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Bird Survey along the Bagmati River Corridor

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Introduction

Background

Nepal is renowned internationally for its high bird diversity. A total of 863 bird species has been recorded so far (BCN 2009). Among them 133 bird species (15%) of Nepal's birds are considered nationally threatened. Habitat loss and damage is major threat to 89% of the birds at risk (Baral and Inskipp 2004).

A total of 534 bird species has been recorded from Kathmandu valley only (Ghimire 2008). There are records of some globally threatened birds like Lesser Adjutant *Leptoptilos*

javanicus, White-rumped *Gyps bengalensis* and Slender-billed Vultures *Gyps tenuirostris*, Imperial Eagle *Aquila heliaca* and Greater Spotted Eagle *Aquila clanga*, Hodgson's Bushchat *Saxicola insignis* etc (Inskipp and Inskipp 1991) and many more nationally threatened species like Grey-headed Lapwing *Vanellus cinereus*, Falcated Duck *Anas falcata* etc from Kathmandu (Baral and Inskipp 2004). Generally forested hill surrounding the valley, agricultural land and rivers are the major bird habitats in Kathmandu Valley.

Bagmati is the main river in Bagmati River system. Pradhan (1998) has listed 20 tributaries within Kathmandu Valley. Among them 5 tributary i.e. Manohara, Dhobi Khola,



Spotted Forktail by Jyotendra Thakuri



Cattle Egret *Casmerodius albus*

Tukucha, Bishnumati and Nakhhu Khola contribute their water to Bagmati River before reaching to Chobhar. Most of the temples and ghats in Kathmandu are situated on the banks of the sacred Bagmati River which has huge religious, cultural and aesthetic values. The Bagmati River has its origin just below the summit of Shivapuri hill in Baghdwar from the southern slope of Shivapuri Lekh, north of Kathmandu basin. It flows straight to south-west cutting Mahabharat range (Sharma 1977 and Pradhan 1998). Its total length is about 196 km in Nepal and the catchments area of the river is 3610 sq km which is 2.25% of total area of Nepal (Shanker & Kiran, 1976). It enters into the valley from Sundarijal and flows down out of the valley from the narrow Chobhar gorge.

As of rapid population and urban growth of the Kathmandu Valley once pristine Bagmati River is becoming dumping sites for all types of solid wastes, outlets for domestic sewerage and industrial and agricultural effluents. This has far exceeded the assimilative capacity of the river and pollution is permanent. The uncontrolled sand extraction is another serious threat to the people, cultural monuments and wildlife. The sacred rivers are nowadays hardly suitable for any traditional and cultural rituals and worship. Recent studies show that water quality of Bagmati River is degrading day by day and pollution level has increased as river passes through dense settlements (Yadav 2002 and Chhetri 2006). In the river of Kathmandu valley, natural communities of aquatic fauna have completely disappeared instead two groups of fauna eg. Tubificids and Chironomids have dominated both typically representing polluted water conditions.



Bagmati River and its surrounding riparian habitats have served as a good habitat for wildlife and an important corridor for migrating birds in the past. On the bank of very few sections of the river there is still some good habitat left.

A highly degraded condition of Bagmati River and its tributaries must have a significant impact on the biodiversity. As an easy and most noticeable indicator of biodiversity a detail avifaunal study along the Bagmati River system was carried to assess the habitat condition of Bagmati River and bird communities of the area. Birds are susceptible to environmental change and habitat degradation so can be used to monitor environmental health and act as most reliable and inexpensive tool for assessment of environment.

Objectives

The main objectives of the study were:

- 1 To obtain baseline information on bird distribution along the Bagmati River system.
- 2 To identify and delineate biodiversity rich areas within different segment of the river.
- 3 To analyse the linkage between bird richness and river pollution.
- 4 To contribute in the process of development of the Bagmati Action Plan.

Study area

The study was carried along the Bagmati River corridor from Shivapuri National Park starting at Pharping hydropower dam down to Katuwal Daha in Simpani VDC and main tributary having significant bird habitat i.e. Dhobikhola, Bishnumati and Manohara.

Methodology

Field survey was carried out in summer season from 30 July 2008- 8 August 2008.

Point count method was used. A total of 155 points were laid along the Bagmati River System with a distance of 500 m. For Bagmati River 86 points were laid down from Katuwal Daha to Shivapuri National Park. Similarly for other tributaries the points were laid randomly but all type of habitats was covered. All observing points were marked as bird survey, BS 1 to BS 86 at Bagmati River for future repeat surveys.

Observation was made within the periphery of 200 m from the observation point. 30 minute time was spent for each point, during this period physical habitat description, GPS location and altitude were noted. During the survey all birds seen and heard within the periphery of 200m were recorded carefully with total counts of each species.

Habitat Catagorisation

Different habitats have been categorised as inhabited by different species of birds

- Forest
- Wetland
- Agricultural Land
- Human Settlement
- Mixed habitat

Results

Bird Diversity

A total of 112 bird species belonging to 12 Orders and 34 Families was recorded from the Bagmati and its major tributaries. The total population count of all species of birds is 5905. Among these most abundant birds are House Crow *Corvus splendens*, Common Myna *Acerodotheres tristis*, House Sparrow *Passer domesticus* and Eurasian Tree Sparrow *Passer montanus*. Nepal's only endemic bird Spiny Babbler *Turdoides nipalensis* and a nationally threatened species Blue-breasted Quail *Coturnix chinensis* were also recorded.

Distribution of birds along different rivers

The bird species in different rivers were distributed unevenly; highest number of birds was recorded from the Bagmati river with species richness 103, Index of diversity H 1.419547. Manohara and its tributary had species richness 63 and index of diversity H 1.258720717. Bishnumati River had species richness 43 and index of diversity H 1.04503. Dhobikhola had least bird species with species richness 25 and index of diversity H 1.02616.



Eurasian Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus*

Relative abundance

Relative abundance or % of dominance of birds was calculated by total count of individual species from all points. On the basis of number of birds recorded and % of dominance, bird species were further categorized into very common, common, fairly common, uncommon and rare.

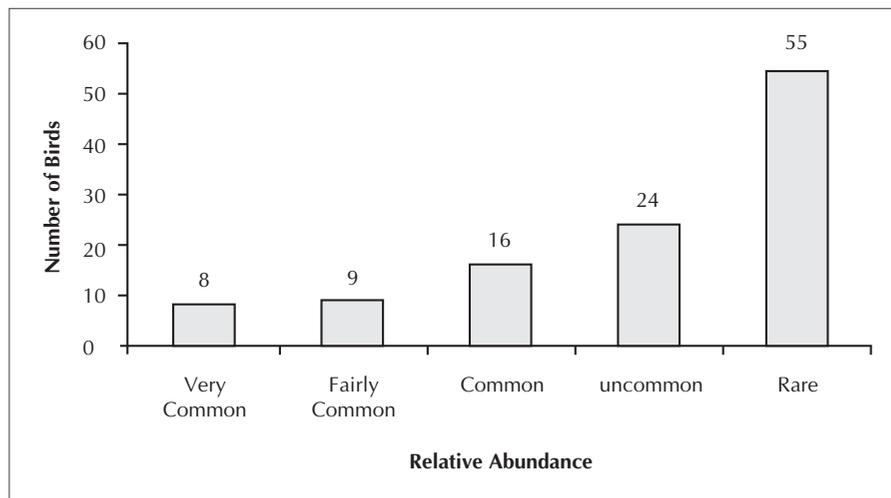
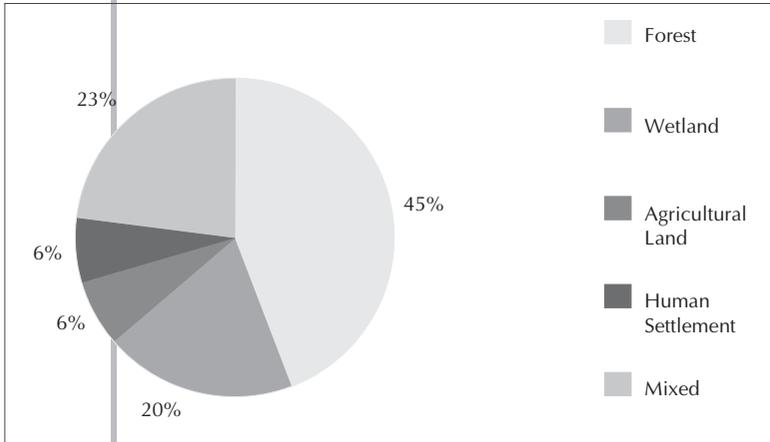


Figure 1: Relative abundance of birds



This Chart shows that the bird community of Bagmati River system is dominated by only 8 species whose population is more than 200 per species. These species are House Crow, Common Myna, Barn Swallow, Red-vented Bulbul, House Sparrow, Eurasian Tree Sparrow, Black Kite and Cattle Egret. Whereas more than 50% species belong to rare category whose population is less than 6.

Habitat association of different species of birds



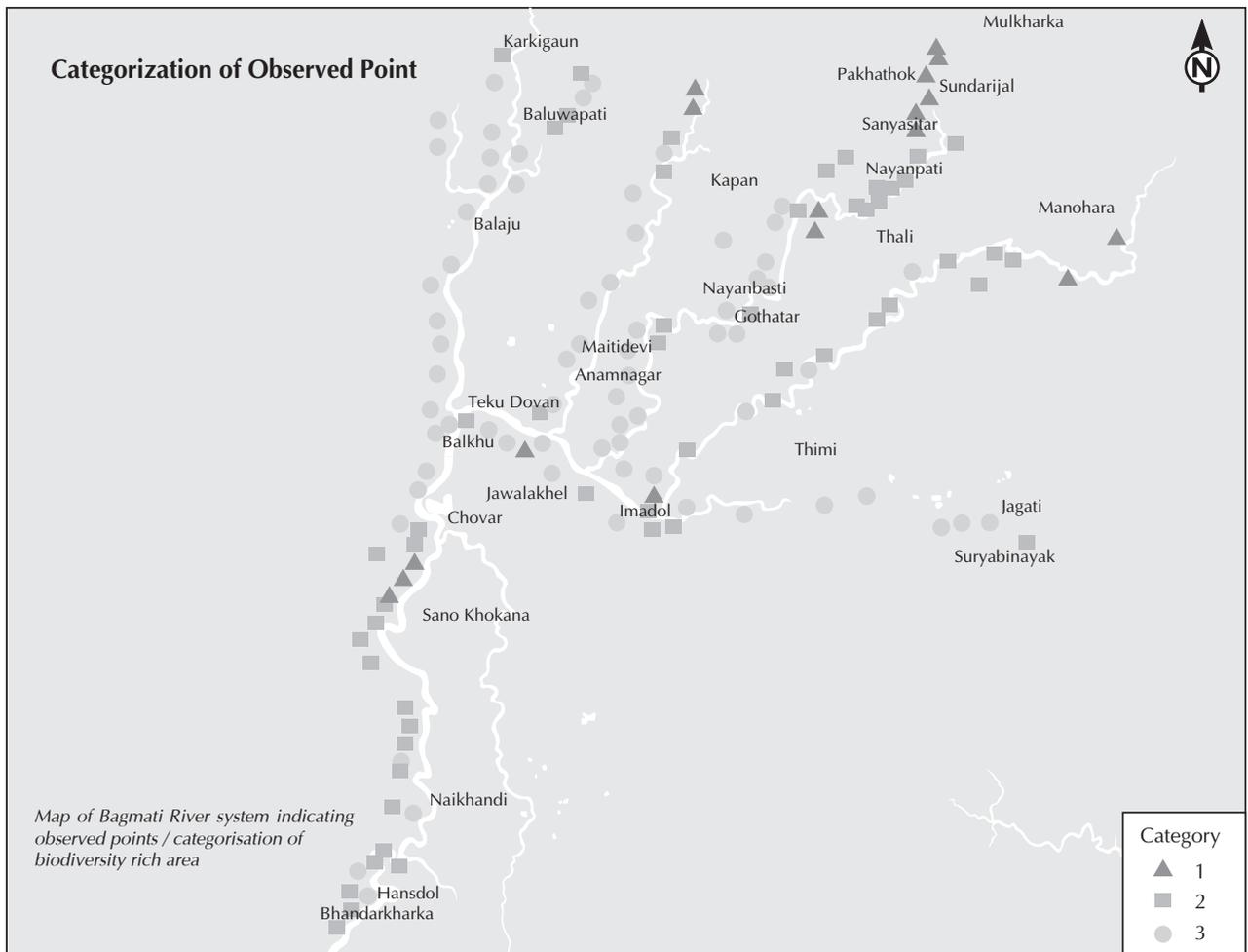
An analysis of habitat utilization indicated that most birds were associated with forest followed by wetland and other habitats

Biodiversity rich areas.

In terms of the bird species richness, quality of the habitat, pollution level; various section of the Bagmati River system have been classified as high, medium and low. According to this 1st category (high biodiversity) has 9 points, 2nd category (medium biodiversity) has 72 and the 3rd category (low biodiversity) has 73 points (see map).

Gokarna Forest and Shivapuri National Park are identified as high bird rich areas whereas Tauthali, Salinadi, Salmutar, Salmu Community Forest, Katuwal Daha, Bagmati River Nature Park/ UN park section, Taudaha lake, Chobhar Gorge and Setidevi VDC are medium bird rich areas. Most of the Bagmati River section in urban areas falls under the third category.

Figure 2: Habitat utilisation by birds





Bagmati River at Sundarijal



Waste deposition at Teku Bagmati



Bagmati at Katuwal daha



Women at the Bagmati bank during Rishipanchami



Discussion

Bagmati River is perhaps the most polluted river of Kathmandu Valley and the entire country. Consequences of river pollution are well elaborated by Khattri (1986), Shrestha and Karmacharya (1990), Yadav (2002), Chhetri (2006). Increased river pollution in Bagmati has severely impacted the birdlife that depend on riparian and river habitats.

Generally bird diversity is correlated with the good habitat quality. Although river and the riparian habitats are highly potential for bird diversity, Bagmati River has now become less significant for this. A total of 20 people closely associated with Bagmati who were informally interviewed also stated the birdlife has significantly decreased due to the impact of urbanisation and pollution. During this survey a total of 112 bird species were recorded from Bagmati River system. The habitats like agricultural land, forest edge, some tree patches, reed and bush along the Bagmati River were very important in supporting the birdlife. A total of 22 wetland associated bird species were recorded. For Bagmati most of the wading birds were recorded from Taudaha down to Chobar gorge, where there is presence of wide sandy shore with stagnant water. In the urban area of Kathmandu all the suitable bird habitats eg river banks and sandy plains have been converted to buildings and agricultural land. From highly polluted area like Teku, Bishnumati up to Gongabu and Hanumante Bhimsenthan only birds like House Crow, Black Kite and two species of sparrow were recorded. Same species were not recorded from area having less pollution with tree patches.

Bagmati River Nature Park situated in the bank of Bagmati river, even close from the densely populated area of Lalitpur, is ideal habitat for birds. From this area Asian Paradise Flycatcher *Tersiphone paradisi*, Purple sunbird *Nectarinia asiatica* and White-breasted Waterhen *Amaurornis phoenicurus* were recorded. A total of 62 bird species have been already recorded from The Bagmati River Nature Park (BCN 2008).

Conclusion and Recommendations

Although Kathmandu valley and Bagmati River system were good habitats for birds in the past, due to unplanned urbanization and river pollution many bird species have already disappeared. All rivers surveyed in the Kathmandu Valley were being used for discharging of untreated sewage, industrial effluents and dumping of household solid wastes.

Although a total of 112 bird species is recorded from a month long bird survey, the bird community of Bagmati River system is dominated by few very common species. But presence of remnant forest patches, agricultural lands with some trees are found to be playing crucial role in supporting wildlife.

Gokarna Forest, Bagmati River Nature Park/ UN park section, Chobhar gorge, Taudaha lake and downstream part of Bagmati: Setidevi VDC, Tauthali, Salinadi, Salmutar, Salmu Community forest edge, Katuwal Daha and Shivapuri National Park are identified as bird rich areas.

Rivers in Kathmandu valley have high value in terms of culture and religion, wildlife habitat, tourism and civilization. Therefore conservation and restoration of the river corridor is very important.

Based on this study and Bird Conservation Nepal's long term involvement in the various river corridors of Kathmandu Valley, following recommendations are made for restoration of the rivers of Kathmandu Valley.

1. Government should declare riparian land upto certain area from the main channel of the river as state-owned land. The land can be used for public services eg parks, walking trails, for traditional rituals, and for enhancing the quality of life that Kathmandu people currently live.
2. Sand extraction should be controlled and minimised with system of issuing permits or other effective means.
3. Renovate and restore sites of cultural and biological importance.
4. Massive awareness programmes on importance of rivers and lakes for people of all level should be initiated as soon as possible. This can enhance already ongoing activities eg Bagmati River Festival etc.
5. The current Bagmati River Nature Park managed jointly by UN Park and BCN should be taken as a model for habitat restoration and should be replicated in other areas of Kathmandu rivers as well.
6. Local Conservation Committees should be set up along the Bagmati/Manohara/Bishnumati Rivers at different sections of river with support of NGOs, INGOs and Government.
7. Natural riverine vegetation should be maintained along the river corridor which is very important for breeding and as a refuge for wildlife. Reed plantation at the area of Bagmati having narrow catchments adjoining agricultural land and other land features should be



- done to act as natural filter of polluted water and wastes and to reduce foul smell.
8. Other ponds and lakes of Kathmandu valley like Taudaha and Nagdaha are still good habitat for many winter migratory birds and ultimate water recharge source for rivers, so these lakes and pond should be managed both for people and wildlife.
 9. Rapid urbanization and deforestation should be limited to conserve the water recharge zone like surrounding hills of Shivapuri and Phulchoki.
 10. Run-off from agricultural fields has adverse impacts so the local farmers should be made aware on it and where possible encourage farmers to use organic farming.

Acknowledgements

We would like to extend our deep gratitude to National Trust for Nature Conservation (NTNC) for funding the survey work. Special thanks go to Dr Siddhartha Bajra Bajracharya, Executive Officer of NTNC for his continued support, advice and encouragement throughout the project. We are grateful to Dr Bhusan Raj Shrestha, Patron of BCN for his support in producing GIS map. We would also like to thank Mr Deepak B.K. for assisting the survey work.

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Annex : List of Bird Species Recorded from Bagmati River System during the survey

Order/Family/English Name/Scientific Name

GALLIFORMES

PHASIANIDAE

- Black Francolin *Francolinus francolinus*
 Blue-breasted Quail *Coturnix chinensis*
 Kalij Pheasant *Lophura leucomelanos*

PICIFORMES

PICIDAE

- Fulvous-breasted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos macei*
 Grey-headed Woodpecker *Picus canus*
 Bay Woodpecker *Blythipicus pyrrhotis*

MAGALAIMIDAE

- Great Barbet *Magalaima virens*
 Golden-throated Barbet *Magalaima franklini*
 Blue-throated Barbet *Magalaima asiatica*
 Coppersmith Barbet *Magalaima haemacephala*

UPUIFORMES

UPUIDEA

- Common Hoopoe *Upupa epops*

CORACIFORMES

ALCEDINIDEA

- Common Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*

DACELONIDEA

- White-throated Kingfisher *Halcyon smymensis*

CERYLIDAE





Crested Kingfisher *Megaceryle lugubris*

CUCULIFORMES

CUCULIDAE

Pied Cuckoo *Clamator jacobinus*

Indian Cuckoo *Cuculus micropterus*

Eurasian Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus*

Asian Koel *eudynamys scolopacea*

Green-billed Malkoha *Phaenicophaeus tristis*

PSITTACIFORMES

PSITTACIDAE

Rose-ringed Parakeet *Psittacula krameri*

APODIFORMES

APODIDAE

Alpine Swift *Tachymarptis melba*

STRIGIFORMES

STRIGIDAE

Asian Barred Owllet *Glaucidium cuculoides*

Spotted Owl *Athene brama*

COLUMBIFORMES

COLUMBIDEA

Rock Pigeon *Columba livia*

Oriental Turtle Dove *Streptopelia orientalis*

Spotted Dove *Streptopelia chinensis*

Red Collard Dove *Streptopelia tranquebarica*

GRUIFORMES

RALLIDAE

White-breasted Waterhen *Amauornis phoenicurus*

CICONIFORMES

SCOLOPACIDEA

Common Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*

Green Sandpiper *Tringa ochropus*

Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos*

CHARADRIIDAE

River Lapwing *Vanellus duvacelii*

Red-wattled Lapwing *Vanellus indicus*

ACIPITRIDAE

Black-shouldered Kite *Elanus caeruleus*

Black Kite *Milvus Migrans*

FALCONIDAE

Common Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*

ARDEIDEA

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*

Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis*

Little Heron *Butorides striatus*

Indian Pond Heron *Ardeola grayii*

Black-crowned Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax*

Cinnamon Bittern *Ixobrychus cinnamomeus*

PASSERIFORMES

IRENIDAE

Orange-bellied Leafbird *Chloropsis hardwickii*

LANIIDAE

Long-tailed Shrike *Lanius schach*

CORVIDAE

Red-billed Blue Magpie *Urocissa erythrorhyncha*

Rufous Treepie *Dendrocitta vagabunda*

Grey Treepie *Dendrocitta formosae*

House Crow *Corvus splendens*

Large-billed Crow *Corvus macrorhynchos*

Eurasian Golden Oriole *Oriolus oriolus*

Large Cuckooshrike *Coracina macei*

Black-winged Cuckooshrike *Coracina melaschistos*

Scarlet Minivet *Pericrocotus flammeus*

Black Drongo *Dicrurus macrocerus*

Ashy Drongo *Dicrurus leucophaeus*

Asian Paradise-flycatcher *Tersiphone paradisi*

Common Iora *Aegithina tiphia*

CINCLIDAE

Brown Dipper *Cinclus pallasii*

MUSCICAPIDAE

Blue Whistling Thrush *Myophonus caeruleus*

Asian Brown Flycatcher *Muscicapa dauurica*

Grey-headed Canary Flycatcher *Culicicapa ceylonensis*

Verditer Flycatcher *Eumyias thalassina*

Oriental Magpie Robin *Copsychus saularis*

Plumbeous Water Redstart *Amauornis phoenicurus*

Black-backed Forktail *Enicurus immaculatus*

Slaty-backed Forktail *Enicurus schistaceus*

Spotted Forktail *Enicurus maculatus*

Common Stonechat *Saxicola torquata*

Pied Bushchat *Saxicola caprata*

STURNIDAE

Chestnut-tailed Starling *Sturnus malabaricus*

Common Myna *Acrodothères tristis*

Jungle Myna *Acrodothères fuscus*

SITTIDEA

Chestnut-bellied Nuthatch *Sitta castanea*

Velvet-fronted Nuthatch *Sitta frontalis*

PARIDEA

Great Tit *Parus major*

Green-backed Tit *Parus monticulus*

Black-lored Tit *Parus xanthogenys*



HIRUNDINIDAE

Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica*Red-rumped Swallow *Hirundo daurica*Nepal House Martin *Delichon nipalensis*

PYCONOTIDAE

Himalayan Bulbul *Pyconotus leucogenys*Red-vented Bulbul *Pyconotus cafer*Mountain Bulbul *Hypsipetes mccllellandii*Black Bulbul *Hypsipetes leucocephalus*

CISTICOLIDAE

Zitting Cisticola *Cisticola juncidis*Striated Prinia *Prinia criniger*Grey-breasted Prinia *Prinia hodgsoni*

ZOSTEROPIIDAE

Oriental White-eye *Zosterops palpebrosus*

SYLVIIDAE

Blyth's Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus dumetorum*Common Tailorbird *Orthotomus sutorius*Grey-hooded Warbler *Seicerus xanthoschistos*White-crested Laughing Thrush *Garrulax leucolophus*Striated Laughing Thrush *Garrulax striatus*Streaked Laughing Thrush *Garrulax lineatus*Rusty-cheeked Scimitar Babbler *Pomatornis erythrogenys*Black-chinned Babbler *Stachyris pyrrhops*Spiny Babbler *Turdoides nipalensis*Nepal Fulvetta *Alcippe nipalensis*

NECTARINIIDAE

Fire-breasted Flowerpecker *Dicaeum ignipectus*Purple Sunbird *Nectarinia asiatica*Crimson Sunbird *Aethopyga siparaja*

PASSERIDAE

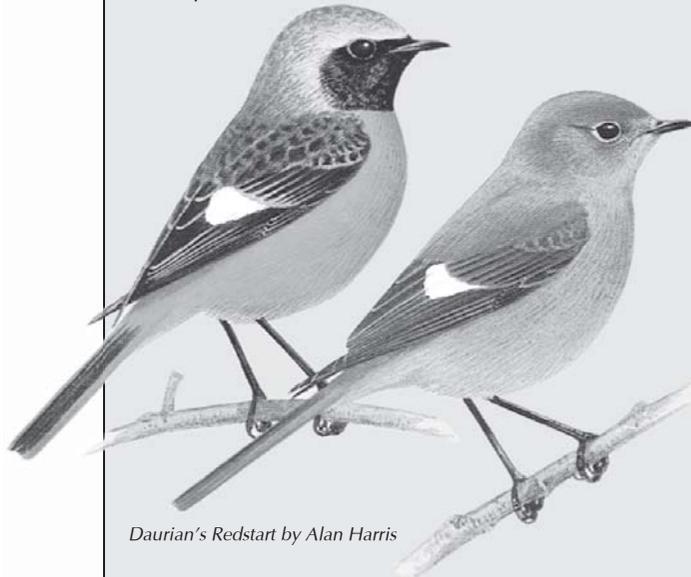
House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*Eurasian Tree Sparrow *Passer montanus*White Wagtail *Motacilla alba*White-browed Wagtail *Motacilla maderaspatensis*Paddyfield Pipit *Anthus rufulus*Red Avadavat *Amandava amandava*Baya Weaver *ploceus philippinus*White-rumped Munia *Lonchura striata*Scaly-breasted Munia *Lonchura punctulata*

FRANGILLIDEA

Yellow-breasted Greenfinch *Carduelis spinoides*Crested Bunting *Melophus lathamii***Bird Conservation Nepal****PO Box 12465,****Kathmandu, Nepal**

Additional Sightings!

A female Daurian's Redstart *Phoenicurus aureus* was recorded on various dates in May 2009 at Koshi Tappu (TG, BM, SB, SGC, BC, AT, SA, HSB, HC). A new species for Nepal!



Daurian's Redstart by Alan Harris

One Hodgson's Hawk Cuckoo *Hierococcyx fugax* was seen at Shivapuri National Park on 24 April 2009 (SGC, RB, DG) and another single bird were observed at Tamakoshi River Valley on 19 May 2009 (HSB, KBS, GB). A rare species and new record for Shivapuri National Park!

Single White-throated Kingfisher *Halcyon smyrnensis* was seen at Lo-Manthang in Upper Mustang on 28 April 2009 (HC, PT). Probably this is a highest altitude record for the species!

One White winged Tern *Chlidonias leucopterus* was seen flying with several Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybridus* at Phewa Lake in Pokhara on 3 May 2009 (HC, PT). Possibly a new species for Pokhara Valley!

AT: Anish Timsina, BC: Badri Chaudhary, BMC: Barry McCarthy, DG: Donald Greenberg, GB: Govinda Basnet, HC: Hathan Choudhary, HSB: Hem Sagar Baral, KBS: Karan Bahadur Shah, PT: Paul Triggs, RB: Robert Blumberg, SA: Sanjiv Acharya, SB: Suchit Basnet, SGC: Som GC, TG: Tika Giri.

Compiled by Tika Giri and Hathan Choudhary



News

Membership

Mr. David Buckingham joined BCN as a Life Member. He is a Senior Conservation Scientist of Royal Society for the Protection of Bird (RSPB, UK). He is very keen on nature conservation with great interest on birds.

Mr. Baikuntha Man Shrestha, Chairman of Shrijana College of Fine Arts joined BCN as a Life Member. He is one of the famous artists from Nepal with great contribution in nature art. He is very enthusiastic on supporting bird conservation.

26th Annual General Meeting

BCN organized its 26th Annual General Meeting on 27 December 2008. On the occasion, BCN presented its annual progress report of FY 2064/65 and future programme for FY 2065/66. The AGM also elected new Executive Council headed by Mr. Shree Ram Subedi as the president. The AGM elected Bhes Raj Ghimire as Vice President, Sarbendra Pachhai as General Secretary, Vimal Thapa as Joint Secretary, Yub Raj Basnet as Treasurer and the members as Dibya Gurung, Krishna Tamrakar, Gopal Jha, Deepak Raj Joshi, Rajendra Gurung and Janak Raj Khatiwada.



On the occasion, Chief Guest Member Secretary of the National Trust for Nature Conservation, Mr. Juddha Bahadur Gurung awarded Mr Subodh Gautam as the 2008 environmental journalist for his excellence in environmental reporting and contribution for bird and biodiversity conservation in Nepal. Environment conservation award was given to our Corporate Sponsor Tiger Mountain Pokhara Lodge.



The AGM was attended by government officials, members, supporters of BCN and representatives from different conservation organizations.

13th Nepal Education and Book fair 2009

BCN took part in the 13th Nepal Education and Book Fair 2009 at Bhrikuti Mandap Exhibition Hall from 21-23 May 2009 organised by Global Exposition and Management Services Pvt. Ltd. in co-operation with National Booksellers and Publishers Association of Nepal and Science for Development. Most of the visitors were students but many scholars were also present in the exhibition. It was a great opportunity for BCN to share information on our conservation efforts and research work.

Wildlife Week Celebration

BCN joined hands with the government and conservation partners in the celebration of the week-long 14th Wildlife Week 2009. The programme included bird watching tours to school students, bird watchers and environmentalists at Sundarjal forest, talk programme on wildlife conservation issues and the publication of the updated Official Checklist of the Birds of Nepal.

At the closing ceremony organised by the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation, Dr. Uday Raj Sharma, Secretary of the Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation, launched the Birds of Nepal official checklist, which was greatly appreciated by the conservation community.

“Save Vulture” exhibition

BCN and Animal Rights Nepal jointly organised a photographic exhibition on the plight of vultures in Nepal. The solo photo exhibition showcased pictures of the vultures taken by a professional photo journalist Krishna Mani Baral.

Inaugurating the opening ceremony, Mr. Shyam Bajimaya, Director General of the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation stated that the Government of Nepal has given high priority to the conservation of vultures in Nepal and informed that the Vulture Conservation Action Plan is being prepared jointly with the support of BCN and the National Trust for Nature Conservation.

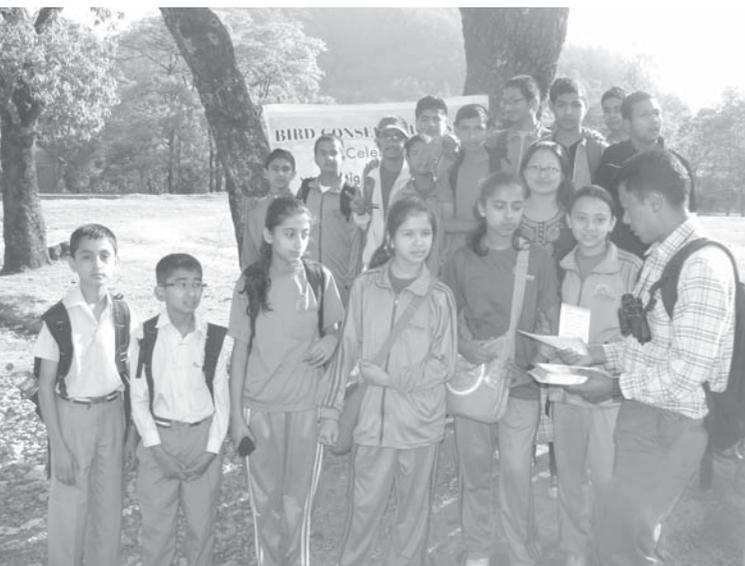


Similarly, Mr. Shree Ram Subedi, President of BCN, remarked that with the help from national and international partners, BCN has been implementing several innovative programmes to conserve four out of eight critically endangered vulture species through management interventions such as the Jatayu Restaurant and the vulture conservation breeding centre.

The inaugural programme of the exhibition was participated by over 50 vulture enthusiasts, conservationists, journalists and the general public. The week-long exhibition "Save Vulture, Save Environment" was open to public at Nepal Art Council, Babarmahal, Kathmandu until 29 April 2009.

Celebrating "Barriers to Migration"

BCN organised a birdwatching programme on 9 May 2009 to celebrate the World Migratory Bird Day 2009 "Barrier to Migration." The bird watching programme was organised at



Phulchowki mountain forest, one of the Important Bird Areas (IBAs) of Nepal.

As part of the commemoration, more than 65 birders and enthusiasts participated at the programme including students from Arniko Secondary School and Pathsala Academy and members of BCN.

Menuka Basnyat, Membership and Education Officer of BCN, highlighted the importance of the World Migratory Bird Day, its theme for 2009 and importance of migratory birds and what can be done for their protection. Similarly, Mr. Vimal Thapa, Joint Secretary of BCN, explained the rules to be followed during bird watching trip and methods to identify and record birds. Participants were provided posters, postcards and stickers from WMBD, newsletter, checklists on birds of Nepal, educational leaflets and brochures.

Everyone found this to be very interesting and informative. Students were very glad to be part of the bird watching programme and also to celebrate World Migratory Bird Day.

Screening of Winged Migration

BCN organised screening of the award winning documentary "Winged Migration" by Jacques Perrin. "Winged Migration" was nominated for 12 awards, including an Oscar for Best Documentary and won 3 awards, including France's prestigious Cesar Award. Screenings successfully supported in raising funds for BCN's conservation work. Screening was carried out at Hotel Manasalu and Hotel Summit on 23 May and 30 May 2009 respectively.



While the first show witnessed the participation of around 50 people, the second show drew the attention of more than 60 participants. During both of the shows BCN merchandises



were on display and many people showed keen interest on publication and merchandises of BCN.

The documentary was viewed by large number of expatriates and representatives from different organizations. The film screening programme was conceptualised and successfully coordinated by BCN members Ellen Leitzer and Mandy as well as BCN Executive Council members Vimal Thapa, Rajendra Gurung and Sarbendra Pachhai.

International Day for Biological Diversity (IDB) Celebration

To mark the International Day for Biological Diversity 22 May 2009, BCN organized a quiz contest among the school students of Kathmandu Valley at Bagmati Nature Park, Jwagal, Lalitpur. A total of 15 schools participated in the quiz contest. These schools were divided into two groups for qualifying round. From each group top three schools were placed for the final round. The event was organized as part of the Environmental education programme of Bagmati Nature Park supported by Taiwan Forestry Bureau.

Galaxy Public school succeeded to be in first place. Similarly Arun Jyoti Vidya Mandir and Snow Apex secured second and third position whereas Gyan Kunj Higher Secondary School received consolation prize. Prize was distributed to the winners by the invited guests: Binod Prakash Sing, Chief Executive Officer of Lalitpur sub-metropolitan city and Anil Kumar Jha, Executive Director of UN Park Development Committee. The programme was chaired by Deependra Joshi, Executive Officer of BCN.

Project Updates

Vulture Conservation Programme

Catching of vultures for the Vulture Conservation and Breeding Center

With the permission from DNPWC, a team including Dr. Richard Cuthbert and S Lucocq from RSPB, Anand Chaudhary and Tulsu Subedi from BCN and R Tamang from NTNC collected vulture chicks to be kept at the Vulture Conservation and Breeding Center (VCBC) at Kasara, Chitwan National Park. A total of 30 chicks of White rumped Vulture *Gyps bengalensis* were collected from Nawalparasi, Rupandehi, Kapilvastu, Dang, Kailali, Kanchanpur, Palpa, Kaski and Syangja districts. The work was carried from 18 March to 13 April 2009. There are now a total of 44 vultures at the VCBC.

Breeding aviary construction at VCBC, Kasara

With financial support from RSPB (Jennifer Headley endowment), a breeding aviary for vultures is near completion at the Vulture Conservation and Breeding Center, Kasara, Chitwan National Park. The aviary has been designed specifically for holding and breeding adult vultures. DNPWC, NTNC and ZSL are also supporting the construction of the aviary. The construction started in January 2009 and is expected to be completed by October 2009.

East-West highway Transect Survey

BCN Vulture Conservation Programme staff completed the East-West Highway transect survey to monitor population trends of vultures. The survey started from Kakadvitta in Jhapa and ended in Gadda Chowki, Kanchanpur. The data of the study is being analyzed, but the initial results show that vulture numbers are still declining in Nepal. Besides the east-west Highway survey, additional reconnaissance study was carried out in Dadeldhura, Doti, Baitadi, Surkhet and Dailekh districts. Three new nesting colonies of vultures were discovered during the survey. Besides vultures, the study also monitored 125 agrovet institutions for NSAIDs all along the survey routes and found 99% were aware of the connection between diclofenac and vulture decline. The survey was carried out in May and took 23 days.

District Level Workshops with veterinary community

Seven district level workshops targeting the veterinary community were held in Kailali, Chitwan, Nawalparasi, Dang (2 events) and Rupandehi (2 events). Besides the veterinary community, participants were also from conservation organizations and relevant government line agencies like District Livestock Office and District Forest Office. The participants were informed of the decline in vulture numbers, cause of decline and efforts to save the vulture from extinction.



All together 329 individuals participated in the workshops and gave their commitment to no longer use of diclofenac. Participants in Nawalparasi and Rupandehi have also committed to declaring their district as 'diclofenac free zone'.

World Veterinary Day Celebration

BCN supported Nepal Veterinary Association (NVA) in celebrating World veterinary Day 2009 from 24-25 April 2009 at Chitwan. More than 200 veterinarians, farmers, journalists and para vets participated at the programme. The second day program was marked with the presence of Hon. Minister of Science and Technology Ganesh Sah as a chief guest. BCN Veterinary Officer, Dr. Surya Paudel presented a technical paper on "vulture initiative: achievements and issues; role of veterinarians in vulture conservation". The paper was very important to drop the message of vulture initiatives among a huge mass of veterinarians and concerned authorities. NVA, Department of Pharmacology/IAAS and National Avian Laboratory expressed its interest to collaborate with BCN in the coming future. BCN would like to congratulate NVA for receiving the first prize for the best celebration of World Veterinary Day 2009 by the World Veterinary Association.

Trainings at the community level

A number of trainings were held at the community level and a total of 96 beneficiaries directly benefited from these trainings and seminar. The trainings were for specimen collection & preservation for biodiversity museum management and cow rescue center management (Pithouli), Jatayu restaurant tourism promotion & vulture conservation awareness seminar (Sauraha), nature guide (Jagdishpur), bee keeping, candle making and incense stick making (Gaidahawa).



Tune in to

Panchhi Sansar

on **IMAGE FM 97.9**
at **7.45 am**

**Second and Fourth Saturday
of Nepali Month**



Koshi Wetland Project

Fish culture training

A fish culture training programme was organized by BCN for the fisher communities from 22-26 March 2009. The main objectives of the programme were to reduce fishing pressure in the river (as the fishery appears to be in severe decline) and to encourage people towards aquaculture.

Seed money for school

With the aim of supporting wetland conservation awareness raising activities for the long term, the Darwin project has provided a fund of Rs 10,000 to eight school management committees. The eight schools are located in the KTWR Buffer Zone.

Exposure visit to Ilam and Jhapa districts

The project organized an exposure visit for Buffer Zone members to Jhapa and Ilam district. The visit was held from 1-3 April 2009. It was especially arranged for the chairpersons of all nine Buffer Zone User Committees. The overall aim of the visit was that the participants develop an understanding and appreciation of the sustainable livelihood options, and how it might be applied to enhance the conservation of Koshi wetlands. The participants learnt lots about wetland conservation, associated livelihood options, their importance,



and bio-diversity conservation. The visit will help them identify which livelihood options can be applied at Koshi wetlands and buffer zone for both the conservation of Koshi wetland and sustainable livelihood of wetland dependent communities.

BZMC Chairperson presented Darwin poster in 17th Warden seminar

Renu Shah, BZMC Chairperson presented a poster describing Darwin project activities at the 17th Warden seminar in Kathmandu. She showed the poster and described all aspects of how the BCN project was benefiting buffer zone people. She said that BCN was leaving excellent models of livelihoods for wetland dependent communities.



Danon Evian project for Jagdishpur Wetland Conservation

Fish farming training

A three day training on small-scale fish farming technology was organized from 9-12 April 2009 at VDC hall of Niglihawa, Jagdishpur. Altogether 21 farmers from Jagdishpur area participated in the training. The participants were taken to chitwan for observation visit. The training was very helpful to the farmers in building their knowledge on initiating small scale fish farming.

Hoarding board placement

Informative boards on Jagdishpur highlighting its importance as a Ramsar site and an important bird area have been placed in various strategic locations of Rupendehi and Kapilvastu districts.

Ramsar Information Sheet (RIS) update

With the support of Danone Evian project the Ramsar Information Sheet of Jagdishpur reservoir has been updated for



the first time since it was declared as a Ramsar site. There has been a major change in the ecological character of the site.

Pokhara Branch News

Bird and bird call identification programme

On the auspicious Occasion of "Wildlife Week-2066", BCN Pokhara branch organized " Bird and bird call identification programme" around Lamachaur and Tatopani area of Pokhara Valley on 22 April 2009. Mr. Hari K.C. (from Fishtail lodge) and Hari Bhakta Adhikari (from Tiger Mountain Lodge) facilitated the program as resource persons. Altogether 42 BCN members participated the programme and 43 bird species were listed in 2 hrs. time. The programme was co-ordinated by Shamsheer K.C., Bird watching Head- BCN Pokhara branch.

World Migratory Bird Day celebration

BCN Pokhara branch organized a one day interaction program with secondary level students in Pokhara Valley on the auspicious occasion of "World Migratory Bird Day-2009" to disseminate awareness on bird migration, barriers and conservation.

Donation

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



Five schools residing close to the lakes that are important from the point of migratory birds and tourism were chosen for the interaction programme. 38 BCN members of IOF Pokhara facilitated around 400 students on the program voluntarily. During the programme discussions were made on Birds of Nepal, importance of bird, bird migration, barriers to migration and roles of all stakeholders in bird conservation. Quiz and interaction were conducted and provision of rewarding for the winner as incentive was made. Educational materials such as pamphlets, brochures, booklets, posters, handout etc. were distributed among the participants.



BCN Pokhara branch would like to thank Tiger Mountain Pokhara Lodge and UNEP/AEWA secretariat, Germany for financial support and Bird Conservation Nepal for providing posters, pamphlets and booklets. The interaction Program coordinator Mr. Arun Gyawali arranged the programme.

Radio programme "Samrakchyan" in Radio Annapurna 93.4MHz, Pokhara, helped in publicity of the interaction program and also broadcasted special programme in coordination with BCN, Pokhara branch for conservation of migratory birds.

Editorial Board

Dr Hem Sagar Baral (Chief Editor),

Ishana Thapa (Sub Editor),

Deependra Joshi, Suchit Basnet, Yub Raj Basnet

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Together for birds and people

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

BirdLife International seeks to conserve all bird species on earth and their habitats and, through this, it works for the world's biological diversity. It recognizes that the problems affecting birds, their habitats and our global environment are linked inseparably with social, economic and cultural factors and that these can only be resolved if human societies function in an ecologically sustainable manner and if the needs, welfare and aspirations of people form a part of all conservation action.

Birds provide BirdLife International with a uniquely valuable focus: they are sensitive indicators of biological richness and environmental trends and fulfil many key ecological functions; they contribute greatly to our understanding of natural processes; they are an important economic resource; and they have inspired and delighted people of many cultures for centuries, which makes them excellent ambassadors for the promotion of conservation awareness and international collaboration.

BirdLife International pursues a programme of:

- Scientific research and analysis to identify and monitor worldwide the most threatened bird species and the most critical sites for the conservation of avian diversity;
- Advocacy and policy development to promote the conservation of birds and biodiversity through sustainability in the use of all natural resources;
- Field action and country conservation programmes, ranging from community-based land-use and management projects to species recovery programmes benefiting both wildlife and humans;
- Network and capacity building to expand and strengthen the global partnership of conservation organizations and to promote worldwide interest in the conservation of birds and the wider environment.



The newsletter is produced quarterly for members of Bird Conservation Nepal. The aim of the newsletter is to inform BCN members on the recent development of ornithology in Nepal and any other relevant news on birds. It is circulated to all members free of cost. The individual annual membership is NRs. 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, 143 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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