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This light box at Vientiane's International Airport reminds visitors of the need to stamp out the illegal wildlife trade to conserve Lao's threatened wildlife.

Community-based Conservation Action Planning for Brown Bears in Nepal

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Conservation Action Planning (CAP) for wildlife species in South Asia has largely been a 'top-down approach,' where subject experts, policy and decision makers develop the plans; these often fail to achieve the conservation goals, however, due to lack of understanding of the realities on the ground and/or lack of involvement ('buy-in') of the local communities. Conversely, community-based CAP is a 'bottom-top approach' that brings local communities, government, and NGOs to work toward achieving the desired community goals for conservation of wildlife in an area. Community-based CAP takes into consideration the on-the-ground situations, culture and traditions of local communities, and even the norms and values of an area. Therefore, such CAP is more likely to achieve success, as the local communities have a sense of ownership and moral obligation for its effective implementation.

in a nationwide campaign for wildlife conservation, supported by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations Wildlife Enforcement Network (ASEAN-WEN: www.asean-wen.org) through USAID, Global Tiger Initiative, and The World Bank, as well as locally active INGOs and companies; the working group is also investigating several opportunities for further campaigns. A recent "Lao-WEN" (Lao Wildlife Enforcement Network) workshop (as part of the greater ASEAN-WEN regional law enforcement initiative) was organized by FreeLand Foundation and again supported by Free the Bears Fund with generous funding by Hauser Bears and USAID as well as the joint Lao government, Finnish government and World Bank "SUFORD" Program. The meeting was held over two days in Vientiane in March 2010 with the aim of promoting awareness of the new law and ensuring that the roles of various government departments are clearly understood. Attended by over 100 officials from provincial Forestry Inspection offices, Department of Forestry, police, customs, military, and CITES, the meeting provided

an excellent forum for the sharing of experiences as well as creating a launch-pad for the establishment of a multi-agency Lao-WEN task force. It was announced at the meeting that all previous licenses for wildlife farms had been revoked and the government will soon begin inspections of existing wildlife farms to determine whether they are operating within Lao's national laws.

The Illegal Wildlife Trade Action Group is keen to continue to build on the momentum that has been established and to increase awareness and action on issues surrounding illegal wildlife trading in Lao PDR. This includes efforts to eradicate illegally operating bear bile farms. Perhaps coincidentally, the week of the Lao-WEN meeting saw the arrival of five new bears at the Tat Kuang Si Bear Rescue Centre including four cubs which were handed over to Luang Prabang Provincial Agriculture and Forestry Office and a sub-adult female Asiatic black bear that was transferred to the centre by authorities in Houaphan province. For more information on work in Lao please visit the website www.wildlifetradelaos.org. 🐻

The high mountains of Nepal encompass the prime habitats of large carnivores (brown bear, snow leopard) and associated wildlife (mountain ungulates). Due to remoteness, high altitude, and severe cold climatic conditions, these areas have received little conservation attention until fairly recently. The poor economic status of the local people and the hardships they face in their day-to-day lives are limitations in generating local support for wildlife conservation, particularly for government plans and policies. In 2004, the brown bear was confirmed from the Upper Mustang (Annapurna Conservation Area) and recently in 2008 we also confirmed its presence in Manaslu Areas of Nepal through field and questionnaire surveys. The population of brown bears in this area is very small, yet causes conflicts with local people, thus calling for a well-considered, community-based conservation plan.

The Biodiversity Research and Training Forum (BRTF) organized a national workshop on “Community-based Conservation Action Plan for Brown bear in Nepal” in Pokhara, Nepal, 21-24 January 2010. This workshop was held in collaboration with the BSG’s South Asian Brown Bear Expert Team, and with financial support from the Rufford Small Grants Programme (UK), British Ecological Society (UK), and the Keidanren Nature Conservation Fund (Japan). Eighty-one people participated in this



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Searching for brown bear sign (diggings for marmots) in the Upper Mustang region of Nepal.

workshop, including 56 representatives from the local communities of Annapurna and Manaslu areas, officials from the government, subject experts, and members of NGOs. The representatives from the local communities were from five Village Development Committees (VDC) viz., Lomangthang, Chhoser, Chhondup, Surkhang, and Charang of Upper Mustang, and Sama VDC Gorkha of Manaslu Conservation Area.

In the formal sessions of the workshop, presentations were made by subject experts on various topics related

to brown bears, wildlife conservation, and the importance of involvement of local communities. Presenters included Mr. Nar Bahadur Amgai, Project Director from Annapurna Conservation Area; Dr. Keshab Duta Awasti, Dean, Institute of Forestry, Pokhara; Dr. Govinda Basnet, Environmental Anthropologist; Mr. Kamal Jung Kanwar, Ministry of Forest and Soil Conservation; Mr. Achyut Aryal, BRTF; Mr. Narendra Lama, National Trust For Nature Conservation; and Dr. S. Sathyakumar, Wildlife Institute of India. As a representative of the local community and Chairperson of the Conservation Area Management Committee, Mr. Indra Dhara Bista mentioned that the participation of the local communities in CAP will be the key factor for its success and stressed the importance of immediate endorsement of the plan by the government. He also highlighted the linkage between tourism and wildlife, and the importance of accurately portraying the need for wildlife conservation in the tourist-based media.

During small working group sessions, participants from the local communities mapped the distribution



Participants of the workshop on ‘Community-based Conservation Action Plan for Brown bears in Nepal’, held in Pokhara, January 2010.

of brown bears and other wildlife in their respective areas. They then applied site-specific CAP for brown bears, detailing problems, solutions and responsibilities for each VDC. All the VDCs presented their draft plans and incorporated suggestions made by other participants during the deliberations. Local people from these VDCs are now focusing on a livestock insurance policy and development of a climate change adaptation strategy not only for people but also for wildlife.

During this workshop, a book 'Brown Bear Conservation Nepal' written by Achyut Aryal and a Poster on 'Bears of Nepal' were released. The draft Conservation Action Plan is currently under finalization and will be submitted to the Government of Nepal for endorsement and implementation. 🐻

The Use of Chest Marks to Distinguish Asiatic Black Bear and Sun Bear Individuals in Thailand

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Assessing the recovery and conservation status of threatened species usually depends on the precision of population estimates of target species (Skalski et al. 2005). Bears present a challenge for estimating abundance because of their elusive behavior (Garshelis 2006). Generally, mark-recapture techniques offer a powerful method for estimating abundance. Population estimates of bears have mostly been conducted by using

mark-recapture with radio-collared animals (Garshelis et al. 1999), camera trapping re-sighting of bears marked with ear tags, and DNA-hair analysis (Boulanger et al. 2004). Recently, facial and pelage patterns of Andean bears have been used as unique marks to estimate bear abundance (Rios-Uzeda et al. 2007).

In this work, we present preliminary results from an experiment that sought to identify individual