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The

Himalayan Naturalist

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Human-Assamese macaque conflict in MBNP
buffer zone

Recent discoveries:

Asiatic golden cat and Red panda in TMJ

Brown fish owl breeding record in Nepal

Chinese pangolin's new distribution record in
Bhutan

Birds of Bajhang

Deukhuri valley: a wildlife haven in Siwalik hills

Photos from the wild

Editorial

Publishing a newsletter on biodiversity and conservation was always a priority for us. In 2005 we launched 'Eco-Mirror' but unfortunately it was discontinued due to lack of funds for publishing. Even now, committing extra time and raising money for a magazine on biodiversity and conservation was a big challenge. We had several lengthy discussions on the subject before we went forward and decided to start a newsletter again.

A major factor that pushed us to take this decision was availability of very few decent publishing platforms for researchers and conservationists in the Himalayan region. In many cases, this leads to lack of proper documentation, hindering the process of dissemination and sharing of valuable research process and outputs. Most materials that are available often reaches only a small specialized section of people. When dealing with sensitive issues of conservation it is often a race against time as inaction can proliferate threats to habitats and species. Thus, the value of information sharing cannot be undermined. Our long-term vision is to develop this newsletter as an open access peer-reviewed wildlife conservation journal for the whole Himalayan region. This will also help gather support from general people and other conservation stakeholders on important issues relating to conservation.

On a lighter note, deciding the name of the newsletter was surprisingly hard. Some of us thought of keeping the previous name while others thought the name would be too generic for a wildlife research and conservation focused publication. We ended up with a really long list. So, selecting the best names we conducted a poll in our Facebook page to involve our readers in the decision. We would like to thank everyone for your support and participation.

So finally, here we are with the first issue of our biannual, digital newsletter 'The Himalayan Naturalist'. The newsletter aims to incorporate both scientific and general articles on wildlife research and conservation. We hope that this newsletter would reach a wide audience and empower researchers and conservationists.

We look forward to your critical comments and suggestions which will help us improve the newsletter in coming days.

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FRONT COVER PHOTO

Red panda by JEEVAN RAI

BACK COVER PHOTO

Himalayan marmots by YADAV GHIMIREY

Distribution Update

New distribution record of the Critically Endangered Chinese pangolin *Manis pentadactyla* in Bhutan

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The Chinese pangolin *Manis pentadactyla* is one of the eight species of pangolins and is classified as Critically Endangered on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species. Its population is rapidly declining due to high levels of poaching for meat and scales across its range (Challender et al. 2014). It is highly susceptible due to its low reproductive rate (usually one litter per year, one cub per litter), food specialization, very poor defense mechanism and strict requirement for habitat (Wu et al. 2004a)

This species is distributed in the southern foothills of Bhutan, China, Hong Kong, India, Laos, Myanmar, Nepal, Taiwan, Thailand and Vietnam (IUCN SSC Pangolin Specialist Group, 2018). In Bhutan, it is mostly found in Samtse, Sarpang and Samdrup Jongkhar districts (Dorji 2017).

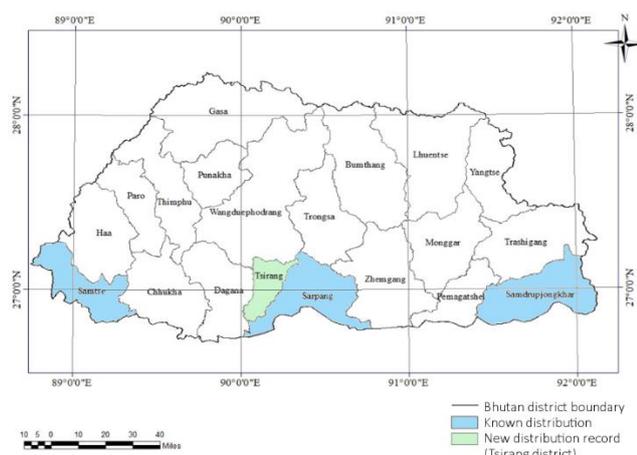


FIG. 1: Map showing districts with new and known distribution areas of Chinese pangolin in Bhutan.

Chinese pangolin mostly prefers broad-leaved forest due to higher presence of termites, its principle diet (Wu et al. 2004b). Primary forest was found to support more pangolins probably due to the availability of large numbers of old hollow trees fit for sleeping and as den (Newton et al. 2008). Besides primary and secondary forest, pangolins have been recorded to occur in oil palm and rubber plantation and near human settlement (Gurung and Singh 1996, Azhar et al. 2013, Katuwal et al. 2015). In Nepal, forest patches and agriculture land in close proximity to human dominated landscape were found to be preferred habitat (Katuwal et al. 2015, Thapa et al. 2014). In Bhutan, pangolins are mostly found in cardamom cultivation area in winter for feeding (Wangchuk 2010) and the maximum numbers of burrows

were observed in such cultivation areas in Samtse district (Dorji 2017).

On 4 April 2018, a local resident of Tsirang reported a sighting of a strange injured animal. Upon receiving the information, a team of forestry staff from Tsirang Forest Division rushed to the site where they found a female Chinese pangolin (PHOTO 1) in a defensive rolled position.



PHOTO 1: Chinese pangolin after its release in Tsirang district.

The pangolin was brought to the Interim Wildlife Rescue Centre of Tsirang Forest Division for treatment and rehabilitation. Weighing 6.1 kg, the female Chinese Pangolin was kept in the wildlife center for 73 hours for treatment and then released back to a safe natural habitat. This is the first report of Chinese Pangolin in Tsirang District, Bhutan. This sighting confirms the distribution of the Chinese pangolin in Southern Central Bhutan (FIG. 1).

Further detailed studies are highly recommended to understand the extent of its distribution, threats and mitigation measures to prevent a further decline in its population.

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Biosketch

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