

Wildlife Times



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There are as few as 3,200 tigers left in the wild.

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Editorial

Let GTF host Tiger summit



We don't know since 1970 when WWF first started to give grant to Nepal for the conservation of tiger, how much million dollars had been spent in the name of tiger conservation. But it is no doubt that tiger attracts billions of dollars worldwide and Nepal has also benefited by receiving considerable chunk of it. But the million dollar question is why despite the pumping of huge resources, tiger population remains always declining trend year by year.

Since 90s, the breeding tiger population in Nepal is not in upward trend. In 1998 when world tiger fraternity celebrated year of the tiger to draw worldwide attention on tiger conservation the world estimated wild population of tiger to be 3176 to 4556. 12 years later, the first tiger range country ministerial level meeting in Hua Hin in Thailand in the beginning of this year, declared the world wild population of tiger is just 3200. Nepal's official breeding tiger population is 121. This number itself is being termed as rigorously and scientifically obtained data. Conservation managers and scientists are not in a position to say whether Nepal's tiger conservation efforts are failure or success.

With the World Bank's official entry in tiger conservation in mid 2008, in a bid to influence and promote improved national and global cooperation and commitment to help elevate tiger conservation, the governments of tiger range country and tiger conservationists are in dilemma whether to support or refuse the World Bank as reliable partner of tiger conservation. The world's largest wild tiger roaming country India officially reject World Bank' support and China presumably considering the threat of wild tiger, rejected to host the tiger summit. Later the summit venue moved from China to Russia.

To save tiger from the brink of extinction India and China need to work together. They can together make wild tiger population a great comeback. Other country and organization's role is to encourage this to happen and not to impose their agenda.

If Nepal government has vision to pursue world powers, Nepal should play a role to strengthen global tiger forum (GTF), an inter-governmental forum of tiger range countries of which Nepal is currently a chair. Though there is not much time left, the Vladivostok tiger summit should be held under the GTF banner and the World Bank should play a positive role for this to happen.

Red Panda: Status and Challenges

By Swechha Lamichane and Gyani Shova Shakya



20 February 2010/
Kathmandu/ National
Seminar on Red Panda
Conservation Initiatives was held in Sacred Himalaya Landscape (SHL) of Nepal's Himalaya which was jointly organized by Department of national Parks and Wildlife Conservation (DNPWC), Department of Forestry (DoF) and WWF-Nepal. The major objective of the workshop was to find the current status, distribution and behaviors of Red Panda in the Sacred Himalaya Landscape and to understand the threats so that the conservation initiatives can be taken accordingly. The workshop was inaugurated by Minister of Forest and Soil conservation Hon' Mr. Deepak Bohara. The minister suggested that all the organizations committed to conservation should come together and divide the work for tangible result and also to focus on the positive aspect of conserving Red Panda by encouraging local participation. Mr. Anil Manandhar, country representative for WWF-Nepal focused on conservation through people participation which involves economic feasibility. If people understood the economic value in those areas, they would join hands for conservation, he said.

“Conservation through people participation” was the major theme of the workshop. Mr. Megh Bahadur Pandey, deputy director general of DNPWC pointed out the adaptation feature of Red Panda i.e. shifting from carnivore to

herbivore which can be taken as significant evolutionary stage.

He said due to human interference, more species are needed to be included in appendix I. Even in technical and medical development, biodiversity has played a great role as an exemplar. So if there is interaction and exchange of information between the specialists and conservationists that will definitely act as a catalyst for conservation efforts.

On the same occasion, Action Plan for Red Panda in Langtang region was launched by the Director General of DNPWC, Mr. Gopal Upadhaya. This action plan will act as a role model for the conservation initiation of Red Panda in other Protected Areas.

About Red Panda

Red Panda is one of the most discreet animals in the world. Red Panda is an elusive and aloof creature and so much importance is not given on its conservation. Red Panda is a Red listed animal in appendix I. It is found only in 7 countries in the world and that is the reason why it is more in danger. They are divided in two sub species:

Ailurus fulgens fulgens: Native to Nepal, India, Bhutan, Myanmar and China

Ailurus fulgens styani: Native to South western China in Sichuan and Yunnan Provinces and Laos.

In Nepal, it is available in eight protected areas in Sacred Himalayan Landscape (SHL) and is distributed in the altitudinal range of 2000m to 4000m. According to red panda network Nepal there are approximately 314 Red Pandas in Nepal. Various synonyms are used for Red Panda i.e. small cat like animal with similarity to bear. In Nepali language, it is called ‘Habre’ and in local languages, ‘Naututo’ ‘Pude Kundo’, ‘Hoptanga’, ‘Telegama’ and ‘Sankam’ to name a few. It is approximately 60 cm long with furry tail of 40 cm having distinct 12 alternating red and buff rings. Its life span is 14 years with average life span of 8-10 years in the wild.

The food habit of the red panda is very peculiar. One of the major characteristics of red panda is its ability to shift from carnivore to herbivore. Red panda belongs to the order carnivore but Red Panda nowadays feeds mostly on bamboos and mushroom which is their major diet and. This shows its ability to adapt and adjust in any situation. Other major foods include juniper, moss, leaves, berries, grasses, roots, fruits, lichens, rhododendron and acorns. It also occasionally eats insects, eggs, young birds and small rodents.

Threats and Challenges

The threats for the red panda can be natural or anthropogenic activities. The major threat is the loss of habitat. Red panda is a shy and subtle animal and is

highly sensitive. So the loss of habitat, i.e. human intervention will lead to the decrease in its number. Similarly, we can see that there is habitat and food overlapping. The cattle and the red panda both eat bamboos and so the food for red panda is overlapping with that of the cattle. Similarly, *chauri* are kept in shed for which the land is cleared to construct the shed and so the natural environment is disturbed. This causes the habitat overlap with red panda. Also, eagles devour on the cubs. Forest fires lead to destruction of habitat and leopard are also the cause of death of red panda.

The human interference like destruction of habitat for human needs, extensive grazing of livestock, fragmentation, non targeted poaching etc are major reasons for the listing of red panda as endangered species.

Red panda is an obscure animal with high sensitivity to human activities. It is not possible to predict the number of red Panda with direct count. So, different models are needed to approximate its number. Temperature, precipitation and vegetations are the major variants that are considered for predicting the probability of red panda in different areas.

Sign density is also considered where the faecal matter of the red panda is studied. Red pandas are more abundant in eastern Nepal than in western because of the suitability of the environment. Potential area mapping also helps in denoting the status and probability so that these areas can be focused for conservation. Site specific studies are necessary for future as well. If proper and accurate studies can be done, that can be considered as the reference for other detailed studies on red panda or any other species. Red panda needs accurate population study so that the conservation process can be



implied. Comparative study is required for management issues. Also, the threats are needed to be identified for conservation. It is necessary to continue the detailed investigation of Red Panda.

For the conservation initiation of red panda in eastern Nepal, red panda tourism has been started for piloting a community based mechanism. This includes creating local stewardship for conservation, bringing livelihood opportunities, piloting well managed community based red panda tourism.

Red Panda Conservation initiative in SHL

Sacred Himalaya Landscape is the Eastern Himalaya of Nepal that includes Langtang, GauriShankar, Sagarmatha National Park, Kanchanjunga Conservation Area, and Makalu-Barun National Park. There are 50,000 people residing in SHL of which 60% are below poverty line. Poverty is a critical constraint in conservation. The vision of SHL is to conserve biological and cultural entity. In Strategy Plan 2006-2016, it is mentioned that in the Himalayan Landscape,

the biological and cultural treasures of world's sacred mountains are to be preserved. The major goal of SHL is to recognize ecologically and culturally significant areas and preservation of customary and traditional livelihood.

The conservation initiative taken by the Red Panda Network along with WWF-Nepal are comprehensive studies on red panda at SHL level that have recently been completed and that help in better understanding of the situation of red panda. Community based anti poaching operations have been commenced which will help to control the poaching activities. Also formulation and implementation of Rangeland management Plans have been set up. Awareness is created with the help of eco clubs, seminars, awareness march, dissemination and workshop.

Site specific strategy have been implied which will help in specific management.

- Langtang National Park
 - i) Red Panda Conservation Action Plan (2010-2014)
 - ii) Implementation of Rangeland Management Plan for Langtang (2007-2012)

- iii) Promotion of eco tourism
- Sagarmatha National Park
 - i) Implementation of Rangeland Management Plan for Khumbu (2007-2012)
 - ii) Anti poaching operation
- Kanchanjunga Conservation Area
 - i) Red Panda eco trail
 - ii) Anti poaching operation by community
 - iii) Functional Trans-boundary Network Committees.

Red panda is a perfect example of adaptation strategy that we can follow (shift from carnivore to herbivore). It also helps in maintaining the ecological integrity of bamboos. There is a close relationship between the red pandas, bamboos and other associated species. In terms of cultural and social aspect, red panda is considered as auspicious animal in Nepal and Tibet. Similarly, it is a rare and unique species which provides lots of potential for eco tourism. It is necessary to formulate and implement the action plan for red panda so that its conservation is done properly with the view of increasing its number.

Conservation Archive 3



In this four meeting minutes held between 1973 September to 1974, many discussion and decision was focused on issues like grant from WWF for tiger project, rhinos death in Chitwan, managing Chitwan National Park in line with Tanzania's Kilimanjaro National Park, New Zealand aid to create Sagarmatha National Park, and acknowledging memoranda submitted by the local people on Koshi Tappu wildlife reserve. One of the meetings was also held at Diyalo Banglow, winter resident of then ruling Royal family in Chitwan. there were two interesting decisions in these minutes, not to allow darting rhino and investigation on Tiger Tops (jungle lodge inside Chitwan national park) collecting fund on behalf of WWF London.

Through the decisions and lines of minutes, one can easily understand the evolution of national park and wildlife conservation system and governance in Nepal.

Date: September 27, 1973

Since the last two meetings certain things were agreed upon, however there has been a number of things that though were discussed before are still pending. Thus it seems that this meeting should concentrate on reviewing the last two meetings discussions. The following is suggested as the main subjects of discussion:

1. WWF Coinage issue: Most of the things have been taken care but Chris Savage of the WWF says he needs certain direction from HRH Prince Gyanendra particularly:

- a. Animals on the coin
 - b. Some kind of function to mark the commemoration of the coin issue
 - c. Nov. 1, 1974 as the suggested date of issue of coin.
2. Langtang National Park: The Khampa Situation
 3. Formulation of a Wildlife and National Park Committee. Discussions on Dr. Pandey's reaction.

The \$132,000 was granted from the WWF under the operation tiger. Discussion

of formulation of a revised proposal, information on correspondence with Vollmer, and field investigation leading to the drafting of a new proposal was done.

4. Staffing of the national park and wildlife conservation unit: chart to be submitted as directed by His Royal Highness and discussed.
5. Hunting

Date: 29.12.2030 (April 11, 1974), Thursday

Wildlife Committee (Palace meeting)

1. The meeting was attended by Hemanta Mishra and B.B.Basnet only. Mr. Uprety and Dr. Sharma were excused as they were in Chitwan.
2. Hemanta Mishra briefed the meeting on his visit to Chitwan, particularly on the 2 rhinos that has died (or poached), the general situation in Chitwan, development works, grazing control activities and others.
3. As the Royal visit to Chitwan is approaching the committee were directed that a complete brief on Chitwan should be prepared on job specifications as directed by His Royal Highness in the past. e.g.

- a. B.B.Basnet – Forestry and forest related problems.
 - b. B.N.Uprety – National parks development activities problems.
 - c. Dr. Sharma – wild fauna of the national park.
 - d. H.R.Mishra – Foreign Research Workers and other activities to foreigners in Royal Chitwan.
4. To instruct the Warden to prepare a dossier on trouble shooters, personals hampering development works, guards fired or suspended and poachers etc.
 5. To ask Poppleton to prepare a list of responsibilities and duties of various members of the armed guards and personnel as specified in

- his report on training.
6. To see if it is feasible to divide and sub divide the RCNP in various units on the same lines as the Kilimanjaro national park.
 7. We should be prepared to by the 8th of Baisakh (2031 on or around) to Chitwan.
 8. Hemanta Mishra to prepare a small brief on the UNESCO World Heritage Convention and send it to Mr. C.S.Thapa.
 9. It was agreed that Gen. Ranga should be included in palace committee meeting.
 10. Next meeting will be held on Friday 8th of Baisakh 2030 and we are directed to bring complete brief on Chitwan as the meeting will be devoted mostly to Chitwan.

Agenda for next meeting:

1. Brief on Chitwan visit of Mr. Uprety and Dr. Sharma.
2. Other reports on Chitwan.
3. Proposed Royal visit of His Majesty and any other directives, ternaries etc.
4. The conservation unit of the Wildlife Project (UN/HMG) is eager to film the Royal visit for various publicity works.
5. The UN and other foreign staff - should they be told to be in Chitwan for the Royal Visit?
6. Other members of the forest department / Ministry that should be asked to be in Chitwan.

Date: 27.1.2031 (10th May, 1974) Place: Royal Palace

The meeting was held under the guidance of HRH Prince Gyanendra and the following members were present:

1. Mr. C.S.Thapa
2. Gen. Ranga B. Shah
3. Mr. Bhisma B. Basnet
4. Mr. M.S.Sharma
5. Mr. Biswa N. Uprety
6. Hemanta Mishra.

1. Briefing on Sagarmatha national park in relation to possible New Zealand Aid. News of arrival of New Zealand team was given to the committee members. It was decided that our policy should be to minimize the number of technical experts, as we

need more capital aid than expert aid. Mr. Hemanta Mishra is to accompany the New Zealand team to go Sagarmatha national park for about 3 weeks.

2. Inconnection to recruitment of Guards HRH directed the committee to call all colonels (Forest Dept.) to draw a plan for recruitment training, promotion and other related matters. A list of job details to be presented to HRH particularly the works we would like to get it done from the Royal Army.
3. A list of all armed personals designated for Royal Shikar Reserve to be submitted in the next meeting.

4. In accordance with the decision of the committee meeting held on 12th Baisakh, 2031 at Diyalo Bungalow, Conservator Mr. Hague and Mr. Maskey of Royal Chitwan national park are to submit a joint report connecting problems in and outside the NP.
5. The committee members were asked to go through Acts and Regulations concerning Tourism Development Board and National Sports Council.
6. It was decided not to give permission to dart Rhino.
7. Investigation on Tiger Tops collecting Fund on behalf of WWF London to be made.

Date: 20th May 1974 (7/2/030) Place: Royal Palace

The meeting was held under the guidance of HRH Prince Gyanendra and the following members were present:

1. Mr. C.S.Thapa
2. Gen. Ranga B. Shah
3. Mr. Bhisma B. Basnet
4. Mr. M.S.Sharma
5. Mr. Biswa N. Uprety

1. Koshi Tappu:
 - a. It was decided to study the flood situation of the area during monsoon rains by the concerned Forest Officer.
 - b. The Secretary ministry of Water, Power and Electricity, should be inquired about the letter

- written to him 23/12/2030 asking about the reaction of Koshi Project..
- c. HRH directed to the committee to withhold the decision on Koshi Tappu Reserve boundaries until the flood situation is studied and decided finally.

- d. It is decided to acknowledge all the memoranda submitted by the local people on Koshi Tappu. A reply format to be submitted in the next meeting.
2. A brief on recruitment and training of Guards

was presented on the committee and it was decided to discuss it further in the subsequent meeting.

3. National Parks and Wildlife Conservation Committee: It was decided to prepare a brief outline of

the above mentioned committee in the light of the discussion with the officials of Finance and Law Ministries.

4. It is decided to send a copy of the proposal of Shey Wildlife Reserve to the Ministry of Agriculture.

Date: 1974/5/21 (8th Jestha, 2031)

The meeting was held under the direction of HRH Prince Gyanendra. All the members were present in addition to Mrs. Sushila Rana of the Royal Wildlife Conservation Department.

Langtang: Hemanta Mishra briefly illustrated the problems of wild bear destruction in Syabru/Barghu. The following were decided:

- a. Palace Shikaris to be assigned to Syabru/Bharghu area for two months only to shot wild bears and bears

in agricultural fields only.

- b. Daily records should be maintained of animals observed and shot.

Langtang NP: Directive of HM to be produced in next meeting. Minister of Forest to take necessary actions for executing the directives.

Memo from Peter Jackson: To draft a reply on this memo.

Sukla phanta/Karnali: It was realized that the Surkhet directives have not been fully implemented. So it was directed that by next meeting everything

pending on Suklaphanta should be discussed in the next meeting.

Monkey research: To investigate developments on this proposal as submitted by Dr. Sharma and to report about this in the next meeting.

Washington Convention on Endangered Species: To find out the details about this from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and to report about it in the next meeting.

Miscellaneous

1. HRH Prince of Iran visiting Nepal in Feb. 1975.
2. To write to WWF requesting for more posters.
3. Ministry of Forests to inquire on the request made by Pradhan Panch of Jagatpur for Soil Conservation Works.
4. To request Warden of Karnali/Bardia WLR to determine the presence and extent of occurrence of Black buck.

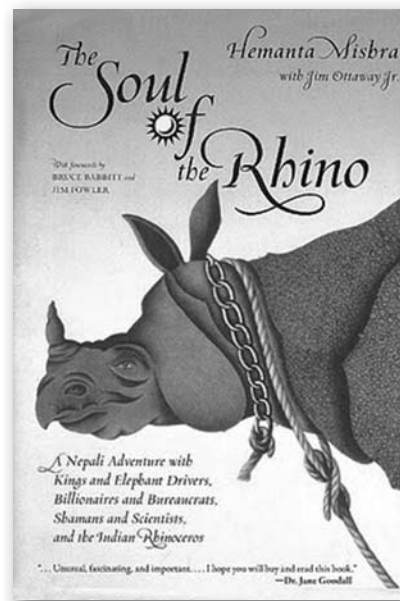
It was also directed that the following shall be discussed in the next meeting.

1. Langtang National Park
2. Suklaphanta / Karnali
3. Monkey research
4. Washington Convention

The Soul of the Rhino

In two weeks time, we found her a mate in Tikoli forest, a narrow strip of jungle ten miles of our camp. We tamed this Rhino in seven days; he was less temperamental than the female calf. Now we had a breeding pair of Rhinos captured and tamed for Fort Worth zoon. To avoid any inbreeding we caught the male miles away from the site where we caught the female calf, as precaution to ensure they were not close relatives.

Both the Rhinos provided fun and frivolity in our jungle camp. I was very much attached to them. They were like my children, eating out of my hands and often taking afternoon siestas with me in the shade of our camp. We fondly called them the Texas Rhinos. We had not named them, as we didn't have the right. Only His majesty the King had this privilege since the Rhino calves were designated by royal decree as a "State gift from the King and the people of Nepal to the President and the people of the United States of America". I knew that I soon would have to ship them away to the Fort Worth Zoo as part of a packaged deal by the World wildlife Fund, the leading Washington based wildlife conservation group.



The World Wildlife Fund (WWF) had made this deal at the behest of Edward P. Bass, a Fort Worth millionaire and philanthropist. Ed Bass has supported major conservation programmes in Nepal, benefiting both nature and cultural heritage preservation. Yet it was not Ed but his sister-in-law Ramona Bass who was looking for the newest blood from the Asian Rhino gene pool for her Fort Worth Zoo. As the chairperson of the Fort Worth Zoological Society, she wanted her hometown zoo to be in the forefront of American zoos. Ramona had the brains and funds to accomplish her mission. She knew that no other Asian countries but Nepal could

provide her with wild Rhinos. Thus, she enticed her brother in law, Ed Bass, who had strong connections in Nepal and WWF to broker a deal.

Fortune magazine had ranked the Bass brothers among America's richest people. Sequestered in Nepal, I did not know that when King Birendra's younger uncle introduced me to Ed in 1979. The King's uncle first met Bass family when he was traveling with King Mahendra and Ed's father, Perry, hit off instantly. Both loved hunting, while Ed did not. He loved daring ventures and liked to create new and controversial projects. One of them was Biosphere 2, the world famous miniature life-supporting system in a three acre enclosure.

Despite being preoccupied with Biosphere 2, Ed Bass often visited Chitwan and maintained his interest in saving Rhinos in Nepal, where he had also built Hotel Vajra in the 1970s. An architectural masterpiece, the hotel was designed by top architects and artists from Nepal, America and Tibet. An unusual Bohemian place in Nepal, it soon became a flocking point for artists and scholars from

all over the world. Ed was also promoting the Institute of Eco-Techniques, a thin tank devoted to balancing human needs with nature conservation.

Then I found that Ed was years ahead of his time, with a vision of the importance of striking a practical balance between human economic needs and nature preservation. He also talked about “sustainable development” in the early seventies, long before it became the mantra of Western environmentalists at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. However, at the local level in Nepal, even in the seventies, we had little problem understanding Ed Bass’s philosophy. There we struggled daily with the challenge of how to save endangered species such as Rhinos and Tigers in an island surrounded by a sea of humanity, a sea steeped in poverty and overridden by a mass of humanity hungry for food, fodder and firewood.

I didn’t know much about the Fort Worth Zoo in the late 1970s. I didn’t even know that city had a zoo. But it had no qualms about providing Fort Worth with two Nepalese Rhinos. I had faith in the WWF, particularly its chairman, Russell E. Train, who was a driving force in garnering international support for nature conservation in Nepal. Furthermore, it was given the responsibility of carrying out this task as part of a tripartite deal between the WWF, the government of Nepal and the Fort Worth Zoological Society. In exchange

for the pair of Rhinos, Ed Bass would donate \$150,000 to the WWF on behalf of the Fort Worth Zoological Society. The WWF would then manage the fund and use it as leverage to generate additional funds from other sources. These funds would be exclusively used to save wild Rhinos in Nepal.

I needed fund and support to implement my first-of-its kind venture in Asia of providing a second home for the Chitwan Rhinos in Bardia, as an insurance against keeping all the Rhino eggs in one Chitwan basket. This was the promise I had made to my long dead friend Tapsi. Thus, keeping my part of the deal, I caught and tame two Rhinos for the Fort Worth Zoo in exchange for the financial resources that I needed to reach my goals. The problem was that I was becoming attached to the Rhino calves that I had reared in captivity. These Rhinos provided entertainment for our camp. They also provided a source of income for some of the more enterprising children of our staff.

One day I was resting on the big lawn amusing a few children by using the male Rhino’s butt as my pillow. Almost twenty feet away, two boys were playing with the female. One was holding a small bucket and teasing the Rhino’s rear end with his fingers to make the calf urinate. The other was in the front with a bucket persuading the Rhino to drink water to recharge her urinary system. Their action were not new but routine. The boy with

the bucket was son of Vishnu, the deputy head game scout. His partner was the son of Bir Bahadur, one of our elephant drivers. These two kids were working hard to corner the Rhino- urine market. The female Texas Rhino obliged them. Later they would repeat the process on male Rhino. Vishnu’s son collected the urine in another bucket and the boys would later sub divide the Rhino pee into small bottles and sell it as medicine supposed to cure Asthma. They would sell each bottle for the equivalent of twenty five cents- a lot for young children at the time.

Perhaps it seems paradoxical that we adults did not dispel their practice, as it further supported the notion that Rhino parts have pharmaceutical properties. Nevertheless, collecting and selling Rhino urine was a common practice by Rhino keepers in Asian zoos, and it did not involve killing any animals. So if the need for Rhino urine kept the species alive, I was happy to allow the boys to collect and sell it.

I often took the Rhinos for a walk to the village, to the amusement of tourists. The animals followed me like a pair of friendly dogs, often nudging my legs with their snouts. When the days were hot, I walked them to the river for a bath along with our elephants and the village buffalos. However, I had to be on guard that they did not get close to an elephant. I did not want to take any chances of their getting hurt. I also never took them

to the forest because I did not want to take any chances of an encounter with other Rhinos, especially their mother.

I lived with these Rhinos for three months before we got an order from the Royal Palace in Kathmandu stating that King Birendra had decided to name them. The male calf was named Arun (Rising Sun) and the female Aarati (Evening prayers). In a small ceremony of our jungle camp, Badai- our camp shaman- whispered these names into each Rhino's ears after we had performed our usual ritual of worshipping the Goddess of the forest by sacrificing a goat, a chicken, and a pigeon. It was now the time and our fate to part ways with our beloved Rhinos.

I consulted a Nepalese astrologer to choose the appropriate day for the ceremony. He selected May 23, 1991, the birthday of Lord Gautam Buddha, a son of Nepal and the Apostle of peace. His birthday is an auspicious day to both Hindus and Buddhists of Nepal.

A quaint handover ceremony was organized at Kathmandu's Tribhuvan International Airport in front of a big yellow Lufthansa German Airline Jet, an aircraft assigned to take the Rhinos to Dallas- Fort Worth Airport via Nepalese Press,

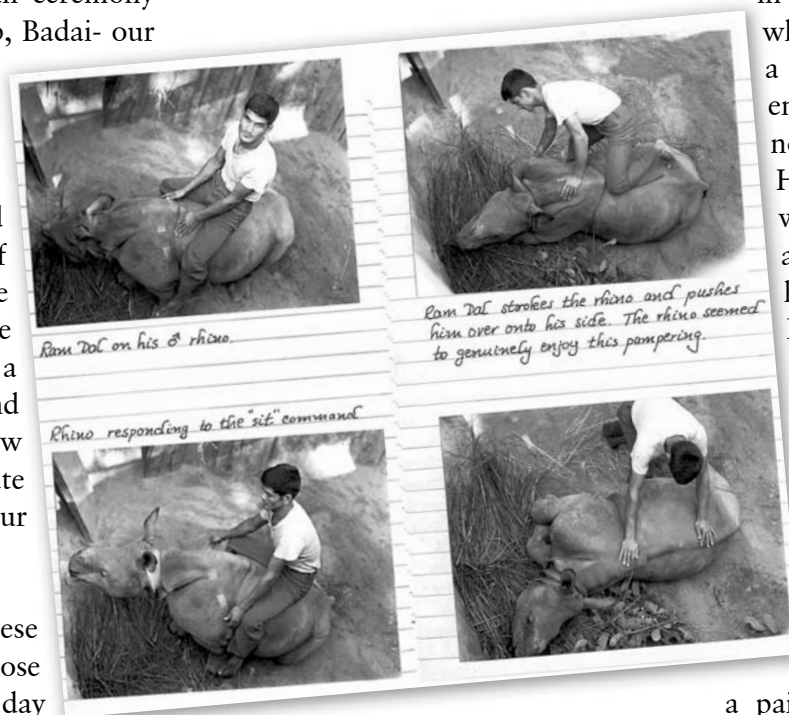
priests, and palace bureaucrats, the American ambassador, Julia Chang-Bloch, formally received the Rhino's from the secretary of His majesty's Government of Nepal, the ministry of Forests on behalf of the United States of America. The ceremony ended after a few sloe speeches and firm handshakes between American and Nepalese officials who had gathered at the airport.

my heart ached as I watched the huge yellow plane soar high over the Himalayas and disappear into the clouds. Just below the first class cabin, in a special compartment of Lufthansa German Airlines Flight 765, were my two favorite Rhinos. They were on an epic journey to a new home in United States.

A year later, I visited the Rhinos in the Fort Worth Zoo, where they lived in a large and spacious enclosure. They did not recognize me. However, my feelings were not hurt. In a gala ceremony hosted by Ramona Bass, the chairperson of the Fort Worth Zoological Society, the mayor of Fort Worth honored me with a title of " Honorary Citizen of the city of Fort Worth" for delivering

a pair of Rhinos in his town. I felt privileged by this recognition and was encouraged in my efforts to keep Rhinos alive, both in the wild and in Captivity.

The two Nepalese Rhinos proved to be a major attraction to the denizens of America who flocked to the Fort Worth Zoo to see them. But these Rhinos were no different than their ancestors, who had also captivated European popes, potentates, royalties and commoners throughout history.



Ram Tol on his ♂ rhino.

Ram Tol strokes the rhino and pushes him over onto his side. The rhino seemed to genuinely enjoy this pampering.

Rhino responding to the sit command

Fate works in strange ways, I thought, as I watched Lufthansa's ground staff load Arun and Aarati, my beloved Rhinos, into the cargo hold of the plane. Fate had forced me to snatch the baby Rhinos from their mothers, only to nurture and love them before finally putting them on a German aircraft for a journey of no return.

I could not take my eyes off the airplane as it circled in the clear blue skies of Kathmandu valley. My eyes were teary, and

Tiger Farms in China Feed Thirst for Parts

By Andrew Jacobs



GUILIN, China — The crowd-pleasing Year of the Tiger, which begins on 14 February, Sunday, could be a lousy year for the estimated 3,200 tigers that still roam the world's diminishing forests.

With as few as 20 in the wild in China, the country's tigers

are a few gun blasts away from extinction, and in India poachers are making quick work of the tiger population, the world's largest. The number there, around 1,400, is about half that of a decade ago and a fraction of the 100,000 that roamed the subcontinent in the early 20th century.

Shrinking habitat remains a daunting challenge, but conservationists say the biggest threat to Asia's largest predator is the Chinese appetite for tiger parts. Despite a government ban on the trade since 1993, there is a robust market for tiger bones, traditionally prized for their healing and aphrodisiac

qualities, and tiger skins, which have become cherished trophies among China's nouveau riche.

With pelts selling for \$20,000 and a single paw worth as much as \$1,000, the value of a dead tiger has never been higher, say those who investigate the trade. Last month the Indian government announced a surge in killings of tigers by poachers, with 88 found dead in 2009, double the previous year. Because figures are based on carcasses found on reserves or tiger parts seized at border crossings, conservationists say the true number is far higher.

"All of the demand for tiger parts is coming from China," said Belinda Wright, executive director of the Wildlife Protection Society of India. "Unless the Chinese change their attitude, the tiger has no future on this earth."

Although conservationists say India must do a better job of policing its 37 tiger reserves, they insist that the Chinese government has not done all it can to quell the domestic market for illicit tiger parts. Anti-trafficking efforts are haphazard, experts say; China bans the use of tiger parts in traditional Chinese medicine but overlooks the sale of alcohol-based health tonics steeped in tiger bone.

It is a gray area that has been exploited by Chinese tiger farms, which raise thousands of animals with assembly-line efficiency.

If there is any mystery about what happens to the big cats at Xionsen Tiger and Bear Mountain Village in Guilin, it is partly explained in the gift shop, where fuzz-coated bottles in the shape of a tiger are filled with "bone strengthening" wine. The liquor, which costs \$132 for a six-year-old brew, is sold openly across the surrounding Guangxi region and beyond.

"This stuff works wonders," said Zhang Hanchu, the owner of a spirits shop in Guilin. A daily shot glass of the rice-based alcohol, he said, can reduce joint stiffness, treat rheumatism and increase sexual vigor. With the Year of the Tiger nearing, demand has been soaring, he said.

Opened in 1993 with financing from the State Forestry Administration, Xionsen is China's largest tiger-breeding operation. Some of its 1,500 tigers roam treeless, fenced-in areas, while many others are packed in small cages where they pace agitatedly.

The park is a fairly dispiriting place. In addition to the tigers, there are hundreds of capuchin monkeys rattling in cages, awaiting their fate as fodder for medicinal elixirs or medical experiments. There are also about 300 Asiatic brown bears which are tapped for their bile, the main ingredient of a lucrative supplement said to improve eyesight.

Those who pay the park's \$12 entry fee are treated to an

extravaganza of tigers jumping through rings of fire or balancing on balls; if the crowds are large enough, workers will place a cow and a tiger in an enclosure with predictably gruesome results.

Until a spate of negative press two years ago, Xionsen proudly sold tiger steaks at its restaurant as "big king meat." These days, the park takes a more low-key approach. The word "tiger" no longer appears on the wine packaging — "rare animal bones" is used instead — although those who sell the wine say the key ingredient remains tiger bone.

On a recent visit, a regular stream of cars, some with government license plates, pulled up to a building at the center of the park and drove away with their trunks full of Xionsen's wine tonic. A large sign in the building's interior declares "Protecting Wild Animals is the Bounden Duty of Every Citizen."

A woman who answered the phone at Xionsen's winery said the owner, Zhou Weisen, was not available to comment, but she insisted that tigers were not an ingredient in the 200,000 bottles a liquor produced each year.

In addition to overlooking the sale of tiger wine, the Chinese government has fueled the market in tiger parts by letting such farms exist, critics say. Although the State Forestry Administration reiterated its

support for the ban on the trade of tigers last December, it reconsiders the restrictions each year, giving hope to the politically powerful owners of China's 20 tiger farms.

If the ban were lifted, critics say, trade in farm-bred tigers would simply provide cover for poached tigers, which are far cheaper to harvest and bring in far higher prices because most Chinese believe the healing properties of wild tigers are greater than those raised in cages.

An employee at the forestry administration said the entire staff was away on a retreat and could not be reached.

Debbie Banks, who runs the tiger campaign at the Environmental Investigation Agency in London, said China's

stated resolve to help end the international trade in tigers was diluted by its ambivalent stand on domestic sales. "The government is stimulating and perpetuating demand, which is the real problem we're facing," she said.

Despite the grim news, conservationists say the coming year also presents an opportunity to raise awareness about the problem. All the hoopla surrounding the Year of the Tiger has captured the attention of many nations, especially China, whose government is sensitive to criticisms that it is encouraging the tiger's extinction. In September, Russia and the World Bank will host a summit meeting on tigers that conservationists hope will yield a solid plan to restore plummeting tiger populations.

James Compton, Asia program director for TRAFFIC, which monitors the global wildlife trade, thinks the most important step would be for China and other nations to elevate the interdiction of tiger parts to that of illicit drugs. "It's not rocket science to knock out the big traders," he said, adding that bodies like Interpol and the World Customs Organization should take on the fight.

Guarded optimism aside, Mr. Compton cannot help but recall the last time the Year of the Tiger came around, in 1998. There was similar talk then of using the occasion to marshal the international community. He also has a vivid memory of the poster produced for the occasion. Its pitch: "Save the Last 5,000 Tigers."

APPEAL

Dear valued readers,

The 18th issue of the Wildlife Times is in your hands. It is our small effort to raise various issues related with wildlife conservation. Please help us include the activities from your group or organizations of wildlife conservation by sending us the concerned information. We would love to find any suggestion and criticism. Please feel free to leave your feedback at info@citesnepal.org. We also seek support from your organization to continue this Wildlife Times. We look forward to your queries, comments and support.



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New bird

SOLUKHUMBU, Feb 21: A new variety of birds has been seen in Burtal (a lake) area of Cheskam VDC in Solukhumbu district for the last three months.

The new birds have been drawing crowds of locals to the village. The birds with mostly black wings with white spots and long beak weigh around eight kg, according to a local Kul Bahadur Chhapdulu.

Locals say the birds appear around the lake time and again.

Another rare bird spotted in Koshi

KATHMANDU, Feb 20: A rare bird was spotted in the Koshi region. A male Small Niltava (*Niltava magrigoriae*) was seen at Koshi Tappu on December 8 last year. Likewise, Glossy Ibis (*Plegadis falcinellus*) was



sighted on December 7 after 21 years. With the two new additions, Koshi now records a total of 491 bird species.

The bird was sighted by ornithologists Tika Giri, Badri Chaudhary and Nick Bray in Koshi Tappu Wildlife Reserve. The bird is found in the Himalayas, China, Myanmar and Thailand.

Similarly, Glossy Ibis was sighted by the same ornithologists. "This bird is a colonial nester and is of highly nomadic nature, often making long journey outside their normal range of occurrence," Giri added.

Youth fights off tiger

ARGHAKHANCHI, Feb 15: A 12th grader youth has fought off a tiger and saved his life in Panena VDC-7 of Arghakhanchi district. Bimal Pokharel fought off the tiger with the help of a sickle. He was attacked by the tiger while he was collecting firewood.

Though he could save his life, he could not keep himself free from the harm. He was injured in the attack and is being treated in a local hospital.

Rhinos menace in west Chitwan

CHITWAN, Jan 12: Rhinos have terrorized people by entering human settlements in western Chitwan this week by injuring four people.

Locals are angry with Chitwan National Park (CNP) officials and local bodies for not initiating an effective effort for the solution. Janak Ghimire, a local, said rhinos have damaged crops of over 18 households at Indrapuri and Phulbari villages. People's life is in danger, locals complain

CNP chief Narendraman Babu Pradhan said rhinos usually come to human settlements in winter as there isn't sufficient food in the forest. He added that settlers remain vulnerable as there is no security in the human settlements.

Wild animals in CNP kill 15 to 20 people every year.

Leopard shot dead

KATHMANDU, Feb 13: A violent leopard was shot dead on Saturday morning after it entered human settlement at Jorpati in Kathmandu.

The beast had entered the house of Dhan Prasad Lamichhane at 8 pm and attacked two persons -- Prem Kumal, 76, and Keshav Purkuti, 53.

After failing to control it alive, police shot dead the beast at around 11 a.m.

Man held with leopard skins

BARDIYA, Jan 18: Bardiya National Park officials arrested a person on Monday in possession of two leopard skins.

Kamal Basnet of Bhawani VDC, Dailekh, was arrested from eastern Chisapani. The arrest comes barely a week after two

individuals were arrested with eight kilograms of tiger bones at Dhodari VDC in the district.

15 pastures for endangered Parsa wildlife

Sunday 10 January: Parsa Wildlife Reserve has built 15 pastures inside the animal sanctuary to protect wildlife creatures and for tourists' convenience so that they can watch scattered wild animals in one place.

The grazing places are abundant in green grass and drinking water. The endangered animals such as striped tiger, leopard and antelope often come to the pastures and satiate their hunger and thirst, Sharma said.

According to reserve officials, the wildlife authority came up with the concept keeping in mind the Tourism Year, the concept floated by the government.

Conservation Leader

Yolanda Kakabadse: New WWF International President



The former Ecuadorian Minister of Environment Yolanda Kakabadse has been named as the new President of WWF International. Ms. Kakabadse replaces outgoing President Chief Emeka Anyaoku who steps down at the end of this year after eight years in the position.

The announcement came on the closing day (28.09.05) of the WWF Annual Conference in Copenhagen. She has worked with WWF for many years including a spell on the international board, and will take up her new role in January 2010.

“Yolanda Kakabadse is a conservation leader of high standing and integrity. I am glad and excited

that WWF will have such a respected personality as its next President,” said Chief Anyaoku.

Speaking from the US, Ms Kakabadse said she was honoured to be asked to take over the Presidency. “I have worked with WWF for many years and have huge respect for the organisation and its work,” she said. “I am looking forward to helping WWF bring about the necessary changes for these challenging times.”

Yolanda Kakabadse is a native of Ecuador and served as Minister of Environment for the Republic of Ecuador from August 1998 until January 2000. Ms. Kakabadse served as NGO Liaison Officer for the United Nations Conference for Environment and Development (the Rio Earth Summit) in 1992, coordinating the participation of civil society organizations in the conference. She is also former President of the World Conservation Union (IUCN) (1996 - 2004).

In 1979 she was appointed Executive Director of Fundacion Natura in Quito, where she worked until 1990. Ms. Kakabadse helped Fundacion Natura become one of Latin America's most important environmental organizations through the development of important processes for Ecuadorian society and the international community. In 1993 she founded Fundacion Futuro Latinoamericano, an NGO she served as Executive President until 2007 and is now its Senior Adviser. Fundacion Futuro Latinoamericano designs and organizes policy dialogues on sustainable development among decision makers in Latin American. She chaired the Scientific and Technology Advisory Panel of the Global Environment Facility (STAP / GEF) from 2005 to 2008.

