



Conservation Watch - Nepal

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Good news on vulture conservation

Diclofenac eludes Nepalese market !

Good news on vulture in Nepal. Diclofenac, a painkiller and anti-inflammatory drug which has been key factor for vulture decimation, is no more available in Nepal. Thanks to the government initiation, veterinary drugs producer of Nepal and conservation organizations for their pressing efforts.

Animals treated with veterinary chemical Diclofenac, have killed over 90 per cent of vultures in the Indian sub-continent in the past one and half decade. Scientists have discovered that Diclofenac residue in the dead animals cause kidney failure in the vultures consuming the carrion and eventually kill the bird.

Department of Drugs Administration (DDA) of Nepal banned Diclofenac in June 2006. However, the campaign to evacuate Diclofenac was not easy. DDA had even initiated to swap remaining stock of Diclofenac with Mofen. Meloxicam, an alternative drugs of Diclofenac is being produced by two veterinary drugs production companies of Nepal and Indian brands are also available in Nepal.

Bijaya Raj Regmi, marketing officer of Medivet, producer of Meloxicam in Nepal, claimed Diclofenac has been virtually displaced from the Nepalese market.

Similarly, Ramhari Timilsana of Medvet, another Meloxicam producer also confirmed the disappearance of Diclofenac. They further elaborated that old stock of Diclofenac could have been found at rural corners, but it is extremely rare. The price of Meloxicam has been maintained at the range of Diclofenac so as to retain the motivation of consumers towards Meloxicam.

However, Meloxicam is fearing threat from itself. According to Dr. Bishnu Kumar Shrestha (Senior Veterinary Doctor of District Livestock Service Office, Chitwan), veterinary technicians have been continuously complaining on Meloxicam for being slow reactor. "Some villagers are ever insisting for Diclofenac because of its quick reaction comparing that of Meloxicam", Dr. Shrestha said, citing his technicians. Mr. Regmi of Medvet concurs with the complain and emphasizes on continuous research to improve the quality of Meloxicam.

The latest red list of threatened species published by the IUCN has listed the Red-headed vulture (*Sarcogyps calvus*) and the Egyptian vulture (*Neophron percnopterus*) as endangered. Two other Nepalese vultures, White-backed and Slender-billed vultures are already in IUCN's critically endangered list. A total of eight vulture species are found in Nepal. Red-headed vulture moved to the critically endangered category from its earlier status of near threatened. Similarly, the Egyptian vulture moved from least concern to the endangered category.



Information Centre craves for visitors

Information Centre on Biodiversity located at Chitwan is tremendously striving for visitors. Centre has been opened for the public since eight months but the visitors are very rare.



Terai Arc Landscape project of WWF invested 4.5 millions Nepalese Rupees (70,000 US \$) for the information centre including two storey building. Information centre includes photographs, detail information on floras and faunas, important body parts of endangered mammals, birds, reptiles such as tigers, rhinos, crocodiles and their features. Information centre has left no stones to furnish the knowledge on biodiversity but of no avail due to the dearth of public interest.

Information Centre is located at Tikauli, near the tourism area Sauraha and Ramsar site Beeshazari lake. Though the agreement has been made with tourism entrepreneurs to include it in the visiting packages, result never turned out. According to the acting president of Sauraha Hotel Association, Mr. Hari Bhakta Ghimire admits they are not less

interested about the centre but the problem is the tourist route management.

Management of the Information Centre was handed over to two bufferzone community forests, Tikauli and Panchakanya. Office Assistant Mr. Sudarshan Bhandari said he has been irritated being alone in the centre whole day. He is the single staff for the day time.

Related individuals consider publicity crunch as a reason behind this circumstances. They believe promotional campaign would certainly redress the situation. According to them, reluctance of local tourism entrepreneurs towards the centre should also be held responsible.

Hari Prasad Poudel, member of the management committee confessed ineffective management of the centre. However, he has pointed out some measures that could salvage from present situation. Fore and foremost, management of the centre seeks support on promotional activities across the country to revive its real essence. They are also in the opinion to build-up recreational spot beside the centre to lure more and more visitors.



Rhinos pair at the Zoo yet to mate

The rhino mating season is almost over for this year, but the Central Zoo's only pair of one-horned rhinos - a highly endangered species - has not been reported mating as yet. Zoo officials expressed worries that their decision to mate the rhinos this year has failed largely due to the differing seasonal urges of the pair.

"With high hopes of having the rhinos breed in the zoo this year, we had allowed them to live together, but no report of mating between the pair has come out to date," said R. K. Shrestha, director of the zoo. "The mating season for rhinos has passed. And there is less likelihood of mating this year as the cold season has begun."

Taking a risk, zoo officials allowed them to stay together in a second attempt in the country at captive rhino breeding and a rare occasion internationally as well, said the officials.

Despite the possibility of serious injuries the female might sustain in the mating process, they had decided to mate Kancha and Kanchi. Before this, Kancha who is 14 and Kanchi, 15, were not allowed together. The rhino mating seasons started in July and ends this month.

Due to lack of synchronization in their urges and sometimes failure on Kancha's part, the chances of mating

diminished. However, zoo officials have high hopes they will mate next year. "We are still in a wait and see mode," said Shrestha. According to him, seasonal urges also occur in the months of March and April.

In recent years, Central Zoo has successfully bred some major mammal species including hippopotamus, tiger and leopard. *(The Kathmandu Post)*

Threats of industrial chemicals over aquatic lives of Narayani

Industries induced pollution has been deteriorating aquatic animals of the Narayani River. Narayani River is also the habitat of crocodiles and dolphins. Till ten years ago, dolphins could be easily seen across the river but it had not been sighted for a long time. Narayani River System inhabits 69 species of fishes belonging to 9 orders and 18 families including 13 species of cold water fish.

According to the report of Narayani Environment Conservation and Local Resource Management Centre, water in Narayani river is getting polluted fast due to the chemical waste disposed from the industries lying on the bank of the river. High intensity of pollution was found in the river after a field study of the river from Devghat to Pitauji and the test of the water in the central lab of the Institute of Agriculture and Animal Science (IAAS) at Rampur. Professor at Rampur Campus Dr Madhav Kumar Shrestha and Narayan Prasad Pandit were involved in the field study and testing of the water for over a year starting from mid-August 2005.

The tests have revealed a rise in acidity of the river water by 2 mg per litre due to the release of chemical wastes, while oxygen level in the river has gone down with a corresponding rise in nitrogen and phosphorous.



The report said the temperature of water in the river keeps fluctuating from 12 to 31 degree Celsius. The pollution is making adverse effects on the resistance and reproductive capacity of the aquatic animals and may one day become reason for their extinction, the report warned. The report was published on November 13 in Chitwan.

The chemical waste disposed from Bhrikuti Paper Mill and Gorkha Brewery is the main reason behind the pollution in the river.

Indigenous blame in-park hotels for rhino travails

Indigenous people of bufferzone area of Kolhuwa, Nawalparasi district has blamed 'in-park hotels' as the primary factor for the rhino intrusion in human settlements. During the focus group discussion organized by Empowering People For Rhino Conservation (EPRC), locals said that hotels established inside the Chitwan National Park are continuously fragmenting habitat of rhinos, destroying the grasslands and rhinos are forced to shift towards human areas.

There are eight hotels inside the Chitwan National Park areas. The running contract of these hotels with the government is going to be terminated next year. Though they contribute colossal amount as a park revenues, pressure has been built up from locals and conservation related organisations to finally end up their operation.

Several vehicular routes are made inside park, uncontrolled tourist movement has shrunk wildlife habitat but we have to bear rhino-induced travails generated from the hotels, Mohan Bote of Kolhuwa-9 laments.





Akal Bote said if these hotels are displaced, communities are ready to bear the responsibility of grasslands and habitat management. Narayan Mahato urges the conservation orientated organization to focus on the root cause of the problem, challengeable nonetheless.

Suntali Bote bemoans unsystematic tourism has been rendering wildlife for displacement. 'Four rhinos are still in our paddy field, deers, pigmy hog are appearing now more than before and causing us troubles', she said.

Majority of the indigenous people opine they do not have grievances on rhinos but towards the circumstances that enforce rhinos to invade and apathy of concerning authorities to curb on cause.