Danphe
Bird Conservation Nepal
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Where have Koklass Pheasant *Pucrasia macrolopha* of Pipar gone?

Suman Sharma

It was 1 May 2011 when we started our journey for the Galliformes monitoring in Pipar valley for this year. Our team members including two foreign guests and other Nepalese finally reached Pokhara from Kathmandu. After packing the camping gears and food we finally departed from Pokhara towards Pipar valley.

The Pipar valley, which was discovered by Jhalak Thapa in 1977, is famous for its rich birdlife especially Himalayan Galliformes (Pheasants and Partridges), Rhododendron forest and other wildlife. First monitoring of Himalayan Galliformes was started by Anthony Lelliot in 1979 and thereafter various periodic surveys have been conducted. These surveys have indicated that population of Himalayan Galliformes have more or less remained stable.

After staying overnight at Karuwa (small village at the edge of valley), we finally started ascending towards Pipar forest and after 3-4 hours of ascend we reached Thulokhobang (2400m), which was our first camp for the dawn call count as we have decided to do the survey as we ascend. Thulokhobang was the previously established site for the survey and has 3 listening stations. At this site we heard dawn calls of Hill Partridge *Arborophila torqueola* and few Satyr Tragopans *Tragopan satyra* and no Koklass. After listening three morning calls, on 6 May 2011, we ascended further to Pilicho camp (2700m), which is a new survey site. After 3 hours of ascend, we finally reached Pilicho and we searched for the listening stations as this was a new site so there were no previously established listening stations. We decided to choose Pilicho a new site as it had

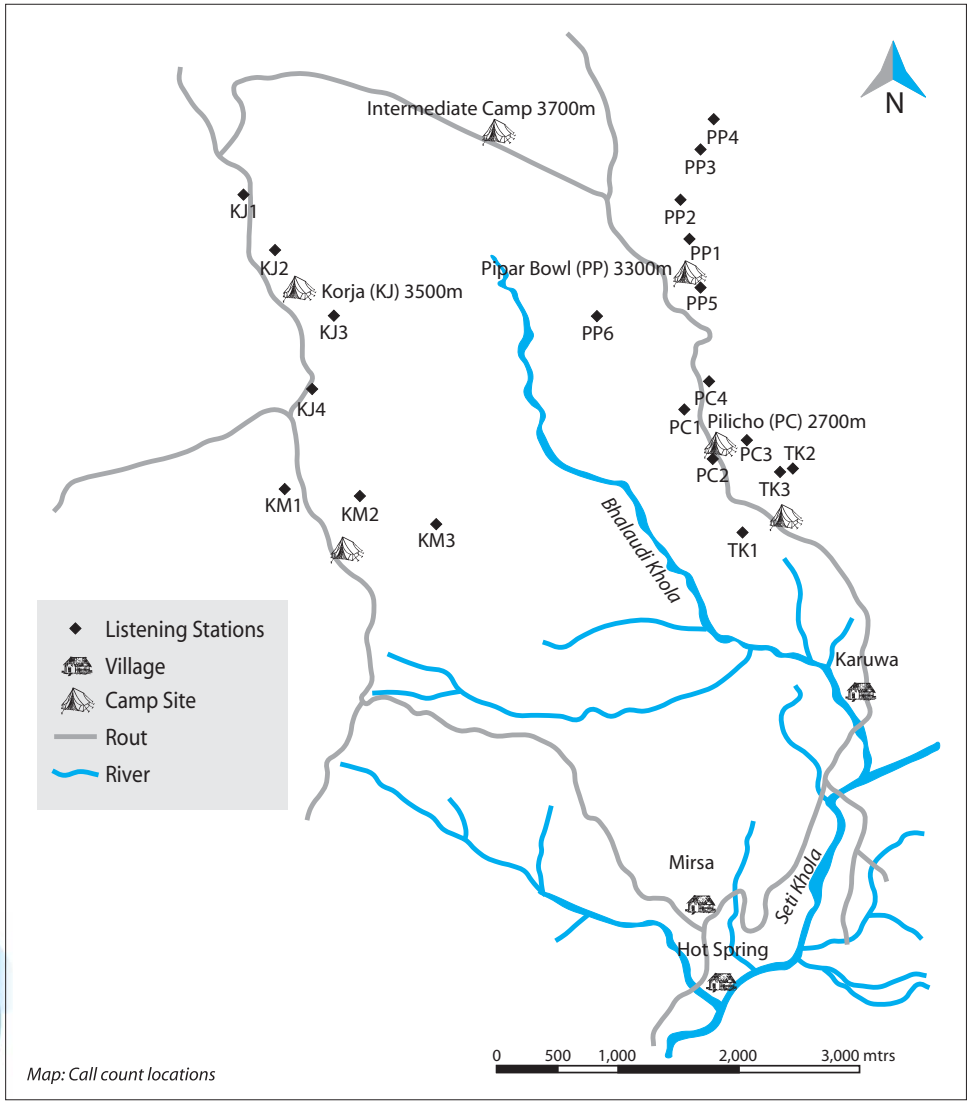
Good pheasant habitat at Pipar, Annapurna Conservation Area

a good forest cover, was at right altitude where Galliformes like Tragopan and Hill Partridge could be roosting and was accessible from camping point and accordingly we recorded good number of calls.

Finally we sorted out two listening station on that day and two more on the next day. On that day I realized how difficult it is to actually establish the listening station in the terrain where ascending and descending was only the walk we could do and furthermore making the trails to reach those stations. I felt lucky as we were accompanied by the guides who were local (most from Karuwa and Kapuche village) and they knew each and every corner of the forest and trails.

Waking up at 3 am and walking for 30-60 minutes up and down in the dark by making the trails to reach the listening station, was not easy task for all of us but we all were driven with motivation and excitement to see pheasants so it was not a serious problem. Finally we all had a lot of fun returning back and sharing the calls. At Pilicho, there was a shelter camp for trekkers with two rooms which was built by Trekking Agents Association of Nepal (TAAN) and Annapurna Conservation Area Project (ACAP), that was very helpful for us especially for cooking and sheltering when it rained heavily. Talking about the weather, it was unusual this year according to Laxman Poudel who carried out 2005 and 2008 survey as it was raining all the day like monsoon. So we established 4 new listening stations at Pilicho and ascended towards Pipar bowl, which was our exciting destination. Pipar bowl is the site which has got the longest monitoring history since 1979.

On the 10 May 2011 we finally reached Pipar bowl and visited historical listening stations 1, 2 and 5. On the first morning we decided to have training for the whole team on listening Koklass call and build more confidence on calls of other Galliformes also. This training was important because there were six listening stations at Pipar bowl and we were 7 members and it was important to build enough confidence on each team member to identify calls of Galliformes. But unfortunately, we were unable to hear Koklass call on that morning. After that morning call we decided that each observer (team member) will be accompanied by a local guide who have previously listened Kokalss call. So again next morning, with the hope to hear Koklass call, all the observers departed early morning with guides to each listening stations but the result was same as last morning, all of them heard the call of Tragopan and Hill Partridge and even few of them heard Himalayan Monal but no Koklass. We did all three morning call counts at all the stations of Pipar bowl but we did not hear Koklass. We were surprised and bit concerned on not hearing the Koklass call. We guessed a lot of anecdotal reasons but no one had the reasonable answer. There was a shelter camp construction work going on in Pipar and 10-15 people were working there and it was the season for Yarsagumba *Cordysep sinensis* (a caterpillar fungus which has high market price) collection so one of our guess was the disturbance caused by people could have affected Koklass but again if so then why did not it affect Tragopan. We did heard good number of calls of Tragopan in Pipar bowl. Poaching could be the next reason as in recent years there were evidences of high poaching going on in Pipar but again why would poachers selectively poach Koklass why not Tragopan and other species as it has the more or



Map: Call count locations

View of Mt. Fishtail from Pipar

less same value as Tragopan and other Galliformes species but the past survey of Galliformes in Pipar showed that population of Koklass was in decreasing trend and some members claimed they could have become extinct now. In the other hand according to 2008 survey there were Koklass in Pipar and how could they get extinct in a period of 3 years. Some members claimed that change in climate with rise in temperature and human disturbance Koklass might have shifted its habitat to other sites. So we all decided before reaching any definite conclusion, we need to study the in-depth behaviour of Koklass. So it was surprising as well as sad to say that we still do not know what happened to the Koklass in Pipar bowl.

After the three morning call at Pipar we moved to Korchan which was our new site for this year monitoring and we established 4 new listening stations at Korchan. Surprisingly we heard two calls of Koklass in one morning from listening station two and one call from listening station three and it repeated the same order in rest of two morning. It made us to think more on what had happened to the Koklass of Pipar. Then our final site was Khumai which was established in 2008 survey by Laxman Poudyal for his Master thesis research work. We all departed on 17 May 2011 to Khumai after listening the morning call at Korchan. As there was already pre-established listening station, we continued to listen the calls from those points. As there was small patch of forest on one side of the ridge and grassland on the other side, we decided it is not worthwhile to have extra listening stations. During the first morning me and two guides were assigned at listening station where we heard a Koklass call just 30-50 m away which was my closest call ever heard before. We heard the same Koklass call in other two mornings in the same distance and direction which proved Kokalss were still there in Khumai. Finally we finished our monitoring of Himalayan pheasants field trip for 2011 and I am still confused are there Koklass in Pipar or not and if yes, why we did not hear their calls.

Acknowledgements
Author is indebted to World Pheasant Association, UK for providing funds for the project. Thanks to Laxman Poudyal, Simon Poulton, Willow Outhwaite, Jyotendra Jyu Thakuri, Lina Chalise and Shovit Koirala for their hard work in the field and finally thanks to local guides of Karuwa and Kapuche village for guiding us throughout the field trip.

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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.

Sighting Probability of Himalayan Monal *(Danphe) Lophophorus impejanus* in Khaptad Plateau of Khaptad National Park, Nepal

Babu Ram Bhattarai

Introduction

Khaptad National Park is rich in avifaunal diversity. It harbors 290 species of birds including residential and migratory birds (Chaudhary 2006). The highest number of bird species are from the family *Sylvidae* (47) closely followed by *Muscicapidae* (44), *Corvidae* (23), *Accipitraidae* (22) *Fringillidae* (16), *Passeridae* (15), *Paridae* (10), *Phasianidae* (10), *Culumibidae* (9) and *Cululidae* (9). Satyr Tragopan *Tragopan satyra*, Cheer Pheasant *Catreus wallichii* and Himalayan Monal *Lophophorus impejanus* are protected birds according to National Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act, 1973 (GoN 1973). In addition, White-rumped Vulture *Gyps bengalensis* and Egyptian Vulture *Neophron percnopterus* are globally threatened birds found in this National Park.

Himalayan Monal *Danphe* is the National Bird of Nepal and it attracts the attention due to its colourful plumage of blue, green, and bronze (Shrestha 2002). Because of its spectacular colours, it is generally called *"naurangi danphe"*. The male bird is 70 cm in length and has a crest. It is iridescent green, copper and purple with white patch on back and cinnamon-brown tail. Female has white throat, short crest, boldly streaked under parts, white crescent on upper tail coverts and narrow white tip to tail (Poudyal 2008). It prefers the subalpine and alpine habitat in steep grassy and open rocky slopes and adjacent forest during summer and descends to lower altitudes during winter (Inskipp and Inskipp 1991, Lelliot and Yonzon 1980 in Poudyal 2008). The main habitat of this species is mentioned as Rhododendron and other undergrowth in open conifer forest interspersed with grassy glades, and the scrub zone above timber-line in between 2500-5000 m (Ali & Ripley 1983). They live either singly or in groups. Seeds, berries and tubers are their favourite food but sometime they forage on insects in the decayed wood. When human approach closer, they run down the hill and emit a whistling chuckle with a low and short flight.

This bird is distributed in Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, Nepal, Bhutan, China and Myanmar. In Nepal, it is resident bird of temperate to alpine zone and moves to 2500 m altitude in winter (Poudyal 2008). This species has been categorized into least concern in red data book of IUCN (www.iucnredlist.org). The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora-CITES has banned the trade of its live or dead specimen as this species has been put into the appendix I (Chapagain & Dhakal 2002). It is a principal game bird of upper temperate and subalpine Himalaya and is under threat due to loss of favourable habitat and hunting pressure (Shrestha 2002). Forest of Rhododendron which is a major habitat of this species is rapidly declining as wood of rhododendron is a good source of fuel wood in the mountain region of Nepal because there lacks other energy sources.

Himalayan Monal by Bikram Shrestha

This report explores the sighting probability of Danphe in Khaptad plateau of Khaptad National Park. It also lists the plant species found in the habitat of this species.

Objective

The objective of monitoring this species is to know the sighting probability/status (abundance/presence or absence) of Danphe and to describe their habitat with plant species list found in the habitat.

Methods

Direct observations were made in the possible habitats in Khaptad plateau of Khaptad National Park. The head quarter of the national park is also located in this plateau. The Observations were made between 0700 to 0930 hrs and 1530 to 1800 hrs in April and May 2010. The points where the *danphe* was found were located and the plant species of 2 m radius were recorded. Altogether, 25 observations were made in Dhauladhunga, Panimuhan, Khaptad Lake and Ballejure area. This species when approached near, flushes with a downward short flight and the study site is closed forest therefore activity could not be recorded.

Result

Out of 50 observations made, we could locate the species only at six events. Therefore, the probability of sighting the species was found low (0.24). The sighted birds were all male and single. Among six successful sightings, in Khaptad lake area and Saileshwori area (Panimuhan area) two observations were successful in each site for sighting the species. While in Dhauladhunga area and in Ballejure area only one observation was successful to sight the species. Out of six successful sighting only two were during afternoon and rests were during the morning time. All these successful observations were found in sunny and clear weather. In one of the site, call of another game pheasant –Koklass *Pucrasia macrolopha* was heard. In five sightings, they were found in southern warmer slope while in one it was in northern slope. The plant species recorded in the located point (2 m radius) are listed as following.

Local Name	**Scientific Name**
Gurans	*Rhododendron hodgsonii and R. companulatum*
Thingre salla	*Abies spectabilis*
Lokta	*Daphne bholuwa*
Goldarim	*Cotoneaster nepalensis*
Pinapani	
Khaptade sirsoo	*Imperata cylindrica*
Bhukyalnu	*Rhus javanica*
Khasru	*Quercus spp.*
Thinke/Liso	*Illex dipyrena*
Jai	*Jasmine spp.*
Papre	*Cassia tora*
Bhojpatra	*Betula utilis*
Gulaf	*Rosa macrophylla*

Discussion

This species is residential or non migratory in this National Park. Only seasonal migration has been recorded with moving downwards in winter. However, Ali and Dick 1983 and Grimmet *et al* 2003 mentioned this species as a subalpine and alpine mountain pheasant, rhododendron and open scrub as main habitat; here this bird inhabits closed forest. In the study area there exists open pastures but we never sighted this species in such habitat. But we observed them in the edge of forest and pastureland. The study site has no continuous connection with alpine scrub with open forest and glades. The habitat in the study area is closed forest and difficult to sight and approach near to observe the activities. Only in one sighting we succeed to observe the foraging activities very shortly. The foraging or other activities will help to study its feeding ecology. Grazing of domestic stocks might disturb its movement or foraging.

Habitat where danphe was found

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On the Amazing Behaviour Observed in Pheasants

Karan Bahadur Shah

Sometimes birds may not show their usual behavior as we read in literature, hear from someone and often commonly think and believe. Last year I have observed probably hitherto unrecorded behavior of two species of pheasant, one domesticated and other wild. Those observations raise a few questions like:

Do birds show parental care only for a limited period?
Do birds also change their behavior according to their physical needs?
Does the reward and punishment system exist in the avian world?
And finally as exhibited by advanced creatures like mammals, do strong members in a bird flock tend to protect their weaker members from the suspected enemies? Is there a cooperative defending behaviour?

The answer for these questions could be in the affirmative or negative, because those two observed behavior may be incidental or shown occasionally or exhibited commonly, and it is a question of further research. To share with you, full account of both the incidents is provided here.

Probably it was First Protection and then Punishment!

It was in Taplejung district in October 2008, we (a group of about 15 people) were heading to Yangma, one of Sherpa villages located at the highest elevation (4100m) in Nepal. Walking almost two hours continuously on snowy ground and after crossing Nurak pass (4900m) our group members were extremely tired and wanted to take rest at the front side of three medium sized chortens constructed along the trail close to two small high altitude lakes, locally known as Sherpa Pokhari (4450m). The chosen site was on the top of a small hillock. As soon as we threw ourselves on the ground, we saw a covey of Blood Pheasants *Ithaginis cruentus* feeding and moving on the slopes about 30m away from our resting site and the chortens. There were about 35 individuals of different sexes and age groups. The birds got disturbed due to our sudden presence in their vicinity. They started slowly moving away from the site without making any audible sound. However, as soon as they started leaving the spot a fight was started between two juveniles of unknown sex. All the members of entire flock except those two fighting juveniles kept moving without feeding on the ground. The observation was something like birds of same feathers may not fly together!

The moving members of the flock had traveled about 20 meter, nevertheless those two juveniles were still engaged in fighting at the same spot. Suddenly a fully grown male, who had seen the fighting juveniles left the moving group and hurriedly came back at the fighting juvenile's site. He then indiscriminately started pecking on heads and other body parts of both of the juveniles as if he wanted to punish both of them for instigating fight and not taking proper care for their own safety! After this unbelievable intervention by the male, both juveniles stopped fighting and separated. Immediately after this, the male turned his head, left the site. No doubt he was immediately followed by the juveniles and all three birds rejoined the flock!

It is quite unknown that the action of the adult male was a mere coincidence or the adult members of the species take extra precaution for protecting young members of the flock?

Mother was no More Friendly with her Own Offspring!

We wanted to raise chickens in our house for various reasons including the proper utilization of household biological waste materials. Therefore, we bought a hen along with her six young offspring. There was no adequate room for housing these new guests in our house; therefore we kept them freely moving on the open terrace of the house. However, every day at night they were kept under a willow basket (doko) covered by at least 3-4 gunny bags to protect the chickens from winter's night chill and biting wind. Besides, we used to put a medium sized flat rock over these gunny bags so that the gunny bags cannot be blown away by the wind. In addition to our support, of course

Blood Pheasant by Rajendra Gurung

the mother herself would cover her offspring by her body as soon as we put them under the basket and remained in same position throughout the night.

As natural food was rarely available on the terrace, every day we would provide them cereal grains, cooked rice and green sprouts to eat and occasionally sand in a large plastic bowl for dust bathing. Whenever we provided them any type of food, the mother would always exhibit great example of parental care by offering all food to the chicks and she would hardly take a single bite for her own purpose. The mother even made available every bit of food to young by vainly scratching the ground as it was hard cemented floor! As the chicks grew larger, we decided to build a wooden enclosure *(khor)*, by using wooden planks and wire mesh and installed the cage on the ground outside the house closer to the kitchen garden.

The chicks along with their mother were shifted in their newly constructed house. Here also she would exhibit same parental care as mentioned before. Days were passed on and the chicks were grown so large enough that it was not possible for the mother to cover all young under her body in sitting position during night time, even then she did not stop covering them under her body. As a result, it forced her to remain standing throughout the night! A few days later the chicks gained their body so large that it was not possible for her to cover all of them by her body even in standing position, as a result the chicks started resting independently without having warmth of their mother's body during the night.

As the chicks attained larger size, it was possible to make out their sexes, and in this particular clutch there were three males and the rest three were females. One day we had noticed that some of these sub-adults had sustained a few bleeding wounds on their heads and necks. Actually, they had even lost a small portion of skin from their skulls and necks and the injury was profusely bleeding! We were surprised and completely amazed at the incident. First of all we provided traditional first aid treatment, we applied a paste made from mustard oil and turmeric powder on the wounds. We suspected that it could be work of the notorious large mice residing in the kitchen garden, and carefully examined the enclosure looking for holes. There were no noticeable holes large enough to make entry of the mice. Therefore, it was a big mystery as well as a problem needing urgent attention to save the chicken family. It was very important to find out the culprit.

It did not take long time to detect the culprit as only the next day one of our family members was greatly surprised to see the mother mercilessly attacking her own grown up offspring and took out a big chunk of skin from the neck of a young bird! It was then confirmed that the mother was responsible for all the damages. She was mercilessly attacking her own grown up babies for some unknown reasons, who were no doubt carefully raised by her just a few days ago the incident! We were totally astonished to see the mother's changed behavior towards her babies. It was just unbelievable! She was the same mother, who had shown great parental care, when the chickens were young.

It was very urgent to protect the chickens from their mother's unnecessary punishment, therefore we narrated the unbelievable incident to many people, however as expected nobody had a plausible explanation. Although there was simple solution i.e. to keep the mother separate from the chickens, but thinking the extra burden of making arrangements for her, we continued our query for looking the solution for next 2-3 days. Finally we found a savior, an old lady residing faraway from my house. This lady had witnessed similar incidents in the past as she also raises local breed of chickens in her house.

She told us that the mother was about to lay new clutch of eggs and she urgently needed a mating partner! We borrowed a rooster from her for a few days and kept inside the enclosure. It stopped her irritation and frustration. She stopped attacking to the hapless young chickens. About a week later as soon as she started laying eggs, we returned the rooster to its owner. The mother still occasionally laid eggs, and the interval of laying two eggs was large and uncertain. She has never repeated the incident of attacking her own offspring again.

Discussion

Parental care is a form of altruism. Parents invest in their offspring at the expense of their own survival and chances of future reproduction. It is also a principal of considering the well-being and happiness of their offspring. It is said that the degree of parental care varies considerably from species to species, and depends upon the number of offspring produced, the type of mating system involved, and the aid given to the offspring by animals other than the parents. It is generally said that the species where internal fertilization occurs, parental care is usually provided by the female. However, although internal fertilization always takes place in the birds, the most common pattern for parental care is provided by both sexes, which usually involves bringing food for the young, and may also involve incubation (McFarland, 1991).

The case of pheasants is a little bit different, where the female usually spends more time and energy in caring for the young than does the male. Exactly same pattern is followed by almost all Nepalese pheasant species, whether it is domesticated or wild. In this, aforementioned case of domestic chicken, the female was about to lay new clutch of eggs, and then to receive a new batch of offspring. But due to absence of a matured male partner, producing offspring was not possible.

The newly born offspring needed sufficient food and room to survive. The old offspring would have definitely created shortage for food and space, therefore the mother probably had acted in this direction i.e. to solve those shortage problems. Her intention was probably not to kill her own offspring but just to vacate the enclosure. But there was no way out and the young group became victim of her frustration! It seems her frustration was further compounded by the absence of true mating partner in the enclosure. It is also possible that the need of mating partner was least aimed at the physical requirement and mostly for passing genes in order to produce descendents, necessary for the survival of her own species.

It seems her actions were also aimed at the survival of the new batch of the offspring. Any behaviour towards offspring that increases the chance of the offspring's survival at the cost of the parent's ability to invest in other offspring is known as parental investment (McFarland, 1991). Probably it was a case of parental investment.

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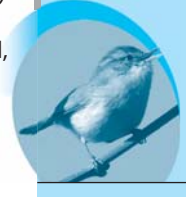


News

Membership

Mr Dyabin Gurung, Managing Director of Gurung Cottage, Ghandruk joined BCN as a Life Member. He is more dedicated in promoting ecotourism in Nepal.

Mr Bhagwan Raj Dahal joined BCN as a Life Member. He is presently working as Country Representative at Red Panda Network. He is a renowned expert on Swamp Francolin in Nepal and has a good experience in wetland conservation.

Mr Phurkel Sherpa, trekking guide by profession has joined BCN as a Life Member. He is a very keen birdwatcher and regularly involves in birding around the Kathmandu Valley.

Mr Govinda Shrestha "Gopi" working as a trekking guide has joined BCN as a Life Member. He is a passionate birdwatcher and photographer.

Capt. Kul Bahadur Limbu, Managing Director of Nepal Airlines Corporation joined BCN as a Life Member. He has a keen interest in photography and loves taking pictures of birds.

Mr Shesh Kanta Sharma joined BCN as a Life Member. He is employed as trekking guide in Mountain Legend Pvt. Ltd. and envisions bird watching as an essential tool to promote tourism in Nepal.

Mr Krishna Raj Gurung, a trekking guide has joined BCN as a Life Member. He is very much interested in enhancing knowledge on birds and support bird conservation.

Mr Shankar Tiwari has joined BCN as a Life Member. He is a very dedicated naturalist and has a long association in promoting bird eco tourism in Nepal.

Mr Kunda Dixit, one of the renowned journalists of Nepal and publisher/editor Nepali Times joined BCN as a Life Member. He is a very keen nature lover.

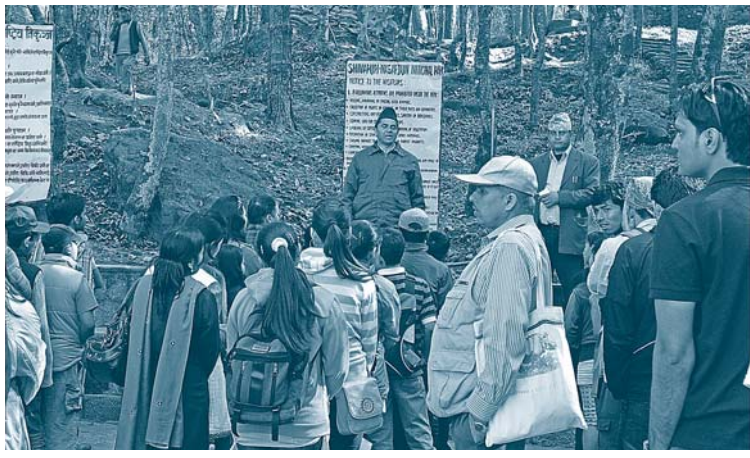
Education and Awareness

BCN Website in its new look

BCN website www.birdlifenepal.org has been updated to make it more attractive and more informative. This time we have also put space for advertisement in our homepage as an opportunity for more fund raising where interested organisations and corporate houses are encouraged to advertise paying nominal charge every year.

16th Wildlife Week Celebration

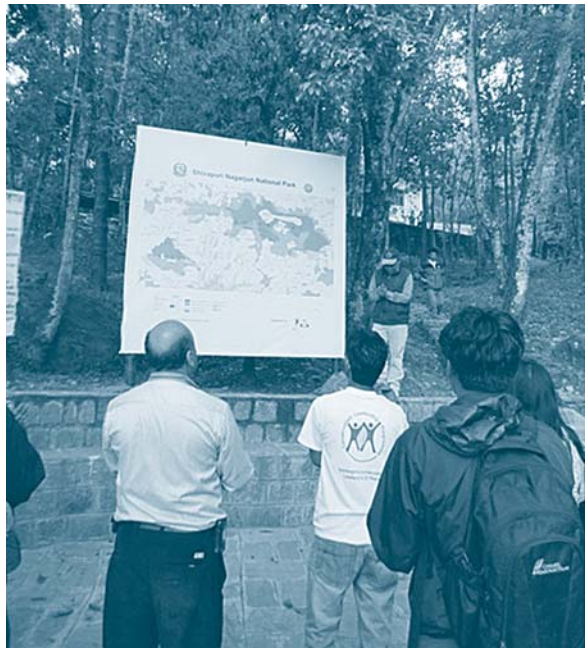
Department of National Park and Wildlife Conservation (DNPWC) has been celebrating first week of Nepali new year as Wildlife Week in collaboration with national partners organising several awareness activities about wildlife of Nepal. Like previous years BCN supported DNPWC in the event by organising birdwatching at Shivapuri Nagarjun National Park (SNNP) on 16 April 2011. There was huge participation of around 150 students from different schools and people from various partner organizations. Altogether 63 species of birds were recorded in the event.



SNNP Chief Warden, Mr Gopal Bhattarai delivering his speech

Shivapuri Nagarjun National Park (SNNP) location map board inauguration

Mr. Krishna Acharya, Director General of DNPWC inaugurated the new hoarding board with detail map of SNNP placed in front of the main entrance of the park on 16 April 2011. The hoarding board was prepared by BCN through the donation money received from Diane Goodman who has been working at the office of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees in Kathmandu.



Director General of DNPWC, Mr Krishna P. Acharya inaugurating the SNNP information hoarding board

World Migratory Bird Day 2011 Celebration

From last three years BCN has been celebrating World Migratory Bird Day (WMBD) organising several events. This year BCN celebrated WMBD organising various programme including birdwatching, bird race, conservation awareness and documentary shows at Kathmandu, Pokhara and Koshi.

Bird race was organised on 14 May 2011 at Phulchowki, one of the Important Bird Area and highest peak near Kathmandu

CEO, Dr Hum Gurung distributing the prize

Valley in collaboration with Friends of Birds. A documentary show on "Winged Migration" was also organized for the general public at NTB hall. Posters, stickers and cards on World Migratory Bird Day were distributed to all the participants. We were able to make four life members and 10 general members on the day.

Likewise one day interaction programme was organised for secondary level students at four schools near the lakes of Pokhara valley on 12 May 2011. Also the day was marked at Koshi by organising musical chair competition at the Sri Janta Higher Secondary School, Madhuban-5, Sunsari. The event was covered in various National and local newspapers.

World Environment Day 2011

BCN organised a week-long Bird Painting and Photography Exhibition to celebrate the World Environment Day 2011 throughout the first week of June at Nepal Art Gallery, Babarmahal. The theme for this year was "Forests: Nature at your Service". Mr. Kiran Manandhar, Chancellor of Nepal Academy of Fine Arts inaugurated the Bird Painting and Photo Exhibition, and stressed the importance of bird painting and photography in our society. The programme was also attended by the US Ambassador to Nepal and other prominent birders and photographers. The exhibition featured 15 paintings and more than 60 photos of birds including 10 globally and nationally threatened species as well as Spiny Babbler the only endemic bird to Nepal. The exhibition gained popularity among the general public right from the first opening day.

Chief Guest Mr. Kiran Manandhar, US Ambassador to Nepal, Scott H. DeLisi, Mrs. DeLisi and BCN President Mr. Shree Ram Subedi are observing the bird painting and photographs at Nepal Art Council.

BCN also participated and exhibited its awareness materials in the Students' Conservation Conference and Exhibition organised by National Trust for Nature Conservation (NTNC) from 5 to 7 June 2011. The conference was inaugurated by Rt. Honorable Prime Minister, Jhalanath Khanal on 5 June 2011.

The exhibition at Babarmahal was partially sponsored by Nepal Airlines Corporation, Everest Bank Ltd and Photo Hollywood.

Update on ongoing projects

Vulture Conservation

Highway road transect survey

This year the highway transect survey of vultures were carried across eight districts of western Terai covering 683 km from Gaidakot in Nawalparasi to Gaddachowki of Kanchanpur. The survey was supported by Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation, Nepal and Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), UK. The current survey recorded 71 White-rumped Vultures *Gyps tenuirostris*.

In addition to east-west highway, the vulture team also surveyed the mountain routes of Rolpa-Piyuthan-Arghakhanchi and Doti-Dadeldhura- Achham-Bajura. For two consecutive surveys there has been no decline in vulture numbers and also the nesting colony across the region is showing positive results.

All this success has been possible through the untiring effort of the partners, local communities and the commitments of veterinarians and para-veterinarians not to use the drug diclofenac.

National Workshop on Diclofenac Free Zone

A national workshop on Diclofenac Free Zone was jointly organised by Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation (DNPWC) and BCN on 23 June 2011. Workshop was organised to sensitise the government authorities and conservation partners in diclofenac issues for saving critically endangered Gyps vultures in Nepal and to collect feedback on the draft Diclofenac Free Zone Declaration, Monitoring and Management Guidelines, 2068 prepared by BCN and DNPWC.

Stakeholders providing their input to the DFZ National Workshop

All the participants highlighted the importance and need of diclofenac free zone declaration guidelines and coordinated actions for its effective implementation.

Representatives from government authorities-DNPWC, Department of Drug Administration, Department of Livestock Service, Nepal Veterinary Association, Department of Forest; and conservation partners- WWF, NTNC, Jatayu Restaurant Management Committees took part in the workshop.

BirdLife /Jenson policy and advocacy project

BCN organized a Stakeholder Consultation Meeting to discuss the draft Mai Valley Forests IBA Management Plan 2012 – 2016 on 25th May 2011 in Kathmandu. Representatives from

Participants from various organizations discussing in the workshop

Department of Forests, experts, representatives of various NGOs and BCN staff participated the meeting.

Dr. Hum Gurung, CEO, BCN welcomed all the participants and described the importance of IBAs for bird conservation and its habitats. He briefly mentioned about the different IBAs of Nepal, highlighted the main significance of the Mai Valley Forests IBA, and emphasized the need for an Integrated Management Plan for maintaining and enhancing the integrity of the area.

The workshop was very useful in getting valuable inputs that were incorporated to consolidate and formulate the Mai Valley Forests Management Plan. The workshop was followed by field visit to Mai Valley to consult with the local government bodies, environmental groups and individuals.

Darwin Ecosystem Services Project

The ecosystem services survey work and data analysis on Tourism, Harvested Wild Goods, Hydrology, Carbon and Cultivatted Goods at two sites Shivapuri Nagarjun National Park and Phulchoki Mountain Forest is nearly being completed. Scientific papers on these two case studies are also being developed.


Understanding, assessing and monitoring ecosystem services for better biodiversity conservation

Project Update 1

Summary

The first year of the UK Government's Darwin Initiative supported project on ecosystem services in Nepal began with consultative meetings and a national workshop to bring all concerned stakeholders together to share their common interest in biodiversity conservation through sustainable management of ecosystem services. The project will be implemented in the plain Terai of Koshi Tappu Wildlife Reserve to the mid hills in Shivapuri-Nagarjun National Park, Phulchowki and in the pristine mountain environment of Rara National Park. These sites, in diverse ecological zones, have been recognised as Important Bird Areas and also provide a wide range of ecosystem or environmental services for human well being. Fieldwork at Shivapuri-Nagarjun National Park undertaken in this first year provides a wealth of information for understanding the value of ecosystem services delivered by this site and for developing a practical 'toolkit' to implement the methods at other sites. The work is being carried out in close partnership with conservation agencies including the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation which plans to use the 'toolkit' in Nepal's protected areas, and is also being shared with BirdLife partners in Asia.

Ecosystem Services

The natural environment provides people with many benefits such as food, clean water, control of climate and other services that are fundamental to human wellbeing. Biodiversity loss, leading to ecosystem degradation is leading to serious degradation of these services with severe economic, social and environmental impacts on people.

BirdLife's Darwin Initiative Project (2010–2013) on ecosystem services

Bird Conservation Nepal (BCN) with funding from the UK Government's Darwin Initiative programme and with support from other institutions: BirdLife International, the Cambridge Conservation Initiative and Kings College London, is implementing a project to develop a rapid approach to measuring ecosystem services at the site-scale.

Nepal is among the richest in its birdlife in Asia, with 867 species recorded to date, 33 of which are globally threatened.

There are 27 Important Bird Areas (IBAs) – sites of international importance for bird conservation. Many of these areas are under threat from agricultural expansion, pollution, overharvesting and climate change. Nepal's rich biodiversity and its ecosystems provide vital services and livelihoods for most poor people. This project will demonstrate the importance of these varied areas for biodiversity and people and will build capacity nationally to assess and value ecosystem services.

BirdLife INTERNATIONAL

Nepali brochure on Ecosystem Services has been produced and distributed to various partner organizations at national and local level. Likewise documentary on Ecosystem Services has also been developed with the help of Nepal Forum for Environmental Journalists (NEFEJ) that will be shared among all the Birdlife Partners through online.

As we have already been through a year on this project, a project update newsletter has also been developed and circulated.

State of Nepal's Birds 2010

All the design and the review work has been finalised and the publication has been sent to the press.

Bird Survey in Reshunga Forest, a Potential IBA

The third and fourth surveys were carried from 24-30 March 2011 and 18-24 June 2011 which recorded 128 and 109 bird species respectively. The final data analysis is being carried and report will be completed very soon. With the record of a number of biome species it is likely that the site may qualify for an IBA.

Great Hornbill *Buceros bicornis* Survey at Chitwan National Park

The full survey of the Great Hornbill at Chitwan National Park has been started from 14 June which will be continued till the end of August 2011. A preliminary survey condected in December has revealed 25 individuals in the park. It is expected that more pairs will be counted by August 2011.

Bird Survey in the Indrawati River Basin

The final two summer bird surveys were carried from 19 April-2 May 2011 and 19 May-2 June 2011. A complete data analysis was carried for the four surveys and the final report has been prepared. Altogether 219 bird species belonging to 44 families were recorded during the 4 surveys (see annex 1). Highest number of species was recorded from family Muscicapadae (36) and Sylviidae (31). Of these recorded bird species, 23 species are truly winter visitors to Nepal, 11 are summer visitors and rest are resident species

Bird survey route along the Indrawati River

The study has also revealed the priority bird areas in the Indrawati River Basin and the underlying threats to birds in the area. It has also indicated the potential of Indrawati River Basin area to develop as bird ecotourism site.

This study is supported by WWF Nepal and WECS.

Visitors

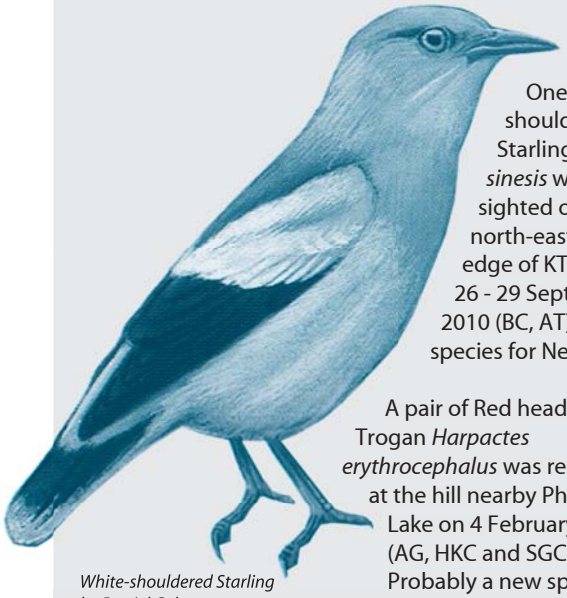
Mr. Krishna Prasad Acharya, Director General of Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation (DNPWC) and Dr Maheshwar Dhakal, Ecologist, DNPWC visited BCN office on 15 May 2011. Dr Hum Gurung briefed about BCN's ongoing activities. Mr. Acharya stressed strong coordination and cooperation among conservation agencies to ensure quality outputs and avoid duplications.

Appointment

Mr Puran Shrestha, Consultant has been appointed for preparation of management plan of Mai Valley Forest IBA and IBA rapid ES data collection from February May 2011.

Mr. Nabin Bhattarai, Research Associate has been appointed for vulture data entry from April-July 2011.

Additional Sightings!



White-shouldered Starling by Daniel Cole

One White-shouldered Starling *Sturnus sinesis* was sighted on the north-eastern edge of KTWR from 26 - 29 September 2010 (BC, AT). A new species for Nepal!

A pair of Red headed Trogan *Harpactes erythrocephalus* was recorded at the hill nearby Phewa Lake on 4 February 2011 (AG, HKC and SGC). Probably a new species for Pokhara Valley!

Great Myna by Daniel Cole

A single Little Forktail *Enicurus scouleri* was seen at Koshi Camp in Koshi Tappu Wildlife Reserve on 19 February 2011(BC, AT and HC). A new species for Koshi Tappu Wildlife Reserve!

Two Great Mynas *Acridotheres grandis* (possibly a pair) were spotted at Koshi Tappu Wildlife Reserve (KTWR) near Madhuban on 2 and 9 March 2011 (BC, CS and SB). A new species for Nepal!

A pair of Spiny Babbler *Turdois Longirostris* was sighted at Uppardang Gadi, Chitwan on 13 April 2011 (MD, RK, PB and SGC). A new record for Chitwan!

One White-browed Piculet *Sasia ochracea* was sighted near Thulokhobang, Annapurna Conservation Area on 3 May 2011 at an elevation of 2100m (JJT, LPP, SP, LC and SK). A new record for Annapurna Conservation Area!

AG: Alec Gillespie; AT: Anish Timsina; BC:Badri Chaudhary; CS: Cagan Sakercioglu; HC: Hathan Chaudhary; HKC: Hari K.C.; JJT:Jyotendra Jyu Thakuri; LC: Lina Chalise; LPP: Laxman Prasad Poudyal; MD: Micheal Dooher; PB: Prakash Basnet ; RK: Rupendra Karmacharya ; SB: Suchit Basnet; SGC: Som G.C.; SK: Shovit Koirala; SP: Simon Poulton

Compiled by Tika Giri and Hathan Chaudhary

BirdLife INTERNATIONAL

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.

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.

Sunrise Bank Limited, Gairidhara
A/C No: 002 00200026CL
Account Holder: **Bird Conservation Nepal**
SWIFT CODE: SRBLNPKA

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Mr. Ganga Jung Thapa, Nepal
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Dr. Guy Castley, Australia
Dr. Jean-Marc Hero, Australia
Mr. Bikram Rai, Nepal

नेपाल पंछी संरक्षण संघ

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.

For further information please contact:

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