



Danphe

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Bird survey of the Kanchenjunga Conservation Area

Carol and Tim Inskipp



Ghunsa Valley

Photo by: Carol Inskipp

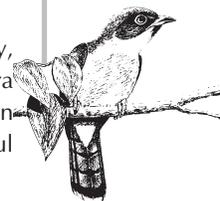
rich, forming one of Nepal's Important Bird Areas (IBAs) (also called Key Biodiversity Areas) and lying within a biodiversity hotspot in the Eastern Himalayas (CEPF, 2005). Surveying KCA had further special attractions because it had recently been identified as one of the most poorly known IBAs in the country and extensive areas of high quality forest habitats were reported to remain (Baral and Inskipp, 2005).

Bird Conservation Nepal (BCN) organised the KCA survey as a contribution to the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF) Initiative in Nepal. Carrying out the survey was made possible by invaluable funding provided by CEPF, and aided by a financial contribution from the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (UK).

Since 2007, CEPF has been working on a far-reaching programme to restore biodiversity and maintain existing biodiversity in the Eastern Himalayas. With great foresight, CEPF's objectives include developing civil society networks that manage, monitor and mitigate threats to biodiversity in KBAs/IBAs in the Kanchenjunga-Singalila complex in the Eastern Himalayas. Ways are being sought to engage local managers in habitat monitoring and management. The other important objective of CEPF's programme is to explore the status of biodiversity in the region with proper scientific methods. CEPF is working to achieve its objectives both through a grant scheme to NGOs, including BCN, and through the work of its own staff. An important part of the BCN project funded by CEPF is the development of an IBA monitoring strategy for the Kanchenjunga-Singalila Complex (Baral, 2008). In conjunction with a bird survey of the Mai Valley IBA, which was carried out in March 2008, our study aimed to assist in the delivery of this monitoring strategy by exploring the status of birds in KCA.

In spring 2008, we were delighted and honoured to join a bird survey team in Kanchenjunga Conservation Area (KCA). Visiting this remote area in the high Himalayas of north-east Nepal had been our dream for many years. KCA is species-

The seven KCA bird survey team members were Mitra Pandey, who works for BCN's CEPF project in eastern Nepal, Jyotendra Thakuri (a BCN staff member, who also proved to be an excellent bird photographer), Richard Winspear and Paul



Collin (both on RSPB sabbatical leave), Angus Robin (also the team doctor) and ourselves. Our survey was very ably supported by a team from Nepal Trekking & Expedition P. Ltd who carried our camping equipment, personal belongings and food (almost all of which had to be brought into the KCA with us), prepared our meals, and set up and maintained our camp each day.

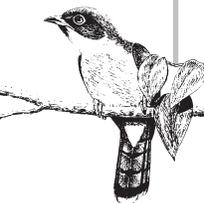
Our survey entailed a 20-day trek from 8 to 27 April, although it was only possible to spend 12 days actually in the survey area. This was because of the logistics of reaching this remote region of the country, despite having some extra long trekking days both on the walk in and out of the KCA, to try and extend our survey time there. On 17 of the 20 days between nine and 11 hours a day were spent walking from one campsite to another and bird surveys were made en route. This was an inevitable limiting factor in the number of bird species and individuals we recorded. During our 12 days in the KCA, we stayed at single locations on three days and carried out bird surveys throughout each day but, unfortunately, for logistical reasons, two days had to be spent at relatively high altitudes where bird diversity was low.



Ashy-throated Warbler

Photo by: Jyotendra Jyu Thakuri

We started the trek at Basantapur (2310m) after flying from Kathmandu to Biratnagar and taking a half day minibus ride to the roadhead. The mountain scenery was dramatically beautiful on our trek into the KCA. On the first two days, we followed an old trading route on the Tinjure and Milke Dandas. Rhododendrons were in full bloom and alive with birds feeding on the nectar, including flocks of Red-tailed Minlas, *Minla ignotincta*, Chestnut-tailed Minlas *M. strigula*, Blue-winged Minlas *M. cyanouroptera*, Stripe-throated Yuhinas *Yuhina gularis* and Hoary-throated Barwings *Actinodura nipalensis* (a restricted range species). The highest point reached on this stage of the trek was 2980m above Gupha Pokhari, before we made a long descent to Dobhan (680m) by the Tamur river. This descent took us through thick forests, first of Himalayan Fir *Abies spectabilis* and *Rhododendron*



where a few of us found the first Satyr Tragopan *Tragopan satyra* of the trip (a globally near-threatened species). Then we descended through oak *Quercus* forest, where bird highlights were a Yellow-browed Warbler *Phylloscopus inornatus* (an uncommon visitor to Nepal) and the nationally threatened Black-headed Shrike Babbler *Pteruthius rufiventer*. The trail then dropped through mixed broadleaved forests before the forests eventually became more open and were replaced by terraced cultivation and scattered villages. Flocks of warblers were seen on these early stages of our trek, presumably birds that breed at higher altitudes which were moving up. Maximum numbers were recorded on 9 April between Chauki and Gupha Pokhari: 80 Buff-barred *Phylloscopus pulcher*, 20 Ashy-throated *P. maculipennis*, and 40 Blyth's Leaf Warblers *P. reguloides*.

From Dobhan we walked for two days up the subtropical Tamur valley. Notable bird species included a pair of Woolly-necked Storks *Ciconia episcopus*, Crested Kingfisher *Megaceryle lugubris*, Asian Paradise-flycatcher *Terpsiphone paradisi* and Spotted Forktail *Enicurus maculatus*.

On the afternoon of the fourth day, we at last reached the gateway to KCA (1300m) and within half an hour we found an Asian Emerald Cuckoo *Chrysococcyx maculatus*, a rare summer visitor to Nepal.

As we trekked through the Conservation Area the landscape gradually became wilder, with less and less habitation and cultivation. Our first night in KCA was spent at Chhiruwa village (1240m). On the next day, we followed the Tamur Khola for most of the walk, before turning into the Ghunsa Valley, just before reaching our camp site at Sekathum (1590m). En route we recorded the maximum number of 12 Himalayan Griffons *Gyps himalayensis* that we saw in KCA. Black-backed Forktail *Enicurus immaculatus* and Ferruginous Flycatcher *Muscicapa ferruginea* were other bird highlights along this part of the trek.

For the next three days, we climbed up the steep-sided and narrow Ghunsa Valley. There were oak and rhododendron forests with dense bamboo undergrowth at lower elevations. On some parts of the western slopes, especially near Amjilessa (2590m), there was evidence of recent extensive burning resulting from the traditional practice of slash-and-burn agriculture.

On 15 April, as we crossed a steep slope through thick bamboo with scattered rhododendron between Amjilessa and Gyabla (2790m), we heard an insistent repetitive, nasal, high-pitched song, which we identified as that of Russet Bush Warbler *Bradypterus mandelli*, based on our previous experience of the song from Bhutan. The bird team listened to the song for several minutes, but unfortunately was not successful in making a sound recording and did not manage to see the bird, which kept in dense cover. Russet Bush Warbler would be a new species for Nepal, but its addition to the country's list needs further proof. It is an unobtrusive species that could well

have been overlooked previously, and we hope that other observers will secure confirmation of its occurrence in Nepal, preferably by making a sound recording (Inskipp and Inskipp, 2008).

Other notable bird species in the lower Ghunsa Valley included Large Niltava *Niltava grandis*, Spotted Laughingthrush *Garrulax ocellatus* and Hoary-throated Barwing.

A Lammergeier *Gypaetus barbatus* soared magnificently over the ridge top above Gyabla. Our birdwatching at Gyabla was marred by finding local youths persistently catapulting Black-faced Laughingthrushes *Garrulax affinis* and Chestnut-crowned Laughingthrushes *G. erythrocephalus*. The next day, soon after we left the village, we entered Hemlock *Tsuga dumosa* forest with bamboo where we heard

a Satyr Tragopan, flushed a shy Long-tailed Thrush *Zoothera dixonii* and watched three Hoary-throated Barwings clambering on mossy trunks. Higher up the trail, Hemlock forest gave way to that of Himalayan Fir and rhododendron. Eventually the Ghunsa Valley broadened and we came to the Bhotiya village of Ghunsa (3540m), situated on the flat valley floor amongst yak pastures and potato fields. Prayer flags fluttered on huge poles by each of the houses. Steep forested slopes and almost sheer rock faces formed the valley sides and splendid snow-covered mountain peaks towered above the village.

It was necessary for our party to camp for two nights at Ghunsa to acclimatise to the altitude. The bird team spent the day exploring the valley, although we were too early in the season for most breeding species. Birds of note included six Himalayan Griffons, two Hen Harriers *Circus cyaneus*, two pairs of Upland Buzzards *Buteo hemilasius*, Northern Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis*, a Black Eagle *Ictinaetus malayensis*, three Golden Eagles *Aquila chrysaetos* and a male Himalayan Monal *Lophophorus impejanus* flying over the ridge top. Two Blue Sheep *Pseudois nayaur* were spotted on a high crag overlooking the village. One other trekking group was camping at Ghunsa. During our entire trek we only saw a handful of groups; apparently around half of KCA's tourist visitors come in October and November.

From Ghunsa our trek continued through beautiful, ancient Himalayan Fir/rhododendron forest, with trunks, branches, huge fallen logs and boulders all clothed with thick mosses and grey-green lichens dangling from the trees like decorations. Here we found a party of nine Blood Pheasants *Ithaginis cruentus*. Our route beyond Ghunsa then crossed five passes; the first was Tama La (3960m) and the last and highest was



Ghunsa Village

Photo by: Carol Inskipp

Mirgin La (4710m). Above 4200m the ground was snow-covered which made our progress slow so we spent a night en route near Selele La (4215m). Snow Partridges *Lerwa lerwa*, which were engagingly tame, Alpine Accentors *Prunella collaris* and flocks of brilliant mauve-blue Grandalas *Grandala coelicolor* were amongst the high altitude specialities that we recorded. On the rocky slopes high above our Selele La camp site at around 4350m there was a herd of 12 Blue Sheep and close by Jyotendra photographed a footprint of Snow Leopard (*Uncia uncia*).

On our trek the next day we were surrounded by snowy peaks and had incredible views of the Sagarmatha and Makalu ranges. However, our party, especially the porters, had a long arduous trek over the snow, followed by a steep, difficult descent of 840m to Tseram (3870m) in the Simbhuwa Khola valley. Our Tseram camp was rather too high at the date of our visit for the large majority of breeding birds, but we were obliged to spend a day here to recover from the previous day. There were beautiful mature forests, of Juniper *Juniperus indica* on the drier north-facing valley slopes and *Rhododendron* (still in bud) on the moister southern slopes. Despite the extensive area of suitable habitat we only saw and heard one Himalayan Monal in the area. Many pheasant droppings were found in the rhododendron forest, probably of Blood Pheasant which was heard close by. Near our camp the Juniper forest produced a male Rufous-breasted Bush Robin *Tarsiger hyperythrus* and Long-tailed Thrush and three Himalayan Goral *Naemorhedus goral* approached the forest edge.

After a day's rest, our party left early the next morning and had a wonderful walk, following the Simbhuwa Khola from Tseram to Torangden (3000m), a small forest clearing above





Alpine Accentor

Photo by: Jyotendra Jyu Thakuri

the river, with a lodge and camp site. The trail ran through forests all day: first juniper, then Himalayan Fir and flowering rhododendrons of several species, including the magnificent *Rhododendron hodgsonii*. As we descended, the Himalayan Fir was eventually replaced by Hemlock and a bamboo understorey appeared. Forests in the Simbuwa Khola valley were observed to be very old and apparently little disturbed by human impact, although there were some small yak pastures and evidence of very limited grazing close to the trail. Large quantities of dead timber, including huge trunks, were present on the forest floor, particularly between Tseram and Torangden. Along the way we came across flocks of warblers that must have been moving up to the breeding grounds, including as many as 200 Buff-barred, 30 Lemon-rumped *P. chloronotus* and two Greenish Warblers *P. trochiloides*.

The following day was eventful, a long trek with some interesting birdwatching, good quality habitat and tough walking. After leaving Torangden we descended steeply to the Simbuwa Khola, followed the river for a short while and then climbed up to the Deorali Danda (3410m) walking through forest all the way, first Hemlock and bamboo and Himalayan Fir and bamboo higher up. Close to the ridge top we crossed three dreadful landslides in quick succession; most of an entire mountainside had gone, leaving loose scree on a very steep slope of more than 500m down to the river. Everyone made it safely across. After scrambling to the ridge top we had a pleasant walk through beautiful flowering *Rhododendron* forest. All of the bird team had fantastic views of a female Satyr Tragopan and soon afterwards a pair of Great Parrotbills *Conostoma oemodium* (nationally threatened) and a Spot-winged Rosefinch *Carpodacus rodopeplus* feeding on *Rhododendron* nectar.

Finally, we made a long steep descent of 980m through dense forest and bamboo to our camp site by the Amji Khola (2430m). This was a beautiful valley, continuously forested from the mountain tops down to the river. The forest was

wonderful habitat for birds, comprising mixed broadleaves with numerous mature trees, dead timber, thick undergrowth including bamboo, and mossy trunks, branches and boulders, hung with epiphytes.

Unfortunately, our time was running out and we were only able to spend two nights in the Amji Khola valley. The weather turned gloomy and wet after our first morning and must have reduced our observations. Even so we recorded a good variety of birds between us, including the nationally threatened Pygmy Blue Flycatcher *Muscicapella hodgsoni* and Blue-winged Laughingthrush *Garrulax squamatus*, which were both new species for KCA. Other bird species of interest included Booted Eagle *Hieraaetus pennatus*, Hoary-throated Barwing and Chestnut-crowned Warbler *Seicercus castaniceps*. Our last morning in the Amji Khola valley was dull and cloudy resulting in reduced bird activity. As soon as we left the valley and crossed to the south side of the Dhupi Danda Karka saddle the vegetation changed sharply. Only small patches of secondary forest growth remained and much of this southern area of the KCA, which lies in the Kabeli Khola watershed was used for terraced cultivation.

Within a few hours we left KCA. The trek from the Conservation Area boundary to Taplejung took us nearly four days, but we walked through some quite extensive areas of good quality broadleaved temperate forest en route. A good variety of bird species was recorded, including Pygmy Blue Flycatcher above Lali Kharka; also Bay Woodpecker *Blythipicus pyrrhotis*, Brown Wood Owl *Strix leptogrammica*, a pair of Snowy-browed Flycatchers *Ficedula hyperythra* and Black-throated Parrotbill *Paradoxornis nipalensis*.

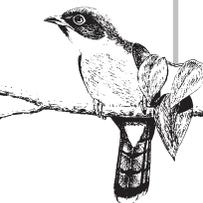


Photo by: Jyotendra Jyu Thakuri

Rufous-breasted Bush Robin



Snow Partridge

Photo by: Jyotendra Jyu Thakuri

After a night at Taplejung, we sadly said goodbye to our support team from Nepal Trekking & Expedition P. Ltd and were treated to a wonderful iced cake! From Taplejung we had a day and a half's journey by local bus and jeep via the attractive small town of Ilam, where we spent the night. On the next day we took the jeep to Bhadrapur airport and a flight back to the clamour of Kathmandu which was a sharp culture shock for us after our peaceful sojourn in KCA.

Throughout our trek, detailed notes were made of localities and numbers of individuals of bird species that we recorded, and altitudes of more unusual records. A total of 246 bird species was recorded, including 185 species in KCA, of which 17 species were new to the Conservation Area. The majority of species had not reached their breeding grounds and many birds were observed moving up. A small number of mammals of seven species and two lizard species were also recorded in KCA.

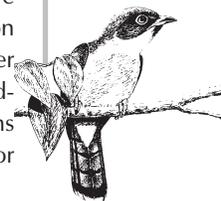
The MacKinnon's List and Timed Species Counts methods were used for bird species. These methods provide an estimate of species richness and in addition the Timed Species Counts give some indication of relative abundance of the more common species. A total of 151 species was recorded in the 74 hours of Timed Species Counts (TSC) and 184 species in 60 MacKinnon's lists. The relative abundance of the 20 most frequently recorded species in KCA was calculated by ranking their TSC scores. Relative abundance was also calculated of the 10 most frequently recorded species in the six areas surveyed, which were categorised by both altitudinal range and broad habitat type. However the assessment of relative abundance was limited because the survey was too early in the year to properly evaluate the abundance of summer visitors and altitudinal migrants, as many were missing from higher altitudes. Despite these limitations, the survey confirmed that KCA is of high importance for many east Himalayan bird species.



Habitat type and quality and human land and natural resource use were also recorded in detail throughout our trek. The survey ranged from subtropical to alpine zones (1240m to 4710m) and covered all the main habitats in the Conservation Area. Extensive mature forests very little impacted by human activity were observed in KCA. The best quality forests recorded during the survey included those in the Simbuwa Khola valley, where almost unbroken forest stretched from Tseram to Torangden and the Deorali Danda. Between 3500m and 3950m these forests comprised mature juniper *Juniperus indica* on north facing slopes and *Rhododendron* shrubberies with Himalayan Fir on south-facing slopes. Himalayan Fir was dominant on both valley sides from 3050 to 3500m, replaced by Hemlock with bamboo in the understorey from 2600 to 3050m. Another exceptional forest covered the southern slopes of the Deorali Danda and the Amji Khola valley which were densely forested with *Rhododendron* on the uppermost slopes (up to 3410m) and lower down were covered with mixed broadleaved forest with *Rhododendron* and bamboo stands stretching to the valley bottom at 2430m. Unbroken dense broadleaved forests were also noted on the eastern Ghunsa Khola valley between Amjilessa and Ghunsa. An ancient, relatively undisturbed forest of Himalayan Fir/*Rhododendron* between Ghunsa and Tama La was also notable.

Slash and burn agriculture and hunting were identified as threats to birds in the KCA, although Gurung (2006) reported that both activities have decreased since the Conservation Area was established. Burning opens up forests, resulting in damage and loss of some trees, a reduction of the forest understorey and the forest becoming much drier with the loss of mosses and epiphytes. These forest microhabitats are vital for many Himalayan forest species, including pheasants such as the globally near-threatened Satyr Tragopan; babblers, including the restricted-range Hoary-throated Barwing; warblers, tits and woodpeckers. Species that prefer open forests and scrub may well benefit from forest thinning, but most species in this category are widespread and common, while many forest specialists are declining (Inskipp, 1989). Numbers of birds of prey, pheasants, pigeons and doves recorded during the survey were much lower than expected, considering the large areas of good quality habitat, the timing of the survey when these species should be conspicuous, and comparisons with these species' populations in other parts of Nepal. As these species are frequently targeted by hunters, it seems likely that hunting has reduced their populations.

Recommendations for bird conservation were made, based on survey findings. Conservation awareness programmes for all schools in the KCA and local communities, notably forest user groups, were highly recommended. Contents of conservation awareness programmes were suggested. A further reduction in the practice of burning for slash-and-burn agriculture by enforcing existing regulations more widely would be highly beneficial for





White-capped Water Redstart

Photo by: Tim Inskipp

many bird species. Direct and adequate compensation paid to villagers for crop raiding by birds and mammals at the household level would help to encourage a more positive attitude by villagers to wildlife. Further bird surveys are strongly recommended, especially in the forest areas identified as the most intact, extensive and of good quality, as well as a comprehensive breeding season survey for the poorly known Wood Snipe *Gallinago nemoricola*.

A comprehensive bird checklist for KCA annotated with details of all bird species recorded in this survey and in previous reports was prepared as part of this study. A total of 330 bird species has been recorded so far in the KCA, including 42 without any details of date or locality, and it is considered likely that quite a few more species occur. This checklist updates the previous published list of 279 species (Thapa and Karki, 2004). Bird species recorded include the globally threatened Wood Snipe and Saker Falcon *Falco cherrug*; the restricted-range species Spiny Babbler *Turdoides nipalensis* (Nepal's only endemic

bird), and 16 nationally threatened species. A summary of all bird records plotted by grid squares demonstrates that the KCA is still poorly recorded, with half of the squares having no records, and even the best recorded square (which includes the unspoiled forests in the Amji Khola valley) may be lacking records for at least 25% of the potential species.

A total of 179 bird species was recorded on the trek in and out of KCA, including 59 species not recorded in KCA during the survey. Notable good quality forest areas observed outside KCA were: Himalayan Fir/ rhododendron and temperate broadleaved forests between Gupha Pokhari and Dobhan; lower temperate broadleaved forest patches in the side valley of the Kabeli Khola valley between Yamphudin and Mamangkhe; lower temperate and subtropical broadleaved forest areas between Mamangkhe and Kande Bhanjyang; and an upper temperate broadleaved forest on the ridge between Lali Kharka and Suketar.

This article is based on a published report of the survey, Inskipp *et al.* (2008).

Acknowledgements

We are especially grateful for funds provided by CEPF and financial contributions made by the RSPB, UK, which fully covered all survey costs, and to BCN for inviting us to take part and for making all the arrangements for our survey. Special thanks go to Dev Ghimire for organisation and to Hem Sagar Baral, Ishana Thapa and Ian Barber for their initial work in setting up the survey. We are grateful to Shyam Bajimaya, Director General of the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation and Janak Karki (Under Secretary) for their advice and support. We warmly thank all members of the Nepal Trekking & Expedition P. Ltd team who accompanied us and gave us invaluable support throughout our trek, and its Managing Director, Sarbendra Pachhai for his organisation of the trek. We are also grateful to Dr Ghana Shyam Gurung, Ang Phuri Sherpa and Dr Sarala Khaling for sharing their valuable information and views on KCA.

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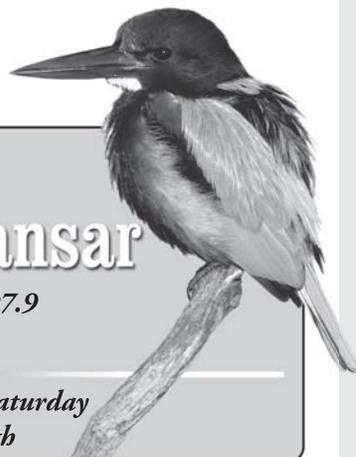
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BirdLife International is a global conservation federation with a worldwide network of Partner organizations, Representatives and committed individuals.

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;
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- 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.



News

Membership

Mr. Ganga Jung Thapa has joined BCN as a Patron. He is Executive Officer of National Trust for Nature Conservation (NTNC). He is highly devoted to wildlife conservation and has special interest on birds.

Mr. Nawaraj Chapagain, GIS officer of National Trust for Nature Conservation (NTNC) joined BCN as a Life Member. He has a keen interest in nature conservation.

Mr. Sanjan Bahadur Thapa has joined BCN as a Life Member. He has a great interest in nature conservation and has done good research works in bats.

Mrs. Krishna Tamrakar, radio journalist by profession has joined BCN as a Life Member. Her contribution to radio programme in Nepal is highly recognised. Currently she runs various radio programme related to conservation and social work. She has been running BCN's popular radio programme *Panchi Sansar* continuously for 3 years.

Mr. Vimal Thapa has joined BCN as a Life Member. He is a tourism entrepreneur and a keen birdwatcher. He has a very good knowledge on urban birds and has published Garden Birds of Nepal with other team members.

Mr. Zimba Zangbu Sherpa, Managing Director of Atalante Mountaineering and Trekking Pvt. Ltd., has joined BCN as a Life Member. He is a bird lover and shows great interest in conservation.

Dr. Richard Cuthbert has joined BCN as a Life Member. He is a Vulture Research Manager from Royal Society for Protection of Birds (RSPB). He has done a very good contribution in vulture conservation work in India and Nepal.

Dr. Suman Sumsher Thapa has joined BCN as a Life Member. He is a doctor by profession. He works an eye specialist at Tilganga eye hospital and shows great interest in nature conservation.

Publication

A total of 1000 copies of resource manual on Participatory Biodiversity Monitoring have been published as part of CEPF project. This booklet is in Nepali and will be very useful for the local communities in enhancing their knowledge on biodiversity monitoring.



Events

Elephant Race 2008

BCN participated in the Elephant Race 2008 held at Sauraha from 26-28 December 2008. BCN displayed various publications, posters, leaflet and merchandise in the event. It was a successful event where more than 2000 visitors visited the stall. We were able to share the importance of birds and need of their conservation to the general public. Many people showed interest on being the member of BCN and also bought bird books and merchandises.

Book Fair at Central Zoo

Three days book fair was conducted in the premises of Central Zoo, Jawalakhel from 29-31 December 2008. BCN displayed various posters, brochures, leaflets, publications and merchandises. Around 1800 visitors from various backgrounds such as students, conservationist, and general public visited the book fair. We were able to raise some fund by selling our publications and merchandises. We also received donation and recruit new members.

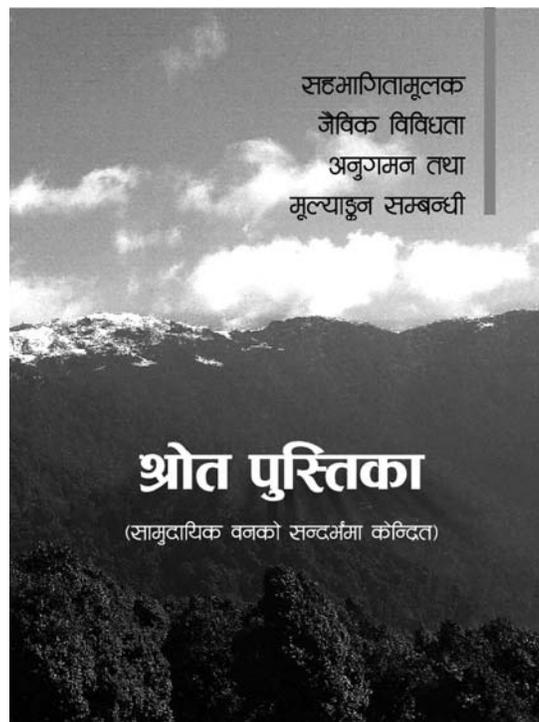
Exhibition at Bardia

BCN participated in an exhibition held at Bardia, Thakurdwara during Maghi Parva held for a week from 14 to 20 January 2009. This is the first time BCN actively participated in an event in this IBA. This was made possible by the great effort of our volunteers and members from Bardia. Various posters of globally threatened birds, vultures and books on birds as well as t-shirts were displayed and sold in that exhibition. More than 3000 visitors visited the stall and many of them showed great

interest on birds.

Rajan Chaudhary, Ram Bahadur Shahi and other members of BCN gave information on birds of Nepal and importance of birds to the visitors.

Likewise, BCN also participated in the one day book exhibition organised by Birendra Sainik School, Bhaktapur on December 29, 2008. Students



from various schools visited the exhibition. Informative leaflets, posters, brochure and newsletters of BCN were distributed to the visitors, which helped to increase knowledge on birds and environment.

2nd National Conference of Children Clubs

Menuka Basnyat, Membership and Education Officer of BCN along with three participants from Jagdishpur, Chandra Shekhar Pandey (Teacher), Ramesh Kumar Mauriya (Student), Shiva Prasad Raidas (Student) participated in 2nd National Conference of Children Clubs organised by Environmental Camps for Conservation Awareness (ECCA) Nepal at Budhanilkantha Higher Secondary school, Budhanilkantha, Kathmandu from 11-13 January 2009. The conference was organised to strengthen children clubs, to provide better scenario of children clubs to the school stakeholders, to expose the learning needs and possibilities and to develop a clear vision on children clubs in Nepal.

Art Competition



An art competition was organised on 2nd February 2009 to mark the World Wetlands Day. The theme of the art competition was "Save Birds: Save Bagmati". Altogether twelve students from various schools around the Kathmandu Valley took part in the competition. All the students did a very good art work relevant to the theme and among them six students received prize. Namdul Gurung from Galaxy Public School, Pratikshya Khadka from Glen Buds School, Jeenesh Chandra Shrestha from Rose Buds School won first, second and third prize respectively. Karun Katuwal from Om Gyan Mandir Secondary School got special prize from Srijana College of Fine Arts of free art course for six month. Laxman Lama from Seto Bangala School and Aman Sthapit from Himalayan Vidya Mandir were given complimentary prizes. All the students were awarded the certificates of participation. The jury consisted of two members with one senior artist Mr. Baikuntha Man Shrestha and famous radio journalist Mrs. Krishna Tamrakar.

Staff Appointment

Dr. Surya Poudel has been appointed as a Veterinary Officer for Vulture Conservation Programme.

Bhupal Nepali has been appointed as a Community Mobilisation Officer for Vulture Conservation Programme.

Jit Bahadur Yadav has been appointed as a Community Service Officer for Vulture Restaurant at Gaidahawa, Lumbini.

Nirmal Chaudhary has been appointed as a Project Field Officer for Jagdishpur wetland conservation project.

Project Update CEPF Project

Cross-Border Sharing Visit

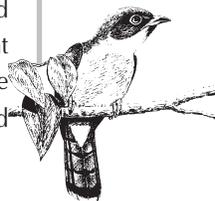
An eight day cross-border sharing visit was held from 21–28 January 2009 to Sikkim and Darjeeling of eastern India. Eleven members of three CEPF grantees (Bird Conservation Nepal, Ilam Cooperation Council and Namsaling Community Development Centre) from Nepal participated in the visit. Similar visit was made by the Indian CEPF grantees team (Volunteer Health Association of Sikkim and Prerana Organization) to Ilam on 15 December 2008. The main focus of these visits was to share the activities of the program and learn the lessons which can be adopted in both countries.

Review and Sharing Workshop

First and Second batch of CEPF grantees participated in a three day Review and Sharing workshop at Ilam organized by CEPF/WWF-Nepal from 10–12 February 2009. All the grantees did a



poster presentation on achievements of the project, identified gaps and future plans followed by a discussion. On the third day, there was a new proposal framework development session where concept proposal was developed based on the gaps identified to give continuity on the projects implemented by the first batch of CEPF grantees.



Billboard in Ilam

An information board with the details of wetlands, community forests, shrines, birds and wildlife of Ilam aiming to promote ecotourism has been established at Biblyate Bazaar of Ilam. It is a joint effort of seven organizations working in the Eastern Nepal – BCN, ECCA, FPPG-Ilam, ICC, NDCD, RPN-N and SHAHPCI.

SSG's Programme

Himali Conservation Forum of Taplejung established four pictorial boards of birds – nationally threatened, globally threatened, globally near threatened and restricted range species at Lelep, Yamphudin, Tapethok and Ghunsa of Kanchenjunga Conservation Area. The SSG also conducted the biodiversity awareness workshops to the local people, CFUGs and trained them to fill the indicator bird species monitoring form.

Vulture Conservation Programme

Vulture Conservation Training

A vulture conservation and management training was organised at Butwal, Rupandehi, from Jan 5-6, 2009. The main aim of the training was to enhance the technical skills of Community Based Organizations (CBOs), volunteers and new BCN staff on vulture identification, record keeping, basic NSAID monitoring, nest monitoring and recording vultures at carcass/feeding sites. Altogether 25 individuals including 4 women were trained. There was a good participation from Government (Department of Forest) also. Representative from all core project districts where vulture conservation activities are ongoing: Nawalparasi, Rupandehi, Dang, Palpa, Kailali, Kaski and Kanchanpur participated the training.

Jagdishpur Wetland Conservation Project

Handicraft Training

A 45 day long intensive training on basket weaving and bamboo craft (from mid October to end of November) was organised for the local communities of Jagdishpur. Altogether 40 local people received the training. They have learnt to make more than 20 different useful items.

At the end of the training, an exhibition was also held where nearly all the products prepared during the training were sold. The news was also covered by Kantipur which is one of the leading national daily newspapers of the country. A local group has been formed for coordination of the handicraft production. Local are keen on setting up a handicraft centre at Jagdishpur.

Koshi Wetland Project

Training on fishery management in Koshi Tappu

Several trainings were organised to improve the livelihoods of the wetland dependent communities in Koshi Tappu Wildlife Reserve in recent months. Of these were four-day fish pond management training aimed at providing knowledge on fish pond management and develop fish farming skills among the fisher community (*Godi*). A total of 20 fishers, 10 from West Kusaha and 10 from Madhuban, participated in the training. Experts from Fisheries Research Centre, Tarhara and District Agriculture Development Office, Inaruwa, were invited as the trainers.

Godi community entirely depends on capture fishery as their main source of income. BCN, supported by the Darwin Initiative, has built the capacity of a group of poorest families in 2 different areas, West Kusaha and Madhuban, and provided them with 5 fishponds leased by the project, in order to encourage them towards sustainable livelihood through fish farming.

Similarly, Fish culture training was organised by BCN for the fisher community (*Godi*), who has been solely depending on Koshi River for livelihoods. A total of 5 fishponds of 2 *Bigah* area, leased by the project were handed over to the two committee of *Godi* community. 1 *Bigah* equivalent fishponds were provided to the 20 poor fishers of Kamala wetland committee of West Kusaha-9. And the rest 1 *Bigah* equivalent fishponds were provided to 22 poor fishers of Madhuban. During this period, other trainings like, fish pond management training, fish health management training and public awareness programmes were also conducted. Water quality monitoring for good fish production and survey of pond biodiversity were also conducted by the staffs of the project.

Information Centre

A programme on linking wetlands with people and their inter-relationship was organised with an aim to raise awareness of local communities on the conservation of wetlands, its biodiversity, forest and birds. Information centres have been established at tea shops located in the buffer zone of Koshi Tappu Wildlife Reserve under the joint coordination of Local Consumer Group, Koshi Tappu Wildlife Reserve and Community Forest Consumer Group. The local communities are expected to gain knowledge on the conservation of biodiversity and wetlands.

Aquarium handed over

A total of 4 aquariums were constructed and handed over in 4 different sectors, Shree Janata Higher Secondary School, Madhuban, Shree Prakash Higher Secondary School, Prakashpur, Koshi Tappu Wildlife Reserve and Shree Mohan Lower Secondary School. The main objective of the aquarium



was to create awareness among local communities about the importance of wetland and biodiversity through students and teachers.



Water hyacinth compost preparation training

With an aim of controlling increasing growth of water hyacinth (invasive species) and utilizing it as a compost fertilizer, 4 days training program was organized in Prakashpur VDC, Sunsari. Women fish farmers were encouraged to participate in the 4 days event. Conservation warden of Koshi Wildlife Reserve and the representatives of District Agriculture Development Office and National Fish Association attended the programme.



This training program will help the farmers to use low-cost fertilizer which will also assist in management of wetlands.

Briquette production training

Briquette production training was conducted in Shree Belka higher Secondary school, Udaypur. A total of 20 women of Chaudhary and Musahar Community of Tapeshwori VDC of Koshi Buffer Zone were selected to participate in the program. The main purpose of the program was to control invasive species and utilize it as the source of alternative fuel. The training was conducted in joint coordination of the staffs of Koshi Tappu Reserve and the Local Consumer Group.

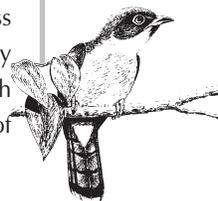
In addition, 2-day training programme was also organised on January 26, 2009 and January 27, 2009, considering the increasing demand of the briquettes in Tapeshwori VDC. A total of 5 women were trained in the programme and in the final day, a new women committee, Shree Belka Briquette production women group was formed. A set of new briquette manufacturing machine was donated to the newly formed group, under the responsibility of the Local Consumers' Group, Rohabar.

Sustainable livelihood and small industry management training

A 3-day training programme on sustainable livelihood and small industry management was conducted with the support of BCN in Namrata Hotel, Inaruwa, Sunsari. The training was organised from January 15, 2009 to January 17, 2009 with an aim of transforming the participants into resource persons. The programme was also attended by the warden of Koshi Tappu Wildlife Reserve. In total, 10 people participated in the event, including one representative from Koshi Development Foundation Nepal, Madhuban, Sunsari, and one from water hyacinth compost preparation group, Prakashpur.

Bird Fair Celebration

Bird festival was celebrated on February 3 at Kamalpur in Saptari district to celebrate the World Wetlands Day. On the occasion, Minister of Forests and Soil Conservation, Hon. Kiran Gurung, inaugurated the festival. The main objective of the festival was to raise awareness on the importance of Koshi wetland habitats and aquatic birds. BCN organised a number of wetland awareness activities, including musical chair game and essay competition. Educational materials and outreach products were distributed among the winners of the competition.



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. 200 for any SAARC nationals and equivalent Nepali rupees of US\$ 10.00 for others.

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**

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

BCN is a membership-based organisation. At present, it is supported by a Founder President, 19 Patrons, 141 life members and several ordinary members. Members are the major strength of this organisation and people from various backgrounds viz. students, teachers, professionals, bird enthusiasts, conservationists, and the general public are involved.

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

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

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