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Avitourism Potential Study in the Forest Patches linking Okhaldhunga and Solukhumbu

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Introduction

The geographical variation in Nepal has created differences in the assemblage of varied flora and fauna (Thapa, 2010; Inskipp *et al.*, 2017; BCN, 2021). Avifauna diversity distribution within varied landscape of Nepal is the prominent example. A total of 892 bird species recorded in Nepal (DNPWC and BCN, 2022) to the date accounting around 8% of world's bird species (BCN and DNPWC, 2011). This has placed Nepal as the popular destination

for Avitourism and it is gaining momentum. Avitourism is popular amongst birders, conservationists and photographers (Cordell and Herbert, 2009; Connell, 2009) and travel across the world shifting from localized birdwatching (Steven *et al.*, 2014). Birdwatchers often travel to remote locations enhancing livelihood options and supporting economic status of the locals (Shrestha and Shrestha, 2012; Steven *et al.*, 2014). The Government of Nepal through the Nepal Tourism Board has been promoting Eco-tourism development including avitourism. Adhering to promote



avitorism in bird diversity rich area and bring into limelight, avitorism potential study was carried on forest patches linking Okhaldhunga and Solukhumbu taking bird species richness as the tool of avitorism.

Material and Methods

Study Area

The study was carried in forest patches in Thade, Kattike, Jantarkhani, Singhane and Dhap, administratively locate in Sidhichara Municipality-6 of Okhaldhunga that share border with Solukhumbu district. The study area locates in Mid-hill with an elevation range 2440-3000 meter. Jantarkhani (2440 m), Kattike (2600 m), Singhane (2670 m), Thade (2830 m) and Dhap (3000 m) are the settlements/hinterland in the study area (Figure 1). Climatically, the study area has temperate climate with dry winter and warm summer (Karki *et al.*, 2015). Majority of study area is private land abandoned for several years or cyclic traditional potato farming. Tree *Rhododendron arboretum*, Brown Oak (*Quercus semecarpifolia*), Nepalese Alder (*Alnus nepalensis*), East Himalayan Fir (*Abies spectabilis*), Fetterbush (*Lyonia ovalifolia*), Blue Pine (*Pinus wallichiana*), Indian Barberry (*Berberis aristata*), Bayberry (*Myrica esculanta*), Common Mugwort (*Artemisa vulgaris*), Yellow Himalayan Raspberry (*Rubus ellipticus*), Persian Yellow Rose (*Rosa foetida*), Reddish viburnum (*Viburnum erubescens*) and Chinese peris (*Pieris Formosa*) are the dominant vegetation in the study area. Yellow throated Marten (*Martes flavigula*), Golden Jackal (*Canis aureus*), Leopard (*Panthera pardus*), Northern Red Muntjac (*Muntiacus vaginalis*) and Himalayan Black Bear (*Ursus tibetanus*) are thriving mammals in the study area.

Bird Study Methods

The study was carried from 7-12 June, 2022. Line transect of varied length in the existing walking trails was followed for bird survey (Figure 1; Table 1) and MacKinnon's listing method was applied for recording bird directly observed and call heard. The birds encountered were listed chronologically breaking down the list with 20 bird species detected (Bibby *et al.*, 2000). These list provided a sample of the species community in the study area (MacLeod *et al.*, 2011). Bird study was carried from 07:00 AM till 07:00 PM with casual break in the afternoon. Opticon Binoculars of 10 x 50 mm magnification was used for bird watching and Canon EOS 90D with Canon 55-250 mm and Tamron 150-600 mm Telephoto lens were used to photograph birds. Identification of birds were carried following Helm Field Guide: Birds of Nepal (Grimmett *et al.*, 2016) while scientific nomenclature of birds was carried following Birds of Nepal-An Official Checklist-2022 (DNPWC and BCN, 2022). Occurrence status of each species was noted following the Birds of Nepal-Helm Field Guide (Grimmett *et al.*, 2016). In occurrence status, birds are grouped as "Summer visitor" that occurs in the area during summer season; "Winter visitor" occur in the area during winter season; "Passage Migrant" that stops over the area during the migration and grouped as "Resident" that are observed year round in the area. Globally threatened status was noted following IUCN threatened category assessment (BirdLife International, 2023) while National status was noted Birds of Nepal-An Official Checklist-2022 (DNPWC and BCN, 2022).

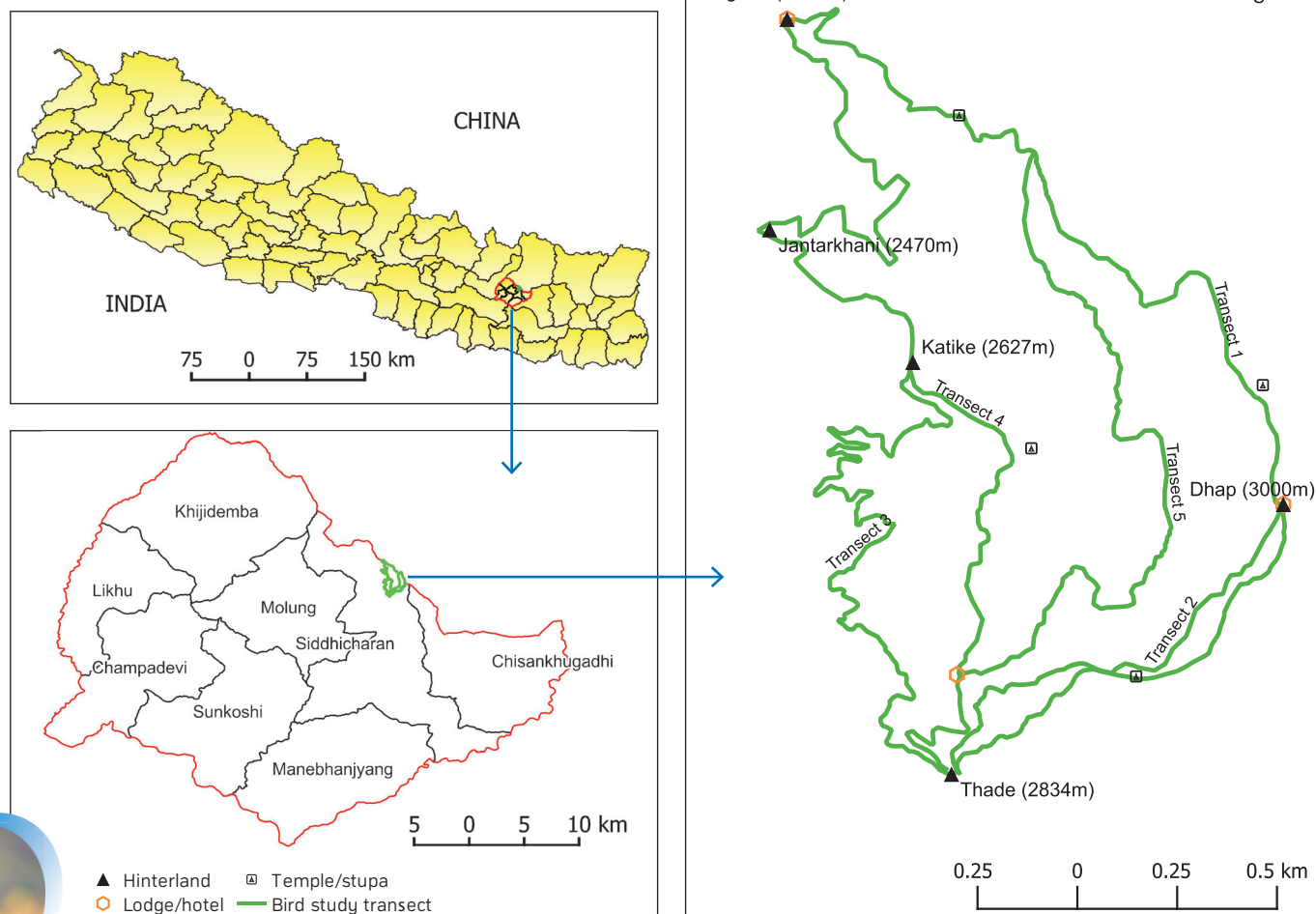


Figure 1: Bird study transect



Table 1: Bird study transect route, position and length

Study Transect	Route	Geographic Position (Degree Decimal)		Length (Km)
		Start Point	End Point	
Transect 1	Thade-Dhap-Bhujapati Temple	27.376061 N 86.520892 E	27.402982 N 86.524306 E	6
Transect 2	Thade-Dhap	27.376061 N 86.520892 E	27.387316 N 86.535003 E	3
Transect 3	Thade-Kattike-Jantarkhani	27.376061 N 86.520892 E	27.393713 N 86.519084 E	6
Transect 4	Thade-Kattike-Singhane	27.376061 N 86.520892 E	27.408568 N 86.513724 E	8
Transect 5	Thade-Bhujapati Temple-Singhane	27.376061 N 86.520892 E	27.408568 N 86.513724 E	8

Data Analysis

The basic quantitative analysis was carried for the field data. Bird diversity index (*H*) (Shannon and Weaver, 1949) and Pielou Species Evenness index (*e*) (Pielou, 1966) was calculated from the field data. Species evenness was further verified through rank abundance curve or Whittaker plot visualizing the relative abundance (Avolio *et al.*, 2015). Species recorded was interpreted in cumulative species richness curve determining the species discovery sufficiency (Willott, 2001) for the study period at the study area.

Results and Discussion

Bird Diversity Composition

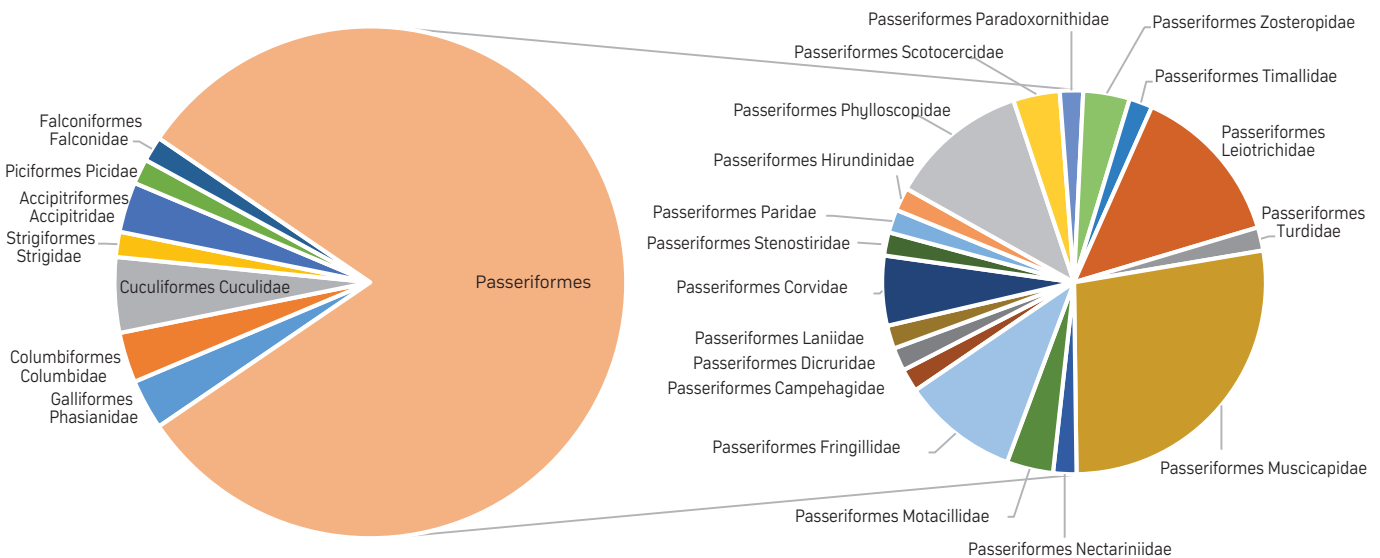


Figure 2: Bird species composition of the study area

The study recorded a total of 63 species (Annex 1) belonging to eight families and 25 orders (Figure 2). In total of 351 bird individuals or samples of bird community were counted. Warblers (phylloscopidae), Laughingthrushes (Leiotrichidae), Flycatchers and Redstart (Muscicapidae), Finches (Fringillidae) of Passeriformes family were the most common and frequently sighted bird species. The area is composed of scrubs with varied basal cover and forest patches of varied story and trees with cavities, agricultural land, open meadows, springs, furrows

and grooves shaped by rainwater. Most observed birds are resident (42 species) occurring year round in the area. The area is often noted to be suitable refuge site of migrant bird species (21 species) included of summer visitor (16 species) and winter visitor (3 species) and passage migrants (2 species) (Annex 1). All observed species are common birds categorically listed in the Least Concern in Threatened Species category of BirdLife International. Few raptor species (Black Eagle *Ictinaetus*



malaiensis, Bonelli's Eagle *Aquila fasciata* and Common Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*) were observed (Annex 1). However, the local consultation marked flock of vultures' roost in the area in the winter season.

The species richness curve attained the asymptote type (Figure 3) with the record of 63 bird species for the monsoon season study however further study covering all the season will definitely add more species for the area.

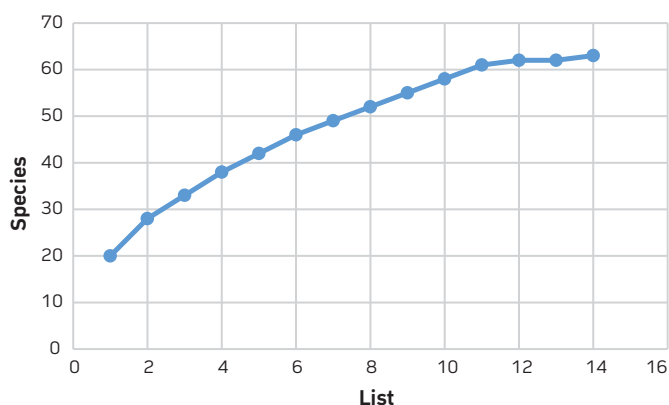


Figure 3: Bird species recorded interpreted in Cumulative Species Richness Curve

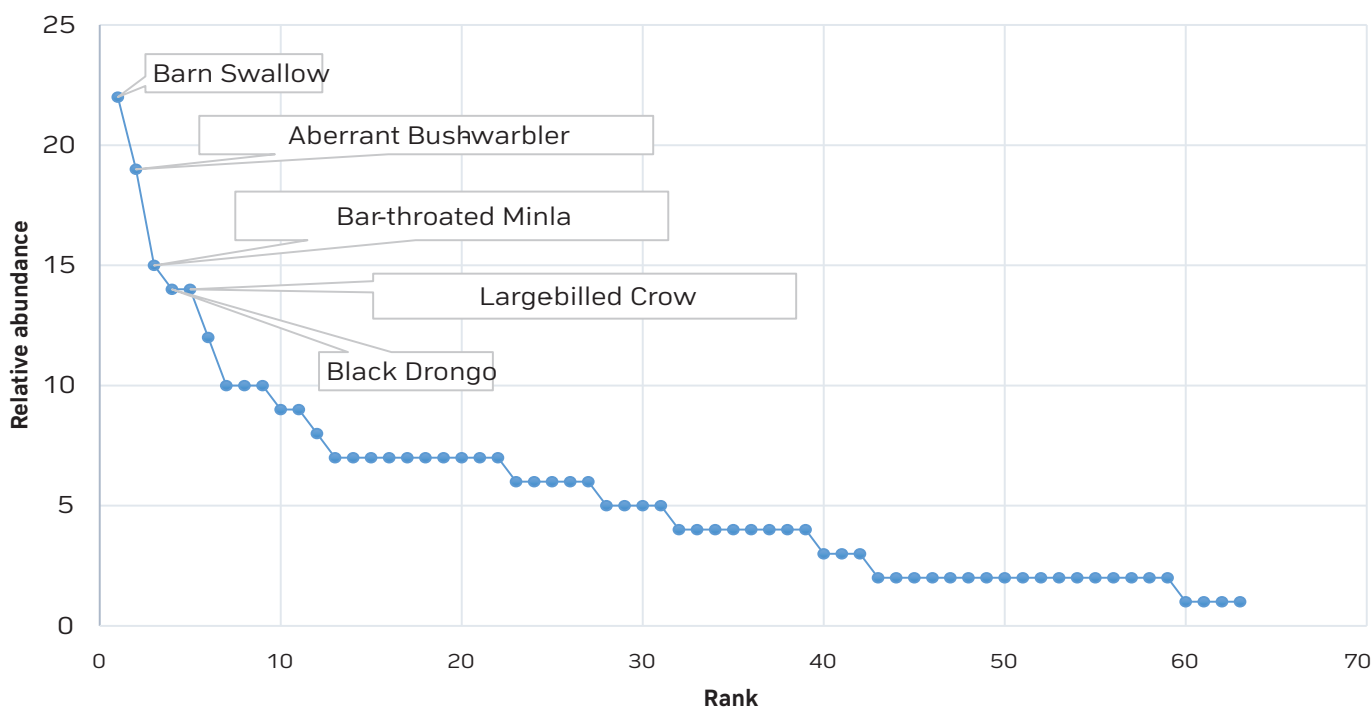


Figure 4: Rank abundance curve plot obtained based on species abundance

The calculated Shannon-wiener diversity index of ($H' = 3.88$) indicated the area is rich in bird diversity and almost even (evenness index = 0.93) distribution of birds. However, steep slope is obtained while interpreting the bird abundance in rank abundance curve implying low evenness of bird distribution as majority of bird species encountered are in singles whereas some species are relatively encountered often. Barn swallow (*Hirundo rustica*) and large-billed Crow (*Corvus macrorhynchos*) are gregarious nature and count is relatively more while Bar-throated Minla (*Chrysominla strigula*) Aberrant Bush-warbler (*Horonis*

flavolivaceus) observed in flocks and Black Drongo (*Dicrurus macrocercus*) though noted in singles is encountered often within the study (Figure 4).

Avitourism Potential

Relating to bird diversity richness, the forest patches linking Okhaldhunga and Solukhumbu bears higher potential of avitourism. The higher bird diversity and soliciting nature in the area will attract bird watcher, bird photographer and conservationist to the area. Besides, the area is accessible, homestay with good hospitality and reasonable cost that would make the avitourism pleasant in the area. And, more importantly, avitourism will enhance locals' sustenance and bird protection and conservation (Gupta *et al.*, 2019). In thriving tourism industry worldwide (Shrestha and Shrestha, 2012) included of the mountain tourism in Nepal (Sherpa and Shrestha, 2011), Avitourism is lucrative upon the birding hotspots identified and promoted. For instance, forest patches sandwiched between Okhaldhunga and Solukhumbu. This would be potential destination delimited the narrow spatial focus to golden triangle (Kathmandu-Pokhara Lumbini-Chitwan), Annapurna, Sagarmatha (Everest) and Langtang (Shrestha and Shrestha, 2012).

Conclusion

Delimiting the narrow spatial focus in avitourism destination in Nepal, avian biodiversity was studied in the forest patches in Okhaldhunga bordering with Solukhumbu for promotion avitourism. The study noted the area is birding hotspot bearing higher potential of avitourism. By promoting avitourism in a sustainable and responsible manner, the area bears economic development opportunity, empower local communities and enhance bird conservation efforts. However, there will be marked need of promotion through both local and national level tourism promotion authorities bringing national and international



birdwatchers, photographers and conservationist to this area into thriving destination for bird enthusiasts while safeguarding its natural treasures for future generations.

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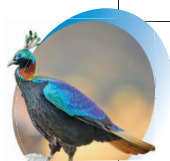
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Annex 1: Bird Species recorded in the forest patches linking Okhaldhunga and Solukhumbu

Family/ Order/SN	Common Name	Scientific Name	Nepali Name	Conservation Status			CITES	Occurrence Status
				Global	National	NPWC		
GALLIFORMES								
Phasianidae								
1	Kalij Pheasant	<i>Lophura leucomelanos</i>	कालिज	LC			III	Resident
2	Hill Partridge	<i>Arborophila torqueola</i>	पिउरा	LC				Resident
COLUMBIFORMES								
Columbidae								
3	Western Spotted Dove	<i>Spilopelia suratensis</i>	कुर्ले ढुकुर	LC				Summer visitor
4	Oriental Turtle Dove	<i>Streptopelia orientalis</i>	तामे ढुकुर	LC				Resident
CUCULIFORMES								
Cuculidae								
5	Lesser Cuckoo	<i>Cuculus poliocephalus</i>	सानो कोइली	LC				Summer visitor



6	Himalayan Cuckoo	<i>Cuculus saturatus</i>	पूर्वीय कोइली	LC				Summer visitor
7	Common Hawk-cuckoo	<i>Hierococcyx varius</i>	बीउ कुहियो	LC				Resident
STRIGIFORMES								
Strigidae								
8	Himalayan Owl	<i>Strix nivicolum</i>	कैलो पहाडी उलूक	LC			II	Resident
ACCIPITRIFORMES								
Accipitridae								
9	Black Eagle	<i>Ictinaetus malaiensis</i>	द्रोणक चील	LC			II	Resident
10	Bonelli's Eagle	<i>Aquila fasciata</i>	मोरङ्गी चील	LC			II	Resident
PICIFORMES								
Picidae								
11	Darjeeling Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos darjellensis</i>	दार्जीलिङ्ग काष्ठकूट	LC				Resident
FALCONIFORMES								
Falconidae								
12	Common Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	बौडाइ	LC			II	Resident
PASSERIFORMES								
Campephagidae								
13	Long-tailed Minivet	<i>Pericrocotus ethologus</i>	लामपुछे रानीचरी	LC				Summer visitor
Dicruridae								
14	Black Drongo	<i>Dicrurus macrocercus</i>	कालो चिबे	LC				Resident
Laniidae								
15	Long-tailed Shrike	<i>Lanius schach</i>	भद्राई	LC				Resident
Corvidae								
16	Large-billed Crow	<i>Corvus macrorhynchos</i>	कालो काग	LC				Resident
17	Southern Nutcracker	<i>Nucifraga hemispila</i>	वनसर्पा	LC				Resident
18	Yellow-billed Blue Magpie	<i>Urocissa flavirostris</i>	सुनदुई लामपुछे	LC				Resident
Stenostiridae								
19	Yellow-bellied Fairy-fantail	<i>Chelidorhynch hypoxanthus</i>	पहेलो मारुनीचरी	LC				Summer visitor
Paridae								
20	Green-backed Tit	<i>Parus monticolus</i>	हरियो चिचिल्कोटे	LC				Resident
Hirundinidae								
21	Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	घर गौथली	LC				Summer visitor
Phylloscopidae								
22	Ashy-throated Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus maculipennis</i>	फुस्रोकण्ठे फिस्टो	LC				Winter visitor
23	Blyth's Leaf-warbler	<i>Phylloscopus reguloides</i>	तालुधर्क फिस्टो	LC				Winter visitor
24	Green-crowned Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus burkii</i>	सुनचशमे फिस्टो	LC				Resident
25	Greenish Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus trochiloides</i>	जीवल फिस्टो	LC				Passage migrant
26	Hume's Leaf Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus humei</i>	चञ्चले फिस्टो	LC				Resident
27	Whistler's Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus whistleri</i>	सुसेली फिस्टो	LC				Summer visitor
Sctoterceridae								
28	Aberant Bush-warbler	<i>Horornis flavolivaceus</i>	पीतहरित झाडीफिस्टो	LC				Resident
29	Grey-sided Bush-warbler	<i>Cettia brunnifrons</i>	रातोटाउके झाडीफिस्टो	LC				Resident
Paradoxornithidae								
30	White-browed Fulvetta	<i>Fulvetta vinipectus</i>	पीतनयन फूलबुट्टा	LC				Resident
Zosteropidae								
31	Stripe-throated Yuhina	<i>Yuhina gularis</i>	थुपलकल्की जुरेचरा	LC				Resident
32	Rufous-vented Yuhina	<i>Yuhina occipitalis</i>	खैरो जुरेचरा	LC				Resident
allidae								
33	Streak-breasted Scimitar-babbler	<i>Pomatorhinus ruficollis</i>	छातीधर्स पाल्कोटे	LC				Resident



Leiotrichidae								
34	Streaked Laughingthrush	<i>Trochalopteron lineatum</i>	छिर्के तोरीगाँडा	LC				Resident
35	Rufous Sibia	<i>Heterophasia capistrata</i>	सिबिया	LC				Resident
36	Red-billed Leiothrix	<i>Leiothrix lutea</i>	रोचिष्णु मिसिया	LC			II	Resident
37	Chestnut-crowned Laughingthrush	<i>Trochalopteron erythrocephalum</i>	कटुसटाउके तोरीगाँडा	LC				Resident
38	Black-faced Laughingthrush	<i>Trochalopteron affine</i>	कानटाटे तोरीगाँडा	LC				Resident
39	Bar-throated Minla	<i>Chrysominla strigula</i>	शिव मिन्ला	LC				Resident
40	White-throated Laughingthrush	<i>Garrulax albogularis</i>	सोइरने तोरीगाँडा	LC				Resident
Turdidae								
41	White-collared Blackbird	<i>Turdus albocinctus</i>	कण्ठे चाँचर	LC				Resident
Muscicapidae								
42	White-bellied Redstart	<i>Hodgsonius phaenicuroides</i>	सेतोपेटे खज्जरी	LC				Summer visitor
43	White-browed Bush-robin	<i>Tarsiger indicus</i>	सेतोआँखीभौ रबिन	LC				Resident
44	Ultramarine Flycatcher	<i>Ficedula superciliosa</i>	नीलश्वेत अर्जुनक	LC				Summer visitor
45	Verditer Flycatcher	<i>Eumyias thalassinus</i>	नीलतुथो अर्जुनक	LC				Summer visitor
46	Rusty-tailed Flycatcher	<i>Ficedula ruficauda</i>	कैलोपुच्छे अर्जुनक	LC				Passage migrant
47	Rufous-bellied Niltava	<i>Niltava sundara</i>	सुन्दर नीलतभा	LC				Summer visitor
48	Rufous-gorgeted Flycatcher	<i>Ficedula strophilata</i>	सेतोटिके अर्जुनक	LC				Summer visitor
49	Indian Blue Robin	<i>Larvora brunnea</i>	नीलो रबिन	LC				Summer visitor
50	Grey Bushchat	<i>Saxicola ferreus</i>	हिमाली इयाप्सी	LC				Resident
51	Common Stonechat	<i>Saxicola torquatus</i>	झेकझेक इयाप्सी	LC				Resident
52	Blue Whistling-thrush	<i>Myophonus caeruleus</i>	कल्चौडे	LC				Resident
53	Blue-capped Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus coeruleocephala</i>	धोबिनी खज्जरी	LC				Resident
54	Blue-fronted Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus frontalis</i>	नीलटाउके खज्जरी	LC				Resident
55	Blue-throated Blue Flycatcher	<i>Cyornis rubeculoides</i>	नीलकण्ठे अर्जुनक	LC				Summer visitor
Nectariniidae								
56	Green-tailed Sunbird	<i>Aethopyga nipalensis</i>	नेपाल बुङ्गेचरा	LC				Resident
Motacillidae								
57	Grey Wagtail	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>	फुस्रो टिकटिके	LC				Summer visitor
58	Olive-backed Pipit	<i>Anthus hodgsoni</i>	रुख चुइयाँ	LC				Resident
Fringillidae								
59	Himalayan White-browed Rosefinch	<i>Carpodacus thura</i>	पङ्खथोप्ले ठूलोतितु	LC				Winter visitor
60	Yellow-breasted Greenfinch	<i>Chloris spinoides</i>	गाजले पीतचरी	LC				Resident
61	Spot-winged Rosefinch	<i>Carpodacus rodopeplus</i>	पङ्खथोप्ले तितु	LC				Resident
62	Pink-browed Rosefinch	<i>Carpodacus rodochroa</i>	रातो झिबी तितु	LC				Resident
63	Common Rosefinch	<i>Carpodacus erythrurus</i>	अमोगा तितु	LC			III	Summer visitor

- LC-Least Concern

- NPWCA-National Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act, 1973

- CITES-Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora;

II- Appendix II (Species not necessarily threatened with extinction, but in which trade must be controlled in order to avoid utilization incompatible with their survival. International trade in specimens may be authorized by the granting of an export permit or re-export certificate)

III- Appendix III (Species included at the request of a Party that already regulates trade in the species and that needs the cooperation of other countries to prevent unsustainable or illegal exploitation. International trade in specimens of species is allowed only on presentation of the appropriate permits or certificates)



First Record of Firethroat *Calliope pectardens* for Nepal

Suchit Basnet¹ and Badri Chaudhary¹

Koshi Tappu Wildlife Reserve (KTWR; 26.35°N & 87.05°E) lies in the floodplains of the Sapta Koshi river. The reserve has mainly grassland, marsh, scrubs and riverine forest. The reserve was formed in 1976 but opened to visitors in 1986 and covers an area of 176 sq. km. Koshi Tappu was declared a Ramsar Site since 1987 and together with wetlands of Koshi Barrage, it is also one of the Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas (IBAs). Koshi has been an important area for migratory birds for many years due to its unique location. Of all the habitats found here the grassland and the wetlands are the most important for avian fauna. The Globally threatened species are primarily dependent on these habitats. Bengal Florican *Houbaropsis bengalensis*, Swamp Francolin *Ortygornis gularis*, Bristled Grassbird *Schoenicola stiratus*, Black-bellied Tern *Sterna acuticauda*, and White-rumped Vulture *Gyps bengalensis* are globally threatened species that all breed at Koshi Tappu. The reserve is dominated by migrants and only 33% of birds are resident. Of the resident birds, Nepal Rufous-vented Grass Babbler *Laticilla burnesii nepalicola* is found only at KTWR.

KTWR has been an important area for migratory birds for many years due to its unique location. Migrating birds follow various courses of the seven rivers and the mountain ranges. Tributary of Koshi river is best during the autumn, winter and spring seasons for birdwatching.

The bird was feeding on a small patch of wet ground some 30 m from the Koshi Camp dining hall. The bird was very active and very shy. After a long wait we could see the bird for 10-15 seconds at a time before it disappeared in the nearby bushes. Author was able to get some photos, which were good enough to get a few details on the bird seen (see photos). The bird had an evenly blueish-grey head and back with greyish-brown primaries. The bill was straight, thin and dark. The most striking feature was a small orangey-red spot on the breast with broad dark line running on the side and white at the base of the outer-tail feather with black tips. Most of us with such quick views confused it to be a Red-throated Flycatcher *Ficedula albicilla* which was also present in the area. Unable to put a name to it, even after consulting the field guide and checking online photos we came to a conclusion that it was one of flycatcher species. After discussion with authors and visitors, the species captured was identified as Sapphire Flycatcher *Ficedula sapphira* but it was still not 100% satisfying to call it that and remained a mystery bird of us all.

After 12 days on 9 April, SB and BC visited Koshi Camp again. The bird was still around and this time it was feeding on the ground and going into the nearby bamboos. We saw it been chased by Oriental Magpie Robin *Copsychus saularis* and the bamboo was a good place to hide. We waited patiently and the





bird came to the edge of the bamboo and sat on a low branch of the bamboo about 3 feet off the ground and also came to the ground occasionally. This time Andrew Whittaker another visiting birdwatcher and leader of VENT, USA, was also with us. We watched and took photos and to our surprise the scruffy bird of 12 days ago had now turned in a beautiful bird.

The bird seen on 9, 10 & 11 April 2023, had light blue on the head and mantle, greyish-brown primaries, black ear coverts, broad black line running down the sides of the breast, white base to the outer-tail feather and had orangey-red extended down from the chin, throat and breast as also shown in the images. The bird was relaxed and feeding in the bamboo and when preening the white line on the neck was slightly visible. The bird was still molting into its full breeding plumage and would look even brighter in the few days to come. The bird was last seen on 11 April 2023. Having checked the field guide to the Birds of the

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Indian Subcontinent (Grimmett et al. 1998) and the Merlin online app. (Craig Brelsford) we identified it as a Firethroat, a new bird for Nepal!

Firethroat *Calliope pectardens* (Near Threatened) breeds in south-east Tibet, central southern China. Recorded wintering in north-east of India, Bangladesh (Robson 2008), also from north Myanmar, Thailand (Round & Clement 2015) The bird found and was photographed at Koshi Camp is a first winter male Firethroat recorded at Koshi and a new bird for Nepal. It was in the process of molting into its adult plumage when first sighted on 28 March, which could be noticed in just 12 days. In order to understand more about this species' status and migration, bird watchers should keep an eye out for the species in Nepal.

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News

Training on Aquaculture

On January 17 and 19, 2023, BCN organized one-day aquaculture training sessions for the representatives of the buffer zone user committee, fish-dependent tribes, and fish farmers in Sunsari and Saptari. A total of 42 participants (23 men and 19 women) attended the training in Saptari district and 40 participants (33 men and 7 women) attended the training in Sunsari district. The training's main objective was to impart aquaculture's technical knowledge and skills. The presentation was divided into 4 segments by Mr. Suraj Kumar Singh, Technical Officer for the Directorate of Agricultural Research. This training is a part of Darwin Initiative Project.



Celebration of World Wetland day

On 2 February 2023 World Wetland Day celebration by government of Nepal in Kasara, Chitwan unveiled the poster "Important Wetlands of Nepal for Migratory Birds" by the Mayor of Bharatpur Metropolitan City: Renu Dahal, Mayor of Madi Municipality: Tara Kumari Kaji Mahato, Director General of Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation: Dr. Maheshwar Dhakal, Director General of Department of Forests and Soil Conservation: Devesh Mani Tripathi. We hope this will grab the attention of the local government and other concerned stakeholders for conservation of wetland dependent birds & biodiversity and wise use of wetlands.



Training on Sustainable Fishing Techniques and Sustainable Harvesting of natural resources

On February 28, 2023, BCN in support with Darwin Initiative held a one-day workshop in Sunsari on sustainable fishing methods and harvesting of natural resources for local people and fishing license holders, especially the tribes of Koshi. The workshop aimed to improve participants' knowledge of sustainable fishing practices and wetland-related resources. The workshop covered four sessions: fisheries management, sustainable fisheries, and sustainable fish harvesting. Participants learned that current fishing practices reduce fish species and populations, and even purest fish genes are tainted by Rahu and Naini.



First Tagging of Slender-billed Vulture in Nepal

On March 16, 2023, Nepal's BCN and Jatayu restaurant successfully trapped, tagged, and released a Slender-billed Vulture at the Vulture Safe Feeding Site in Kawasoti, Nawalpur. On 18 March another Slender-billed Vulture was trapped and tagged in the same site. The tagging of the species is crucial due



to its critically low population, with only five or six nests identified in each breeding season. The tagging will provide valuable insights into the bird's feeding, roosting, breeding, and potential threats to their survival. BCN plans to tag more individuals later this year and expresses gratitude to the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation and Chitwan National Park for their permission and support. The data collected will inform conservation efforts and protect these important birds for future generations.

12th Annual SAVE meeting in Nepal

12th Annual SAVE meeting was held in Kawasoti, Nepal on 9th and 10th March 2023. Dr. Maheshwar Dhakal, Director General of DNPWC, chaired the opening session, while Dr. Ganesh Pant hosted it. Dr. Rewati Raman Poudel, Secretary of the Ministry of Forests and Environment, inaugurated the program. Professor Rhys Green highlighted the SAVE's achievements and concerns about new NSAIDs' threat to vultures. Dr. Rewati Raman Poudel emphasized the government's commitment to conservation efforts and urged research on climate change's impact on birds. Dr. Maheshwar Dhakal emphasized transboundary conservation policies and community involvement. Sessions covered various topics, including SAVE's vision, updated blueprint summary, policy advocacy, fundraising, country wise vulture population estimation, vulture tagging and tracking and transboundary vulture conservation. The meeting concluded with Professor Rhys Green welcoming Ms. Jemima Parry-Jones as the new chair of SAVE, and the program ended with the awarding of the Disney Conservation Hero award to Dr. Vibhu Prakash for his contribution to vulture conservation in South Asia.



Final Releases of Captive Birds in Nepal

On March 11, 2023, a vulture conservation milestone event took place in Nepal, releasing the last 10 captive-reared White-rumped Vultures with GPS/GSM Ornithel tags and leg rings. Additionally, 10 more wild-caught White-rumped Vultures were tagged. This marked the seventh and final captive vulture release event in Nepal, bringing the total number of tagged White-rumped Vultures to 139. The event was chaired by Mr. Mahendra Dhaj GC, and featured speeches from Chris Bowden, Dr. Hum Gurung, Haribhadra Acharya, Raj Kumar Rai, and Lal Bahadur Gurung. The event also included traditional indigenous Tharu culture and delicious food, and was attended by over 100 representatives from various governmental and non-governmental organizations, Nepal Army, CFUG, women's groups, cooperatives, CBAPU, and local media.



Stakeholder's interaction for Electrocutation Risk and Management perspective to Vulture

BCN in support of Asian Development Bank conducted a stakeholder's interaction 11th April 2023 at Pokhara Batika Hotel, Pokhara, to discuss the electrocution risk faced by vultures and potential management strategies. The event involved 35 participants from various sectors, including the Deputy Mayor, Ward President-10, Ministry of Industry Tourism, Forest and Environment, DFO, and media journalists. The broader impact of electrocution on vultures and other bird species was highlighted. The proximity of poles near feeding areas led vultures to choose them for perching, resulting in electrocution. To mitigate bird mortality, recommendations were made to install perch deterrents and deflectors on poles and transmission lines.

Bird-friendly transmission lines and underground and insulated transmission lines were proposed as practical solutions for high-risk areas. Bird experts also emphasized the importance of conducting environmental impact assessments.



Membership

Saroj Chaudhary has joined BCN as a Life Member. Mr. Chaudhary is working as a volunteer in ENSPROK and is highly dedicated to birds and biodiversity too.

Suraj Baral has joined BCN as a Life Member. Mr. Baral is doing his PhD at Lebaniz Institute for the Analysis of Biodiversity Change. He has profound interest in birds and biodiversity too.

Editorial Board

Ishana Thapa (Chief Editor),
Ankit Bilash Joshi, Santosh Bajagain

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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. 500 for any SAARC nationals and 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 executive council, 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 120 organisations around the world, BCN also works on a worldwide agenda to conserve the world's birds and their habitats.

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