from November 2012.
- Dr Sushila C. Nepali has been appointed as a CEO from 2 November 2012.
- Dr Hum Gurung, CEO has left BCN.
- Dr Sagar Paudel has left BCN.

Donation

BCN welcomes all kinds of support from individuals and institutions. You can even help us by providing us your camera, binocular, telescope, scientific equipment etc. Further more, we will also be grateful if any one provides educational materials for our library. All support will be duly acknowledged.



Together for birds and people

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 fulfil 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 benefiting 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.

Editorial Board

Dr Hem Sagar Baral (Chief Editor),
Ishana Thapa (Sub Editor),
Suchit Basnet, Yub Raj Basnet, Dr Hum Gurung

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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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**Bird
Conservation
Nepal**

Established in 1982, Bird Conservation Nepal (BCN) is the leading organisation in Nepal, focussing on conservation of birds, their habitats and sites. It seeks to promote interest in birds among the general public, encourage research on birds, identify major threats to birds' continued survival. As a result, BCN is the foremost scientific authority providing accurate information on birds and their habitats throughout Nepal. We provide scientific data and expertise on birds for the Government of Nepal (GoN) through the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation (DNPWC) and work closely in birds and biodiversity conservation throughout the country.

BCN is a membership-based organisation with a founding President, patrons, life members, ordinary members, friends of BCN and active supporters. Our membership provides strength to the society and is drawn from people of all walks of life from students, professionals and conservationists. Our members act collectively to set the organisation's strategic agenda.

We are committed to showing the value of birds and their special relationship with people. As such, we strongly advocate the need for peoples' participation as future stewards to attain long-term conservation goal.

As the Nepalese partner of BirdLife International, a network of more than 110 organisations around the world, BCN also works on a worldwide agenda to conserve the world's birds and their habitats.

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