Celebration of Fishing Cat February Programs in Rupandehi, Nepal

Design, publication of education materials on Fishing cat and its habitat

Education materials play a vital role in conservation efforts by raising awareness, building knowledge, inspiring action, and empowering communities. Without effective education, it may difficult to achieve lasting and meaningful progress in protecting the elusive Fishing cats. Therefore, we designed and published education and promotional materials such as flexes, banners, stickers, and educational video to raise awareness about the importance of Fishing cat and wetlands and to educate local communities from diverse castes and ethnicity about the ecological imbalance and environmental issues and the actions that can be taken to address them. We believe these productions will provide people with the knowledge and skills needed to participate in Fishing cat conservation efforts. Our educational materials have helped in building knowledge and teach people about the scientific concepts and principles underlying environmental issues and help them understand the impacts of their actions on the Fishing cat and their environment. Through these materials, we inspire people to take action to protect and motivate individuals to make changes in their daily lives.

Fig: 1. Educational kits on Fishing cat and its habitat

Community consultation and meeting with indigenous Tharu people

Indigenous communities have played a significant role in biodiversity conservation for thousands of years. They have developed a deep understanding of their local ecosystems, and their traditional knowledge and practices have helped to maintain the balance between humans and nature. They rely on natural resources for their survival and well-being, and their cultural and spiritual beliefs are often closely tied to the natural world. They also play an important role in conservation efforts through advocacy and activism.

Indigenous peoples have developed sustainable practices for hunting, fishing, agriculture, and forest management that have allowed them to meet their basic needs without damaging the environment. However with change in time and with money motive tendency, these groups who were once living in harmony with nature and natural resources are undertaking actions that are driving species extinction.
Overall, indigenous communities have the knowledge and important perspective on conservation, thus, interaction programs were organized to maximize their participation in conservation efforts, which is crucial for protecting biodiversity and promoting sustainable development. During the interaction, we shared the status of Fishing cat and other wetland fauna and urged them to think with due care of their unique resources and work together to protect them.

![Fig: 2. Curious eyes on the camera trap records & Monitoring members at Danapur village](image)

**Community workshop with ward presidents**

Ward presidents are typically elected officials at the local level, responsible for representing and advocating for the interests of their ward or district within their municipality or city government.

Community workshops are an essential aspect of community development and play a vital role in fostering a sense of community spirit, facilitating dialogue and learning, and empowering individuals and groups to take charge of their lives. In this connection, we organized a daylong workshop joint collaboration with the ward office of Kanchan, 3 to mark the Fishing cat February. It offered a platform for sharing knowledge and skills, particularly those that are relevant to the community’s needs. It was a first of its kind, thus participants appreciated the program and were told that they learned a new thing, and acquire knowledge. They shared their own limitations and commitment in saving the indicator species in Rupandehi district. Furthermore, our program brought different stakeholders such as members from Lumbini Cultural Municipality, Kanchan Rural municipality, media personnel, security and women people together and created an opportunity for different individuals to meet and interact with others. We are very hopeful that the interaction will foster the development of social networks and strengthen the sense of community spirit towards the conservation of fishing cat and its habitat.

We are happy that our workshops provided a platform to foster dialogue, collaboration, and learning and play a crucial role in promoting Fishing cat conservation and enabling members from different backgrounds to work together towards a common goal.
Fig:3. Fishing cat conservation workshop in progress & happy faces after receiving Fishing cat cup as token of love

Fig:4. Participants receiving Fishing cat cup that urges for its conservation attention

Fig:5. Words of conservation commitment from enforcement bodies & a memory of the workshop
Taxidermy is the art and science of preserving the skins and other parts of animals by treating them with chemicals and mounting them on a lifelike replica of their body structure. Taxidermy is an important tool in scientific research, as it allows scientists to study the anatomy and behavior of animals in detail.

I was selected for training that provided a solid foundation for a career in scientific taxidermy. We are trained by the Taxidermist Marco Fisher, one of the winners of the European Taxidermy Championships, 2021, prestigious competitions. A total of 14 of us gained practical experience through preparations, education or internships with experienced taxidermists for the first time in Nepal for a total of 18 days. We knew the importance to have a strong understanding of anatomy, biology, and ecology, as well as a thorough knowledge of the species that we are working with. We learned the skills in handling and manipulating delicate specimens, and have a keen eye for detail in order to create accurate and realistic mounts.

Through this training, we are trying to form a Taxidermy Society in Nepal which will be guided by dedicated taxidermists and we hope to showcase threatened species for the future generation to see and experience the beauty of nature.

Fig:5. Some glimpses of the taxidermy training
Using vehicles to deliver conservation messages can be an effective way to reach a wider audience and raise awareness about conservation issues on the Fishing cat. Vehicles such as cars, buses, trucks, and even bicycles can be used as mobile billboards to display messages about conservation. We have used local safari, popular vehicles in the district because they travel to more rural areas and that would be more meaningful to reach a wider range of people who may not have as much exposure to conservation messages. We requested some time to have a talk with the drivers of the safari. We talked them when they were free. We talked about the Fishing cats, their status, conservation threats and their local and global importance. They become very interested and also gave permission to paste the Fishing cat stickers in their vehicles. This is our first trial in using vehicles to deliver Fishing cat conservation messages as an effective way to raise awareness and promote conservation efforts. However, we found some important features to consider such as the design of the message, the size and visibility of the vehicle, the target audience, and the location where the message is being displayed in order to maximize its effectiveness of the message.

Fig: 6. Conservation conversation with the local safari drivers in Parsa chauraha, Lumbini

Fig: 7. Sticking the Fishing cat stickers in the motorbikes and safari with the vehicle owner’s permission
Workshop and training with the youth leaders

Training conservation education to youth in a society can be highly effective in promoting environmental sustainability and biodiversity conservation.

Young people are more receptive to new ideas, and exposing them to conservation education at an early age can help instill lifelong habits of conservation responsibility and stewardship. When young people learn about the importance of conservation, they can spread this knowledge to their families, friends, and communities, creating a ripple effect that can lead to positive environmental outcomes. Moreover, by educating young people about conservation, we can create a generation of biodiversity advocates who are passionate about protecting the planet.

From our training program, they learn about conservation can help them understand the urgency of these issues and empower them to take action.

We believe that our training conservation education to youth in a society promoted and inspired a new generation of environmental leaders for the change.

Fig:8. Communicating conservation significance and issues on Fishing cat with youths

Fig:9. Fishing cat conservation movie show in Sungabha Community center & Youth participants with Fishing cat caps
Media Coverage

Our workshop program was covered by the local news portal, where we have acknowledged our supporters and collaborators for Fishing cat conservation. Kindly please click the links below for the news description and the Fishing cat conservation jingle that is being aired 13 times a day from Kanchan Community Radio, Haraiya.

https://www.kanchankhabar.com/news/10899

Jingle on Fishing cat that deals with Fishing cat ecology, status, its services to the human environment and welfare.

Educational kits in public areas

For the effectiveness of a conservation program, we placed Fishing cat education banners, stickers, flexes in public areas to raise awareness and promoting behavior change among the public.

We pasted fishing cat conservation stickers, banners in public areas such as open areas, colleges, tea shops to increase people’s knowledge about Fishing cats and motivate them to take action to monitor and protect the threatened cat in the district. We hope that visitors walking in the open areas, or waiting for the bus in the bus stand, or safari stand will be exposed to educational materials and will more likely to engage in fishing cat-friendly behaviors, such as reporting the trapping or killing of Fishing cat in the area to the local forest and security offices.

In a summary, we believe that placing educational materials in public areas can be an effective strategy for promoting conservation and encouraging behavior change among the public.

Fig: 10. Interested persons going through the pasted banners
Fig: 11. Fishing cat educational materials in public premises

Thank you so much !!