

Primate Conservation Awareness Programme in Annapurna Conservation Area of Nepal

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Abstract

Nepal is a small, mountainous and biodiversity rich country. There are 181 species of mammal recorded in the country and three species of monkeys are found there. These are *Semnopithecus* sp., *Macaca mulata* and *Macaca assamensis*. These species are listed in the annexes of IUCN as well as CITES and are considered to be threatened species. The primate populations in Nepal are declining and isolated. The main threats to their conservation are disturbance of their natural habitat, conversion of forest land into agriculture land, wild fruit harvesting, poaching and human-primate conflict.

The project was carried out in three Village Development Committees (VDC) of Kaski district, Nepal. The main objective of the programme was to create primate conservation awareness by involving school students. The specific objectives were to:

- Organize school level education on the conservation of the primates
- Organize different school based activities such as drawing, quiz contests and essay writing.
- Publish and distribute primate related brochures, posters and note books.

The programme focused on school students in a human-primate conflict area. Three secondary level schools were selected for the programme. Conservation education like art and essay competitions, quiz contests and forest visits were carried out in schools in the study area. In total, 45 students from class 8 and 9 from three different schools participated in these activities.



Conservation education classes focused on an introduction to primates, their distribution range, the status of primates in Nepal and Annapurna Conservation Area, threats to the habitat and our role and responsibility in primate conservation. The education programme was successful in changing the attitude of local people towards the conservation of primates in the study area. The project published a conservation report entitled '*Save primates; an inseparable species of ecosystem*' and distributed it to school students and local clubs so that it could convey the message of saving the primates for our future. An information brochure on primates was attached to the back cover of the report to provide information on primates and their status in Nepal; this was written in Nepali.

The total duration of the programme was one month and the programme was able to create positive thoughts towards primates in the local area. Local old people were positively excited about the primate conservation programme. Local people, organizations and teachers welcomed the programme and suggested that it was extended to other VDCs /schools.

It is recommended that the programme is extended to other schools in the human-primate conflict area and to the Community Forest User Group. Conservation education activities are most important to raise awareness among local people, so awareness camps, conservation quizzes and art competitions for schools students should be launched. In addition, local villagers were keen that studies should be undertaken to find out which crops would be less susceptible to damage by primates.

The total expenditure for the projects was £700.00. PSGB provided £500.00 and Conservation Nepal provided £200.00 for the programme.