

Veröffentlichungen ARCO

2012

-ARCO Newsletter no.01-

Editorial: ARCO-Nepal
Prof. Dr. H. Hermann Schleich

September 2012

FIRST ACTIONS AT BUDO HOLI

TURTLE RESCUE & CONSERVATION CENTRE



**First Translocation of a
Peacock Softshell Turtle at
Budo Holi Turtle Rescue
& Conservation Centre**



..... and also of
Yellow-Bellied Roofed Turtles

A 10 kg male of *Nilssonia hurum*
came to ARCO-TRCC in Jhapa -Nepal



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Photo credits: Milan Kharel, cover page, p. 3,

Next Issues:

Annual Assemblages: !!ARCO – Spain, November 11th 2012
 ARCO – Nepal, December 2012

Sense of Project Applications and Enigmatic Science Publications in Nepal

A New Species for Nepal

Development Plans for the Turtle Rescue & Conservation Centre at Jhapa

ARCO- Spain, Turtle Rescue and Conservation Centre

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More about us at www.arco-nepal.de

- **First Non-Government Turtle Conservation by ARCO – Nepal at „Budo Holi“ in Jhapa/ SE Nepal**

Long times passed since 1982 for first signing of MOU by ARCO-Nepal on Turtle Conservation in Nepal. First government acceptance to contribute to Turtle Conservation in Nepal had been given already in 1982 by King Mahendra Trust of Nature Conservation.

Many years of scientific projects, collaborations with Tribhuvan University, Students guidance and supervisions as well as many publications dedicated to the Amphibians and Reptiles of Nepal had been realized. Almost ten years passed, -due to political difficulties- without any field conservation methods but several masters on the turtle situation in SE-Nepal had been supported during this time.

In April 2012 finally ARCO-Nepal and SUMMEF signed a Memorandum of Understanding that at Sanichare Martyrs Memorial and Park in Jhapa region, SE Nepal, a Turtle Rescue and Conservation Centre shall be developed within the next few years. In the same summer 2012 we also received the official Government approval that ARCO-Nepal as Non Government Organisation can collaborate with the Nepali authorities to develop such a TRCC in the Terai.

- **We introduce:**
Our New Project Partner and new ARCO-Nepal employee MILAN KHAREL working for his ph-thesis and realisation of Turtle Rescue and Conservation programs at Budo Holi TRCC

Milan Kharel, born on 27/08/1980 (2037/05/11), married, 2 children. Studied in Jhapa and Biratnagar,



English-Nepali-English Translation
Page No. 249
E-mail: notarytranslation2@gmail.com

Government of Nepal
Ministry of Forest and Soil Conservation
Environment Division

Letter No.: 068/69
Dispatch No.: 175
Obtained Letter No. and Date:
Subject: Regarding to establish tortoise conservation center

Department of National Parks and Wild Life Conservation
Baharmahal

In the above reference subject, in relation to the application of Sukhani Martyrs Memorial Foundation, Nepal submitted with the letter bearing Dispatch No. 2355, Letter No. 068/69, dated 2068/12/24 BS (April 6, 2012 AD), the description is hereby informed with request that the decision has been made from Government of Nepal (Honorable Minister Level) on 2069/2/24 BS (June 6, 2012 AD) to give permission to that organization to establish tortoise conservation center to abide by the following terms. Moreover, the document which was obtained from there is sent herewith.

Following

1. It is not allowed to use in other purpose apart from the conservation of tortoise and study and research conducted in the country as proposed in the project.
2. The foundation shall have make management for monitoring for the tortoise conservation center with the coordination of Department of National Parks and Wild Life Conservation and concerned District Forest Office.

Sd.
Sagar Kumar Rimal
Environment Officer
(Gazetted Section Class Technical)

Copy To:
Department of Forest - Requested to manage for informing the concerned District Forest Office
Sukhani Martyrs Memorial Foundation, Nepal

Notary Public & Verified by:
Name: Anand Kumar Kharel
Date: 2069-06-12
Certificate Number of the Nepal Public: 279
Date of expiry of Certificate: Nov 4, 2012
One of the notary public.

It is expected to mention Let No. and Date wh corresponding.
Secretary: 421154
Environment: 421181
Administration: 421193
Project: 4211936, Follow t
4211742, Foreign: 4211842, Fi
4211868, P. O. Box No.: 398
Singhdurbar, Kathmandu
Date: 2069/2/25 BS
(June 7, 2012 AD)

Notary translation of Government acceptance letter to start with Turtle Rescue Conservation Centre in SE-Nepal.

...speaks English, Nepali, Hindi, Maithili worked at Medical labs, on Computer Software and received a permanent teaching license. He lectured In science and health, biology and zoology. His master had already been supported by ARCO-Nepal and focused on “General Survey of Anthropogenic Impacts on Chelonian Fauna in the Kankai river and its Vicinities, Jhapa, East Nepal”.

- **More news about the disastrous situation for turtles in Nepal**

Turtle trafficking on the rise in Nepal

| 28 February, 2012 10:03 / Timeslive

Trafficking of turtles to China from Nepal is on the rise, media reports said Tuesday.

Smugglers have been trafficking turtles, many of them endangered, to the town of Zhangmu, just over the Chinese border north of Kathmandu, according to the Kantipur daily.

Trade in tortoises and turtles is prohibited in Nepal, where many species are facing possible extinction, including the red-crowned roof turtle, the three-striped roof turtle, elongated tortoise, and narrow-headed soft-shell turtle.

Traffickers are thought to catch the turtles in Nepal's plains, before taking them to Kathmandu, from where they are taken to Zhangmu for sale.

"We've been screening goods trucks passing into China more thoroughly to prevent the trafficking," district police chief Basanta Lama said.

Chinese buyers arrive at the border town two days a week to buy tortoises, which are sold for 15 000 rupees (\$194) each.

An estimated 50 to 60 animals are sold each week, a local trader was quoted by the report as saying.

Some turtles are valued in China as an aphrodisiac and luxury ingredient, and often served in soup, the report said.

<http://www.timeslive.co.za/scitech/2012/02/28/turtle-trafficking-on-the-rise-in-nepal>
kindly submitted by Henk Zwartepoorte/Rotterdam

REQUEST FOR LAW ENFORCEMENT BY ARCO-NEPAL!!!!

OCTOBER 2012

Turtle trafficking at Koshi river in 2012

Koshi is the largest river of Nepal and has an area of 28,140 sq. km. It is considered one of the hotspots for the Nepali turtle fauna. Koshi Tappu Wildlife Reserve (KTWLR) lies along the vicinity of Koshi river and extends between 86°55'–87°05'E and 26°34'–26°45'N. It covers an area of 17500 ha. Many endangered turtle species such as *Indo-testudo elongata*, *Nilssonia hurum*, *N. gangeticus*, *Chitra indica*, *Pangshura flaviventer*, *P. tentoria circumdata*, *P. smithi*, *Lissemys punctata*, *Melanochelys trijuga*, *M. tricarinata* were already reported by earlier workers from here.



Heavy turtle poaching at Koshi River Banks

But unfortunately, it has been found that local fishermen, grass cutters or fodder collectors with herds of cattle enter the reserve freely and they can easily trap the helpless turtles by using hand or by hooks or nets. Nowadays turtles in Koshi are under heavy threat due to illegal trafficking to Kathmandu (capital of Nepal). Some agents from Kathmandu frequently visit Koshi and encourage the local fishermen to capture live turtle. Local handlers buy turtle from local fishermen at the rate of about NRs.100 per specimen and call the agent when they collect at least 10 turtles. In turn agents pay rupees 1000 per turtle specimen to local handlers. It has been seen that they prefer small turtles or juveniles especially of the roof-shelled turtles (genus *Pangshura*) for aquarium use in Kathmandu. According to religious beliefs if someone keeps live turtle in their house, prosperity avails to them. The rate of trafficking is so horrible that every month, more than hundred turtles have been illegally transported by bus to Kathmandu. Besides this, tribal people living in the vicinity of Koshi river are mostly dependent on flesh of large soft-shelled turtles. If such trend continues then there is no doubt that most of these endangered turtle species will completely disappear without any notice in the very next future. Hence, they need urgent protection - right now!!

By:Milan Kharel, Ph.D. Candidate, Jhapa, Nepal

Developments at Budo Holi TRCC in Jhapa, SE Nepal

Jhapa district occupies an area of 1606 sq. km and is located geographically between 26°20' to 26°50' N and 87°39' to 88°12' E, at an altitude of 56 to 381m above sea level (Rai, 2004). The turtle rescue and conservation area (TRCC) is a wetland, locally called 'Budho Holi' or 'Bhimsen Pokhari'. It is located at Sanischare VDC ward No.- 9, Goldhap about 6 km north from Birtamode, in Jhapa district. The area is surrounded with beautiful Sal (*Shorea robusta*) dominated forests and belongs to Martyr's Memorial Foundation- SUMMEF ('Sukhani Shahid Smriti Pratisthan') occupying an area of 22.4 hectares. The Turtle Rescue and Conservation Centre (TRCC) was established as joint venture program of Amphibian and Reptile Conservation Society Nepal (ARCO-Nepal) and Sukhani Martyr's Memorial Foundation (SUMMEF). Plans for the TRCC are



Construction work of the Park's entrance gate...



..and security guard house

ambitious. It will have multiple functions as a centre for research, conservation, education and conservation-tourism and activities related with freshwater and terrestrial turtles. It will also serve as a rescue centre for turtles confiscated from illegal trade. Physical facilities for the centre shall

include an open-air hatchery, a building as information centre and to house laboratory and office. Others shall be ponds for freshwater turtles and outdoor enclosures for rescued turtles, breeding ponds for captive breeding programs, outdoor exhibits for interpretive purposes and an education centre. Staff, visiting scientists, and volunteers shall have a basis to work and stay. Its main objective is to serve as “living” conservation centres for freshwater and terrestrial turtle research and to conduct research in all aspects of their biology and ecology. Previous study show that various roof-shelled turtle species such as *Pangshura flaviventer*, *Pangshura smithi smithi*, *Pangshura tentoria circumdata*, softshell turtles like *Nilssonia gangeticus*, *Lissemys punctata*, *Nilssonia hurum*, and more terrestrial species like *Indotestudo elongate* and *Melanochelys tricarinata* were existing in Jhapa. Recently, during summer 2012 turtle species like *Lissemys punctata*, *Nilssonia hurum* and *Pangshura flaviventer* could have been translocated into the main lake of TRCC area. An updated checklist of the existing flora and fauna in and around the study area is under preparation. There will be built seminatural habitats for aquatic and terrestrial turtles and research and education programs initiated. Fund-raising activities, and public outreach through educational campaigns together with the establishment of a Recreation Park including a small zoological sanctuary serving as a rescue centre for animals confiscated from illegal trade shall contribute for its sustainability and income generation for the species’ conservation and livelihood of the local people.

First Turtle Translocations to Budo Holi TRCC

See photos on cover page!!

Early morning my cell phone ringed continuously, as I received the call, I was informed that one big turtle of about 10 kg has been found at Damak, Jhapa. Then without any delay, I started my motorbike and headed towards Damak municipality about 100 km far from my residence for rescue purpose. The day was 21st September 2012. When I reached over there, the specimen was already released into a pond located within premises of Damak Multiple Campus, Jhapa. Being monsoon period, the pond was completely filled with water. I hired a local fisherman with his net to trap the specimen without hurting it. He tried a lot but being unable to catch it. Then I decided to drain the water out of the pond by the help of water pump set. By the regular efforts of about two hour, we were able to drain the water out and finally catch the specimen by hand. It was a mature male Indian peacock softshell turtle (*Nilssonia hurum*) of 9.3 kg body weight. Necessary biometry of the specimen and GPS coordinates of the location were taken and the specimen was kept in a wet cotton bag. Actually, the specimen was caught by a local from the bank of a riverlet called Dipeni Khola near Damak Multiple Campus. When the man was returning to his home at evening, he saw the turtle was crawling towards the bank of this small river. He caught it by hand and kept it in his house for five days then he handed it over to the college authority. Photographs were taken and immediately send to Prof. Dr. Hermann Schleich, president of ARCO-Nepal, for the conformation of the species identification. Then the specimen was transported at the same day to the TRCC by car. A brief press meet was conducted at Birtamod, Jhapa about the acquisition of the species. The specimen was translocated in the main lake within the premises of TRCC, Sanischare, Jhapa in the auspicious presence of Prof. Dr. Kaluram Rai (Representative of ARCO-Nepal), Mr. Deoraj Ghimire (president, SUMMEF Park), media persons and present researcher Mr. Milan Kharel. Finally the time has come when we released the first international protected (CITES) big turtle at our new Turtle Rescue and Conservation Centre (TRCC), Budoholi, Sanischare, Jhapa, South-East Nepal. It was this way how finally we were able to rescue the first turtle specimen by our tasks working for the turtle conservation in Nepal and for the Budo Holi TRCC.

“Damn the trade that kills turtle”

By: Milan Kharel, Ph.D. candidate/ARCO-employee, TRCC, Jhapa, Nepal

- **Presentation of Roadsigns – our hope helping to prevent turtle trafficking!**



Roadsigns designed by ARCO-Nepal and submitted to Nepali authorities and officials.

- **Months ago – Signing of MOU in April 2012**



• Hope for Nepal's Turtles

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September, 2012

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Partner of TSA
Turtle Survival Alliance



Dear Members, Friends and potential future sponsors,

ARCO-Nepal, the society supporting conservation of species and habitat of amphibians and reptiles in Nepal, focusing on its endangered turtle fauna especially, is already 15 years active with its endeavours. Amongst those were several strategies in conservation, training and education as well as scientific investigations on the whole herpetofauna of Nepal.

We are now focusing on the most recent project to be realised in Nepal that has been accepted by government and local authorities. This exciting project shall be realized not only for the conservation of endangered species and restoration of habitat it also shall bring benefits employing, training and educating local indigenous people.

You will find more details like project description the cost estimates for building, fencing, breeding pond arrangements on our website www.arco-nepal.de or upon personal request.

To achieve the first important step of the basic construction units, we still do have to raise fundings. However, € 15,000 realised in donations would enable us to begin the first construction phase as Arco-Nepal would contribute 20.000 EUR itself.

Direct project support will come from the funding society ARCO-Nepal (reg.soc.) and engaged project co-ordinators Henk Zwartepoorte (Rotterdam), Dr. Markus Baur (Munich), Jose M. Rodriguez-Linde (Almería), Dr. Peter Praschag (Graz) and Dr. Peter Pritchard (Florida).

After having accomplished the financing for the construction phases, the next step will be the elaboration of a management plan for breeding, conservation, education and development of further conservation issues in the country.

We now ask you for your constructive ideas on the project and any possible sponsorship. Every contribution counts, no matter how small, and will enable the project to move ahead. Even achieving a metre of enclosure is a support and part of a step forward.

Imminently requested is your really strong support and any assistance in this long expected project!!

Prof. Dr. H. Hermann Schleich
Chair ARCO-Nepal reg.soc.