



NEWSLETTER

JANUARY
2013

Inside the Himalayas

Vol 1 | No. 1 | January 2013

WWF Nepal newsletter



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Message from the Country Representative

In this issue of 'Inside the Himalayas', we highlight the importance of collaborative working, from the grassroots to the trans-boundary level, in helping conserve two of Nepal's flagship species – the elusive snow leopard and the endangered tiger. Protecting both these species involves a mix of local stewardship, national commitment and trans-boundary cooperation to tackle pressing issues such as human-wildlife conflict and illegal wildlife trade. It is also heartening to note the historic step taken by the governments of Nepal and India to conduct the first landscape-wide tiger and prey-base survey in the Terai Arc Landscape.

WWF Nepal is proud to be a close partner in all of these endeavours. Together, our actions indeed add up!

Happy Reading and Happy New Year!!!

Anil Manandhar
Country Representative

Snow Leopard Conservation in Kangchejunga



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Mreedu Gyawali

Communication and Marketing Associate

Kangchenjunga Conservation Area (KCA) lies in the far eastern region of Nepal. It is home to Mt. Kangchenjunga, the third highest mountain in the world, and also to the majestic snow leopard. Unfortunately, snow leopards face and have faced several very severe threats, especially retaliatory killing by herders, and is listed as an Endangered species in the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species. In order to protect the snow leopards in Nepal, WWF Nepal initiated a community-led conservation program through the establishment of Snow Leopard Conservation Committees (SLCC).

The SLCC in Ghunsa, Kangchenjunga was established in 2005 with 7 members. Currently, there are 8 members that are a part of the SLCC. It was established in order to promote conservation in the communities, to reduce human wildlife conflict, and to improve livelihood opportunities for the local people.

The members of the SLCC are known as citizen scientists. The members go through a two-month training course provided by WWF Nepal through which they gain the understanding and skills in conservation and snow leopard protection. The citizen scientists are, in effect, WWF Nepal's on-

the-ground partners in species monitoring and protection and community mobilization.

Prior to 2011, snow leopard monitoring was done through transect studies by the SLCC where pug marks and feces of snow leopards were studied in order to estimate snow leopard populations. In 2011, WWF Nepal introduced camera traps in Kangchenjunga for the first time to help SLCC-Ghunsa better monitor snow leopards. So far, 30 camera traps have been installed in Kangchenjunga with the help of the SLCC to monitor snow leopard population as well as snow leopard movements.

According to Himali Chungda, Chairman of SLCC-Ghunsa, "Camera traps are extremely useful in that they allow the animals to be observed without disturbing them. Also, transect studies take more time and effort to complete, but with camera traps, the only thing we have to do is set up the cameras and analyze the camera trap images which is comparatively a more efficient monitoring tool."

Since camera traps are set up in harsh terrain throughout Kangchenjunga, the SLCC members who are deployed to set up and monitor camera traps are paid a minimum wage for their work and this money comes from an endowment fund for snow leopard monitoring. There is also a life insurance scheme that the members of the SLCC are part of.

"Setting up camera traps is a risky affair as we have to brave harsh terrains and weather conditions

in the high mountains. The life insurance scheme of Rs. 300,000 has come as a big relief to our families," says Chungda.

Reducing human wildlife conflict is another key task of the SLCC. Before the establishment of the SLCC, there used to be a lot of retaliatory killing of snow leopards by the villagers as a form of revenge for their livestock, primarily yaks, that had fallen prey to snow leopards. With snow leopards being viewed as the enemy, the local people had developed negative attitudes towards this species that was robbing them of their livelihoods. The SLCC was therefore tasked with the dual responsibility of changing this attitude as well as providing quick relief to villagers who had been affected. As an immediate measure, the SLCC set up a livestock insurance scheme with the support of WWF Nepal, to compensate affected households for the loss of their livestock on account of snow leopards. Under this scheme, the SLCC established a verification process to ascertain whether the livestock was actually killed by a snow leopard based on a formal request from the affected household followed by disbursement of the insurance money once the verification was completed. The SLCC is presently managing a total fund of USD 16,000 under the livestock insurance scheme and has helped compensate for the loss of 200 yaks so far in Kangchenjunga thereby serving as an important measure in reducing human-wildlife conflict.



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Besides the livestock insurance scheme, the SLCC has also initiated added measures to reduce human-wildlife conflict such as the use of 'proof corals' and the introduction of a guarding system. Proof corals are walls that are 8 feet in height and made of boulders to protect yaks that are under 2 years of age. The proof corals serve as a natural barrier to snow leopards in effect. Similarly, under the guarding system, members of the SLCC as well as the local people take turns in guarding yaks while they are left to graze so that they do not wander off and become prey to snow leopards.

Besides the local-level interventions, many trans-boundary programs have also been conducted to protect snow leopards. "India and Nepal have signed a memorandum to work together in snow leopard conservation. Similarly, Nepal and China have participated in many coordination meetings to work together in minimizing illegal wildlife trade and curbing wildlife crimes in order to strengthen snow leopard protection efforts," says Chungda.

Despite the growth in capacity of the SLCC in leading the snow leopard conservation program in Kangchenjunga, there are still challenges that need to be addressed.

"We have heard that there are other SLCCs in Nepal such as the ones in Langtang and Dolpa. I think it would be a great idea and very beneficial to us if we could go and visit the SLCCs around Nepal so that we could learn how the SLCCs function and try to incorporate their success into our SLCC in Kangchenjunga," says Chungda.

"Although there has been a decrease in retaliatory killings since the establishment of the SLCC, putting a complete stop to human-wildlife conflict is a big challenge. People are still known to kill snow leopards when their yak is



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killed. The people of Ghunsa are very poor and yaks form their main source of livelihood and such acts of retaliation are but a natural reflex. We therefore need to scale up the present conflict mitigation measures as well as explore new ones," says Chungda.

Another major challenge is sustainability. While the dedication and commitment of the present members is highly commendable, it is equally important that the SLCC starts preparing the next in line of members in order to give continuity to its operations. This requires a focus on transferring skills and knowledge as well as finding added sources of funds.

At the same time, these challenges do not undermine hope; they in fact create new opportunities. By working with the SLCC and the local communities, WWF Nepal seeks to further empower the local people and strengthen their commitment to live in harmony with nature.

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In search of harmony: Anjukla's story

Mreedu Gyawali

Communication and Marketing Associate

Anjukla Sherpa is one of the members of the Snow Leopard Conservation Committee (SLCC) in Ghunsa, Kanchenjunga. The snow leopard has always been a part of his life both for the good and the bad.

In the year 2009, Anukla was a very happy man when he had eight yaks that provided him with milk for his family, carried heavy loads from place to place, and provided him with fertilizer to use on his land. However, his happiness was short lived when one of his yaks was killed by a snow leopard. Even though it was a loss for Anjukla, he took consolation from the fact that he still had seven yaks left. But then the very next week, Anjukla lost three more of his yaks to snow leopards.

Anjukla says, "I didn't know what to do. It was one of the most hopeless days of my life when I woke up one morning and found three of my yaks missing. After searching for a while, I was led to their carcass. I was very outraged. I took

out my *khukuri* and began running around endlessly trying to find the snow leopard. At that moment in time, if I had encountered a snow leopard, I would have shredded it to pieces."

Yaks are a very expensive animal to have; one yak costs anywhere between Rs. 40,000-Rs. 50,000. For someone whose monthly income is less than Rs. 20,000, even losing one yak has dire consequences.

Anjukla recalls, "Even while being a member of the SLCC with a responsibility to protect snow leopards I had led myself to the extent of killing one on account of the loss I faced. It would not be too difficult then for anyone to understand the challenges involved in getting the local people to help conserve snow leopards."

"My work involves a lot of risk. On the one hand I have to look after the interests of the snow leopard and, on the other, that of my community. I have spent more than three years trying to create this balance... I wish to continue doing this as it gives me a different sense of satisfaction knowing that one day I will be able to build my own little world of harmony between my people and the snow leopard," he adds.



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Harnessing the power of youth in Lumbini

Yashaswi Shrestha

Senior Program Associate

Inspired by WWF Nepal and Lumbini Development Trust's reforestation programs in Lumbini, more than 100 students from the various schools in Lumbini planted 1500 trees within their school premises. Since August 2012, such youth campaigns and initiatives have further drawn the interest of their fellow students and as a result, madrassas and government schools in Lumbini are increasingly focusing on organizing several environment campaigns and rallies dedicated to increasing environmental consciousness and awareness within their communities.

In order to harness this growing energy of youth on environment and conservation related issues, WWF Nepal is working with local schools and madrassas to form Eco Clubs. These clubs comprise of students between the ages of 8 – 16. The members receive basic training and learn through field work about the methods and processes involved in protecting different plant species, proper planting techniques and effective waste management. These sessions are mainly conducted by field staffs of WWF and experts from Lumbini Development Trust. As of today, there are 20 Eco Clubs working hand-in-hand with WWF Nepal, Lumbini Development Trust and the local communities in order to spread and implement different conservation messages and goals.

In December 2012, the Eco Clubs organized a cleanup campaign in which, students and their teachers cleaned several sites within the Master Plan Area along with other areas where much of waste generated by local households, tourists and local businesses are dumped. Together, all Eco Clubs also called for public awareness against littering and careless dumping of non-degradable wastes within Lumbini. The campaign lasted for the entire month and according to the students of the Eco Clubs, it will persist for a few more months. Their goal is to persuade, educate and generate awareness among the local people on the environmental and health hazards of improper waste management.

These Eco Clubs have drawn the interest of more than 200 youths and as future citizens, WWF Nepal realizes the power and the potential of young individuals in Lumbini to bring positive development to the region and the outcomes that can be generated by providing them with the necessary tools and knowledge to help them better understand conservation and their own environment.

Million Trees Plantation Closing Ceremony 2012



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Yashaswi Shrestha

Senior Program Associate

WWF Nepal along with Lumbini Development Trust held the closing ceremony for the 100,000 trees plantation program for the year 2012 at Buddha Adarsha Higher Secondary School, VDC Bhagwanpur Ward no. 4 in Lumbini on October 17.

Local students, members of school Eco Clubs, members of School Ecological Conservation Education Network (SENSE) Nepal, District Forest Officer, Deepak Gyawali, and representatives from five partner banks were present at the ceremony, in addition to WWF Nepal's Young Conservation Ambassador, Shristi Shrestha.

Laxmi Bank, Nabil Bank, Nepal Investment Bank, Siddhartha Bank and Bank of Kathmandu supported this year's Million Tree Plantation project by contributing over 20,000 trees to the Lumbini Master Plan. "It is every local citizen's duty to help make Lumbini green and clean," said Mr. Pemba Sherpa of the Lumbini Development Trust at the ceremony.

Ceremony attendees planted saplings within the school premises followed by a brief interaction session with the students, Eco Club and staff members. The Eco Club at Buddha Adarsha School recently started their own initiative of maintaining an eco-garden within their campus. This initiative supported by WWF Nepal is also becoming popular in other schools in Lumbini who have also endorsed this eco-campaign and are encouraging their Eco Club members to do the same. Currently, there are 15 Eco Clubs in the area who have jointly planted over 1,500 trees through their own initiative this year alone.

WWF Nepal, Shristi Shrestha and the bank representatives also visited a local madrasa where an eco-garden supported by WWF Nepal was established and interacted with the students and staff members.

The opening ceremony for The Million Trees project, as part of the Green Lumbini Initiative, was officially launched on Earth Hour, March 31, 2012. On this day, WWF Nepal and Lumbini Development Trust organized a ceremonial plantation session for the partnering banks in the Lumbini Master Plan area, which kicked off the plantation of 100,000 trees for 2012.

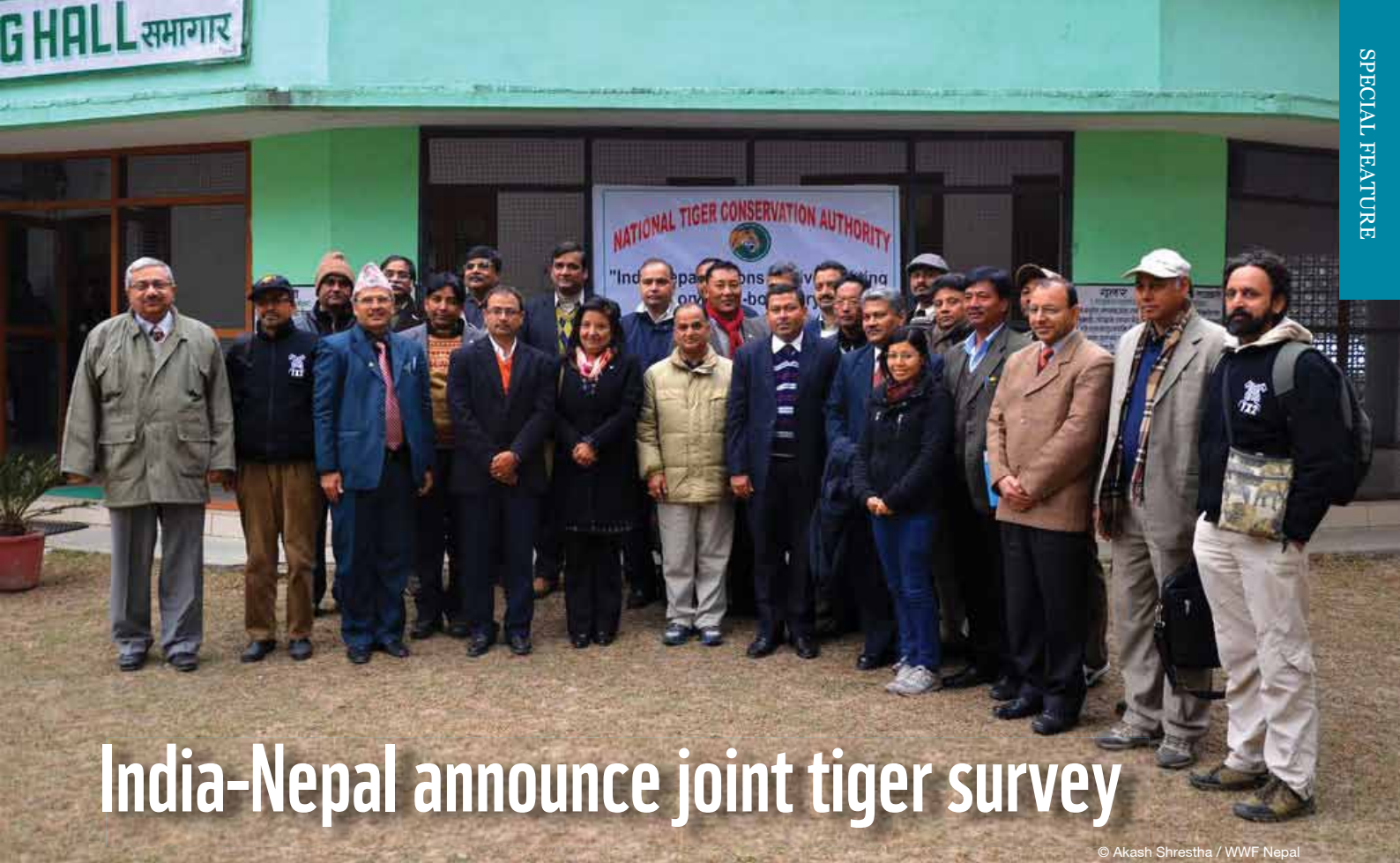


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Kangchenjunga Conservation Area finds a new ambassador

Kangchenjunga Conservation Area Management Council appointed Mr. Tom Dillon, Senior Vice President- Field Programs of WWF US as Goodwill Ambassador for Kangchenjunga Conservation Area and mountain communities.

The ambassadorship was handed over to him amidst a ceremony organized by the local community members of Ghunsa, one of the villages in Kangchenjunga Conservation Area. Along with the other members of WWF Nepal, Dillon trekked all the way to Kangchenjunga Base Camp and learned about the on-going snow leopard monitoring work. He also paid tribute to the conservation heroes who lost their lives on a tragic helicopter crash in the year 2006.



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India-Nepal announce joint tiger survey

Akash Shrestha

Senior Communications and Marketing Manager

The first joint tiger survey in the Terai Arc Landscape covering protected areas, critical forest corridors, community forests, reserve forests and buffer zones was announced by the governments of Nepal and India at the 6th Indo-Nepal consultative meeting that took place on 7-8 January 2013 at Dudhwa Tiger Reserve, India.

"Bilateral meetings between India and Nepal have resulted in positive outcomes for wildlife conservation," said Dr. S. P. Yadav, Deputy Inspector General of the Government of India's National Tiger Conservation Authority. "Our governments need to continue strengthening trans-boundary ties for protecting tigers and enabling their free movement between India and Nepal," he added.

Government-led teams will work with partners, including WWF Nepal, from January to March 2013. On the Indian side, the field work for the survey had begun in November 2012. Camera trap technologies, line transect and occupancy surveys will be used to estimate tiger populations, prey abundance and density. India and Nepal will produce a joint status report on the results of the survey.

"This shared conservation landscape gives our governments common ground to work together to save wild tigers, which is a source of pride for us all," said Mr. Bishwo Nath Oli, the Nepal delegation head and Joint Secretary of the Government of Nepal's Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation. "The survey results will play an important role in shaping strategies to get us to our ultimate goal of Tx2, doubling the number of wild tigers, which was set during the historic Tiger summit in 2010."

At present, there are an estimated 500 tigers in the Terai Arc Landscape, which also has one of the highest densities of tigers in the world. Stretching 600 miles across Nepal and India, the landscape allows tigers to disperse, conserving their natural behaviour, ecology, and genetic diversity. It has become a global priority for tiger conservation since its inception more than a decade ago.

"WWF is proud to be a partner in this landmark survey and we remain committed to saving wild tigers in the Terai, something we have been actively involved in since our very first tiger conservation project with the Government of Nepal in the early 1970s," stated Mr. Anil Manandhar, Country Representative of WWF Nepal. "Saving tigers requires collaborative actions to curb wildlife crime together with managing tiger habitat which is a primary challenge in the landscape."

The consultative meeting agreed on an eleven-point resolution that stressed on, amongst others, strengthening trans-boundary efforts in curbing poaching and illegal trade of wildlife and forest products, preparing tiger recovery plans for selected trans-boundary sites, pursuing proactive measures to mitigate human-wildlife conflict, promoting smart infrastructure development that does not adversely affect key wildlife habitat, and promoting exchange visits to learn best practices in community participation in conservation. A committee at the central and field levels will be established and mobilized to help action the agreed resolution agendas.

Mr. Ravi Singh, CEO and Secretary General, WWF-India said, "The Terai Arc joint survey is an excellent opportunity for India and Nepal to strengthen their trans-boundary cooperation. WWF hopes that the results of this survey will lead to a better understanding of the status of tigers in the Terai and stronger on-the-ground conservation actions that will ensure long term survival of tigers in the and other wildlife in this area. WWF thanks and acknowledges the efforts and actions of the governments and their agencies including the Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar Forest Departments in this regard."

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श्री तिकौली मध्यवर्ती सामुदायिक वन उपभोक्ता समूहको कार्यालय र. न. पा.-७, तिकौली TIKAULI BUFFERZONE COMMUNITY FOREST USER GROUP



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Words from HR...

Prajana Waiba Pradhan

Senior Human Resources Officer

The last three months of 2012 were the busiest for everyone –with Dashain in October, followed by Tihar in November. These are times when everyone in the office feels the festivities in the air! To celebrate the onset of Dashain, we held our annual Dashain party in a nearby banquet with our families invited.

The Regional HR Conference was hosted by WWF Nepal from 5-7 December in the office premises with representatives from WWF International, Malaysia, Japan, New Zealand, India, Pakistan, US, and Philippines attending. The three-day conference was a successful event in relation to the Asia Pacific Growth Strategy which has identified capacity building / talent management of fundraisers in the region among top priorities. The HR Conference tackled fundamental issues related to human resource within the region including recruitment, compensation & benefits, performance management and succession planning. The Conference was followed by a field visit to Sauraha, Chitwan where all the participants got the chance to see some examples of community based conservation initiatives in the Terai Arc Landscape in Nepal and understand the protected area system in Nepal, its management practice and habitat conditions.

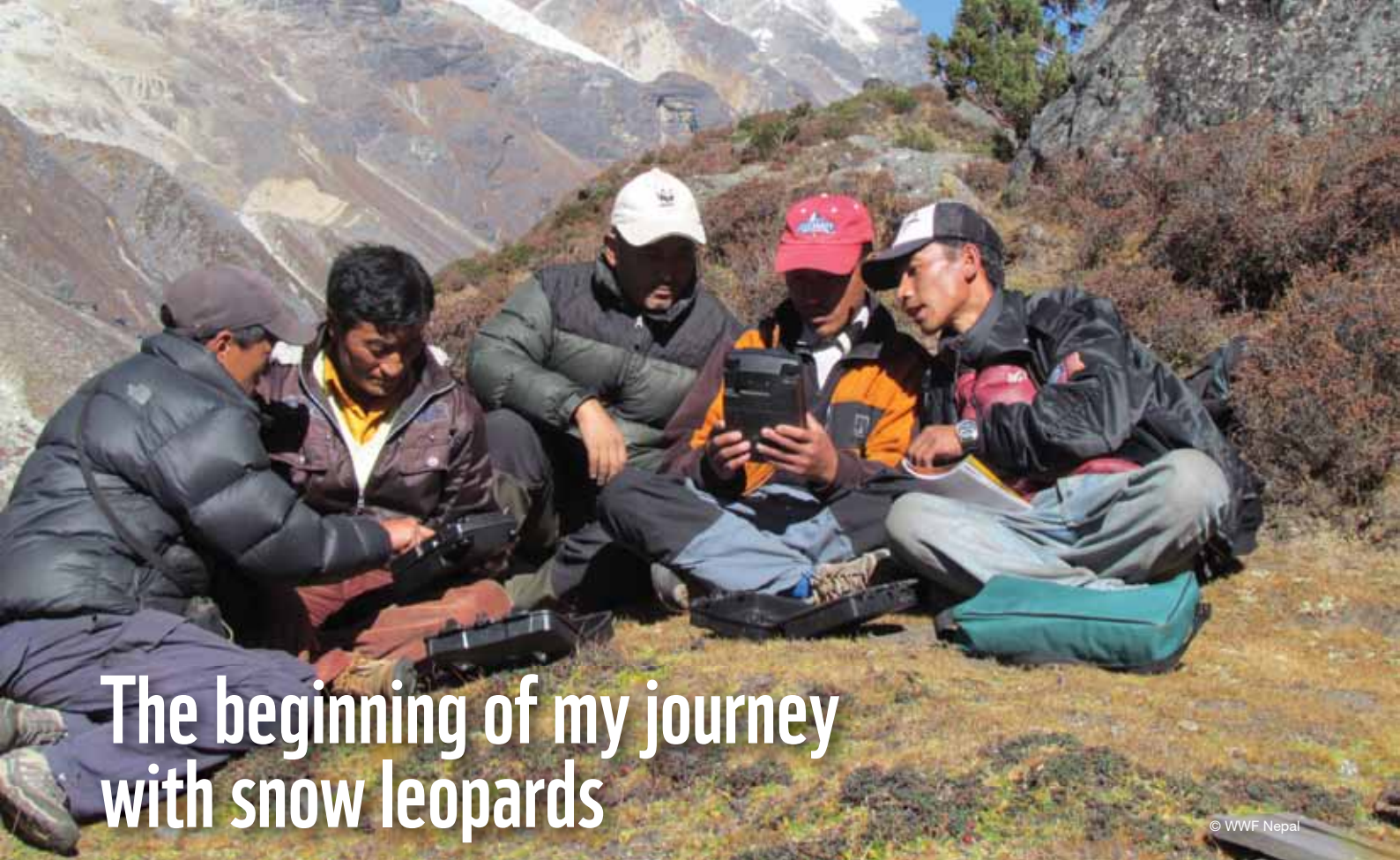
A total of 9 staff members were provided with various trainings within and outside the country between October and December and we hope to provide more learning opportunities for our staff in the coming year.

Wishing everyone a Very Happy and Prosperous New Year!



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The beginning of my journey with snow leopards

Kamal Thapa

Senior Research Officer

I have always been passionate about wildlife conservation. Having been born and brought up in a remote mountain district, I had developed a strong affinity towards wildlife in the mountains. However, it was only in the year 1994, after I was offered a job at the Annapurna Conservation Area Project (ACAP), that I actually got an opportunity to work towards my passion.

With enormous interest and excitement but with limited knowledge on species conservation, I started my career as a research assistant for Snow Leopard Conservation at Neisyang valley in Manang district.

In March 1999 I got the opportunity to participate in a training on Snow Leopard Research Techniques provided by Dr. Rodney Jackson, an expert on snow leopards. The training was organized jointly by WWF Nepal, Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation (DNPWC) and International Snow leopard Trust (USA).

The training took me to Dolpo where I looked forward to learning about snow leopard research techniques, on-the-ground work, and most importantly seeing snow leopards in the wild.

Getting to most of the snow leopard zones in Nepal requires crossing high passes at altitudes of around 5,000 meters or more. Flying to Dolpa was just the beginning and I had no clue as to how my two months would unfold.

For around two months of the training, as part of the research we steadily looked for snow leopards especially in their prime habitats in upper Dolpa and in the southern parts of Upper Mustang. Despite stumbling on various signs such as scrapes (social markings), pug marks and scat, we were not fortunate enough to sight the elusive snow leopard.

In addition to the learnings from the training, what struck me most was the level of cooperation required from the community members in conducting any program related to snow leopard conservation. In most of the snow leopard zones the conflict between humans and snow leopards is one of the biggest issues. Several studies on feeding behavior of snow leopard show that domestic livestock contribute to one third of a snow leopard's diet and hence livestock depredation is the major problem faced by the local communities when it comes to snow leopards.

To recall some of my personal experiences, I was once surrounded by a group of herders from Dolpa asking me to provide them with compensation for their yak that was killed by a snow leopard. Similarly in Manang one of the herders actually showed us around 30 dead sheep and goats that were killed by a snow leopard on a single night. That was the extent of the loss that a local household could suffer. I cannot remember a more helpless state than the one I was faced with during these instances as I did not have any immediate solutions to this problem.

Today, as a Senior Research Officer of WWF Nepal, I feel proud to note that we have made remarkable progress in snow leopard conservation. Livestock insurance schemes and other mitigation measures are now in place to help reduce human wildlife conflict. The introduction and use of new techniques and technologies such as fecal DNA and camera traps has proved very effective for snow leopard monitoring. And with heightened awareness at the grassroots level and a strong backing at the national level, I feel that we can find a future for Nepal's snow leopards.

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Hot off the Press

WWF ON YOUR RADIO

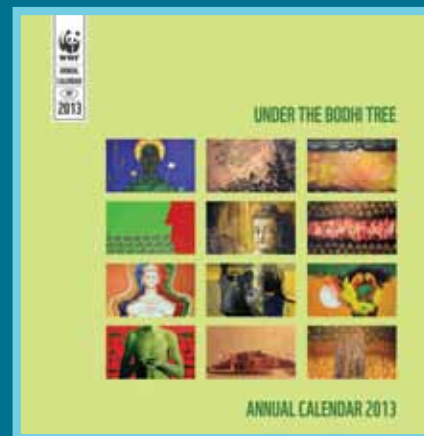
Kalika FM	Thu	7:25 PM to 7:55 PM
Phoolbari FM	Wed	8:30 PM to 9:00 PM
Shuklaphanta FM	Sun	7:15 PM to 7:45 PM
Bageshwori FM	Thu	6:30 PM to 7:00 PM
Madhyapaschim FM	Fri	7:30 PM to 8:00 PM
Samudayik Radio Solu FM	Fri	6:35 PM to 6:50 PM



*Socio-Economic Baseline
Survey for REDD+ Readiness*



*WWF Nepal Strategic Plan
2012-2016*



WWF Nepal Annual Calendar 2013

STAFF ANNOUNCEMENTS

In the past months we welcomed new staff...

• **Bhumika Shrestha**
Assistant Program Administrator

• **Pankaj Ratna Bajracharya**
Program Associate – GIS

and we bid farewell to...

• **Monika Bajimaya Shrestha**
Program Associate – GIS

Inside the Himalayas

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Akash Shrestha
Prajana Waiba Pradhan
Mreedu Gyawali

On the Cover:
Snow leopard (Panthera
uncia) cub yawning, lying on
snow, captive, USA (non-ex)



For Living Himalayas

WWF's work in Nepal is part of WWF's Living Himalayas Initiative which aims to bring the three governments of Nepal, Bhutan and India together to effectively manage and conserve the Eastern Himalayan region for the sake of their exceptional wildlife, breathtaking environment and unique people.

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Why we are here

To stop the degradation of the planet's natural environment and to build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature.