



Guidelines and Recommendations to foster Development of Turtle Rescue & Conservation Centres in Sense of Conservation and Sustainability

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By
Hermann Schleich / ARCO-Nepal 2017

Editor's note

Real protection and conservation of animals exist since more than three centuries as ethnic and philosophic discussion.

Animals do have their rights for own life and are not the property of the human being. This is partially accepted already by basic laws regulating and protecting our wildlife.

The possession of any animals in captivity or in whatever captive circumstances affords our utmost attention to allow them the most natural conditions for life being amongst and with us. Zoos have their obligation in their existence to care for conservation and its education and not serving anymore as show places.

The same must be applied in agriculture and keeping of livestock but also for any own pet and any living creature in nature.

Also invasive species released by unreflecting humans can cause a great harm to native populations, being competitors or carrier of diseases.

For example the introduction of fish species in natural habitats can bring the death or loss of unique sites for reproduction of endangered and autochthonous fish and amphibians.

What can or do we contribute in our own education? General awareness and education programs are definitely basic levels to start with, this at family, school level up to politics and whole government philosophies as being practiced so successfully in Bhutan. Individuals, generations or even peoples reaching the point to come to own reflections about a meaningful life, validating nature as unique heritage for future and coming generations, can be the potential constructors for conservation ideas and their realization.

David Evans (1992,1997) describes the history of nature conservation in Britain and states that nature conservation in Britain is already 100 years old. Early conservation ideas were dedicated mainly to keep sustainability for natural resources like water, soil, forest, land. Nowadays the conservation of nature and wildlife is more the principle idea, protecting nature and species of plants and animals. America started with the first National Parks (Yellowstone NP) in 1872. Humboldt created the word "Naturdenkmal" (nature monument) in 1799 and about 30-60 years later first steps were made in Germany and neighboring countries towards protection of nature monuments.

A good presentation on the whole topic is presented in:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conservation_movement, including literature for the various continents, too. For Nepal we show here some data composed from:

<https://www.worldwildlife.org/magazine/issues/winter-2014/articles/history-of-nepal-conservation>

NEPAL'S CONSERVATION HISTORY (1957-2014)

1950th

1957

Wildlife Conservation Act is the first act to identify the importance of protecting wildlife in Nepal.

1960th

1967

WWF starts working in Nepal when it launches a **rhino conservation program in Chitwan Valley**.

[Late 1960s] First rhino conservation units are set up to start protecting depleted rhino populations.

1970th

1973

Nepal establishes **Chitwan National Park**, the country's first national park.

WWF grants \$38,000 to the Smithsonian to study tigers in Chitwan, allowing scientists to successfully use radio tracking for the first time.

National Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act provides for the conservation of natural areas and wildlife and sustains the welfare of the people.

27 mammal species, 9 bird species and 3 reptile species are given legal protection under the National Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act.

1980th

1980

Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation is set up as a separate entity under the Ministry of Forest and Soil Conservation.

1982

Royal Bardia National Reserve is officially formed.

First government acceptance for Turtle Conservation by Arco-Nepal (INGO) had been given in 1982 (see ARCO-Nepal Newsletter 01, 2012)

1985

WWF expands conservation programs in Asia, showcasing the new Annapurna Conservation Area, the largest protected area in the country.

1988

Royal Bardia National Reserve becomes Royal Bardia National Park, Nepal's largest national park.

Nepal now has 10 national parks, 3 wildlife reserves, and 6 conservation areas, a system which covers more than 13,000 square miles—an area larger than the US state of Maryland.

1990th

Arco-Nepal publishes first information on jeopardy for Chitwan NP, followed by the first description of several new amphibian and reptile species.

1991

WWF begins antipoaching work with Nepal. WWF-Nepal and the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation seek to identify deterrents to tiger and rhino poaching in the national parks. Antipoaching units are formed in Chitwan and Bardia national parks.

Community-based antipoaching units were originally set up to reduce the level of poaching of tigers and rhinos, but quickly became involved in monitoring the trafficking of other wildlife species and their products. **Today there are more than 400 units working throughout the country.**

1993

WWF-Nepal office is established in Kathmandu.

Forest Act empowers the government to hand over forest areas to local communities for management as community forests.

Rural communities play a huge role in protecting Nepal's forests: about 18,000 community forest user groups have been established throughout the country since 1980.

1996

Maoist insurgency begins. Much of the country's conservation work is derailed as resources are redirected to the conflict.

1997

The government of Nepal declares **Kangchenjunga, the world's third-highest mountain ecosystem**, as a special conservation area.

Kangchenjunga means “the five treasures of snows.” The mountain landscape is home to **more than 250 species of birds and animals, including snow leopards.**

2000th

Basic scientific studies on the amphibians and reptiles of Nepal were published in books, monographs or articles by Arco-Nepal. Awareness programs by lectures and poster distributions in Nepal started.

2001

In the **Terai Arc of the Eastern Himalayan lowlands**, WWF spurs progress toward the ambitious goal of creating wildlife corridors linking 11 protected areas between India and Nepal.

2006

Maoist insurgency ends, and Nepal's rhino population is drastically lower than before the conflict.

Following the historic handover of Kangchenjunga Conservation Area from the government to the local community, a helicopter carrying WWF staff members Dr. Chandra Gurung, Dr. Harka Gurung, Jennifer Headley, Yeshe Choden Lama, Matthew Preece, Dr. Jillian Bowling Schlaepfer and Mingma Sherpa, as well as other **conservation leaders, crashes in Nepal, killing all 24 passengers on board.**

2010th

Four study books on amphibians and reptiles were distributed at schools in Nepal and offered for free download at www.arco-nepal.de

2011

After years of anti-poaching progress, Nepal reports **365 days of zero poaching.**

2012

Nepal **loses only one rhino** to poaching.

Hariya Ban Program launched.

ARCO-Nepal signed with SUMMEF a first joint venture project on turtle conservation in Jhapa, SE-Nepal

2013

Nepal and India embark on the **first-ever joint tiger survey** covering the entire Terai landscape and using a common methodology.

WWF-Nepal celebrates 20 years.

2014

Nepal celebrates **another 365 days of zero poaching.**

Nepal launches **The Generation Green.**

2017 The first Turtle Rescue & Conservation Centre was handed over to community level

Other valuable resources for conservation in Nepal are presented in:

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/272354436_biodiversity_conservation_in_nepal_a_success_story

Guidelines and Recommendations to foster development of TRCC in sense of Conservation and Sustainability

Most people in Nepal live in poverty but a destroyed natural heritage is forever unreplaceable.

The 4 main pillars of ARCO-Nepal conservation philosophy are already built up, but only its continuity by serious followers can bring it to the wanted sustainability in:

SCIENTIFIC KNOWLEDGE

Arco-Nepal and its founder and president, Hermann Schleich, have been linked to Nepal since 1991. When he was invited guest professor at Tribhuvan University Kathmandu, Hermann Schleich carried out a Volkswagen foundation project for several years on the herpetofauna and was also invited guest for lectureships by DAAD (German Academic Ex-change Service) and Goethe Institute. Under his supervision, several Nepali and German students carried out Masters and Ph degrees on the herpetofauna of Nepal. The basics of a comprehensive knowledge on the biology, systematics and conservation of amphibians and reptiles of Nepal have been given with the books and publications by Schleich & Kästle (editor, author) et al. also, with the description of several new species for the country and for science. Arco-Nepal is the first association founded and dedicated for research and conservation on Nepal's herpetofauna collaborating directly with government authorities in an active turtle conservation program. About 15 years ago, first planning for a Turtle Conservation Centre was made for Chitwan National Park and realized by the Nepali government, Dept. National Parks & Wildlife. Since 2016 the Turtle Rescue & Conservation Centre (TRCC) Budoholi at Jhapa (SE-Nepal) had been started with own activities in a community forest imbedded project in collaboration with SUMMEF. When we started with a first listing of Nepal's herpetofauna in 1992 only 120 species were recorded what reached already 180 in 2002 with many species described new for science but also others new for Nepal.

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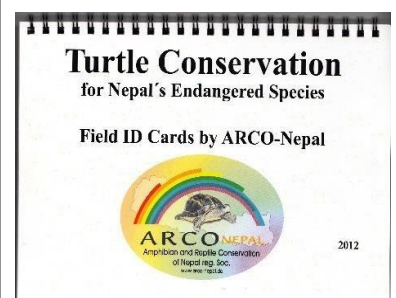
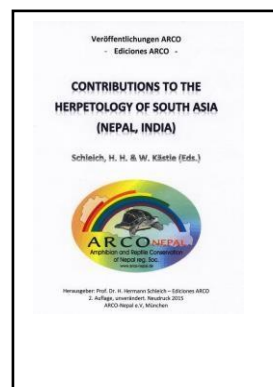
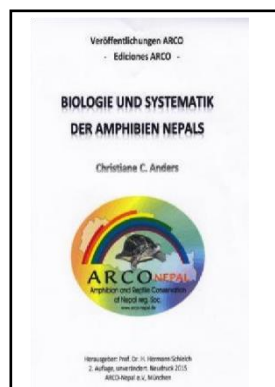
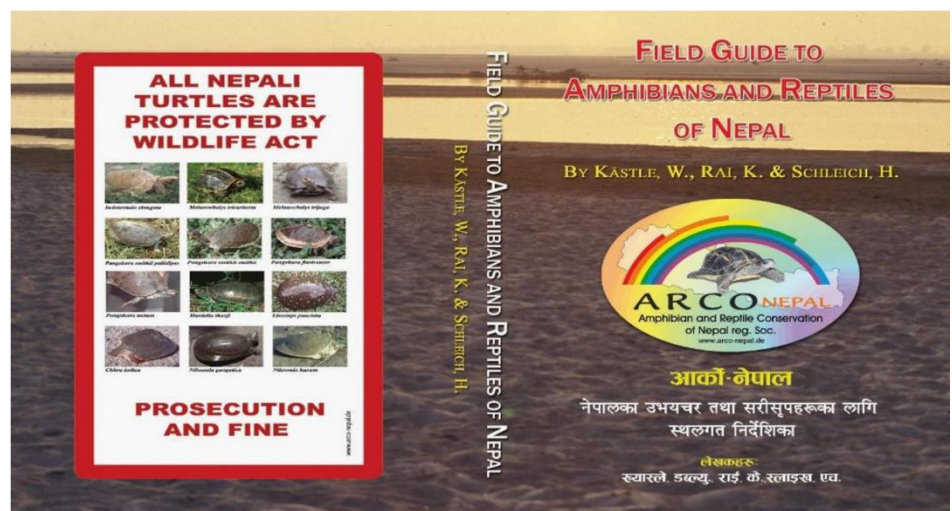
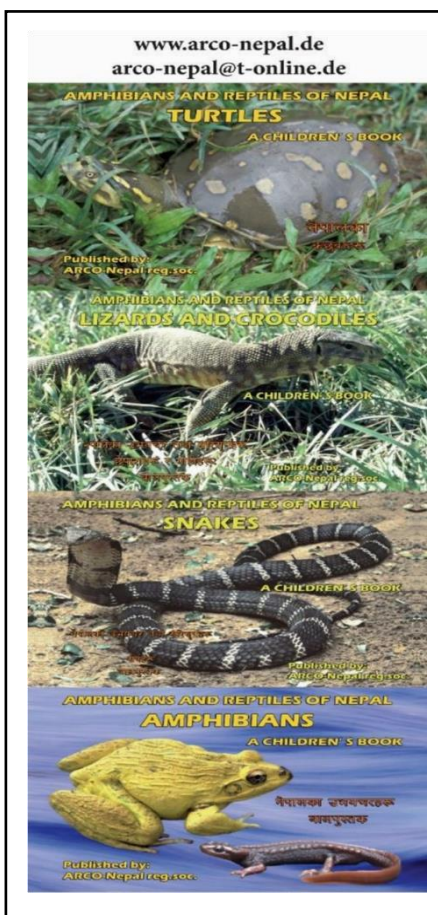
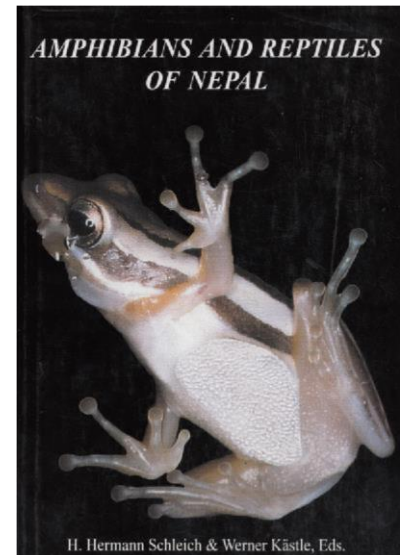
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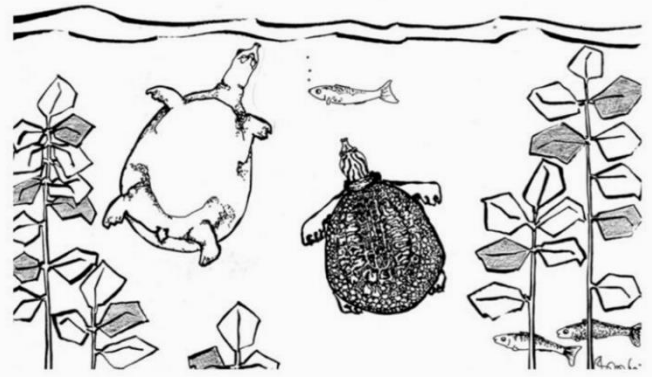
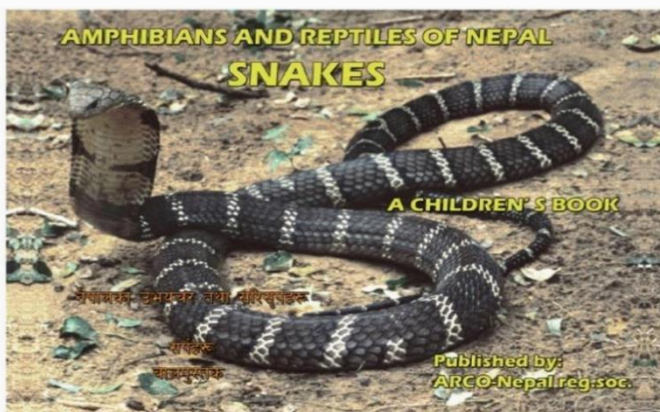
EDUCATION

In Nepal, there exists almost no knowledge about turtles, their natural history, systematics, distribution and biology.

Turtles play an important role in the Hindu religion and are venerated in many places e.g. temples.

To all schools **ARCO offers the study and coloring books on Amphibians and Reptiles of Nepal** (4 volumes for free download at www.arco-nepal.de) and gives training for students and at National Parks, also lectures at the universities are offered.

Since 2016 we do have an own education program carried out by the recently started TRCC Education Centre.



Schoolbooks were made available as hard prints but also free for download from our website.

Left: cover page of coloring book on snakes, right: one of the coloring pages with text inside. Also playing cards and others had been developed, including a didactical concept for teaching of environment and turtle conservation.



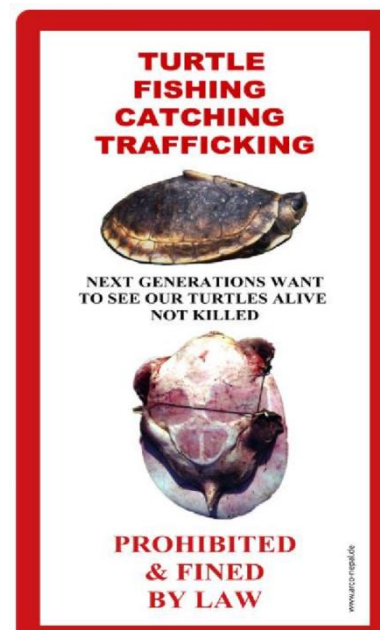
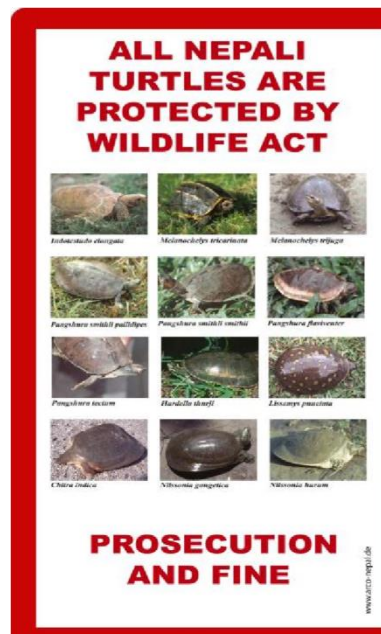
Education programs for conservation started in March 2016 at the TRCC inaugurated by German teacher Mrs. Larissa Kiesl and TRCC representative Mr. Tapil Prakash Rai.

PUBLIC AWARENESS

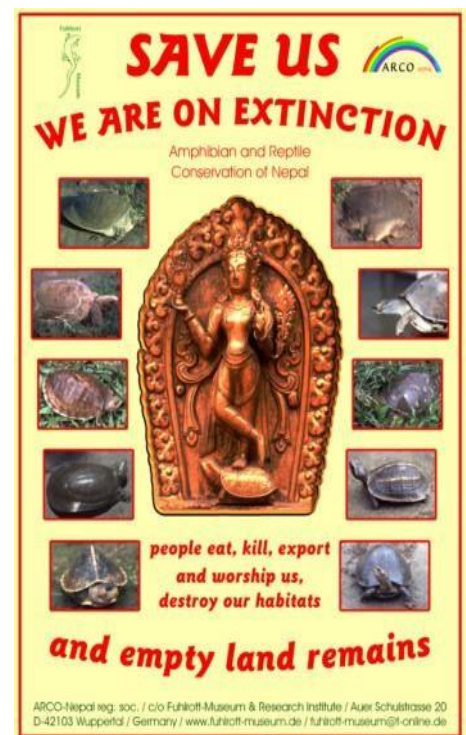
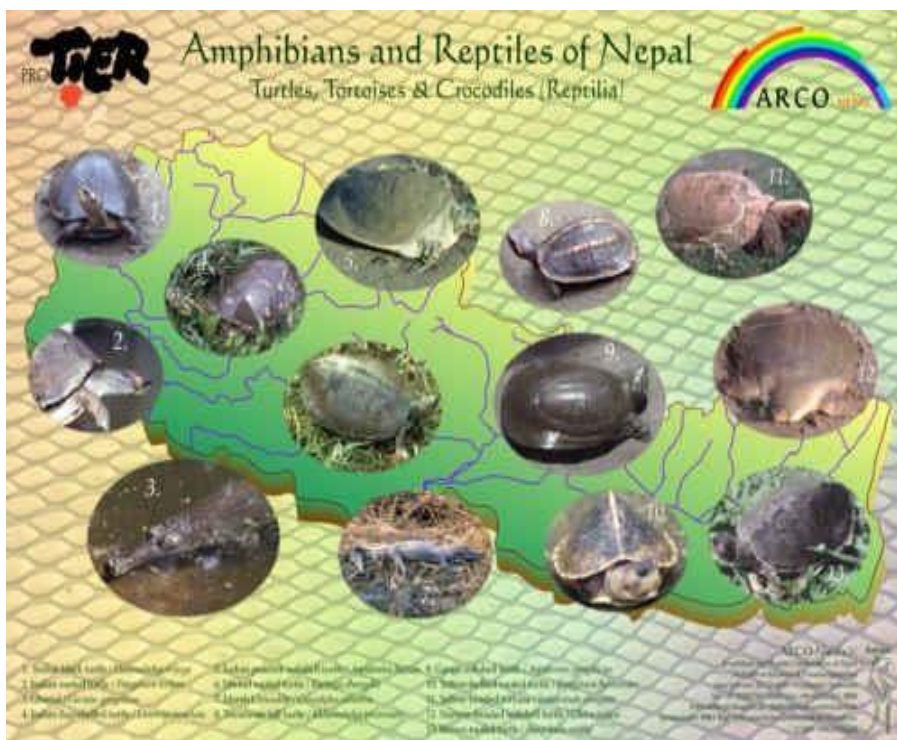
It's a practice existing for many years that Indians pass the open border at the Koshi barrage and buy –the bigger the better– almost all types of live turtles. There exists a big demand for live turtles and in the case of poachers or fishermen getting hold of big specimens the Indian trade men are informed to fetch the catch.

Also trucks laden with live turtles on the way to China (Tibet) have already been confiscated on Nepali roads and recently even at Tribhuvan International Airport.

ARCO and any governmental institution can contribute by publicity and awareness campaigns, posters and sign boards on the main highways. Arco-Nepal is always willing to offer the material and ideas for it.



Population densities of all 16 turtle species proved for Nepal are in dramatic decline, viable populations becoming less and every time more endangered.



Posters were distributed in Nepal at many public places including airports, schools, institutes etc.

Also international awareness campaigns were supported by “Pro Tier” and Arco-Nepal and various other organizations, too.

A migrating exhibition (photo right) on Amphibians and Reptiles of Nepal was travelling within Germany and Netherland and a steady exhibition “The other Nepal *’ Das andere Nepal” was shown at the former Fuhlrott-Museum of Natural History (D-Wuppertal) for seven years. Others were in Nepal at the Central Zoo and at Natural History Museum.



CONSERVATION

Why to develop Conservation Centers:

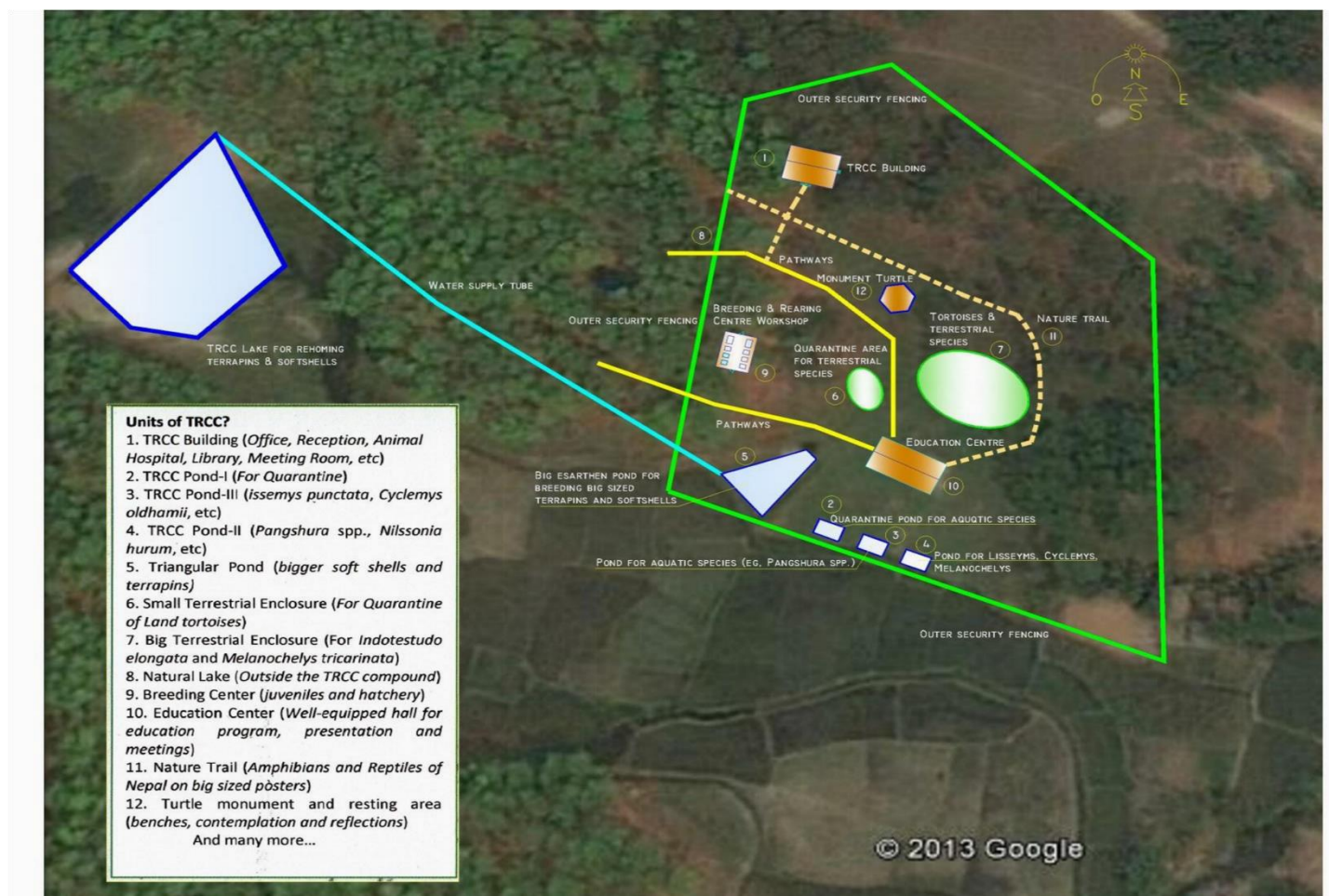
All turtles in Nepal are threatened by international trade, local use, tourist articles, killed as “pests” on fishery farms.

To catch turtles is a tradition in many areas of the lowlands. If they cannot be sold on markets they remain kept alive in cooking pots until they die and then they are thrown away.

The biggest turtle harvesting area is around Koshi Tappu National Park where thousands of turtles appeared on the markets in all conditions up to 20 years ago.

There are no more fully grown adults caught of the genus *Pangshura* and all Softshell Turtles. Genera occurring east and west of Nepal like *Geoclemys*, *Morenia*, and the big growing Batagurs cannot be found anymore in wild. Turtles are used as human food by animistic indigenous people and much appreciated as food items in China and India.

Turtle Conservation Centres for assurance colonies, training and education should be available at all lowland National Parks: Koshi, Chitwan, Bardia, Suklaphantah, (see www.arco-nepal.de), and at special protected zones like Ramsar sites: Godha godi Tal or others and under private communities eg: Budoholi TRCC, see picture below.



Above: The first by ARCO-Nepal & SUMMEF privately realized Turtle Rescue and Conservation Centre had been finalized in 2016.

Recommendations for a Management Plan

Guidelines for placement of confiscated animals

Following information according to IUCN

Collaborations and Network development

The mandatory basics are a country based ecosystem conservation to preserve all natural life heritage.

To achieve this, one needs to develop strategic partnerships for knowing about habitats and nature resources, their aesthetic, ecological and economical (commercial) values.

What and how can it be done

- Signboards at key habitats to protect local species,
- fixed monthly payment to landowners for a protection and no-use concept of particular habitat
- Land given to community is a unique chance for long term conservation in situ and a needed partnership
- Building up conservation bridges as it was many years long suggested to DNPWS (partially still on Arco website (www.arco-nepal.de) to have TRCCs at each lowland National Park.
- Species and specimens of every animal can have potential value for restocking or building founder groups.
- Collaboration with university branches and institutes.
- Serious mapping with voucher records in E-Nepal but actually for the whole Terai is needed.
- Go for Hindu generosity sponsoring turtle survival campaigns in local projects, National Parks and at the TRCC.
- Collaboration and implementation of KTM zoo for rescue programs and further collaborations like in ex-situ breeding and own small conservation programs. Also exhibition and awareness campaigns including collections for fundraising can be perfectly done at the Zoo and universities.

Social impacts and sensitization in conservation approaches by awareness programs at various levels: local, national, international

Local: invitations to TRCC, posters and information for schools, assessment studies about number and distribution of schools in Jhapa province, E- Nepal and finally the whole Terai.

How to address the schools and how to address the children:

Drawing contests, clay modeling, mobile school unit traveling from east to west lowlands of Nepal. Leisure activities at SUMMEF park incl. TRCC visit.

Build up a team of turtle ambassadors as voluntary “King Cobra” rangers equipped with own ARCO-T-shirt and cap incl. Turtle Ranger ID card)

-generate a local team and have decisions based on research executed by them (e.g. Mecchi Campus of Tribhuvan University)



Also use of ex-situ turtle breeding at foreign centres (e.g. ARCO-Spain) can act as turtle embassies for turtle conservation in Nepal.

Use of religious turtle monument at the TRCC for donation focus.

Spread conservation techniques as livelihood for local people and avoidance of impact on turtle habitats.

Start and request for trial groups

The local fishermen community at Koshi Tappu (and of course at various other wetland areas) is a since years requested main focus of ARCO-Nepal, but due to lack of finances and proper (wo)manpower could not yet have been carried out. Fishermen are in the wetlands daily and are key stake holders for information on turtles and their biology. Let fishermen tell their experience and stories of turtles and it may give them another insight in their life with turtles but also respect them by perhaps not anymore fishing turtles. Talk to key individuals, elder experienced and mature people. Help them in humanitarian aspects in exchange for information and live specimen to build up founder groups while we support them with medicine, dentists, food dry or canned or as live chicken, etc.



Meet and talk with local chiefs of ethnic groups and try to gain and convince them as local project ambassadors as there is normally no local law enforcement realized.

How much is salary for local teachers in such areas – can we support with a little bit of income improvement for them for gaining them as collaborators?

Organize annual world turtle day and have motivated king cobra rangers acting as “security ambassadors” for improving life conditions by safeguarding turtle lives.

Management plan for SUMMEF Park – it could become a Nature Park with Nature trails.

-“- for TRCC

-“- for turtle conservation network by building up a TSA (Turtle Survival Alliance)

Celebrate 20 years Arco-Nepal

Taxonomic problems must be resolved via search of partner organizations: IUCN – e.g. *Pangshura* species and genetic analyses (universities, zoos, industry).

Arco can take part with its ambassador activists (King Cobras etc.) in confiscation works as para-official entities and give home to rescued turtles (eg. Nepal’s lowland National parks, in SUMMEF Park or other Community protected areas)

At SUMMEF Park and other similar ones one could offer programs for awareness campaigns in nature conservation and do trainings camps.

Asian Species Action Partnership (ASAP) and other international acting organizations can they become interested partner?

Requests and demands for Conservation programs

- 1) It is a long term commitment
- 2) It needs effective and long term committed teams
- 3) Multidisciplinary goal administrators (conservation of habitat, species, census, surveys etc.), eg.: census for destruction and loss of habitat or population by measuring/estimate size of species, specimens and densities in population or quantity of catch rate
- 4) Realize primitive/simple research abilities at various institutions (habitats and species biology)
- 6) Study threats & goals for possibilities in conservation and nature heritage
- 7) Partners: KTM Zoo, Universities, Forest Depts., Nat Parks & Wildlife Reserves, International Partners

To support conservation programs Masters and Phs can be done on following topics:

- *Cyclemys* and other turtle species (biology, conservation method and population census)
- *Draco* (field studies to prove existence of species)
- Development works for ANTSA (Arco Nepal Turtle Survival Alliance): Pokhara, Koshi, CNP, BNP, Suklaphantah, Ramsar Sites in mid and lowlands.
- Recreation Centres and wetland habitats via community groups.
- Modeling a financial plan for next years
 - Donors (with regard to exchange rates & inflation), Fundraising
 - Collaborating partners
- Assessment studies for Turtle Conservation in E-Nepal, Central Nepal and Far West Nepal.

Future scenarios

- Fill empty natural areas with turtle species (in collaboration with DNPWS)
- Create metapopulations and a long term conservation management plan for habitat and species.
- Involve locals in projects like breeding and restocking or simply bringing back offspring to its natural place
- Setting up information stands at local markets
- Security ambassadors acting as local project ambassadors with leaders, teachers, high school students (for talks and campaigns)
- By focusing on local species and specimens for each region and inform with talk programs, posters etc. with the goal to engage turtle rescue ambassadors
- Turtle programs at schools as being simple key indicators for livelihood of nature sustainability
- Promote conservation campaigns as government cannot do it alone and is lacking the knowledge
- Make use of confiscated stuff for museum purpose, local exhibitions and educations (eg. Denver zoo and many others)
- Education campaigns and basics
 - How many schools are contacted
 - How many responded
 - How many accepted lectures
 - How many came to visit
 - Activities at the TRCC in drawings and modeling (contests)
 - And explain how you do realize that animal and how you can see and find and define it.
 - What habitat and life conditions does it request
 - And draw the habitat where that species is living – where can one still find it in nature?
 - Analysis of drawings which turtles were chosen in % results and studies could be presented in next newsletters
 - And what are responses from adults, students, pupils, children in sake for conservation needs of turtles
 - And what means turtle conservation at the end –to leave and give sustainable survival chances for undestroyed natural habitats and their species for men s future

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Idea Wild, USA
Kaestle Werner, D
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NBSV, NL
Oasys Parque Tematico, E
Pandey Prasad, Nepal
Parque de las Ciencias, E
Pichler H. Mario, D
Rai, Kalu Ram, NEP
Reptilienauffangstation München, D
Rodriguez Linde Jose-Maria, E
Rutherford Douglas, UK
Tovar Diego, E
Turtle Survival Alliance Europe
Van Rossem, Rogier, NL
Zwartepoorte Henk, NL



We do need your future support for realizing all or just a few of the above mentioned conservation efforts.

NB/ At the EAZA International Conservation congress in Malaga (March 2016), conservation projects from all continents had been presented and confirmed the great need and value of those conservation projects also showing that all gained enormous value, publicity, success and sustainability by time.

Hermann Schleich for ARCO-Nepal reg. soc. @ www.arco-nepal.de



**!!!We need your Help
now!!!**

**Make your donation or just join
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Amphibian & Reptile Conservation of Nepal

Hiermit erkläre ich meinen Beitritt zum

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zu folgendem Jahresbeitrag:

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O Institutionen und Körperschaften EUR 150.-

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ARCO-Nepal e.V. www.arco-nepal.de

Amphibian and Reptile Conservation of Nepal.

c/o W. Dziakowski Edlingerstr. 18, D-81543 München

email: w.dziakowski@yahoo.de; arco-nepal@t-online.de



Confirmation of Membership

Sponsoring Society „ARCO-Nepal e. V.“
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Herewith I declare my membership to
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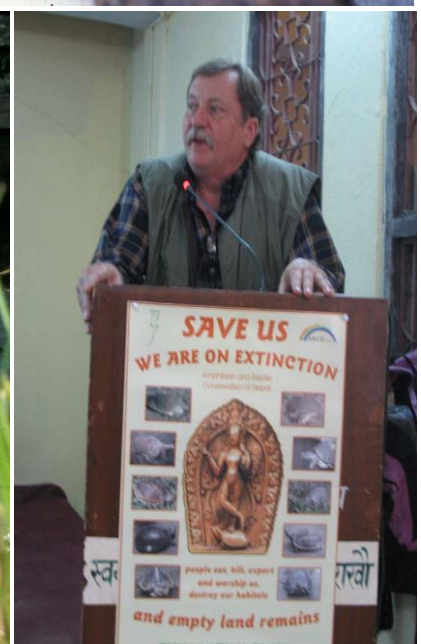
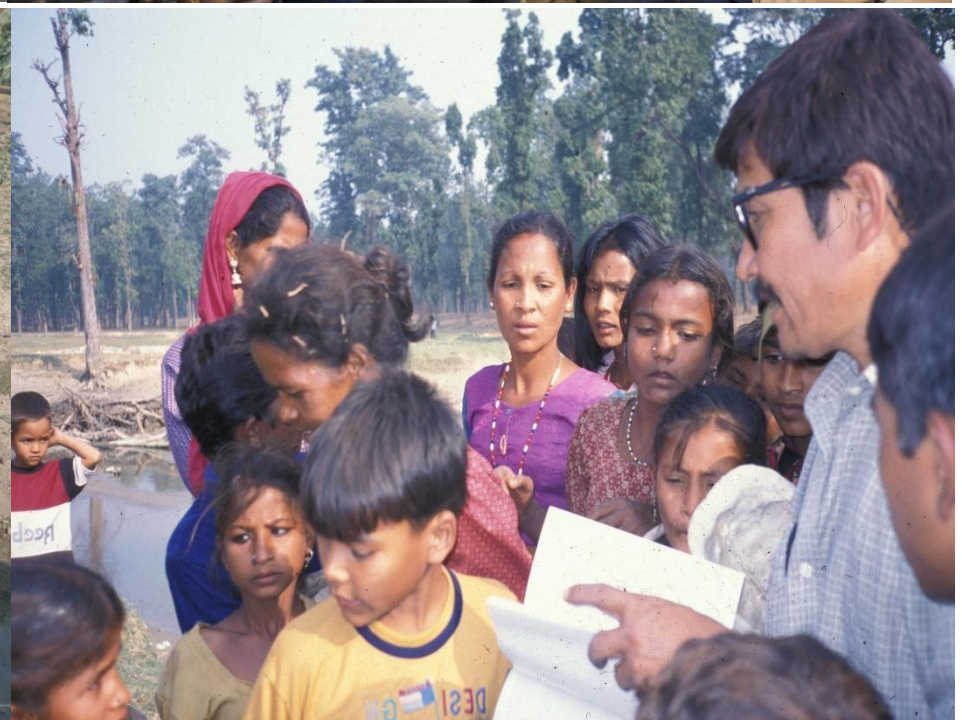
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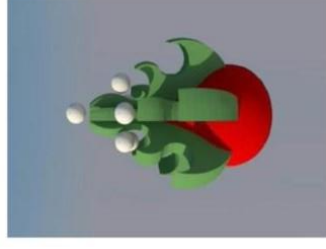
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Date of MOU & Leading Stone: April 22, 2012

This project is supported by “Amphibian and Reptile Conservation Nepal”
ARCO-Nepal, Germany

Signed by Mr. Devraj Ghimire (SUMMEF) & Prof. Dr. Hermann Schleich (ARCO-Nepal)

**सुखानी सहिद स्मृति प्रतिष्ठानको सहिद स्मृति उद्घाटन
कछुवा उद्धार तथा संरक्षण केन्द्र बुडोहोली (भिमसेन पोखरी)**

**साम्ना कार्यक्रम
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मौजको मिति र प्रतिष्ठापन: बैशाख १० गते, २०६९

**यो परियोजनालाई “उभयचर तथा सरिसृप संरक्षण नेपाल” आर्को-नेपाल, जर्मनीले सहयोग गरेको छ।
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