

WILDLIFE NEWS 1991b

Royal Bardia National Park. Such release program is being operated with an aim to replenish the wild population of gharial since 1981. Eggs are collected from the nest and kept in a safe place in natural condition (river bank) to save them from flood (sand deposition over the nest and washing away) and theft. Gharials are brought to the Breeding Center after they hatch and are reared until they reach the size to survive in the wild (4-5 yrs). This year 283 gharials have hatched from 359 eggs collected from Kali Gandaki and Narayani rivers from 9 nests. Hatching percent of the eggs is 79 this year with an increment of 35% compared to that of last year. Normally, the eggs hatch in 60 days, however, it took 70 days on average this year. The hatching time greatly depends on the temperature of the sand bank of the rivers where the eggs are kept for hatching. It is estimated that a total of 100 gharials (40 wild and 60 released) are in Kali Gandaki and Narayani rivers, 37 (7 wild & 30 released) in Babai and 4 (all released) in Koshi rivers. A small population is also in the Karnali river. Eggs (111) from 3 mugger nests have also been collected from Rapti river for captive breeding.

### PARK MANAGEMENT PLAN

Baseline information collection is in progress in Shey-Phoksundo National Park for the preparation of a management plan with the assistance of WWF-US. The park is situated in the mid-west Nepal occupying the Himalayan and trans-Himalayan region. It is the largest national park (3555 sq km) in Nepal. Biogeographically, it corresponds to the Tibetan Plateau of the Palearctic Region. A diverse biotic system exist due to various physical extremes coupled with annual rainfall less than 500 mm. Information will be collected mainly on resource use patten, resource management problems, wildlife species and habitat condition, grazing pattern and pastureland management, socio-economy of local population and tourism impact. The preliminary survey recorded 29 species of butterfly, 121 bird species, and more than 16 species of big mammals. Vegetation in the trans Himalayan region is completely different. The

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park is the homeland of about 2500 people of Tibetan origin. Animal husbandry and trade with Tibet are their main economic activities. Until 1989, Dolpa region including the park area was closed for the foreign visitors. Now, the southern parts of the park is open. Considering the scarce resources and fragile ecosystem of the park, tourism should be permitted to a sustainable limit only.

### STATUS OF BIG WADERS

A survey conducted in the beginning of the year along the southern Tarai revealed that large waders like White Stork *Ciconia ciconia*, Greater Adjutant Stork *Leptoptilos dubius*, Painted Stork *Mycteria leucocephala* and Black-necked Stork *Ephippiorhynchus asiaticus* have become alarmingly rare. Sunsari District with Koshi Tappu Wildlife Reserve (KTWR), a Ramsar Site, supports the highest wader population (41.3%). The study particularly concentrated on the status of storks, cranes, ibises and spoonbills. Rare species like Spoonbills (30), Baer's Pochard (3), Falcated Teal (1 male), White Pelican (2) were recorded in KTWR. White Stork, Black Stork and Cranes are the only big waders presently protected under the law.

### PANGOLIN CONCERN

Pangolin or the scaly anteater *Manis pentadactyla* has been reported occasionally from the surroundings of the Kathmandu Valley. Although rare, it is also reported from the Royal Chitwan National Park. Identification problem in general public sometimes results in the killing of the animal unaware of its protected status. It is nocturnal and fossorial in habit. Lack of teeth is due to its exclusive diet of ants and termites. Nearly 3 ft. in length, it is armoured on the back and sides by overlapping scales, a modified form of hair. When alarmed it curls into an impregnable ball.

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P.O. Box 860, Kathmandu, Nepal

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