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# Eastern Himalayas Bulletin

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## Small grants in Bhutan

Eight CEPF small grants have been awarded in Bhutan for the following projects.

### Conservation of Golden Langur and Capped Langur

**Location:** Corridor linking Thrumshingla National park with Royal Manas National Park, and Jigme Singye Wangchuck National Park.

**Grantee:** Tashi Wangchuk

The study will determine the extent of hybridization between Golden and Capped Langurs and establish a baseline for future monitoring. A hybrid troop of Golden Langurs and Capped Langurs (*Trachypithecus pileatus*) was noticed at the Dunmang hot springs in Zhemgang district in southern Bhutan. Hybridization between Capped and Golden Langurs could lead to the extinction of the Golden Langur as a distinct species.

### Snow Leopard ecology, distribution and conservation threats in Jigme Dorji National Park

**Grantee:** Tenzin Phuntsho

The proposed study will map snow leopard range and collect data on the species in the Jigme Dorji National Park.

### Spatio-temporal distribution of Takin at Boe Nueli and Landgra Ney

**Grantee:** Sangay

This research explores the range of Takin (*Budorcas taxicolor whitei*) in the Boe Nueli and Landgra Ney areas of Wangdue Dzongkhag, bordering the Jigme Dorji National Park. The study is expected to

provide information on the population status, density and demographic structure of the species. Inferences on birth and death rates will be drawn and migratory routes documented.



▲ Takin (*Budorcas taxicolor whitei*)

### Habitat use of Black-necked Crane at Trashiyangtse

**Location:** Bomdeling Wildlife Sanctuary

**Grantee:** Sherub

The study to be conducted in the wintering habitat of the Black-necked Crane (*Grus nigricollis*) in the Bumdeling valley, Trashiyangtse, will generate GIS baseline data on habitat types and land use to analyze the spatial and temporal use of the landscape by the species.

### Distribution, habitat characteristics and conservation status of Red Panda in Bhutan

**Location:** Thrumshingla National Park, Jigme Dorji National Park and corridors

**Grantee:** Sangay Dorji

This study will generate detailed information on the status and problem of conserving Red Panda (*Ailurus fulgens*) and on viable habitats for the

species in the country. It will help gain further support to maintain the animal's status as a protected species under the Forest and Nature Conservation Rule of 2006. The research results are also expected to help in proper zoning of the park and protecting key habitat.

### Conservation and management of Red Panda in Sakteng Wildlife Sanctuary

**Grantee:** Kesang Dorji

This study involves habitat surveys, population estimation and determination of immediate threats and ecology of the Red Panda in the Sakteng Wildlife Sanctuary, eastern Bhutan. A vegetation survey, scat sampling, as well as research on encounter rates of Red Panda and its associate species, and disturbance by humans and livestock are also included in the study. Potential habitat for the species is expected to be identified.

### Survey of Pygmy Hogs and Rhinoceros in Royal Manas National Park

**Grantee:** Sangay Wangchuk

The study will determine the presence / absence of Pygmy hog (*Sus salvanius*) and Rhinoceros (*Rhinoceros unicornis*) in an assessment of their habitat in the Royal Manas National Park. Sangay Wangchuk's research project was conceived in response to the lack of data for prescribing management interventions for species conservation in the Royal Manas National Park. The study's objectives are to assess rhino and pygmy hog habitat and map their distribution in the Royal Manas National Park.

### Habitat and biology of the White-bellied Heron in Bhutan

**Location:** Punakha, Wangdiphodrang, Tsirang, Dagana, Zhemgang, Mongar, Trashigang, Trashiyangtse, Sarbang, Samtse, Chukha and Ha areas

**Grantee:** Royal Society for the Protection of Nature (RSPN)

This study will acquire scientific data on the ecology and potential threats to the White-bellied Heron (*Ardea insignis*). The information gathered will help develop a five-year strategic plan for the species' conservation.

### For more information

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## Small grants in India

Thirteen grants have been given out in India in addition to Kashmira Kakati's camera-trap survey of carnivores mentioned in the previous issue of this bulletin.

### Assessment of the current status of Wild Water Buffalo in Assam

**Location:** Lakhimpur-Dhemaji and Dibru-Saikhowa in the North Bank Landscape.

**Grantee:** Dr. Anwaruddin Choudhury

This systematic survey of the globally endangered Wild Water Buffalo (*Bubalus arnee = bubalis*) will provide vital information on the status of the species. The threats faced from habitat loss and poaching will be assessed while the one from interbreeding with domestic buffaloes will also be given due attention. The findings from the survey will inform conservation strategy and form the basis for future monitoring.

### Conservation of turtles and tortoises of North East India

**Location:** foothills of Arunachal Pradesh and areas bordering Assam, with a focus on Dibru-Saikhowa, D'Ering, Mehao, Nameri and Pakke.

**Grantee:** M. Firoz Ahmed

The study will attempt to evaluate distribution, current status and trend of exploitation of threatened species of chelonians in northeast India. Although the region has a high diversity of turtles, there is little information on them. The study will survey wild turtles and tortoises in protected, non-protected, community owned areas and major turtle markets in the region and evaluate their present status. Distribution maps will be prepared and threats assessed. The capacity of local biologists in field research and turtle husbandry will also be developed.



▲ Black Softshell Turtle (*Aspiderates nigricans*)

### Assessment of conservation status of threatened rhododendron populations of the Sikkim Himalaya

**Grantee:** Lalit Kumar Rai

A comprehensive ground assessment of the extant rhododendron population of the Sikkim Himalaya will help in determining their status and in harnessing the information base from the indigenous knowledge system in the region. Results of the research would shed more light on two vanishing populations of rhododendrons – *R. decipiens* and *R. maddenii* – in certain natural habitats. This will help in determining the conservation status of the regional rhododendrons, at species as well as at the population level, and assist in framing plans for their conservation in the Himalaya.

### A study on the distribution and population status of Takin along the Tibetan and Myanmar borders of Arunachal Pradesh

**Grantee:** Dr. N.V.K. Ashraf

The survey will help assess the distribution, population status, habitat condition and the extent of anthropogenic pressure and other threats, if any, to the Takin (*Budorcas taxicolor*) habitat. A village level survey will also help to understand the use of animal resources by the locals and their dependency on them. Ways of involving local people in the conservation of takin will also be explored to make the conservation effort holistic and sustainable.

### Conserving through communities: adopting an inclusive approach of research, population monitoring, conservation education and extensionism on Golden Langur

**Location:** Manas Tiger cum Biosphere Reserve, Assam

**Grantee:** Dr. Jihosuo Biswas

The buffer area of Manas Tiger cum Biosphere Reserve i.e. Ripu-Chirrang-Manas Reserved Forest complex, contiguous with Bhutan, serves as the last stronghold of Golden langur (*Trachypithecus geei*). Here good forests with diverse habitat types that can ensure long-term viability of Golden langur populations still exist. Dr. Biswas' work attempts to quantify the population and demographic structure, determine habitat status, map available habitat, monitor population and identify threats and site-specific conservation strategies.

### Evaluation of population status, demography and threats to Capped langur

**Location:** Nameri National Park, Assam; Eagle Nest Wildlife Sanctuary and Sessa Orchid Sanctuary,

Arunachal Pradesh

**Grantee:** Nabajit Das

The study aims to assess the population status, density and demography of Capped langur (*Trachypithecus pileatus*) in the Nameri National Park and adjoining areas of Arunachal Pradesh, thereby filling gaps in our knowledge of the species. This project will also assess survival threats, input into an inter-state conservation action plan and involve communities in conservation and monitoring.

### Non-invasive monitoring to support local stewardship of snow leopards and their prey

**Location:** Sikkim trans-Himalaya

**Grantee:** Dr. Yashveer Bhatnagar

This collaborative NCF-TMI project seeks to work directly with pastoralists to make them aware of the value of the snow leopard by building on the conservation ethics of the local Buddhist culture. The project will also emphasize the determination of status, distribution and populations of prey species which are an important index of the status of the snow leopard. The project will develop a decentralized monitoring mechanism for the snow leopard and the other ungulates in the alpine zone by building the capacity of the herders in the area.

### Status survey and documentation of selected threatened medicinal flora

**Location:** Pakhui Wildlife Sanctuary, East Kameng District, Arunachal Pradesh

**Grantee:** Dr. Hui Tag

The study site is home to many rare, endemic and endangered medicinal plants of high commercial value and some of cultural significance. Observations by local people point out that these plants are under threat. Dr. Hui Tag's study aims to record the current threat status of these species in the wild. This systematic study and scientific documentation would form the basis for developing participatory conservation strategies and setting conservation priorities at the national and international levels.

### Status, survey and conservation action plan for *Cycas pectinata* complex of North Bank Landscape

**Location:** Nameri National Park, Assam; Eagle Nest Wildlife Sanctuary and Sessa Orchid Sanctuary, Arunachal Pradesh

**Grantee:** Dr. Rita Singh

The study aims to investigate a member of the gymnosperms' group– the cycads– of the Eastern Himalayan region. The systematic

survey, collection, identification and documentation of the *Cycas pectinata* complex of the North Bank Landscape will also involve study of distribution patterns, population size, growth pattern, population structure and phenology of both reproductive and vegetative cycles.

### Conservation of Hoolock gibbon by integrating field survey with education and awareness programme

**Location:** Mehao Wildlife Sanctuary, Arunachal Pradesh

**Grantee:** Dr. Dilip Chetry

The Mehao Wildlife Sanctuary is considered the northernmost point of distribution of the endangered Hoolock Gibbon (*Hylobates hoolock*) in India. The study will undertake a systematic survey of the species to assess its current status, threats, habitat, and distribution. Keeping in view the long term conservation of the Hoolock gibbon, it will also involve an education and awareness programme in the fringe area schools and community.

### Status survey of Hispid Hare in the North Bank Landscape

**Location:** North Bank Landscape, Assam and Arunachal Pradesh

**Grantee:** Naba Krishna Nath

The globally endangered Hispid hare (*Caprolagus hispidus*) occurs only in a few pockets of the Terai grasslands in Nepal and India in isolated populations. The study will be the first ever attempt to identify the status and distribution across the North Bank Landscape, survival threats and key habitat sites to formulate strategies for long-term conservation. This exploratory project is expected to assist policy makers and managers in preparing strategies and action plan for conservation of this endangered species.

### Ecology of the endangered Rufous-necked hornbill and conservation status of hornbills in the Eastern Himalayas

**Location:** Mehao Wildlife Sanctuary, Eagle's Nest Wildlife Sanctuary, D'Ering Wildlife Sanctuary, Namdapha National Park and other protected areas, reserve forests, unclassified state forests and community forests in Arunachal Pradesh.

**Grantee:** Rohit Naniwadekar

Current conservation status on the five species of hornbills that occur in northeast India is not well known, and there is a lack of quantitative information on the ecology of the globally

threatened Rufous-necked hornbill (*Aceros nipalensis*). This study aims to understand the distribution patterns and the relative impacts of hunting and habitat degradation on hornbill species in Arunachal Pradesh, to identify key dietary resources, and to understand resource partitioning mechanisms between the Rufous-necked hornbill and three other species of hornbills in the landscape.

### Survey, monitoring & conservation of the Bengal florican in the North Bank Landscape

**Location:** Barnadi Wildlife Sanctuary, Sonai Rupai Wildlife Sanctuary, Nameri National Park and Orang National Park of North bank landscape.

**Grantee:** Namita Brahma

This study attempts to provide an insight into the present status and conservation of the critically endangered bustard, the Bengal Florican (*Houbaropsis bengalensis*), in the North Bank landscape. The protected areas situated on the north bank of the Brahmaputra river are key habitats for the bird and knowledge of its current conservation status would be crucial for long-term conservation planning.

### For more information

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## Small grants in Nepal

Six grants have been awarded in Nepal bringing the total to eight grants. Grants were given for the following projects.

### Conservation of the breeding population of Lesser Adjutant Stork

**Location:** In and around Koshi Tappu Wildlife Reserve, Eastern Nepal

**Grantee:** Bharat Raj Subba

The Lesser Adjutant Stork (*Leptoptilos javanicus*), one of the eight species of storks found in Nepal, is globally threatened. The overall objective of the project is to ensure that the populations of Lesser Adjutant Stork found in the human-dominated landscape of eastern Nepal are conserved and the threats to their survival reduced. The study will determine the breeding success of the species in and around the Koshi Tappu Wildlife Reserve, document current threats and develop an awareness campaign for its survival.

### Conservation of key species of fauna and flora by reducing illegal activities through community-based anti-poaching approaches

**Location:** Environs of Bardia National Park, Nepal

**Grantee:** Amauri Range Post Level FECOFUN

The study area forms a biological corridor for large mammals and elephant and rhino frequently occur here. The overall objective of this action-oriented project is to reduce wildlife trade and other illegal natural resource-related activities through community-based initiatives in and around Bardia National Park. Specifically, the project will form anti-poaching groups and mobilize them at the community level. A community-based wildlife monitoring and information sharing mechanism, focusing on elephant and rhino, is also expected to be set up.

### Awareness raising and sensitization for conserving the Ganges River Dolphin in Eastern Nepal

**Location:** Morang, Eastern Nepal

**Grantee:** Jeevan Bikas Samaj

This project was conceived as a rapid-response action following the death of a Ganges dolphin (*Platanista gangetica*) in June this year. The 83-kilo dolphin was stoned to death after villagers spotted it in Lohondra, Judi river, a tributary of the Koshi river in Morang district of Eastern Nepal. Noting the lack of awareness, WWF/CEPF, following discussions with various organisations, identified Jeevan Bikas Samaj, a local NGO, as the appropriate institution to work on the issue. The project aims to sensitize local communities, education institutions, government and administrative agencies and civil society groups and bodies on the significance of dolphins. A community-based information and monitoring system for the movement of dolphins in the area will also be developed.

### Hispid hare population status, habitat utilization, distribution and conservation threats

**Location:** Bardia National Park, Western Nepal

**Grantee:** Promod Tandan

The project will study the population, ecology, extent of movement and habitat utilization of Hispid hare (*Caprolagus hispidus*) in Bardia National Park; determine species distribution and assess conservation threats; study the feasible presence of Pygmy hog (*Sus salvanius*); and provide recommendations to the park management authorities on scientific management of habitat and species.

### Initiating a community-managed vulture restaurant

**Location:** Gainda Tal, Lumbini

**Grantee:** Bird Conservation Nepal

This high-impact project aims to conserve the critically endangered population of vultures in Rupandehi district, Lumbini, in southern Nepal, by providing safe food and nesting habitats close to Gainda (Gaindahawa) Tal, while involving local communities in their conservation. Bird Conservation Nepal runs a similar project at the edge of the Chitwan National Park in Nawalparasi district, also in the Lumbini area, with considerable success. The proposed project in Rupandehi is a replication of the vulture restaurant in Nawalparasi.



▲ Vultures feeding on a carcass at the vulture restaurant in Nawalparasi district

### Species accounts, distribution, status and threat assessment of turtles in the lowlands of Nepal, with a focus on the Indian Eyed Turtle

**Location:** Wetlands of the Terai region in southern Nepal - Shuklapanta Wildlife Reserve, Bardia National Park, Chitwan National Park, Parsa Wildlife Reserve and Koshi Tappu Wildlife Reserve

**Grantee:** Man Kumar Dhamala

Man Kumar Dhamala's field work in the wetlands of Terai in southern Nepal is expected to help fill the critical information gap on the status of turtles in the country. The study is also expected to sensitize people and enable the involvement of local communities in turtle conservation. The study aims to measure the status and distribution of turtles in the Terai with a specific focus on the Indian Eyed Turtle (*Morenia petersi*) in Gainda Tal, Lumbini; assess threats to the survival of turtles especially with relation to turtle trade in Nepal; and gather people's perceptions on turtles while raising awareness on their status and conservation importance.

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## Progress in community forest management in eastern Nepal

The NGO Environmental Camps for Conservation Awareness (ECCA) has been working with community forest user groups for better management of community forests. Recently, users identified a prominent Red Panda site in the Pyang Patal community forest of Pyang Village Development Committee, Ilam, and have stopped harvesting forest products, including bamboo, in the area. Earlier, bamboo, essential for the survival of red panda, was indiscriminately harvested from the forest.

The organization is working with sixteen community forest user groups to develop operational plans for the forests. Fifteen operational plans have been developed so far, and trainings organized for local resource persons on developing the plans, monitoring of key species, and on controlling threats such as illegal trafficking, habitat destruction and illicit harvesting.

The NGO Namsaling Community Development (NCD), recipient of a CEPF large grant for biodiversity conservation through alternative livelihood development, organized a familiarization visit for representatives from fifteen community forest committees. Through the visit to selected community forests, members learnt about community forest management practices, briquetting and agricultural practices.

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The Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF) is a global program that provides grants to nongovernmental organizations and other private sector partners to protect critical ecosystems. It is a joint program of Conservation International, l'Agence Française de Développement, the Global Environment Facility, the Government of Japan, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, and the World Bank.

To apply for a CEPF grant, all applicants must submit a Letter of Inquiry (LOI), when calls for LOIs are advertised on the websites [www.panda.org/easternhimalayas/cepf](http://www.panda.org/easternhimalayas/cepf) and [www.cepf.net](http://www.cepf.net). The call for proposals will also be advertised in major national newspapers. Guidelines and format for developing LOIs are available on [www.cepf.net](http://www.cepf.net).

In the Eastern Himalayas region, WWF leads the regional team responsible for facilitating, coordinating and monitoring grants for CEPF-supported conservation projects.

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