



WWF

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# Inside the Himalayas

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WWF Nepal newsletter



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## Message from the Country Representative

Dear friend of WWF Nepal,

Come 19th May, WWF Nepal will be commemorating two decades of its office establishment and celebrating the power of partnerships in helping bring conservation and WWF Nepal this far. Although WWF started working in Nepal from 1967 from its head office in Washington D. C., starting with the protection of species and their habitat, the WWF Nepal office was formally established in May 1993.

It gives me immense pleasure to bring to you this edition of 'Inside the Himalayas' in this opportune month. This edition covers the historic joint tiger survey being conducted by the governments of Nepal and India, Nepal's celebration of Earth Hour and the recognition of the role of local communities in combatting poaching, amongst others – all of these stories highlight the significance of collaborative efforts in conservation.

We thank you for being our friend, supporter and mentor, and take pride in being your partner in conservation.

Happy reading!

**Anil Manandhar**  
Country Representative

# Tracking Tigers in the Terai Arc

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## Sabita Malla

Senior Research Officer, TAL

The tiger is more than just a large charismatic carnivore found in Asia. It is an umbrella species and by saving the tiger, we save the ecosystem and the habitats it houses.

Protecting this species requires, amongst others, information on its demography and behavior together with the status of habitat and prey-base as a continued trend over time. Tiger monitoring therefore is an important aspect of any tiger conservation program. Tiger monitoring provides valuable insights on the success or failure of species management interventions and population trends over time, while providing empirical knowledge to guide policy development and decision making.

In Nepal, tiger monitoring was initiated under the "Tiger Ecology Project" funded by the Smithsonian Institute and World Wildlife Fund US 1973, the same year Nepal's first

national park, Chitwan National Park (NP) was established. The famous tiger biologists – John Seidensticker, Charles McDougal, Kirti Man Tamang, Mel Sunquist, Hemanta Mishra – dedicated their lives to study tigers as Smithsonian Researchers.

This project was the first ever in-depth study devoted to tigers and provided a wealth of information on their movement patterns, social behavior, and habitat requirements. A complete reproductive history of 46 tigers of Chitwan National Park was also researched. The Smithsonian researchers also developed the method of reading pugmarks and identifying individual tigers that involved tracing pugmark for size and shape analysis. This method, however, requires extensive field knowledge of an experienced tracker. The data collected by the amateur trackers could be very misleading since the method in itself is prone to human errors.

Over the years, tiger population monitoring has evolved through

a series of new methods and improvement in technology and statistical software for analysis, the latest development being the use of remote camera trapping method which is now recognized as the most reliable and effective tool in estimating tiger populations. The camera models have also advanced from simple self-triggered film roll cameras to sophisticated digital motion sensor ones.

Camera trapping method involves placing a pair of motion/infrared sensor cameras along the forest trail, riparian habitat or forest road most frequently used by tigers. Since, tigers are territorial animals, they continuously traverse across their established territories. Once an animal is photographically captured in the cameras, it is marked with the help of its stripe pattern that is unique to each tiger. The data obtained on capture and subsequent recaptures is analyzed to estimate tiger population under the well-established theoretical framework called capture-recapture sampling framework by using

programs such as MARK, CAPTURE or SPACE CAP. Of late, non-invasive genetic method using fecal DNA analysis of tigers is another promising method for monitoring tiger populations in the wild.

Nepal's first ever landscape level "Tiger and Prey base Monitoring" was conducted in 2008/2009 and the study estimated 121 (100-191) tigers in the Terai Arc Landscape (TAL). This study was successful in identifying core tiger populations in the landscape and showcasing key anthropogenic pressures affecting tiger population. The results led to major changes in policy as well as management of tiger populations in Nepal. Some of the significant policy interventions included declaration of the new protected area, Banke National Park, extension and improvement of the buffer zone in Bardia National Park, corridor and bottleneck management, establishment of the National Tiger Conservation Committee (NTCC) and Wildlife Crime Control Bureau (WCCB), creation of a special



tiger conservation fund, and the government's commitment to double tiger numbers to 250 by the year 2022.

In January 2013, Nepal went a step further by collaborating with India to undertake the first joint tiger and prey-base survey encompassing the whole of the Terai Arc Landscape in both countries. This was announced at the 6th Indo-Nepal consultative meeting organized between the two governments. The joint survey is expected to provide a more robust estimation of tiger populations and understanding genetic linkages of sub-population across borders.

In Nepal, this survey is a joint collaborative effort of Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation (DNPWC), Department of Forests (DOF), National Trust for Nature Conservation (NTNC) and WWF Nepal. The survey is being funded by USAID (under the Hariyo Ban Program), US Fish and Wildlife Services, WWF UK, WWF Australia, WWF US and the Leonardo DiCaprio Foundation.

The field work for the survey began on 5 February 2013 in Nepal and is expected to continue until May 2013 covering all five protected areas and critical corridors. Camera-trap based capture-recapture methods, habitat occupancy and line transect surveys are being used to estimate tiger and prey-base populations and densities.

To conduct the camera trap exercise, all protected areas, surrounding buffer zone forests and critical corridors have been sub-divided into 3-5 trapping blocks (depending on

the size of the PA). These blocks are further sub-divided into a grid of 4 sq. km each in which a pair of camera units is deployed for 15 days. For habitat occupancy surveys, the entire TAL including community forests and national forests have been divided into grids of 225 sq. km. In the habitat occupancy surveys, field monitoring teams walk in each grid along trails, roads, ridgelines, river and streambeds searching for tiger signs such as scats, scrapes, pugmarks, kills and urine, and prey signs such as dung, footprints, calls and sightings in the area. The teams also collect anthropogenic data such as grazing, logging, poaching, etc. In the line transect survey, two people in each team walk a straight line of 1.5-2km

and record the number of prey such as chital, sambar, hogdeer, barking deer, swamp deer and wild-boar observed from the line.

120 people are directly involved in the survey and comprise of staff from DNPWC (game scouts and rangers), DOF (rangers and forest guards), NTNC, WWF Nepal and TAL program, community people, and university students. Prior to the commencement of the field work, training and field orientation was provided to all the team members by WWF/TAL biologists, GIS experts and NTNC's Conservation Officer. Given that the team members need to work in the forests under harsh conditions coupled with continuous fear from wildlife, accidental insurance has

been provided to each member for the entire period of the survey.

The results of this survey, which will also be announced jointly by Nepal and India, will be instrumental in evaluating the effectiveness of management interventions undertaken in all protected areas and the wider landscape, and provide a realistic ground in developing effective conservation strategies to double the number of wild tigers by 2022. In addition, this survey will add another milestone in Indo-Nepal trans-boundary research and monitoring and strengthen future collaboration efforts between the two countries.

[sabita.malla@wfnepal.org](mailto:sabita.malla@wfnepal.org)



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## Local Youths Unite To Curb Wildlife Crimes

Nepal witnessed a mass gathering comprising 5,000 passionate youth and members of community-based anti-poaching units in Khata Corridor, Bardia to mark the fourth annual Community-Based Anti-Poaching Unit (CBAPU) Day on 10 March 2013. The event was supported by WWF Nepal and USAID funded Hariyo Ban Program under the Government of Nepal's Terai Arc Landscape Program.

One thing that unites the youth of the landscape is biodiversity conservation; through the anti-poaching units, the youth have come together on a voluntary basis to help protect their forests from illegal logging, poaching and wildlife crimes.

"Since the establishment of CBAPU, the involvement of communities in curbing illegal wildlife crime has been increasing with each passing day," stated Mr. Hari Ram Tharu, Chairperson of a Community Based Anti-Poaching Unit. "It is now time that the government of Nepal recognizes our effort and declare March 10 as a National Day," he added.

The event also saw the active participation of government authorities, representatives from diplomatic mission and conservation partners.

Secretary of the Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation, Dr. Krishna Chandra Paudel said, "It is very encouraging to see the seamless efforts of the local communities in combatting wildlife crime. This is an indication that together we will be able to achieve zero poaching of our flagship species in Nepal."

At the event, the chief guest of the program Dr. Krishna Chandra Paudel, Secretary of Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation, felicitated WWF Nepal for continuously supporting the Government of Nepal's Terai Arc Landscape program particularly with regard to biodiversity conservation in Bardia National Park.

Similarly, other key personalities from various walks of life, including Mr. Shiv Raj Bhatta, Deputy Director of Terai Arc Landscape Program-WWF



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Nepal and Dr. Shant Raj Jnawali, Coordinator of Biodiversity for Hariyo Ban Program-WWF Nepal were felicitated for their contribution in biodiversity conservation in Bardia National Park.

Speaking at the program, Dr. Ghana S Gurung, Conservation Program Director of WWF Nepal said, "Conservation and addressing the threats towards the same requires strong ownership and leadership starting with the grassroots level. WWF Nepal is proud to have joined

hands with the local communities and youth in helping protect the natural heritage of Nepal."

Special guests at the event, Mr. Rajesh Hamal, Nepal's leading cinema artist and WWF's Goodwill Ambassador, and Ms. Shristi Shrestha, Miss Nepal 2012 and WWF's Young Conservation Ambassador, expressed their individual support to end wildlife crimes and called upon individuals and organizations alike to take proactive steps to curb this biggest threat to wildlife.

## WWF joins hands with National Geographic to bring to the world the state of Nepal's rhinos.

WWF partnered with Nat Geo Wild and brought on board a well-known US radio and TV host Billy Bush (of Access Hollywood fame) to shed light on the plight of the Asian one-horned rhinoceros.

The team ventured into an epic journey to Nepal's Chitwan National Park to produce Wild Nepal, a documentary with Billy as the protagonist to present Nepal's efforts in rhino conservation, and highlight issues such as poaching and illegal wildlife trade and the role of enforcement agencies and communities in helping protect this species.

In addition to rhinos, the documentary will include other endangered animals such as tigers and elephants. There will also be more culture-centric aspects to the special, including Bush touring the sprawling capital city of Kathmandu.

The film is directed by Tony Gerber from Market Road Films.



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# Earth Hour puts the 'you' in youth in Nepal



© Yashawsji Shrestha / WWF Nepal

## Akash Shrestha

Senior Manager - Communications and Marketing

Nepal's youth took centre stage on Earth Hour in what was called "the biggest gathering for the environment" in the picturesque lake-city of Pokhara attracting over 6,000 youth.

The event saw performances by two of Nepal's leading pop/rock artists, Nima Rumba and Abhaya & the Steam Injuns, using music as a medium to reach out to the youth on the need to make environmentally-smart choices. Nepal's icon of the film industry and WWF's Goodwill Ambassador, Rajesh Hamal, and Miss Nepal 2012 and WWF's Young Conservation Ambassador, Shristi Shrestha, were the special guests at the event.

"Climate change poses a major threat to the biodiversity and communities of Nepal and the Himalayas, for which Pokhara is a key entry point, is one of the hardest hit," said Dr. Ghana S Gurung, Conservation Program Director at WWF Nepal. "Earth Hour gives people, especially the youth, the means to take concerted environmental actions and adopt climate-smart lifestyles that heals the earth," he added.

"Music is the fabric that binds us youth; Earth Hour is a platform that gives us a shared purpose," said Shristi Shrestha. "Through Earth Hour, I would like to call on the youth to join me to be the agents of change for the environment and to take the initiative to make a difference for a living planet," she added.

The Earth Hour event in Nepal was supported by the WWF Network and the Hariyo Ban Program. The Hotel Association of Pokhara, Restaurant and Bar Association and Pokhara Tourism Council were the local partners of the event.

"Pokhara is a meeting point between the mountains and the terai in the Chitwan Annapurna Landscape, one of the two landscapes under the Hariyo Ban Program funded by USAID and implemented by a consortium of conservation partners led by WWF Nepal," said Ms. Judy Oglethorpe, Chief of Party, Hariyo Ban Program. "Pokhara gives us an ideal platform to showcase some of Nepal's natural riches, from the lakes to the adjoining community forests and the recently inaugurated world peace biodiversity garden, and stress on the need to address the impacts of climate change on our natural resources," she added.



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# Words from HR...

## Prajana Waiba Pradhan

Senior Human Resource Officer

The New Year brought with it new cheer and excitement and a string of events to mark the onset of the first quarter of 2013.

As part of our HR calendar of events, the Annual Staff Retreat was held on 15-16 January and was facilitated by ODC. This year, the theme was knowledge management taking into consideration the need to capture organizational learnings and processes given the growth in people and projects of WWF Nepal. The learning sessions were specifically designed to ensure staff had a common understanding of the need to have proper systems in place and the role of knowledge management in WWF Nepal's operational strategy.

Another HR event we celebrate annually is International Women's Day that falls on March 8th. This year, a special lunch was organized in honor of our female staff which was followed by the participation of the staff in a special event organized by the Hariyo Ban Program. The event was built around the global theme of this year's International Women's Day, "The Gender Agenda: Gaining Momentum". With a view to amplifying unheard voices of women's leadership in conservation and climate change, the event showcased local talent in poetry and music together with awards for the best performances.

WWF Nepal also hosted the Network Operations and Development Committee meeting at its office premises on 11-13 March 2013 where, representatives from the network including US, UK, Switzerland, Pakistan, Malaysia, Africa and Chile



participated. The participants at the meet were also taken on a field visit to observe our conservation efforts in the Terai Arc Landscape.

The past three months have whisked by in a blink of an eye and we are already in the second quarter of 2013. We look forward to many more events and opportunities to build a high performance team at WWF Nepal.

[prajana.pradhan@wfnepal.org](mailto:prajana.pradhan@wfnepal.org)



# IN CONVERSATION With Nepal's Tiger Trackers

© Akash Shrestha / WWF Nepal

WWF Nepal's Communications team caught up with Bishnu Bahadur Lama, Chief Wildlife Technician (NTNC), Harka Man Lama, Senior Wildlife Technician (NTNC), and Basanta Lamichhane, Game Scout (Chitwan National Park) at their camp site in Tamaspur in Nawalparasi for a small conversation over tea on tigers. All three have a rich experience in tiger monitoring built up over years of working in the field. Below are excerpts of the interview.

## Could you tell us how tiger monitoring has evolved over the years from when you first started this work?

**Bishnu:** In the past, tigers were monitored by studying pug marks and also scat. We used to divide ourselves into teams and head out in different areas of the national parks. The process was very rigorous and the data received from the monitoring was not completely scientific and accurate. The team had to continuously follow one pugmark for an entire week. It used to take us around ten months to finish the field work back then.

The first tiger survey using pug marks was conducted in 1994 covering Chitwan National Park, Bardia National Park, Shuklaphanta Wildlife Reserve and Parsa Wildlife Reserve which resulted in identifying 133 tigers.

**Harka:** Camera traps were first

introduced in 1998 by Tiger Tops to monitor tigers in their pocket areas. It was only in 2008 in the national tiger survey that camera traps were used that estimated 121 tigers in the terai (91 in Chitwan, 18 in Bardia, 4 in Parsa and 8 in Shuklaphanta). In this survey, the cameras are more technically advanced with new features.

**Bishnu:** Camera traps are surely an efficient and effective means to monitor tigers. It is a quicker and more scientifically sound alternative when compared to the earlier methods.

## What challenges do you face in the field while monitoring tigers?

**Bishnu:** Tiger monitoring is certainly a very challenging task. It requires both mental and physical strength considering that we have to spend weeks on end walking and camping in the forest. The terrain may be familiar to us but we cannot predict the weather or wildlife encounters in the forest for which we have to be constantly on our guard. While there haven't been any fatal accidents so far, it still was an issue earlier when we did not have any kind of insurance. From 2010, group accidental insurance was introduced which has come as a big relief.

**Basanta:** People who work in the national parks, including game scouts like me, have multiple responsibilities,

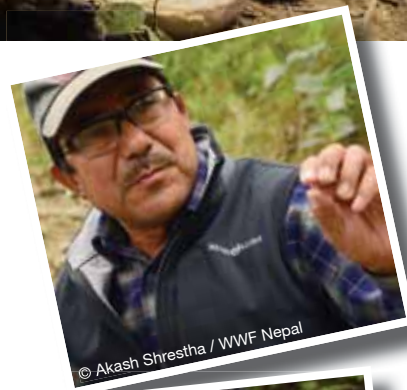
from carrying out park patrolling to conducting tiger surveys. We have to create our comfort zone with the forests since that is where all our work is focused on.

**Harka:** I have been asked on several occasions if I have ever come across poachers during my monitoring work in the forests. Till now, I haven't although my team has found traps and snares set for tigers a couple of times, which we have handed over to the park authorities.

## What are the major issues when it comes to protecting tigers in Nepal?

**Bishnu:** In the last few years, the issue of human-wildlife conflict seems to be of a major concern. We have been hearing more cases of tigers entering human settlements which I think is more to do with people encroaching their habitat leading them to do so. In order to address this issue, it is important that we expand tiger habitat including the maintenance of critical corridors, and manage prey-base populations.

**Basanta:** While poaching still remains one of the biggest threats to tigers, I think that it is now in a declining phase. As a game scout, I have come across illegal arms and snares in the forest and have also helped make several arrests of poachers. We need to continue strengthening our efforts to curb poaching for the sake of tigers.



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## WWF ON YOUR RADIO

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

+ 100

WWF is in over 100 countries, on 5 continents

1961

WWF was founded in 1961

+ 5m

WWF has over 5 million supporters



+ 5,000

WWF has over 5,000 staff worldwide

## STAFF ANNOUNCEMENTS

In the past months we welcomed new staff...

- **Pankaj Ratna Bajracharya**  
GIS Associate
- **Shruti Dhungel**  
Finance & Compliance Associate,  
Hariyo Ban Program
- **Samundra A Subba**  
Short Term Research Assistant – SHL
- **Richa Bhattarai**  
Communications Associate,  
Hariyo Ban Program
- **Anuja Shrestha**  
Program Associate, ChAL - Hariyo Ban  
Program

## Inside the Himalayas

### Editor:

Simrika Sharma  
Marasini

### Editorial Team:

Akash Shrestha  
Prajana Waiba Pradhan  
Mreedu Gyawali

### On the Cover:

Indian tiger (*Panthera tigris tigris*)



## For Living Himalayas

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

**WWF, the Global Conservation Organization**  
Nepal Programme

Baluwatar, Kathmandu, Nepal  
Tel: +977 1 4434820

info@wwfnepal.org

[www.wwfnepal.org](http://www.wwfnepal.org)



### Why we are here

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