



Gharial may head for IUCN Green-listing on securing its habitat!

Gharial *Gavialis gangeticus* occurs in Nepal in the Karnali and Babai rivers in Bardia National Park (BNP) and the Narayani and Rapti rivers in Chitwan National Park (Lang et al. 2019) with active conservation action plan (DNPWC 2018) and captive facilities in Chitwan at the Gharial Conservation and Breeding Center (GCBC) (Khadka & Bashyal 2019).

We congratulate everyone involved in the Gharial Conservation Project in Nepal, and appreciate the sentiment of the author Sunil Sapkota of Nepal, presently a student in Bhutan who wants his grandson to see Gharial *Gavialis gangeticus* in nature. We wish the sentiments in favour of Gharial conservation become strong in the coming years and flourish in the entire range of Gharial habitat in the Indian subcontinent (Singh 1991a; Thapaliyal et al. 2010; Lang, et al 2019).

Forty-three years ago, on 14 July 1977, when I joined Gharial Research and Conservation Unit (GRACU), Gharials faced the threat of imminent extinction in India (FAO, 1974 based on the work of Dr. H.R Bustard). Because of growth in knowledge and its application in ex situ and in situ conservation for Gharials, (Bustard 1975, 1976, FAO 1975, Singh 1978, 2018) now they appear fairly safe as a species.

Although the conservation efforts have not been uniformly successful (Singh 1991), over the years Gharial conservation has resulted

in multiple aspects of species conservation, research and training (Singh 1999).

Also, areas with improved population of Gharial are receiving encouraging attention in research and conservation, as in the river Gandak (Sinha 2018). Gandak is the continuation of river Narayani of Nepal and it provided the initial clutches of eggs which were transported to the first Gharial project of India at GRACU, Tikarpada, Odisha (Behura & Singh 1979). 18 June 1975 is a landmark in the history of Gharial Conservation. On that day, the first Gharial hatched in captivity at GRACU (Singh 1979).

Another good example of return of Gharial is into river Yamuna, upstream of its confluence with river Chambal (Tripathy et al. 2019). Sharma (2006), based on a survey conducted in February 1997 had mentioned the absence of gharial in Yamuna upstream the confluence.

Overall, the status of gharial from 1974–75 has improved and in coming years we may hope for its listing in the IUCN Green List for species (IUCN 2020).

Lang et al. (2019) mention about the extinct status of Gharial in Myanmar, Pakistan, and Bhutan. The possibilities of a project for conservation of Gharial in Bhutan was thought in the past (Bustard 1979, 1980a,b). Gharials are within the list of herpetofauna of Bhutan (Wangyal 2014). The levels of awareness about the species appear to have improved. Presently, visitors are able to see



gharial in captivity (Singh & Tshering 2004; Anonymous 2018, 2020)

We wish further that the young generation and the local people help gharial return through its entire range of habitats in the subcontinent.

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