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STUDY OF ALTITUDINAL DIVERSITY OF BIRDS IN GODAWARI-PHULCHOKI PROTECTED FOREST

Drishtant Bidari¹

INTRODUCTION

Our Earth has an astonishing diversity of life. More than 1.2 million species have been recorded in a central database, yet some 86% of existing species on still await description (Mora et al., 2011). Nepal is also exceptionally blessed with a large number of species despite its small geographic size. The variation in biogeography and climate of Nepal harbors 892 species of birds, which is

nearly 9% of world avifauna (DNPWC and BCN, 2022). This includes 42 globally threatened species, nine protected species, 10 Critically Endangered (CR), eight Endangered (EN), 24 Vulnerable (VU), and eight Regionally Extinct (RE) species (DNPWC and BCN, 2022). Godawari & Phulchoki mountain forest is home to six globally threatened species of birds: Wood snipe (*Gallinago nemoricola*), White-rumped Vulture (*Gyps bengalensis*), Slender-billed Vulture (*Gyps tenuirostris*), Indian Spotted Eagle (*Clanga hastata*), Greater Spotted Eagle (*Clanga clanga*) and Steppe Eagle (*Aquila nipalensis*) (BCN, 2022).



Ashy Wood- Pigeon by Drishtant Bidari



Chestnut-crowned Laughingthrush by Drishtant Bidari

Birds provide a wide range of ecosystem services that sustain human life, like pest control, seed dispersal, pollination, nutrient cycling, and ecotourism (Deng GT and Yimam IA, 2020). The significant proportion of threatened bird species inhabit forest ecosystem (BirdLife International, 2024a). More than 150 species of birds migrate to Nepal during the winter season from different countries like China, Syria, Mongolia, Russia (Jha, 2016). Similarly, during the summer season, 62 species of birds are known to migrate to Nepal, mostly for breeding (Grimmett et al. 2016). The forests of Nepal are also known to provide a breeding habitat to around 77% of birds that breed in Nepal (Grimmett et al., 2000).

The diversity and abundance of bird are dependent upon factors like altitude, climate, habitat type, and disturbance (Adhikari et al., 2020). There are four distinct diversity patterns with nearly equal frequency that are followed by birds on mountains: decreasing diversity, low-elevation plateaus, low-elevation with mid-peaks, and unimodal mid-elevational peaks (McCain, 2009). Studies suggest that there is a decrease in bird species in Nepal with increasing altitude (Katuwal et al., 2016). In the Central Himalayas, the greatest number of bird diversity is seen in the slopes consisting of heterogenous habitats and a monotonic decline in species richness (Basnet, 2016).

Godawari & Phulchoki mountain forest are managed by different community forest user groups and Division Forest Office. Phulchoki Mountain Forest IBA is home to 360 bird species representing 15 orders and 57 families (BCN, 2022). Godawari Forest is on the southern fringe of Kathmandu valley is the best area for Himalayan butterflies' species, along with different varieties of local and exotic species of plants. Getting an exceptional level of waterfall every year, the Godawari & Phulchoki mountain forest area is covered by subtropical broadleaf forest of *Schima Wallichii* on the lower slopes and *Quercus lamellose* and *Quercus lantana* forest higher up the slopes while the top of the hill is dominated by the *Quercus semecarpifolia* plant (BCN et al. 2024). The Phulchoki Mountain Forest is recognized as an Important Bird and Biodiversity Area, rated with medium threat and low conservation response by BirdLife International (BirdLife International, 2024). Previous assessments of habitat disturbances and threats to bird species have not been conducted. This study's



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findings will aid future research and help raise awareness among local communities and stakeholders, informing better conservation strategies for the protection and sustainable management of this critical bird habitat.



Stripe-throated Yuhina by Drishtant Bidari



MATERIALS AND METHODS

Study area

Phulchoki Forest is the tallest hill surrounding the country's capital on the southern side, at 2795 masl elevation. Phulchoki hill at 16 km away from Kathmandu City, has an altitudinal range of 1600 masl to 2795 masl. The survey was conducted starting from 27° 34.802' N and 85°22.712' E along the Godawari & Phulchoki trail. Phulchoki Mountain Forest is listed as an Important Bird and Biodiversity Area which is at a medium threat level and has a low response against the threat (BirdLife International, 2023). This area harbours restricted-range species Hoary-throated Barwing (*Siba nipalensis*) and Nepal's only endemic bird Spiny Babbler (*Acanthoptila nipalensis*). The broadleaf temperate forest of Phulchoki mountain forest is also home to various species of mammals like Common Leopard (*Panthera pardus*), Asian palm civet (*Paradoxurus hermaphrodites*), Northern Red Muntjac (*Muntiacus*), Yellow-bellied weasel (*Mustela kathiah*) and herpeto fauna like *Trincata* Species, Common Asian Toad (*Duttaphrynus melanostictus*), Green pit Viper (*Trimeresurus trigonocephalus*) etc.

There is no perennial source of water above 1600 masl in Phulchoki Hill. The mean temperature ranges between 2.6°C and 18.7°C in winter and 15.8°C and 28.2°C in summer. Mean annual rainfall is 1882 mm with about more than 80% between mid-June to mid-September. Relative humidity at 6:30 am is greater than 90% in July, with a minimum of 63% in April (Poudyal, 2013).

Road construction is going on from Godawari to Phulchoki, is causing significant disturbances to the bird species in the area and also damaging their habitat. Phulchoki hill is a renowned bird-watching destination attracting foreigners as well as Nepalese birdwatchers and nature enthusiasts.

Study Area

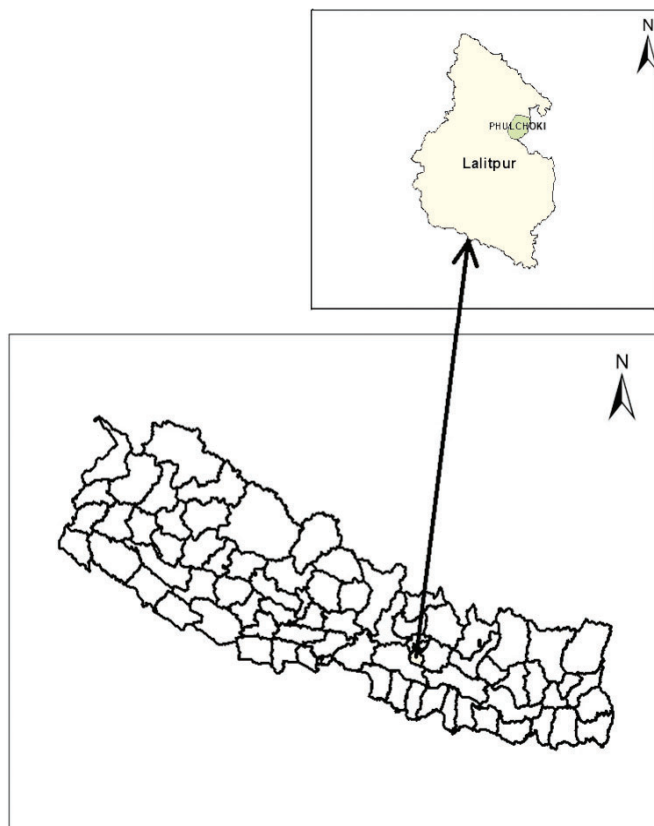


Figure 1: Location of Godawari & Phulchoki Mountain Forest

Field Survey:

Data collection for the study was done by using the point count method (Bibby et al, 2000), one of the most widely applied methods for the bird census for reliable data and statistical representation. In total, 13 different points were allocated along the Godawari & Phulchoki trail at an elevation difference of 100 m each. Altitude as well as geographic coordinates information were noted for each plot using a Garmin eTrex 10 GPS device. The survey was conducted from 6:30 AM to 11: 30 AM and ten minutes was spent at each site as most species exhibit peak activity levels around sunrise and in the subsequent hour, after which their activity gradually decreases throughout the morning (Robbins, 1981). Bird species observed or heard from each point were recorded. The survey was conducted for three days during pre-monsoon and for three days during monsoon season in the months of May and July, respectively. Olympus 10*50 DPSI binocular was used to observe the bird species, and a Canon 90D DSLR camera with Tamron (150-600G2) Telephoto zoom lens was used for further identification and documentation of birds.

Data Analysis:

Information obtained from the field survey was analyzed, and the bird species were categorized according to their feeding guilds following "Birds of Nepal" (Grimmette et al, 2016). Shannon-Wiener Diversity Index (Shannon, 1948), Simpson Diversity Index (Simpson, 1949), and Evenness Index (Pielou, E.C.,1966) were used in order to analyze the diversity and evenness of birds. Additionally, species richness and abundance were also observed along the altitude gradient. For the analysis of potential threats to the birds and their habitat, direct observation was done during the field survey along with a questionnaire survey conducted among the birdwatchers and wildlife photographers who visit the area on a regular basis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Bird Diversity and status

A total of 77 bird species belonging to 32 families and 8 orders were recorded during the study period. Passeriformes order had the largest number of families (n=24) followed by Piciformes (n=2); the rest of the orders had a single family in each of them. Among the recorded birds, the highest number of species were from the family Muscicapidae (n=12) and followed by Leiostrichidae (n=10).

When categorized by feeding guilds, the highest number of bird species observed were insectivores (n=47) followed by omnivores (n=19), frugivores (n=8), and carnivores (n=3). Based on migratory status, 57 resident species,

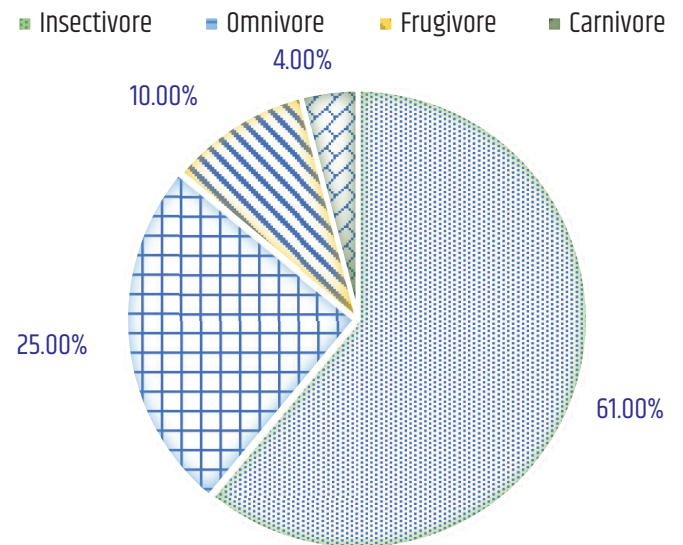


Figure 2- Pie-chart showing proportion of birds with different feeding guilds.

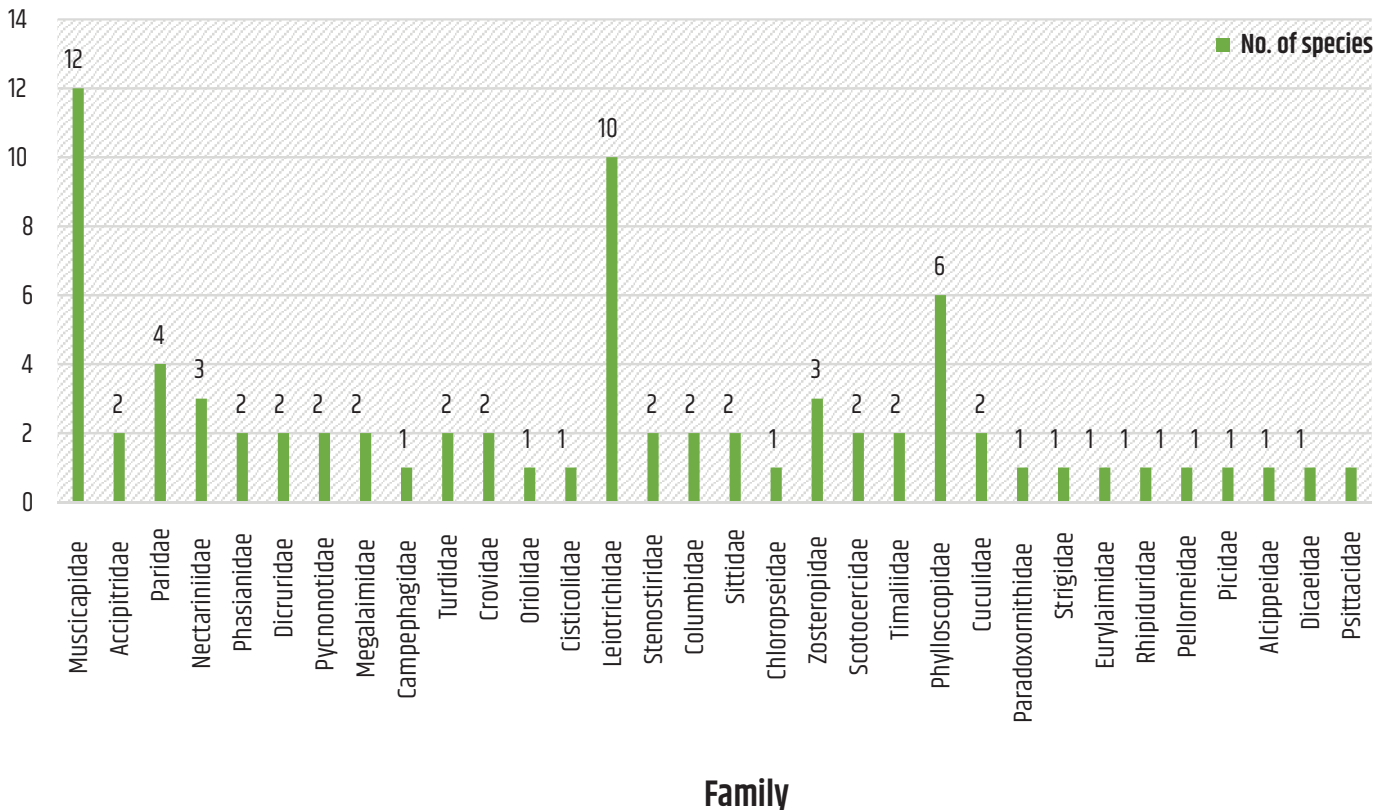


Figure 3- Bar-diagram showing family and number of species of Birds.

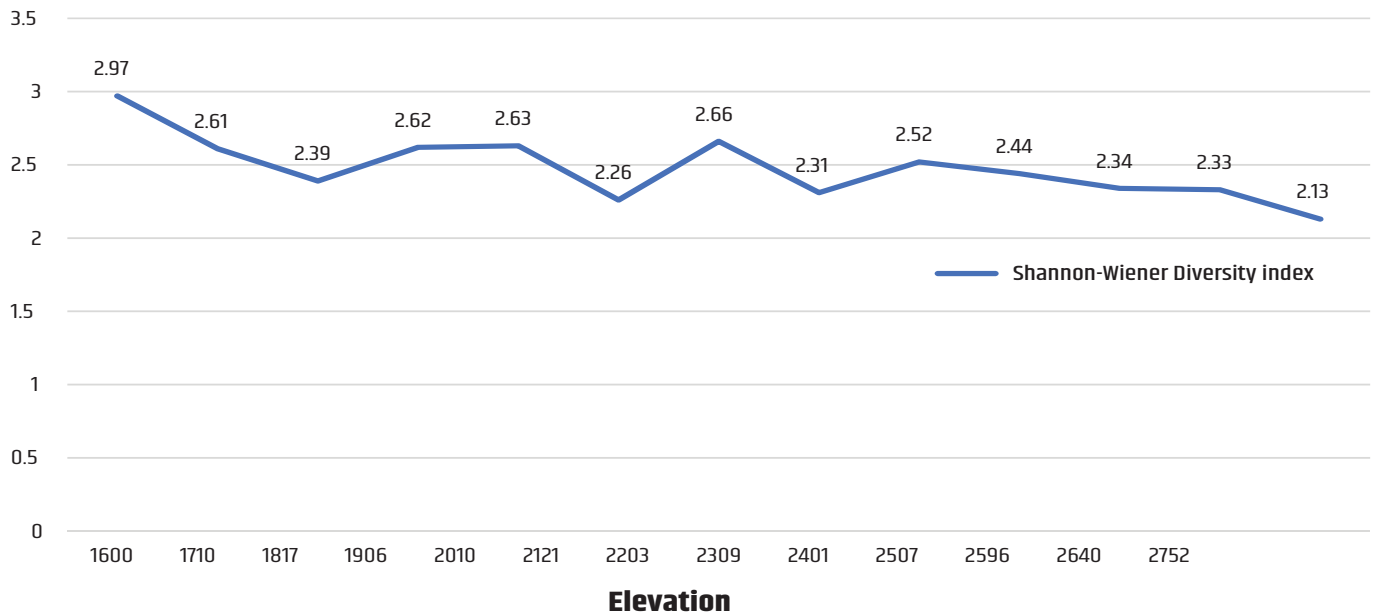


Figure 4- Shannon-Wiener diversity along the elevation range.

11 summer visitors, 6 winter visitors, 2 passage migrants, and one vagrant species of bird were recorded. The high proportion of resident species highlights the year-round importance of the Godawari- Phulchoki forests as critical habitat.

The Shannon-Wiener diversity index (H') of the study area was found to be 4.14, indicating high species diversity in the study area. Site 1 being the highest diversity with a diversity index $H' = 2.97$. The least diverse site was site 13, with a diversity index $H' = 2.13$. A gradual decrease in species diversity was seen with increasing altitude. Simpson's diversity index (D) of the study area was found to be 0.986, further confirming high diversity among the species of birds and relatively low dominance by any single species.

Species Richness, Abundance and variation

The highest species was recorded at the lowest altitude of 1600 masl with a species diversity of 22 different species. A gradual decrease in species richness was observed with increasing altitude, with the highest altitude of 2795 masl having the least number of species richness with only nine species. In terms of Pielou's evenness index the most even site was site 13, with a species evenness value of 0.961 at an altitude of 2752 masl, and the least even site was

site 8, with a species evenness index value of 0.875 at an altitude of 2309 masl. The species evenness of the whole study area was found to be 0.792, which shows the bird communities were relatively evenly distributed across species. The highest species abundance was recorded in sites 1 and 2, with abundance being 43 individuals for each site, and the lowest abundance was recorded in site 13, with species abundance 13 individuals. Similar to species richness, abundance of species seems to be decreasing with increasing altitude.

Among recorded bird species, Rufous Sibia (*Heterophasia capistrata*), Chestnut-headed Tesia (*Cettia castaneocoronata*), Verditer Flycatcher (*Eumyias thalassinus*), and Striated Laughingthrush (*Grammatoptila striata*) were observed throughout the entire elevation range. While Great Tit (*Parus major*), Alexandrine Parakeet (*Palaeornis eupatria*), Spotted Forktail (*Enicurus maculatus*), and Long-tailed Broadbill (*Psarisomus dalhousiae*), were observed only in elevation ranges up to 1600 m, whereas species of birds like Rufous-gorgeted Flycatcher (*Ficedula strophilata*), Streaked Laughingthrush (*Trochaloxyron lineatum*), and Grey Bushchat (*Saxicola ferreus*) were observed only in higher elevation ranges above 2000 m. Leiotrichidae and Phylloscopidae were the most abundant family of birds widely distributed across the altitudinal range, while the least abundant family includes Eurylaimidae, Chloropseidae, Picidae, and Oriolidae. Buff-barred Warbler (*Phylloscopus pulcher*) and Rufous Sibia (*Heterophasia capistrata*) were the most abundant species of birds throughout the elevation range.

Site no.	Elevation (masl)	Shannon wiener diversity	Species richness	Species Abundance	Pielou's evenness index	Simpson's diversity index
1	1600	2.97	22	43	0.960	0.965
2	1710	2.61	19	43	0.886	0.923
3	1817	2.39	12	18	0.961	0.954
4	1906	2.62	16	30	0.944	0.949
5	2010	2.63	16	35	0.948	0.947
6	2121	2.26	11	21	0.942	0.923
7	2203	2.66	16	28	0.959	0.957
8	2309	2.31	14	40	0.875	0.894
9	2401	2.52	14	32	0.954	0.941
10	2507	2.44	13	24	0.951	0.912
11	2596	2.34	12	20	0.941	0.936
12	2640	2.33	12	33	0.937	0.920
13	2752	2.13	9	13	0.969	0.948

Table 1- Diversity, Richness, Abundance and Evenness of birds along the Elevation range.

A questionnaire survey conducted among 25 individuals (birders and experts) showed 68% of respondents considered Phulchoki forest as moderate habitat for birds, while 28% regarded Phulchoki forest as habitat of the highest quality. Although the majority of the individuals were students (48%) followed by researchers (28%) and nature guides (20%), the major purpose of the visit of 88% of the individuals was birding. Most individuals choose Barwing (24%), Warblers (28%), Laughingthrush (8%), and Sunbirds (8%) as their preferred sightings in Phulchoki hills. 48% of respondents identified their favourite birding location as the pond area at an elevation of 2586 msal which was one of our sites during the field study. It revealed a high abundance of species of birds like Warblers, Sunbirds and Laughingthrush.

Threats

Biodiversity is threatened by human induced changes. Construction of motorable roads is going on around the Phulchoki forest. These routes are not only causing deforestation but also causing other secondary impacts such as soil erosion and landslides. During the monsoon, heavy rain is seen in this part of the valley, with the mean annual rainfall of the Godawari area being 2075.3 mm (Nayava, Janak, 1981). A lot of soil is eroded by rain through these clearings made for infrastructure development, as the concrete path reduce infiltration of water. Another major pressure arises from the high number of hikers, riders, and campers come to Phulchoki hills during their leisure time. As a result, plastic wastes are being accumulated in the forest area, and noise pollution caused by the loud exhaust of bikes is possessing disturbances and threatening many species of animals. Threats like this might affect the behavior of birds like breeding habits, feeding habits, and courtship rituals.

The majority of individuals who took part in the questionnaire survey perceived road construction (12%), a huge number of tourists (16%), hikers and picnicker (20%), and deforestation (8%) are major threats to birds in Phulchoki hills, while 36% believe all of these to be the combined threat. Among the respondents, bird watching and a similar number of people use bikes for their birding purposes, while only 16% of respondents are using cars or jeeps as their means of transport for birding. Groups of not more than 5 people are preferred by 72% of respondents while the rest of them prefer company in even lower numbers to minimize disturbances. None of these respondents believe that concerned authorities are showing enough efforts for biodiversity conservation in Phulchoki hills, 56% of respondents believed that there is no effort shown, while the rest of the respondents were uncertain.

Discussion

The study recorded 77 species from 8 orders and 32 families during the study period. A total of 360 species of birds belonging to 15 orders and 57 families have been recorded from the Godawari & Phulchoki Mountain Forest (BCN, 2022) during different seasons. In accordance with the feeding guilds, our study shows similarity to the total bird species that have been recorded from Nepal (Grimmet et al., 2016) as well as other studies conducted in different

parts of Nepal (Katuwal et al., 2016, Basnet et al., 2016, Kunwar et al., 2023). The decrease in bird diversity along the altitudinal gradient has been observed in the study area, which has been well supported by other studies (Katuwal et al., 2016, Kunwar et al., 2023, Bastola et al., 2022). Although Godawari & Phulchoki Mountain Forest is home to six globally threatened species of birds (BCN, 2022), none of them were observed during the course of the study which could be because of seasonal limitations of study conducted fieldwork only during the monsoon, weather condition, and intensity of the field survey. This study was conducted along the Godawari & Phulchoki trail, which did not include the whole forest area of the IBA; this might have influenced the species number in comparison to overall species recorded from Phulchoki hills. The Spiny Babbler, only endemic species of bird have also been recorded from this area but was not observed during this survey.

In our study area, a monotonic decrease in bird species richness was observed as we moved along the elevation range with peaks in mid-range. A study conducted in south western Brazil to the elevation of 2500 m along three different elevation gradients shows a similar result, with species richness decreasing with an increase in elevation (Mallet-Rodrigues, Francisco & Parrini, Ricardo & Rennó, Bruno, 2015).

Similar to the studies of BirdLife International, 2024b; Stratford et al., 2015, deforestation and over exploitation were found to be the major threats to the bird species, while threats due to climate change and agricultural expansion were not noticed in the field area. Threats due to poaching, firewood collection, cattle grazing, and land use change were not recorded during the course of this study. This could be attributed to the hill's harsh geographical conditions, its isolated location, and the army camp situated at the top of the hill, which appears to provide protection from illegal hunting activities.

To minimize the threats to the birds in this area, the number of visitors should be controlled, plastics should be banned in the forest area, and activities causing high anthropogenic disturbances should be discouraged in the area. Beside these awareness programs, controlled entry of vehicles could also be one of the measures to protect birds in this area. As the Phulchoki hill forests are under constant threat due to infrastructural development and the least efforts have been shown by the concerned authority, proactive measures should be taken for the protection and conservation of avifauna and their habitat.

It is well known that birds are friends of humans, providing ecosystem services such as pest regulation (Koli 2014). Yet, widespread misconceptions and low public awareness remain barriers to effective conservation. Active collaboration among government agencies, conservation organizations, and local stakeholders is essential to ensure the long-term protection of the avifauna and habitats of Phulchoki.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that there is a high diversity of birds in Godawari & Phulchoki Mountain Forest and its importance is well recognized as IBA. The survey revealed a with increasing altitude, a gradual decrease in species richness and diversity has been observed in the study area. The highest number of bird species from family Muscicapidae and Leiotrichidae were recorded during the study. Road construction, tourist activities, and deforestation are few of the major threats to birds in Phulchoki Forest. During the course of our study, human disturbances were high as the road was under construction and a large number of visitors joined the trail during holidays, which might also have affected the bird diversity in our study area. For the betterment of avifaunal habitat in the study area, proper steps should be taken by concerned



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authorities, and infrastructural development should be more sustainable with environmentally friendly approaches. Stronger legal enforcement and community engagement will be vital in ensuring the long-term conservation of Phulchoki's forest ecosystem and its birdlife.

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First Record of Spotted Flycatcher (*Muscicapa striata*) and Naumann's Thrush (*Turdus naumanni*) for Nepal

Shankar Tiwari¹

The largest protected area in Nepal and the site of remarkable biodiversity is the Annapurna Conservation Area (ACA), which was established in 1986. The ACA, which is located in west-central Nepal, supports an astounding variety of 506 bird species (BCN et al., 2024) including globally and nationally threatened taxa and spans a range of habitats from arid high-altitude areas to subtropical forests. This article presents the first ever record of two bird species from the Annapurna Conservation Area adding new species to the list of Nepal's bird.

The Spotted Flycatcher (*Muscicapa striata*) was observed during birdwatching in Samar, Mustang District, on July 17, 2024. The species was recorded by the author along with bird photographer Sanjay Tha Shrestha during the bird watching at the site. This species migrates through South Asia on its way to its wintering grounds in Africa, but it mostly spends the summers in Europe and western Asia. Records from nearby nations like China and India, where it occurs in transitional habitats during migration, are consistent with its presence in Nepal. The importance of the Himalayan flyway for migratory birds such as the Spotted Flycatcher is further highlighted by occasional sightings in northern Pakistan and Bhutan (BirdLife International, 2024a).

A Naumann's Thrush (*Turdus naumanni*) was spotted by the author in the early hours of the morning on April 30, 2024, in Chaille Village, Mustang District. This species spends the winter in southern Asia and breeds in Korea, northeast China, and eastern Russia. Its use of the Himalayas as a critical flyway is confirmed by migratory records from northern Pakistan, India, and Bhutan, which makes the ACA observation especially significant (BirdLife International, 2024b).

reaffirming ACA's designation as an Important Bird and Biodiversity Area (IBA). ACA's importance as a centre for avian biodiversity is expected to grow as more undiscovered species are discovered there. The official checklist Birds of Nepal does not include the species (DNPWC and BCN, 2022). As a result, our observation is the species' first verified record in Nepal.

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¹* Travel Nepal Pvt. Ltd., Nepal, E-mail: nepalbirds@live.com



Spotted Flycatcher by Shankar Tiwari



Naumann's Thrush by Shankar Tiwari

Combating Wild Bird Trade: Awareness and Action Workshop at Sudurpaschim Province

On 25 August 2024, BCN held the "Wild Bird Trade Control and Sensitization Program" in Sudurpaschim Province. The workshop was last of seven planned across Nepal's provinces, organized in collaboration with the Department of Forest and Soil Conservation (DOFSC) and facilitated by Sudurpaschim Province, with support from LUSH-FRESH HANDMADE COSMETICS.

Pramod Bhattarai, Secretary of the Ministry of Industry, Tourism, Forest, and Environment for Sudurpaschim Province, chaired the workshop. Hem Raj Bist, Director of the Province Forest Directorate, emphasized the importance of controlling wild bird trade in the region. Shiva Kumar Wagle, Director General of the DOFSC, provided insights into wildlife trade control. Forest officers from various district offices were educated on existing laws and regulations regarding wild bird trade and control by Surendra Adhikari and Sabanam Pathak, officers of the DOFSC. Santosh Bajagain, Research Officer of BCN, shared the status of wild bird trade in Sudurpaschim Province and across Nepal. Additionally, Mohan Bikram Shrestha, Senior Research Officer of BCN, provided detailed information on CITES-listed bird species.

Likewise, university graduates from Kailali Multiple Campus, affiliated with Sudurpaschim University, participated in a two-day knowledge enhancement session on wild bird trade control and sensitization.

Empowering Women and Restoring Wetlands: Handicraft Display Center Handed Over to Koshi Tappu Cooperative

On 27 September 2024, with the initiation of the Koshi Tappu Wildlife Reserve and the support from the BCN, display centre for handicrafts made from wetlands and alien invasive species was officially handed over to the women-led Koshi Tappu Multipurpose Cooperative. This effort is part of the

"Sustainable Management of Wetlands and Grasslands: Enhancing Biodiversity and Livelihoods" project, supported by the Darwin Initiative.

The project aims to promote women's entrepreneurship, enhance livelihoods, and restore degraded wetlands within the buffer zone area. The handover ceremony was honoured by the presence of Hon. Gyanendra Bahadur Karki, former Minister of the Government of Nepal and Member of the House of Representatives, along with Israil Mansuri, Member of the Provincial Assembly, Aiyub Ansari, President of Koshi Rural Municipality, and Senior Conservation Officer Ramesh Kumar Yadav, among other distinguished guests.

16th International Vulture Awareness Day Celebrated across Nepal

BCN marked the 16th International Vulture Awareness Day (IVAD) with week-long celebrations from September 1st to 7th, 2024, across 20 districts of Nepal. The events aimed to raise awareness about the importance of vulture conservation and engage communities in efforts to protect these critically endangered birds. A diverse array of activities was organized, including a special Vulture Hike and Count and a Bird Watching Program at Batase Danda near Ichangu, Kathmandu, which drew significant participation from bird enthusiasts and conservationists. Simultaneously, vulture counts were conducted in vulture range districts across the country, providing valuable data for conservation efforts.

Educational and outreach programs played a key role in spreading the message of vulture conservation. Schools, universities, and community centers hosted activities such as art competitions, quiz competitions, documentary screenings, and talk programs. These initiatives fostered interest and dialogue on the critical role vultures play in maintaining ecological balance. Community outreach programs organized in collaboration with local partners further emphasized the importance of vultures to Nepal's biodiversity. Media campaigns and social platforms amplified the message, ensuring broad public engagement in vulture conservation efforts. The celebrations underscored



the importance of protecting Nepal's vultures and their habitats, reinforcing BCN's commitment to conservation through collaborative efforts at all levels of society.

Bird-friendly Rooftop Plantation Initiative

As part of the Bird-friendly Neighbourhood Program by BCN, Bird-Friendly Rooftop Plants and pots were distributed to the Vashkar Women's Group of Nyakhachowk Community in Ward-16 of Lalitpur Metropolitan City. This initiative took place on August 9, 2024, during the auspicious occasion of Nagpanchami.



A total of 30 bird-friendly rooftop plants, along with pots, were provided to the women's group within their community. The event included a brief session led by local experts and representatives from BCN, where they discussed the various plant species distributed and highlighted their benefits for both humans and birds. The initiative aims to foster bird-human coexistence by introducing native plants that attract local bird species, enhancing urban biodiversity. Local experts and representatives from BCN discussed the benefits of the plants. The event also involved monitoring previously planted plants in the community park, reinforcing the commitment to creating more bird-friendly neighbourhoods.

Wild Bird Trade Control and Sensitization Workshop to dismantle bird trade in Madhesh Province

With an aim to discourage the trade of wild birds as well as to enhance the capacity of the enforcement agencies, BCN conducted wild bird trade control and sensitization workshops on 16 August 2024 at Madhesh Province. During the program, provincial secretary Mr. Udhaw Ghimire chaired the event and highlighted the importance and impact of the awareness program to dismantle illegal trade. In light of recent surveillance conducted by BCN, which revealed significant findings on the wild bird trade in this region, a crucial workshop was held in Janakpur to address this issue. Jagannath Prasad Jaiswal, Director of the Province Forest Directorate, emphasized the urgent need for wild bird trade control in the region. Special guests, Shiva Kumar Wagle, Director General, and Dipak Jnawali, Deputy Director General, shared their insights on controlling wildlife trade. Division forest officer and forest officers from different Division



Forest offices were provided knowledge on existing rules and regulation in for wild bird trade and control in Nepal by Department of Forest and Soil Conservation. Santosh Bajagain, Research Officer at Bird Conservation Nepal, presented the current status of wild bird trade in both Madhesh Province and across Nepal. Additionally, Mohan Bikram Shrestha, Senior Research Officer at Bird Conservation Nepal, provided an overview of CITES-listed birds in Nepal.

Launching a Pilot Survey: Nest Box Installation to Explore Spotted Owlets in Urban Habitats

On May 3, 2024, a study on Spotted Owlets was initiated in Ward No. 16, Lalitpur Metropolitan City focusing on their presence and behaviour in urban areas. As part of this pilot survey, nest boxes were thoughtfully constructed and installed in the community to explore the owlets' nesting preferences across diverse urban habitats. This initiative aims to enhance understanding of these urban-dwelling birds while contributing to their conservation.

This collaborative effort goes beyond scientific exploration—it enriches the local environment by creating vital habitats for biodiversity dependent on native plants. By combining research and community engagement, the project reinforces a shared commitment to preserving and nurturing urban ecological diversity.



World Environment Day 2024: Cultivating Hope, Inspiring Action

On the occasion of World Environment Day, BCN, in collaboration with Lalitpur Metropolitan City, Ward No. 16, organized a bird-friendly plantation event at Nyakhachowk Community Park. The event aimed to promote bird and biodiversity conservation by planting native plant species. With the dedicated support of Mr. Nirmal Ratna Shakya, Chairperson of Ward No. 16, along with the active participation of the local women's group, Tolsudhar Samiti, and enthusiastic bird lovers, biodiversity-friendly saplings were planted. This initiative seeks to enhance urban biodiversity and strengthen the local ecosystem.

42nd Annual General Meeting

Bird Conservation Nepal celebrated its 42nd AGM successfully on 28th December 2024 at Amrapali Banquet, Naxal, Kathmandu. The event, chaired by Mr. Vimal Kumar Thapa, Vice-president of BCN Executive Council, hosted Mr. Bed Kumar Dhakal, Deputy Director General of Department of National Park and Wildlife Conservation as chief guest of the event. The discussion session of the AGM commenced with a presentation on BCN's annual progress report by Mr. Ashok Bahadur Malla, General Secretary of the BCN Executive Council. This was followed by the annual financial report, presented by Mr. Raj Kumar Rai, Treasurer of the Council.

The event also awarded Nepal Bird Conservation Network (NBCN) Grant worth



NRS. 1 Lakh to two LCG groups: Golden Valley Community Learning Center, Ilam and Jatayu Restaurant Lalmatiya, Kalika CFUG, Dang for their significant contribution in bird and biodiversity conservation. Similarly, the *Jatayu Research Scholarship* of NRS. 35,000 was presented to two university students, Ms. Surakchhya Pokharel and Mr. Sarbesh Singh Mahara, to support their research on vultures. The event also honored the individuals who recorded new species for Nepal in the past one year: Firethroat (Suchit Basnet and Badri Chaudhary), Lesser Grey Shrike (Dev Raj Joshi), White-cheeked Starling (Shankar Tiwari), Spotted Flycatcher (Sanjay Tha Shrestha and Shankar Tiwari) and Naumann's Thrush (Shankar Tiwari). Through the event, BCN also welcomed Mr. Dipak Kumar Singh as new Patron member.

During the 42nd AGM, a new Executive Council was elected to serve a three-year term. Senior Advocate Mr. Hum Raj Nepal, serving as the election officer, formally announced the names of the elected members. The newly elected candidates are as follows:

President	Mr. Vimal Kumar Thapa
Vice-president	Ms. Sarita Jnawali
Secretary	Mr. Ashok Bahadur Malla
Vice-Secretary	Prof. Dr. Prem Bahadur Budha
Treasurer	Mr. Sudarson Karki
Member	Mr. Jaya Nath Bhandari
Member	Mr. Deepak Shrestha
Member	Er. Mahesh Prasad Pandey
Member	Ms. Ganga Devi Gurung
Member	Mr. Prem Thapa
Member	Mr. Dikpal Krishna Karmacharya

In the closing remarks, the newly elected president of Executive Council, Vimal Thapa thanked all attendees and emphasized continued collective efforts in bird and biodiversity conservation.

8th national workshop of Nepal Bird Conservation Network (NBCN) members

Bird Conservation Nepal, in collaboration with the Jatayu Restaurant Management Committee, Pithauli, Nawalparasi East, organized a three-day national-level workshop for members of the Nepal Bird Conservation Network (NBCN). The event took place from 29-31 December 2024 at Nana Jungle Resort, Amaltari, Nawalparasi East.

A total of 33 Local Conservation Groups (LCGs) representing 21 Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas (IBAs) from across the country participated in the workshop. The primary goal of the workshop was to strengthen the

capacity of these field-based groups in bird and biodiversity conservation and monitoring. Participants also shared feedback, discussed current challenges, and exchanged new perspectives to help shape the annual conservation plan.

The workshop was chaired by D.B. Chaudhary, President of the Jatayu Restaurant Management Committee, and inaugurated by Chief Guest Babu Ram Bishwokarma, Chairman of the District Coordination Committee, Nawalparasi East. The program featured presentations by BCN staffs and LCG representatives, along with group discussions.



Life Membership

Mr. Parshu Ram Rana has joined BCN as a Life Member. Mr. Rana is a Nature Guide by profession.

Mr. Prasan Shrestha has joined BCN as a Life Member. Mr. Shrestha is a photographer by profession and an avid bird watcher.

Mr. Amrit Maharjan has joined BCN as a Life Member. Mr. Maharjan is a business man by profession. He is passionate about birds and is highly dedicated for the conservation of birds.

Mr. Tashi Rapte Ghale has joined BCN as a Life Member. Mr. Ghale is a wildlife photographer by profession.

Mr. Nishan Baral has joined BCN as a Life Member. Mr. Baral is a bird lover and is highly dedicated for the conservation of birds and biodiversity too.

Mr. Sundar Kumar Pandey has joined Bird Conservation Nepal as a Life Member. Serving in the Nepal Army, Mr. Pandey is deeply committed to the conservation of birds and biodiversity.

The newsletter is produced quarterly for members of Bird Conservation Nepal. The aim of the newsletter is to inform BCN members on the recent development of ornithology in Nepal and any other relevant news on birds. It is circulated to all members free of cost. The individual annual membership is NRS. 500 for any SAARC nationals and US\$ 15.00 for others to join as Friends of BCN.

Those who would like to donate to or be a member of BCN can do so by a direct bank transfer, to the bank details below, or via cheque. Cheques should be made payable to Bird Conservation Nepal and sent to the address below.

Laxmi Sunrise Bank Limited, Gairidhara
A/C No: 0020002591701001
Account Holder: **Bird Conservation Nepal**
Swift code: LXBLNPKA

Patrons

Mr. Karna Shakya, Nepal	Mr. Ganga Jung Thapa, Nepal
Mr. Rajendra Lal Shrestha, Nepal	Prof. David Simmons, New Zealand
Miss Michie Kashiwabara, Japan	Dr. Guy Castley, Australia
Mr. Shyam Khatri, Nepal	Dr. Jean-Marc Hero, Australia
Field Marshal Sir John Chapple GCB, CBE, DL	Mr. Bikram Rai, Nepal
Mrs. Nicole Nooren, Netherlands	Dr. Shant Raj Jnawali, Nepal
Mr. Yozo Koshiyama, Japan	Mr. Chungba Sherpa, Nepal
Mr. Lalit Jung Lalchan, Nepal	Mr. Umang Jung Thapa, Nepal
Mr. Bishwa Tuladhar, Nepal	Mr. Basant Raj Mishra, Nepal
Mr. Tara P. Lama, USA	Mr. Bhogendra Rayamajhi, Nepal
Mr. Krishna Karki, Nepal	Mr. Jaya N. Bhandari, Nepal
Mr. Uttam Raj Kayastha, Nepal	Dr. Rishi Bikram Shah, Nepal
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Dr. Joel T. Heinen, USA	Mr. Jyotendra Jyu Thakuri, Nepal
Mr. Lok Nath Wosti, Japan	Retd. Brig. Gen. Babu Krishna Karki, Nepal
Mr. Rajendra Gurung, Nepal	Mr. Additya Shrestha, Nepal
Mr. Syam Krishna Prasai, Nepal	Mr. Sujana Kumar Shrestha, Nepal



नेपाल पंखी संरक्षण संघ Bird Conservation Nepal

Established in 1982, Bird Conservation Nepal (BCN) is the leading organisation in Nepal, focussing on conservation of birds, their habitats and sites. It seeks to promote interest in birds among the general public, encourage research on birds, identify major threats to birds' continued survival. As a result, BCN is the foremost scientific authority providing accurate information on birds and their habitats throughout Nepal. We provide scientific data and expertise on birds for the Government of Nepal (GoN) through the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation (DNPWC) and work closely in birds and biodiversity conservation throughout the country.

BCN is a membership-based organisation with a executive council, patrons, life members, ordinary members, friends of BCN and active supporters. Our membership provides strength to the society and is drawn from people of all walks of life from students, professionals and conservationists. Our members act collectively to set the organisation's strategic agenda.

We are committed to showing the value of birds and their special relationship with people. As such, we strongly advocate the need for peoples' participation as future stewards to attain long-term conservation goal.

As the Nepalese partner of BirdLife International, a network of more than 120 organisations around the world, BCN also works on a worldwide agenda to conserve the world's birds and their habitats.

For further information please contact:

Bird Conservation Nepal

Post Box 12465, Lazimpat, Kathmandu, Nepal
Tel 4517805, 4520213, Fax +97714513884
Email bcn@birdlifeneपाल.org
www.birdlifeneपाल.org



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