

Mithila Wildlife Trust – An introduction

Mithila Wildlife Trust (MWT) was established in 2013 by a group of nature lovers in Nepal, to conserve natural resources and wildlife in the country. Since establishment MWT has been working to restore diminishing national forest and its biodiversity as well as filling the gap of conservation activities outside Protected Area (PA) in the nation.

At present, organisation has been restoring the biodiversity of Dhanushadham Protected Forest (DPF) as a permanent as well as temporary shelter for the wildlife outside PAs, and the methods to conservation include community interaction programmes for indigenous knowledge sharing, promotion of private plantations to create hiding place for wildlife, alternative income generation activities, eco - tourism promotion and environmental education for the indigenous communities. The organisation facilitates academic researches for the wildlife and environment researchers outside PA and providing volunteer opportunities for national and international nature lovers.

MWT has been working for conservation and development of Dhanushadham Protected Forest since last 6 years. Acting for declaration of forest as Protected Forest, arranging technical support for 10 years management plan preparation, forming Council, committees and subcommittees for direct involvement of local communities in the conservation and development, rescue, rehabilitation and relocation of wildlife, planting the tree saplings on the diminished forest land and creating awareness among surrounding community and school students are the activities carried out by MWT, resulting the forest be announced as Illicit Felling and open grazing free zone in 2012 by The Government of Nepal at Zero Budget.

Creating a hotspot at Dhanushadham Protected Forest and lobbying the same throughout the State No.-2, organisation's activities have been focused on corridor connectivity for the wildlife travelling from Parsa National Park in the west to Koshi Tapu Wildlife Reserve in the east, a travelling distance of 1,613 Square KM in 1,61,380 Hectare Shivalik Mid-foot hills forest outside Protected Area. The main objectives of the project are to create dense forest patches, either private or national between human settlements so that, it can act as a hiding place for wildlife in day time and move from one to another patch securely with less human-wildlife conflicts and to ensure the financial benefits to the communities involved in conservation MWT works on sustainable tourism by establishment of eco tourism hotspot in their surroundings. Organisation works for an integrated concept where all environment, wildlife and dependent communities are benefited as a whole.

Thematic areas of works done by Mithila Wildlife Trust, Nepal are as under:

1. Environmental and Wildlife Conservation Awareness Programmes
2. Rescue and Rehabilitation activities for animals
3. Sustainable Development of Forests of Nepal (Dhanushadham Protected Forest as role model)
4. Sustainable Development Programmes based on ecosystem services.

Thanking you,

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1.1 Community Interaction and Awareness Programmes

In the communities where higher forms of mammals and antelopes like Lion, Tiger, Leopard, Bears and Deers are only considered as wildlife, the community interaction and awareness programmes have higher level of achievements. The awareness programmes are working as bridge to fulfill gap of wildlife and natural resources conservation inside and outside Protected Areas (PA). So many national and international organizations are working inside PA of Nepal, so, we have concentrated our awareness activities outside PA



to fulfill the gap of wildlife and natural conservation works in the society outside PA. Our works are highly appreciated by the community and we are encouraged with their continuous support to the organization in the rescue and rehabilitation activities of our organization. In most of the cases where harmless wildlife are left to leave freely, without any disturbance. Co-existence of

human and wildlife are being accepted and people have started their showing involvement towards sustainable use of natural resources.



Whenever and wherever wildlife is rescued, we also gather community after successful rescue and aware them about the particular species and other wildlife found in and nearing habitat. Awareness with the live specimen works fantastically, especially in the case of snake and turtle rescues.

1.2 Environmental and Wildlife Awareness Activities in the villages and schools/colleges.

Environmental awareness activities in the villages and schools seems to be easy method to connect the communities and school students towards environmental and wildlife conservation.

Reasons of climate change and their negative impacts in the daily life really motivated the surrounding community to continue



conservation of environment.

The projected communities

accepting the uses of traditional methods to avoid uses of plastic made materials and uses of polythene in local market is being avoided. The changes can also be noticed in the local markets where old generation to younger are starting uses of recycled and



re-usable bags to carry fruits, vegetables and other daily life materials. Awareness classes on the need of wildlife conservation, the debate competition, painting competition, quiz competition and so

many other activities are well noticed in our working schools and are highly appreciated by the schools and guardians of the students.

1.3 Field Trip to the students and eco-teachers

Students are the one to spend much time in the bushy areas to play or hang out with their friends and classmates. Their awareness works more than the awareness in the society. It helps them to avoid conflicts in one hand where they can easily convince their parents and neighbors to save life of the speechless in another.

To raise awareness among students, we have been organizing painting competition, debate competition, conservation painting,



plantation and school compound cleaning

activities in the schools. During our wildlife awareness programmes in the community and private schools, we encourage students to be familiar with the snakes; they touch it and feel it. We teach them about the precautions to be followed while we sight the snakes and other wild animals in the human



settlements. Students and children visiting Dhanushadham Protected Forest get chance to interact and spend time with turtle, rabbit and other harmful wildlife so that, they can remember the visit for lifetime.

1.4 Teaching students about forest and wildlife

To teach the students of schools in Buffer Zone, we attend classes in the community schools surrounding Parsa National Park and Dhanushadham Protected Forest.

The major topics touched during classes were wildlife, wildlife ecology and importance of wildlife, human-wildlife conflict, need of forest conservation, snakes, snake-bite and snake-bite first-aid.



1.5 Snake-bite Mitigation Initiative



As Snake-bite mitigation campaign is the focused programme of MWT, we use all available platform to share our experience with about it. We interact about snakes, snakes ecology, venomous and non-venomous snakes, Anti Snake Venom Serum, importance of snakes, avoiding snake-bites, DOs and DON'Ts of snake-bites, proper first-aid method in case of snake-bite incidents and common myths and truths about snakes.

According to the survey conducted by us in 2013, it was recorded that 68% of the total snake-bites don't goes to hospital where Anti Snake Venom is available, so since 2013 itself we're continuing our awareness programmes targeting the victims goes to traditional healers first, instead of certified medical practitioners in community hospitals.

2. Rescue and Rehabilitation Activities for animals

2.1 Snake Rescue, Release and Rehabilitation

Decreasing number of snake rescue calls is a sign that community people have started identifying snakes. We are not



being called to rescue for the non-venomous snakes that is why above 90% of the rescues are only for venomous one which assures us that methods taught to identify the non-



venomous snakes is working well. It is need of time to promote co-existence of the snakes and human being. Except the rescue of some King Cobra snake, all the releases were made within 250 Mtr. in the same localities so that, eco-system of the snakes not disturbed. No rescue was conducted outside human settlement.

Our snake rescue also includes 2 numbers of King Cobra (Ophiophagus hannah), one was relocated due to heavy disturbance in nearing area where second one was released within 100 mtr. of the rescued location. 2 level of awareness program was conducted in the area, prior to release at the same location so that, co-existence is accepted. And yes, it was encouraging for us that they easily accepted the release and keeps informing us the newly sighting of that individual snake. It shows us the awareness level of the community towards wildlife conservation.



Total 342 numbers of snakes were rescued in the year where 92% were the venomous rescues.

2.2 Turtle Conservation Initiatives

Not only the direct rescues from our side, the turtles are also rescued by local supporters and are released in the same localities after confirmation of the species. The endangered and



vulnerable species and either relocated or housed inside Turtle enclosure constructed by Mithila Wildlife Trust inside



Dhanushadham Protected Forest. All the Indian Flap shell turtles are released in the same localities in presence of local community after conducting an awareness program. The

conservation initiative has been working well that total 82 nos. of turtles have been saved by the

community people. It's an example of the community's involvement in wildlife conservation initiatives. Some of them are saved due to its' religious connection. According to the Hindu mythology, turtles are the representatives of God Vishnu and thus some people never kill turtle to prepare curry for food. We have constructed a turtle enclosure inside Dhanushadham Protected Forest to house and breed endangered and under threatened species of the turtle. The initiative aims to increase the population of turtle in wild. It will also help us conserve some of the species from being extinct. We exhibit the turtles to the students and the tourists to Dhanushadham for assurance of the increased level of awareness to conserve them in their urban and rural settings. Some turtles are rescued by the villagers and handed over to MWT for rehabilitation.



2.3 Bird Conservation

Rescuing the injured birds are also one of our regular duties. We receive call if the injured birds are sighted in or near human settlements. We rescue the birds and transport them to Dhanushadham Protected Forest, treat them and release inside forest.

The birds rescued without injuries are released in the same localities after examination. Our rescues includes Asian Koel, Spotted owlet, Spotted Dove, Indian spotted eagle, common myna, Black Drongo, Grass birds and Sun Birds. We were able to provide a new life to 36 birds this year.



3. Sustainable Management of Forest of Nepal (Dhanushadham Protected Forest as role model)

3.1 Enhancing capacity of Council Members

According to the rules and regulations of Government of Nepal, a council was formed having 31 members for the overall management of Dhanushadham Protected Forest. From announcement of the forest as protected forest, to prepare 10 Years management plan, forming Protected Forest Council and enhancing the capacity of council members, MWT has a great effort and investment. So, we conduct a forest trip of council members explaining about the forest, the regeneration, the conservation and the new arrivals of wildlife including birds and mammals. Such tours energizes the council members and motivates for the next step forward.



3.2 Modification of Snake Enclosure to house King Cobra inside DPF

The old 2 blocks of constructed snake enclosure were combined together to house King Cobra snake. It was



urgently required to house King cobra so that, it can be used for identification by the communities residing in Sivalik range. They are brought to Dhanushadham Protected Forest for the identification and awarded to conserve this particular species with priority to reduce human-snake conflict. Presently 2 nos. of King Cobras are housed inside the enclosure. The extension of enclosure is proposed in the coming financial year which can house at least 2 male and 1 female King Cobra for breeding purpose.

3.3 Restoration of Dhanush Dah

President Chure Terai Madhesh Conservation Development Committee, Government of Nepal funded for the restoration of Dhanush Dah with 6.5 hectare water area. The design and ideas of MWT was accepted and implemented for the restoration work. An Island has been created in middle of the pond for nesting and hatching of birds and turtles. The pond is proposed to be developed as conservation pond as well as boating facility in certain area.



3.4 Construction of outer Ring Road

It was finalized in the very first level of community interaction programmes to construct an outer ring-road around forest to provide substitute of the inner roads used by communities residing around forest. Total 9.2KM road has to be constructed where 3 KM road has been constructed with financial support of Department of Forests. Once the construction phase is over, entry inside forest without written permission will be restricted for security of wildlife and regeneration of plants. It is planned to complete road construction work in coming financial year.



3.5 Plantation in Barren Area

Nepal Electricity Board accepted to provide funding for plantation in 146 Hectare barren forest land of Dhanushadham Protected Forest which will also include barbed wire fencing of new plantation. The fencing and plantation activities have been started and approx. 10 hectare have been planted.



3.6 Reaching in Media through TV Programme

A program called "Chakrabyuh" was organized inside Dhanushadham Protected Forest as part of massive advertisement. Above 200 individuals from different professional background took part in the program including Honb'le Secreretary, Ministry of Forest and Soil Conservation and Honb'le Chairman, President Chure Terai Madhesh Conservation Development Committee.



Several politicians and stakeholders were also present in the program where we explained the past, present and future of the forest. Everybody committed for the possible support from their side in the future developmental programmes. Everybody then, observed the snake enclosure, turtle enclosure and under construction crocodile enclosure and also roamed inside forest to see

the natural germination.

4. Sustainable Management Programmes based on ecosystem services.

4.1 Upgraded Level of Mithila Painting Training

As part of the continuity and upgrade in the Mithila painting program, we conducted upgraded level of Mithila painting training to the participants who had already been trained last year and first level of training to the new participants. The training programs were conducted in Janakpur dham and Dhanushadham. The



participants

were dalit students and

women. Mithila painting holds above 1000 years of history of explaining everything through painting, no words are used in painting. Maithili women used to paint and decorate house through this painting method since ancient days and it is one of major ancient cultural history of Maithili community. In the present days the demand of this painting is increasing and to

get benefit from the increasing market as well as to create a sustainable business opportunity, we're supporting and promoting the paintings.

4.2 Women Empowerment through Vocational Trainings

We always consider women group, unemployment youth and marginalized community while planning the programmes. And to uplift the economical condition of the house wives,



providing sewing and cutting training is always demanded. It has proven to be the best way to save



money for day to day repairing and sewing of the cloths, where several women have turned professional to earn satisfying income by sewing cloths.

4.3 Sustainable tourism

In the 21st century where people spending their days in heavy duty and the increasing number of urban settlements, people require the place where they can spend their leisure time with nature and where they can experience both nature and peace of mind, tourism business in also proven to be the best sustainable business.

In the eco-tourism business, involved community can earn handsome amount without much investment. So, we tried to connect the community through the developmental process where they can also earn handsome amount. We



started entry ticket for the exhibition of snake and turtle enclosures. It created job for the 2 locals directly,



where sales of the shop is marked increasing due to tourist coming to the site, thus indirect benefit to others. On an average basis 117 people have been visiting to observe Snake and Turtle enclosure inside Dhanushadham Protected forest.

We're trying to connect the communities residing outside protected areas in the natural resources and wildlife conservation activities, so, we're bound to keep some animals in exhibition but still we give priority to animal life and their natural behavior. We keep the exhibition of King Cobra closed for 72 hours once a snake is fed as it requires complete rest for 48 to 72 hours once having food.

2.4 Enhancing the pre-formed Jhijhiya Committee

Jhijhiya is the ancient cultural dance of Maithili women, where a group maithili women gather together, they keep a mud pot with dozens of whole in the sides of pot, lighting a light in small mud pot inside the main mud pot and keep singing and dancing in maithili language. It is one of the cultural celebrated and enjoyed by maithili community freely. 2-3 males are only allowed in the group who plays instruments to tune up the songs of women.



The Jhijhiya group was formed including 25 Mushahar Women from the attached Mushahar communities. They perform in several festival in the villages and earn amount as remuneration. They also perform in front of several tourist group visiting to Dhanushadham Protected Forest and tourist give them a token amount as remuneration which has proven to be a good alternative livelihood for them instead of depending on the forest and on the male of the family for economical requirements.