

Project Update: January 2019

Executive Summary

Birds are one of the main drivers of ecosystem services with social and cultural significance. In Nepal more conservation activities are practised inside the protected areas. However, the current practices don't support bird conservation outside the protected areas. Therefore, I aimed to find the farmer's existing knowledge and their attitudes towards farmland bird conservation outside the protected areas of Nepal. In addition, the result of this study and the activities such as conservation education programmes to farmers and school children will encourage the newly established local government to develop eco-friendly policies for long-term bird conservation in Nepal.

Preliminary Report I (Till December 2018)

Evaluation of existing knowledge and attitudes of farmers towards bird conservation

I systematically selected 24-25 villages/cities having large farmlands in Chitwan and Sarlhai district. In each village/city, seven to eight households were chosen to understand knowledge and attitudes of farmers towards farmland birds. Simultaneously, based on discussion with bird experts, my previous experience and IUCN Red list data, I chose and printed 15 pictures of farmland birds. The selected bird species were sarus crane, Asian woollyneck, lesser adjutant, Indian spotted eagle, yellow-breasted bunting, Eurasian collared dove, plum-headed parakeet, Asian openbill, black-shouldered kite, black drongo, cattle egret, long-tailed shrike, pied bushchat, Asian pied starling and paddyfield pipit. These bird photos were shown to farmers to evaluate their existing knowledge and conservation attitudes towards bird communities. Then semi-structured interviews were conducted with about 400 farmers in November and December 2018. The interview focused on demographic data of the farmers, information on land ownership and farming system, their knowledge on farmland birds' ecology, transfer of knowledge to younger generation, conservation attitudes, knowledge on existing laws and policies about the threatened birds, their knowledge on bird's role in ecosystem balance etc.



Figure 1: Interview with the farmer about the farmland birds in Chitwan

Similarly, I studied bird bushmeat hunting and consumption practices within six districts of Province No. 2. Locally people call it as *Bagedi* eating. For this, major hot spots for *Bagedi* hunting and consumption were identified as Chandranigapur, Gaur, Barathwa, Malangwa, Bardibas, Dhalkebar, Mahendranagar, Janakpur, Lahan, Rajbiraj, and Mirchaya cities. A separate questionnaire is designed for hunters, hoteliers and customers to evaluate the bird hunting and consumption trade scenario.

Snowball sampling process is being used for this survey. I used local assistants from each cities to interview about *Bagedi* hunting and trade. For the hunters, I have asked to understand their hunting style (hunting time, target hunting species, frequency of hunting over the years, reason of hunting, knowledge about the birds etc.); for the buyers, how hunters approach them, price, number of customers, etc.; and for consumers, perceptions - why they like to eat, how many times they have eaten, knowledge about the conservation birds, etc. to understand the *Bagedi* hunting and trade. As it takes time for people to cope with this kind of research, this survey is still going on and hopefully it will complete by the end of this January 2019.

Awareness programs to farmers and children

After completion of the interviews, we also performed awareness programmes with the farmers and children as well in the Chitwan and Sarlahi districts. The awareness programme was done with more than 500 farmers and 200 schoolchildren. During the awareness programme, we explained about common and threatened farmland birds found in their locality, their existing threats, and ways for its conservation. Most of the people reported that this was the first awareness programmes about farmland birds' conservation in their locality.



Figure 2: Awareness to the school children about the farmland birds at Sarlahi

Collaboration with local organizations

Additionally, I have discussed and linked up with the local organisations who are working in lowland Nepal for bird and biodiversity conservation like Mithila Wildlife Trust, Chitwan Bird Society, Koshi Bird Society, Green Youth of Lumbini etc. Their support will help to continue the project more smoothly and will help further in awareness campaigns.

Works to be done in 2019

- Completion of the *Bagedi* hunting survey.
- Preparation of leaflets and posters for additional education programmes.
- Overall data analysis.
- Results sharing workshop.
- Final report.
- Manuscript preparation.