

2016

REPORT

NEPAL OWL FESTIVAL 2016

SIKLES, KASKI



Prepared by:

(Raju Acharya, Yadav Ghimirey and Suman Acharya)

Friends of Nature (FON) Nepal

Kathmandu, Nepal

(Photographs: Sanej Prasad Suwal, Raj Prasai, Naresh Kusi, Raju Acharya, Kaushal Yadav,
Bipana Maiya Sadadev, Sabita Gurung, Chiran Khanal)

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NEPAL OWL FESTIVAL 2016 - AN OVERVIEW

Nepal Owl festival, an annual event organized by Friends of Nature (FON) Nepal, is an effort to promote owl conservation along with promotion of traditional culture, traditional games and eco-tourism too. This year it was celebrated on February 19-20, 2016 at Sikles, Parche VDC of Kaski district in the mid hills of western Nepal. More than 4000 people including 450 student, local residents and visitors participated the festival Nepal Owl Festival 2016 in Sikles. Millions of people from different parts of Nepal got a chance to participate the festival indirectly through different media including BBC Nepali Service



Photo: Local visitors at Nepal Owl Festival 2016.

SITE SELECTION

After careful consideration among 14 possible venues we confirmed to organize the fifth Nepal Owl Festival 2016 in Sikles, a beautiful village in the hills of Kaski district.



Photo: Sikles Village

Sikles is a village lying in the lap of Lamjung Himal that lies 42 kilometers north of Pokhara valley, at an elevation of 1950 meters above sea level. It is the birth place of late Dr. Chandra Pd. Gurung, who designed and implemented Nepal's first community-based integrated conservation and development project, the Annapurna Conservation Area Project. Sikles has approximately 400 households making it one of the largest Gurung villages of Nepal. The



Photo: Women in local business

majority of people here are Gurungs with minority of dalits. Tourism and agriculture are the primary source of economy in Sikles whereas remittance from recruits to British and Indian army also has a strong influence in the economy of the village.

The charming view of snow covered mountains refreshes every visitor in the village. A perfect blend of diverse local culture, traditional houses built up of stones, stone paved trails and cleanliness of the village keeps you captivated. Sikles trekking is newly explored and virgin trekking routes above the Mardi Khola (1,980m) overlooking Annapurna IV (7525 m) to the north and Annapurna II (7939 m) and Lamjung Himal to the east. Ghale kharka (4500m) one day of trek with camping from Sikles village, Hugu six hours trek from Sikles village, Parche camp site, live avalanche from Rishing Danda and Sikles Eco museum are other local attraction for additional visits.

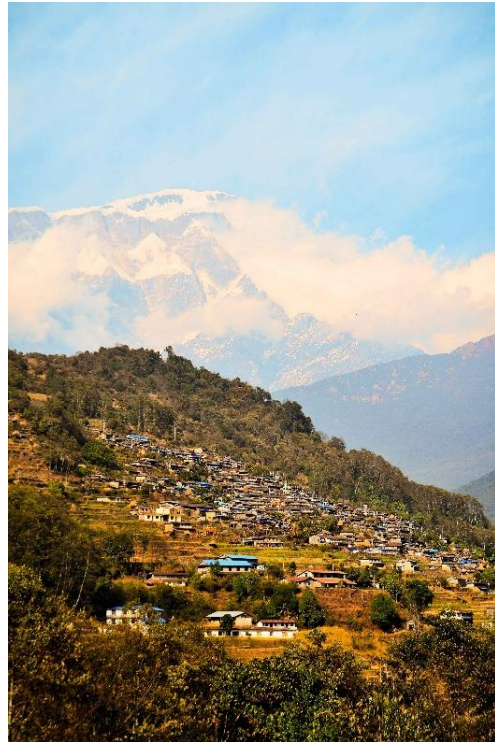


Photo: Sikles Village on the lap of Lamjung Himal

The area is rich in different floral species like Chilaune (*Schima wallichii*), Katus (*Castanopsis indica*), Lankuri (*Fraxinus floribunda*), Uttis (*Alnus nepalensis*) along with varieties of NTFP including Kurilo (*Asparagus racemosus*), Chiraito (*Swertia chirayita*) and Panch aule (*Dactylorhiza hatagirea*). Wildlife like Barking Deer (*Muntiacus vaginalis*), Musk deer (*Moschus chrysogaster*), goral (*Nemorhedus goral*), Himalayan thar (*Hemitragus jemlahicus*), Himalayan black bear (*Ursus thibetanus*), Common leopard (*Panthera pardus*), Ban Biralo (*Felis chaus*), Clouded leopard (*Neofelis nebulosa*) including avian species like Bonelli's Eagle (*Aquila fasciata*), Olive-backed Pipit (*Anthus hodgsoni*), Bearded vulture (*Gypaetus barbatus*) etc. are found in the area.



Photo: Nepal Owl Festival, 2016, Program Venue

How to get to Sikles?

1. Buses leave to Sikles every morning and afternoon at 07:00 AM and 01:00 PM respectively from Kanhukhola (The trip takes approximately 5-6 hours from Kahukhola to Sikles (NPR 290)). In case the bus to Sikles is missed, a bus to Sabi from Kahukhola can be joined that leaves at 08:00 AM, 12:00 PM and 03:00 PM that costs NPR 100 and trek to Sikles from Sabi (approximately 5 hours of walk). There is the service of Jeep from Kahukhola to Sikles and costs about NPR 1000/person. Jeep can be reserved as well at NPR 7000-8000 (Kahukhola-Sikles).
2. There is no direct route to Sikles from Kathmandu or any other places. So visitors from outside the Pokhara valley must spend a night at Pokhara and begin the trip to Sikles early at 07:00 AM from Kahukhola.
3. One who wishes to visit Sikles in their private vehicle (four wheel drive) or motorcycle can take the route of Kathmandu-Mugling-Pokhara-Sikles.

Preparation of the festival

Sikles was visited multiple times by team of Friends of Nature (FON) Nepal and several discussions were held with local people and Annapurna Conservation Area Project, Sikles in order to confirm the village as a venue for the event. After the confirmation of festival venue a twenty four member Nepal Owl Festival 2016 Organizing Committee was formed under the chairmanship of Mr. Suraj Kumar Gurung. Nepal Owl Festival 2016 preparation meeting was done with organizing committee, schools and mother groups of each ward of Parche VDC.

A sport ground and building of Sikles Youth Club was selected as the venue for the Nepal Owl Festival 2016. Sport ground of Sikles Youth Club with stage was sufficient in terms of space to organize different cultural shows, local games and public owl conservation camp. Similarly, the building of the club was perfect for exhibition hall where different owl related materials were put for public display during the festival.

In Kathmandu

FON Nepal gathered a group of volunteers, and held several meetings to distribute work plan and prepare for the festival. Before heading to the festival venue, the team collected and prepared owl related articles and curios for display, and designed certificates, awards and banners. A short promotional video of Nepal Owl Festival 2015 was developed, which was uploaded in you tube (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DO3nSgYM2Fg>) and shared in online social media for public viewing. Detailed information on the festival was disseminated online through official facebook page of FON Nepal (<https://www.facebook.com/fonnepal2005>; with around 4500 followers) and its facebook group (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/fonnepal>; with over 12,500 members).

In Sikles

Broadcasting and publication of the news about festival in local news media were done for the promotion of Nepal Owl Festival. Further promotion was done by orienting students at school, meeting with local organizing committee, discussion with mothers groups and notice distribution throughout the village. Students were one of the primary stakeholders which was indicated by the school level competitions. For example owl poem competition was targeted for lower

secondary level (class six to eight) and owl art competition for primary (up to class five) and secondary level (class nine and ten). The winners of each competitions were to be awarded during the main event of the festival.

Owl conservation camps for students

Mr. Raju Acharya and Mr. Suman Acharya conducted owl conservation camps in the schools of Sikles village reaching the venue a week before the festival where information on status, biology and conservation of owls were disseminated. In total 10 conservation camps were conducted that benefitted around 450 students from Annapurna Secondary School, Nalku Primary School and Sthanpati Lower Secondary School were conducted.



Photo: School camps by Raju Acharya

Press conference

To ensure a good public participation in the festival, a press conference was held in February 8 in Pokhara, headquarter of Kaski district. A total of 24 journalists from various national and local media were present in the conference. They helped in the publicity of the festival and also to increase public awareness on owl conservation through publication and broadcast of festival detail in the newspapers, TV and FM stations. Furthermore, promotional banners were put at various public places to publicize the festival events. Invitation card, e-invitation card, email were also send to potential visitors make festival wider and participatory.

Festival Activities

Similar to the earlier Nepal Owl Festivals, this year the festival with various activities were planned for two days. First day included various events like inauguration, bird watching competition, nature photo walk, local games, public display of temporary owl museum and public owl conservation camp where as second day contained the main events of the festival. Additional activities like face painting, cultural shows, owl conservation speeches, prize distribution and distribution of nature conservation awards were included in second day.



Photo: Local mother's group welcoming chief guests

Day 1: February 19, 2016

The first day of the festival started with photo walk and birding competition early in the morning at 07:00 am. The festival was officially inaugurated during the day followed by; competition of different local games and display of owl related materials. More than 500 local villagers participated the owl conservation camp in the evening hosted by Mr. Raju Acharya, country representative of World Owl Trust, UK. The camp cleared different queries/curiosities on owl conservation among the participants.



Photo: Guests of Nepal Owl Festival. 2016 during the National anthem.

Owl Festival Inauguration

Chief guest Mr. Govinda Gajurel, member secretary of the National Trust for Nature Conservation (NTNC), inaugurated Nepal Owl Festival 2016 by cutting the ribbon.



Photo: Nepal Owl Festival 2016, inauguration by Chief Guest.

Bird watching competition

As per the schedule, bird watching competition started at 07:00 A.M and ended at 12:00 P.M. The competition was participated by nine birders equipped with their binoculars and bird book.



Photo: Birders being briefed on bird watching competition.

Bird watching and nature photo walk

Renowned birder and FON Nepal's executive council member; Mr. Som G.C. led a group of 40 interested people for bird watching. The list of observed birds includes Bonelli's Eagle, Olive backed Pipit, Bearded Vulture, Slaty-Headed Parakeet. Similarly, Mr. Sanej Prasad Suwal led a group of interested people for nature photo walk and collected photographs of the fascinating landscape dominated by the Lamjung *himal* on the backdrop of the alluring Gurung village.



Photo: Bird watching and nature photo walk

Temporary owl museum

The temporary Owl museum was installed in Sikles Youth Club's new building and included new items like the game 'Save the Owl' and photo booth 'I am an Owl' for public display and participation.



Photo: Temporary Owl museum

Winning poems and arts

The top three poems and arts from the school level competition were put for public display during the festival. The winner of secondary level and primary level art competition were Mr. Dipesh Gurung from Dhanubaans Kalika Secondary School and Mr. Prajwal Gurung from Nalku Primary School respectively. Similarly, Ms. Sneha Gurung from Annapurna Secondary School won the poem competition.



Photo: Winning arts and poems

Owl sketches

Renowned national award winner artist Mr. Roshan Bhandari (M.F.A student at Central Department of Fine Arts, Tribhuvan University) and Ms. Sabita Gurung, M.Sc. student at Central Department of Zoology, Tribhuvan University exhibited their owl sketches.



Photo : Owl sketches by Roshan Bhandari



Photo: Sketches by artist Sabita



Photo: Paintings and sketches by students from Creative Academy, Kathmandu



Photo: Sketches by students from Modern Indian School, Kathmandu

Owl straw arts

Owl straw arts and owl straw masks were an attractive creation displayed in the festival by Mr. Sitaram Gosai, a national award winning straw artist. Mr. Gosai also made the owl straw mask live in the festival that attracted large number of children and visitors towards display hall. The straw used for making arts and masks was of wheat.



Photo: Straw art by artist Sitaram Gosain

Owl robot and owl call playing device

The owl robot prepared by Mr. Madan Gyawali and helped finishing by Ms. Sabita Gurung and the owl call playing device prepared by Mr. Madan Gyawali and Mr. Mohan Gurung became an interesting attraction of Nepal Owl Festival 2016. Visitors were amazed to see the flapping wings and head rotation by owl robot at 180°. The owl call device played calls of eight different species of owls and a picture and general illustration of the corresponding owls were displayed for a better understanding of the owls.

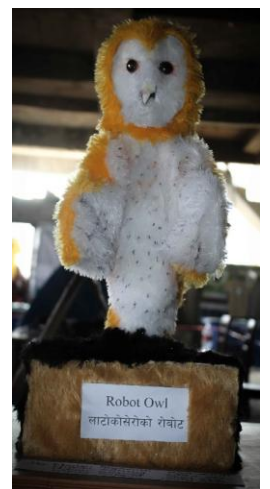


Photo: Owl Robot prepared by Madan Gyawali



Photo: Owl call device

Owl Nest

Owl nest prepared by Ms. Sabita Gurung and Mr. Mohan Gurung was also kept in the museum.



Photo: Owl nest by Sabita Gurung and Mohan Gurung

Taxidermy specimens and prey of owls

Temporary owl museum contained the taxidermy specimen of a barn owl and brown wood owl brought from the Natural History Museum, Tribhuvan University, Kathmandu and the museum specimens of the prey of owls that included rat, mongoose, bat and insects brought from the Central Department of Zoology, Tribhuvan University, proved effective in portraying an overall picture of the food chain of owls.



Photo: Taxidermy and museum specimens showing owls and their prey

Owl photo booth 'I am an Owl'

A photo booth was installed in the museum. This was other attraction of the festival. Visitors kept a keen interest in photographing in the owl photo booth.



Photo: Visitor enjoying Owl photo booth

Owl study and research equipment

Equipment that are generally used in the study and research of owls were kept in the museum for exhibition. Equipment included GPS, tent and mattress, sleeping bag, call recorder, reference books, densiometer, binoculars, torchlight, weighing machine, scale, compass, monopod, sampling vials, maps, survey form and a measuring tape.



Photo: Different equipment used in the study and research on owls

Save the owl

A game was developed on dart board that discouraged the killing of owl and was installed in the hall. The dart board was painted with owls and as well as a hunter as shown in photo 'Dart game *Save the owl*'. Every visitors enjoyed the game and appreciated the punishment of up and down for those who darted owl. The one who darted the hunter would make his/her competitor follow the same punishment.



Photo: Dart game 'Save the owl' ३९ | 19

Owl curios

Different owls related items like cups, plates, handicrafts, hangers, bags, bottles, caps etc. that contained owl images on them were put for public display in the museum. They were collected from different curio and other shops both in Nepal and abroad.



Photo: Owl Curios

Owl masks

Owl masks of various designs were hanged in the hall which added charm to the display hall. Ms. Sabita Gurung designed paper mask and Mr. Sitaram Gosain designed straw mask which were enjoyed wearing by a large number of children and visitors.



Photo: Owl masks in the public display



Photo: FON members and local boy in Owl straw mask.

Owl t-shirts

Variety of t-shirts with owl images prints were displayed in a public. T-shirts were specially designed for the festival that also contained the logo of Accordeos foundation and Friends of Nature (FON) Nepal in it.



Photo: Different t-shirts with owl images

Owl conservation poster

A poster conveying message on owl conservation was put for display in the festival. The main photo of a spotted owl was provided to us by photographer Mr. Sagar Thapa.

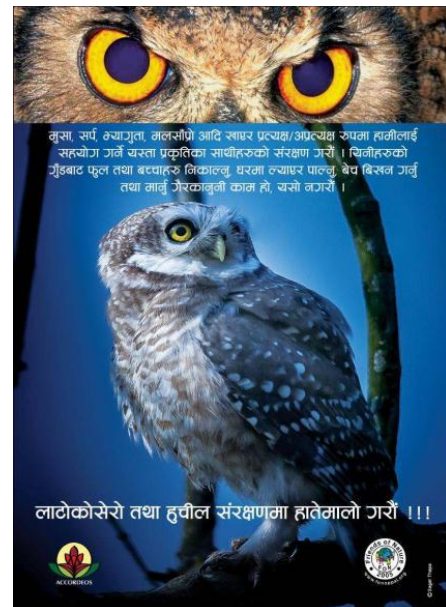


Photo: Owl conservation poster

Owl origami

Different owl origami were made and put in the hall for public display.



Photo: Owl origami in public display

Owl Information sheets

Information about the importance of owls, their biology and interesting facts were also put in the public display. For instance: the group of owl is called parliament, Owls throw away the undigested remains of the prey out of the mouth which is called pellet, a single family of an owl consumes about 3000 mice in a single breeding season.

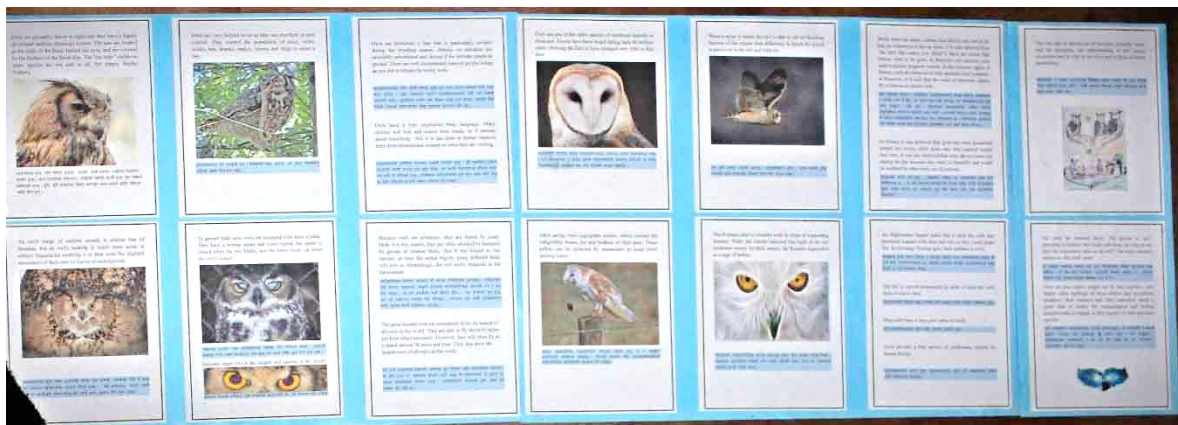


Photo: Owl fact sheets

Organization stalls

Different organizations like Annapurna Conservation Area, Bird Conservation Nepal, Small Mammals Conservation and Research Foundation and Himalayan Nature installed their stalls in Nepal Owl Festival 2016. All these organizations are working for the conservation of nature and biodiversity. Hence, for the further promotion of nature and biodiversity conservation through public display of their works these organizational stalls were installed in the festival.

Annapurna Conservation Area & Eco-Museum, Sikles

Annapurna Conservation Area Project (ACAP) was launched in 1986 as the first Conservation Area and largest protected area in Nepal. It covers an area of 7,629 sq. km. and is home to over 100,000 residents of different cultural and linguistic groups. ACA is rich in biodiversity and is a treasure house for 1,226 species of flowering plants, 102 mammals, 474 birds, 39 reptiles and 22 amphibians. ACA has been working to achieve sustained balance between nature conservation and socio-economic improvement in the Annapurna Conservation Area (ACA). Different publications and books published by ACAP were put in display in its stall. Eco-Museum, Sikles was established in 2014 at Sikles, Parche VDC, Kaski. Information about the museum was disseminated to visitors through its stall. Traditional items of Gurung culture, environment related materials and museum specimens of different species of butterflies, reptiles and insects are found in the museum.



Photo: Stall ACAP and Eco-Museum, Sikles

Bird Conservation Nepal

Bird conservation Nepal (BCN) is an organization focusing on the conservation of birds and their habitats. It seeks to promote interest in birds amongst the general public, encourage research on birds and identify major threats to birds. It has been working as a scientific authority in providing data and expertise on birds for the Government of Nepal through the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation (DNPWC) since 1982. Various publications, bird books, t-shirts with bird prints and posters published by BCN were put in display and sales in a separate stall.



Photo: BCN Stall

Himalayan Nature

Himalayan Nature founded in 2000 is an international conservation research institute, initiating scientific research on Himalayan floral and faunal diversity and the broader environment. It is an independent, not-for-profit organization actively working on emerging issues related to the conservation of natural resources, and the improvement of living conditions of people in the Himalayan region. It is dedicated to explore the natural history of the Himalayan region to inform and empower the public for a knowledge-based management of natural resources in the most participatory way possible. Different booklets, publications and books published by Himalayan Nature were put in display in its stall.



Photo: Stall Himalayan Nature

Small Mammals Conservation and Research Foundation

Small Mammals Conservation and Research Foundation (SMCRF) is a non-profit, non-governmental organization based at Kathmandu, Nepal. It is dedicated for the conservation and research of Small Mammals throughout Nepal and other potential sites throughout Nepal. SMCRF focuses its conservation and research activities on 151 species of small mammals. SMCRF kept its publications and small mammal related books in its stall.



Photo: Stall SMCRF

Publications of Friends of Nature (FON) Nepal

Friends of Nature (FON) Nepal publishes all of its works in various national and international journals. Works published in various journal papers, newspaper articles, program reports (including previous Nepal Owl Festival reports) and other publications of FON Nepal were also put in display.

Nature Conservation Award winner profile

The profile of Nature Conservation Award winner of Nepal Owl Festival 2016 was placed in the display room. The display room also contained the photographs of winners of Nature conservation award from the year it was started 2013.



Photo: Nature conservation award winner profile, 2016.



Photo: Winners of Nature conservation award of past years.

Past Nepal Owl Festivals

Photo display of Nepal Owl Festivals from 2012 to 2015 was also done in the display hall.



Photo: Nepal Owl Festival, 2012-2015.

Competition of local games

The first day was comprised of competitions of various traditional games namely *Thelo*, Tug of War (*Rassi tanne*), Cock fight (*Bhale judhai*), *Ghur ghumai* and *Hyakuhe*. *Jhijhili* game and Gurung cultural dance of two wards were shown in first day.

Thelo is the most popular game among Gurung community in Sikles village. It is the game of power played once in a year on the occasion of *Maghe* (*Maghe sankranti*). Players hold a stone of four kilogram in their palm, run for a short distance and throw the stone reaching the borderline after a whistle from referee. The player who throws the stone farthest from the borderline is considered a winner and is rewarded.

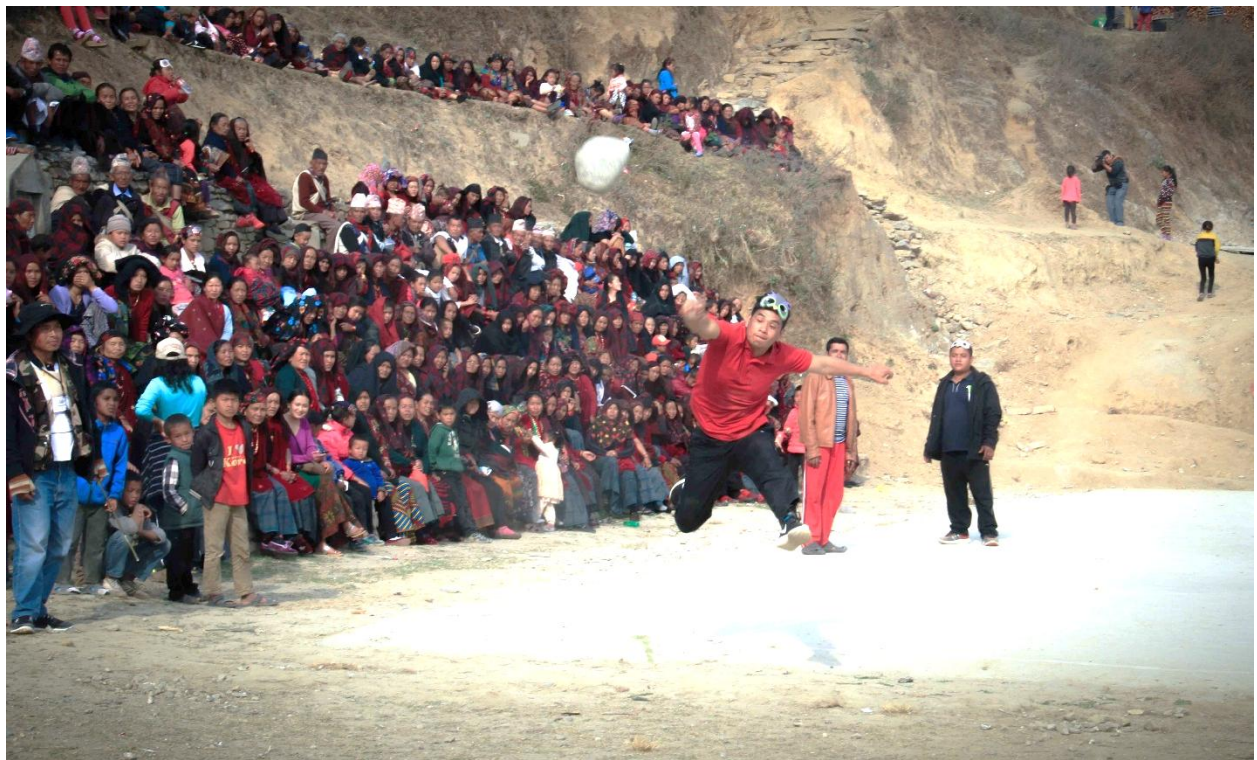


Photo: Thelo competition

Tug of War (*Rashi tanne*) is literally known as rope pulling game. It is a five membered team game in which two teams compete at a time. Team stand inside the boundary facing each other holding a long rope. When referee blows the whistle, both team starts pulling the rope with their full strength. The team which pulls the rope towards their side making opponent team members cross the midline wins the game.



Photo: Tug of war (Rashi tanne) game in progress

Cock fight (*Bhale judhai*) is generally played by children. In this game players hold their one leg by their hand and use single leg to stand. They attack opponents hitting by shoulder. Player that remains till the last making others out is awarded as winner.



Photo: Cock fight (Bhale judhai) being played by school students

Ghur ghumai is a game played with the wooden spinners. A large circle is drawn as a ring and the players stand outside the ring with their individual wooden spinners. When the referee indicates the start of the game, all the players throw their spinners inside the circle with the help of the rope wound around the spinner. The spinners that move out of the boundary are considered disqualified. The player whose spinner spins for the longest time is declared winner.



Photo: Ghurs



Photo: Ghur ghumai in progress

Hyakuche is also a traditional game of Sikles village. In this game players sit on the ground outside the boundary line. As the referee hints the start, players start to move in a motion of jumping towards the end boundary. The player that reaches the end line first wins the game.



Photo: Hyakuche being played by women.

Jhijhili is an old and traditional game of Sikles. This game was shown by Sikles Mothers Group (*Aama samuha*) during the festival. The game is a metaphorical representation of a jackal chasing ducklings and their mother trying to protect them from the jackal. The ducklings hold their hand on the body of next making a long queue in the support of mother's body and follow the direction directed by mother to be safe from the Jackal.



Photo: Jhijhili in progress by Sikles mothers group.

Owl mascot dance

Staff from Annapurna Conservation Area (ACAP), Sikles performed an Owl mascot dance in the festival. The Owl mascot was gifted by Mr. Rajesh Acharya from USA.



Photo: Owl mascot dance

Public owl conservation camp

An owl conservation camp was organized at 20:30 in the evening in Sabha chowk. Power-point presentation and short documentary were used to disseminate the information on the biology and status of owls. The information about Sikles village and the message of owl conservation were relayed among around 300 villagers gathered in the premise.



Photo: Public owl conservation camp

Day 2: March 7, 2015

Second day was the day of main events of Nepal Owl Festival 2016. Similar to the first day, second day also started with nature photo walk and bird watching early in the morning till 10:00. Temporary owl museum was kept open for public display from 10:00 to 15:00. The other major events of the day were:

Owl Face painting

As in the previous Nepal Owl Festivals, Owl face painting happened to be one of the major attractions of the festival. Artists Mr. Roshan Bhandari and Mr. Raj Man Maharjan painted variety of owl images in the face of the interested participants. Owl stamps in the hands and face of the children were also became very popular.



Photo: Face painting in progress



Photo: FON Nepal friends with owl face paintings



Photo: Visitors with face painting



Photo: Local children having Owl stamp in their face.



Photo: Artist Raj Man Maharjan and Roshan Bhandari in action during face painting.



Photo: Jack, Coordinator at Wild Tiger Conservation Research and development with Face painting and artist Roshan Bhandari after his successful face painting job respectively.

Owl nail art

Owl nail art was new and charming event for Nepal Owl Festival 2016. Artist Ms. Honee Manandhar painted variety of owl images on the hand nails of females.



Photo: Nail art



Photo: Artist Honee Manandhar performing nail art

Cultural shows

Promotion of traditional culture of Sikles village was also one of the main aims of Nepal Owl Festival 2016. Different traditional dances were performed by the villagers of Sikles during the festival. These traditional dance included *Gurung cultural* dance, dance by *Dalit* groups and *Ghatu* whereas *Lakhe* and *gaijatra* dance by *Balgopal Bhajan Samuha*, Pokhara 13 and *wildlife conservation* dance by students from Institute of Forestry (IOF), Pokhara were other attractive cultural shows. While these performances delighted the visitors, the villagers were also motivated to take steps towards the conservation of these cultures that are rarely staged these days.



Photo: Ghatu Dance



Photo: Gurung dance in progress



Photo: Team Balgopal Bhajan Kirtan Sewa Samiti



Photo: Lakhe dance



Photo: Gai Jatra dance



Photo: Owl conservation dance by students of Institute of Forestry, Pokhara



Photo: Japanese dance by students from Japan.

Conservation speech

Mr. Raju Acharya, Country Representative of World Owl Trust and Executive Director of Friends of Nature (FON) Nepal highlighted the reasons of celebrating Nepal Owl Festival, relaying the message on conservation of owls. He gave stress on the need of local participation to ensure long term conservation of owls in the country.



Photo: Raju Acharya giving conservation speech.

Prizes

Prizes were distributed to the winners of school based poems and art competitions during the main festival event.



Photo: Prize distributed to school students for school level competition

Similarly, the winners of local game competitions were awarded with cash prizes.



Photo: Prize distributed for local games competitions

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Prizes were also awarded to the top two birders who participated in the bird watching competition.



Photo: Prize distributed to the winners of Bird watching competition Chiranjeevi Khanal (First) and Jeevan Rai (Second) respectively.

All the participants of different cultural shows were felicitated with cash in the festival.

Local conservation award

Three individual locals were awarded in the Nepal Owl Festival 2016 who have significantly contributed for nature conservation and social welfare of the society in the local level. This year Man Bahadur Gurung (Chairman, Conservation Area Management Committee, Parche), Dambar Bahadur Gurung (ex-Chairman, Conservation Area Management Committee, Parche) and Dil Kumari Gurung (Chairman of Mother group, Member of Conservation Area Management Committee, Thumakodanda) received local conservation award.



Photo: Distribution of local conservation award

National award: Nature Conservation Award

Nature conservation award has remained a pivotal component of Nepal Owl Festival Nepal since its commencement. Similar to the previous festivals, this year also we felicitated four individuals working in conservation sector with this prestigious award. A short profile of the awardees is given below:

Ramesh Kumar Thapa, Bardia National Park; Governmental service

If Nepal was able to celebrate three zero poaching years in almost as many years, it is because dedicated conservationists like Ramesh Kumar Thapa have been working tirelessly without a second thought. He was born on 19 July 1969 at Setidobhan-8, Syangja district. Currently living in Karkado-9, Banke district he has served in various protected areas of the country after completing his I.Sc. in forestry from institute of Forestry, Pokhara. He idolizes Dr. Shant Raj Jnawali who led many research and conservation work during his tenure in Bardia NP.



Photo: Ramesh Kumar Thapa receiving 'Nature conservation award'

Currently deployed in Bardia National Park as assistant chief warden he regularly joins patrolling units to keep an eye on illegal activities inside the park. This proved quite a success and 250 guns in total were handed over to the national park office. Having been in the conservation field for more than 32 years now, he has also rescued many species of owls and brought many poachers involved in their trade under the law. His contribution has also been very nicely documented by WWF International in a 15 min documentary film titled "On the Frontlines of Tiger Conservation" which has been viewed by more than 22,000 people on you tube. He was ranked third among the five nominated integrity idols which is a global campaign to highlight honest government officials. He has also been interviewed by different media

through which too he has disseminated messages related to the importance of conservation. With such amount of work in the field of conservation he is still looking forward to the ways in which he can contribute towards biodiversity conservation in the country in future.



Photo: Manoj Paudel receiving 'Nature conservation award'

Manoj Paudel: Conservation through media

A permanent resident of Kapilbastu municipality, Anandbag-2, Taulihawa, Mr. Manoj Paudel has been using his journalist's pen with a purpose i.e. conservation of biodiversity. He is currently affiliated with the nation's biggest media house Kantipur Publications pvt. Ltd. which has also helped him a little to spread his intended conservation message to millions. He has worked as reporter for reputed media houses such as *Rashtriya Samachar Samiti* and *Saptahik Ujyalo Khabar*. A decade of these 25 years is dedicated to his latest found passion, which is to ensure that people at the ground level are well informed of the benefits of conservation. He adores the contribution of Prof. Karan Bdr. Shah and Dr. Hem Sagar Baral in the field of conservation in Nepal and regularly keeps in touch with them for any expert consultation he needs.

His contribution to the field of conservation in the country through journalism is exemplary, especially in the recent years. Important contributions include more than five dozen articles, both news and feature articles, on different components of biodiversity including threatened birds and raptors, eco-tourism in Jagadishpur reservoir, snow leopard, illegal wildlife trade, vultures and black buck. His contribution in leading the bird festival in Jagadishpur reservoir is something to emulate. He also played an important role in highlighting the plight of Mr. Dinesh Giri, a

renowned birder and conservationist, who had to undergo kidney transplant. Photos taken by him have also been highlighted by national newspapers and UNDP to convey conservation message. His photo story on owls with theme "Owl: a Farmer's Friend" generated a lot of interest among conservationists and general people. Discovery of Mottled wood owl, a new species for Nepal, was also covered by him. He opines that threats to biodiversity conservation can be significantly reduced if people at grass root level can be made aware about the benefits of conservation.

Hathan Chaudhary: Birder

Hathan Chaudhary, one of the most renowned birders of Nepal is also among the most travelled one. He was born in Narayani municipality; Bachhauli-5 in the doon valley of Chitwan district on 15 June 1969. He is currently involved as Director and Treasurer in Nature Safari Tours (P) Ltd and Nepal Ornithological Union respectively. He has been affiliated with Gaida wildlife camp (P) Ltd which had a great reputation of producing amazing naturalists. He passed intermediate in commerce but his skill in spotting birds easily outweighed the business skill he was getting from his education. Furthermore, his meeting with Tim and Carol Inskipp, his conservation heroes, left a big impression on him which lasts even today.



Photo: Hathan Chaudhary receiving 'Nature conservation award'

He started his conservation journey first as a naturalist in Koshi-Tappu wildlife reserve in early 90s. During this period he started monitoring the nesting of Brown fish owl in the same area from 1995-97. During 26 years of his conservation career he led 14 bird survey/exploration trips. He also took part in the survey work of the globally threatened species wood snipe in Langtang valley in 2005 and Ibisbill in 2008 which was also published as a paper in Forktail (Journal published by Oriental Bird Club) and Danphe (Newsletter published by Bird Conservation Nepal) respectively. Furthermore, he has also helped to discover two new bird species, Eurasian skylark and black-tailed crane, for Nepal which is an outstanding achievement by any means. He

emphasizes the importance of training the younger generation in conservation but maintains that making politicians aware about the benefits of conservation is the key.



Photo: Ram Bahadur Shahi receiving 'Nature conservation award'

Ram Bahadur Shahi: Individual

Born on 15 June 1969 in the hills of Jumla, Ram Bahadur Shahi grew up and worked in Bardia National Park (BNP) almost all his life. He currently lives in Thakurdwara Village Development Committee (VDC), Shivapur-9, Hattisar. He is affiliated with Bardia Nature Conservation Club (BNCC) since its inception. He took nature guide training from Tharu guide office in Sauraha in 1997 and since then has been actively involved in this profession.

He completed his PCL in major English and sociology. He is highly influenced by Ramesh Kumar Thapa's conservation works and actively participated in his campaign to motivate local people in handing over the locally made guns.

Right after the formation, BNCC conducted an awareness campaign targeting aquatic mammals and other organisms. The campaign had a total of 2245 beneficiaries and was conducted in the villages around Geruwa River. He also led another conservation campaign from Nature Guide Association in four VDCs in the north of BNP including remote Hariharpur and Taranga VDCs in 2009-10. He led another important campaign titled Nepal vulture conservation movement network which included publicizing of diclofenac free zone, orienting veterinary technicians and monitoring. In spite of spending a lot of time in conservation works his dedication to birding remained constant and he documented two new bird species for Bardia i.e. Rosy starling and rusty-cheeked scimitar babbler. He also motivated a person to submit and release captive brown fish owls in Bardia. He recently discovered a new species of owls from Nepal, Mottled wood

owl. He is of opinion that making politicians aware about the benefits of conservation is the only solution to the problem we are facing now.



Photo: Nature conservation award winners

Owl Research Grant

In remembrance of late Hari Shankar Aryal his family established Hotel Crown Himalayas Owl Research Grant of cash Rs. 30,000 and awarded to Ms. Madhuri Khadka on the occasion of Nepal Owl Festival 2016. Currently she has completed her degree in bachelors on Forestry from Institute of Forestry, Hetauda.



Photo: Madhuri Khadka receiving Owl research grant

Felicitation to Mr. Yadav Ghimirey, Director, Wildlife Research, FON, Nepal

Mr. Yadav Ghimirey, Director of wildlife research at Friends of Nature (FON) Nepal was also felicitated for his decade long contribution towards wildlife research and conservation in Nepal.



Photo: Yadav Ghimirey receiving award of respect

Certificate to volunteers

Friends of Nature handed over certificate of honor to all the volunteers who provided their full time effort from the preparation to the accomplishment of the festival.



Photo: A volunteer receiving certificate of honor

Coverage of ‘Nepal Owl Festival 2015’ in media

The Nepal Owl Festival 2016 was a huge success and was covered by several national media through radios, televisions, newspapers and online news.

National newspaper

Kantipur daily

Kantipur Saptahik

Nagarik daily

Annapurna Post daily

The Himalaya Times

The Kathmandu Post

Local newspaper

Adarsha Samaj daily

Pokhara Patra daily

Kaski Awaz daily

Samadhan daily

Golden News daily

FM

BBC Nepali service

Annapurna FM

BIG FM

Machapuchre FM

Radio Nepal

TV

Nepal Television (NTV) Plus: *Ankhihyal*

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IqjV_KyhEQ

NTV Plus program *Naya pusta* (New generation)



Photo: Journalist Shova Manandhar interviewing Mr. Som G.C. for the program Naya Pusta

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7ELRE5mFfCQ>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bhkdyuXuARg>

Gadaki TV

Fewa TV

Online News

setopati.com

onlinekhabar.com

pahilopost.com

a2zsamachar.com

www.samacharpati.com/38134/

International news

BBC Nepali Service (FM) with 6 million listener

The xinhua News Agencies (in progress)

Other online links

http://lacrossetribune.com/putting-the-international-in-international-owl-festival/article_91b62156-cf9f-513f-b592-febb1c6fdb6c.html

<http://travelnewsnepal.com/tourism/8559/>

tunza.eco-generation.org/ourActionsEventView.jsp?viewID=37556

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<http://samudrapari.com/20160221154681.html>

<https://thehimalayantimes.com/nepal/owl-festival-begins-in-kaski/>

<https://thehimalayantimes.com/nepal/owl-fest-concludes/>

<http://kathmandupost.ekantipur.com/printedition/news/2016-02-21/news-digest-20160221075247.html>

<http://baahrakhari.com/np/2016/02/18/3296/>

https://scontent-mxp1-1.xx.fbcdn.net/hphotos-xta1/v/t1.0-9/10527760_10208852632133525_2771829562408772808_n.jpg?oh=45c90eff81f021b0a5347053196bd5ad&oe=575F5616

<http://www.onlinekhabar.com/2016/02/389348/#sthash.TvU80fgc.dpuf>

<http://www.samacharpati.com/38134/>

<https://thehimalayantimes.com/multimedia/photo-gallery/artists-pose/>

EVENT PHOTOS



Photo: Sikles, Village



Photo: Local volunteers and winners of local games



Photo: Local ladies in Gurung dress



Photo: Chief Guest visiting display hall



Photo: Owl photo booth



Photo: Ms. Sabita Gurung with her Owl art



Photo: Ghurs



Photo: Visitors gathering different information from temporary owl museum



Photo: Performance of Owl conservation song



Photo: Owl conservation dance team



Photo: Local mother's group ready to welcome guests



Photo: Team Balgopal Bhajan Kirtan Sewa Samiti in Newari costume



Photo: Children enjoying Owl robot



Photo: Owl mask distribution



Photo: Owl nail art in progress



Photo: Mr. Raju Acharya with students from Institute of Forestry, Pokhara



Photo: Mr. Yadav Ghimirey clarifying visitors about display item and old man with his granddaughter in Nepal Owl Festival 2016.



Photo: Japanese students performing Japanese dance in festival.

लाटोकोसेरो तथा हृचील संरक्षणमा हातेमालो गरौं !!!

'NEPAL OWL FESTIVAL 2016'
(19-20 Feb) Sikles, Kaski

“नेपाल लाटोकोसेरो तथा हृचील उत्सव २०७२”
(फाल्गुन ७ र ८) सिक्लेस, कास्की

Organizers:
Nepal Owl Festival 2016, Organizing Committee, Sikles, Parche VDC, Kaski
Friends of Nature (FON) Nepal

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- ▶ सिक्लेस पाछे तमु समाज, पोखरा

NORED OWL FEST, INTERNATIONAL OWL CENTER, International Festival of OWLS, and other logos.

Photo: Main banner of the program