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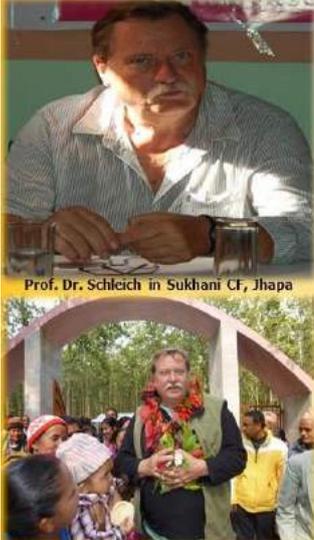
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Editor's note

The visit to India and Nepal this year was filled with a lot of activities and challenging tasks. The stopover for a few days in Lucknow at the Turtle Survival Alliance India was a great pleasure and wonderful experience. To see their efforts and learn how willing the government is to support their conservation strategies is great, also the host, Dr. Shailendra Singh and the whole staff was so cooperative that the time being there was great fun. To learn and see about habitats with endangered turtles we still are searching for in Nepal was much impressive also the facilities that are granted to TSA-India for breeding and conservation purposes. We thank Dr. Singh and all of his staff very much for those possibilities.

Again it was a great moment, as always, to arrive in Kathmandu and as we had already long time planned a special seminar with CODEFUND and the DEPARTMENT of NATIONAL PARKS at the Zoo the time seemed to be passing by quickly. Since its founding times ARCO-Nepal always had been in collaboration with the DNPWS, the Tribhuvan University (Natural History Museum) and now, being invited guest speaker from CODEFUND, I was much pleased to see so many long time known friends and visitors at the seminar and

HIGHLIGHT OF THE SEMINAR



Prof. Dr. Hermann Schleich is the Founder of ARCO-Nepal, and his engagement in conservation research of herpetofauna is very profound. He is the Advisor of Himalayan Wetlands Journal under the initiative of CODEFUND.

In the seminar, Prof. Dr. Hermann will present the history of ARCO-Nepal and the learning demonstrated in the herpetological investigations and conservation from 1980 reflecting on his works. Presentation will cover the discovery of some of the new species, review brief published in the last 20 years, and conservation needs and issues on turtles and amphibians of Nepal.



also many new students. As always the time given in Nepal is running fast and too many things appear on to do lists. The request from DNPWC Director General to visit the National Parks in the lowlands of Nepal for the evaluation if Turtle Conservation Centres can be established there gave me much hope for future development of new strategies fighting for the survival of remaining endangered species.

The arrival in the south-eastern province of Jhapa at Bhadrapur airport was another start for new undertakings. There was in a short time so to do as much as possible and the inauguration cum hand over of the Turtle Rescue and Conservation Centre, according to our MOU, was just two weeks away. With the collaboration from SUMMEF and the Park Management, many different labourers appeared the following days and did their best in an almost day and night working time. A lot of new achievements and solutions were realized and the Inauguration Ceremony was a much cordial and overwhelming moment.

Last not least came the visit of the National Parks in Lowland Terai from Far East to far West, 800 km travelling in several days. I want here now to express my sincerest and most cordial thanks to all the Chief Wardens, Deputy Wardens, Wardens and Assistants who made that trip successful. A detailed report was given to the DG of DNPWS and we are with great hope that he will start soon a Turtle Conservation Program for the whole country and thus being based in the various National Parks.

Visit of ARCO-Nepal's president to India and Nepal in March and April 2018

For my trip to Nepal and the TRCC I took the chance to have a few days stopover in India to visit Turtle Survival Alliance-India at Lucknow.

We, Mr. Tapil P. Rai (TRCC Nepal) and I were kindly received by the TSA director Dr. Shailendra Singh and it was my wish to discuss possibilities for collaborations but also to get to know habitats of turtles we assume to exist in Nepal but their existence has not been proved so far.

Within a few days we got offered a dense program and learned a lot about the working facilities of TSA-India. In brief, the advantage to TSA-India is given in the great collaboration and support by the government and the possibilities they have for rescue and conservation of endangered turtle species.

The India Turtle conservation Program (ITCP) began in 2003 by the TSA and Madras Crocodile Bank Trust with first surveys at the Gomti river in Uttar Pradesh. Such country program now operates at five Turtle Priority Areas (TPAs) fighting for the conservation of endangered species and habitats. The ITCP is widely recognized as one of the most socially integrated turtle conservation programs in Asia. The objectives of the ITCP are

- Update distribution and monitor surviving populations of endangered non-marine turtles of India.
- Generate information on natural history and species response to environmental variables and management regimes for effective conservation and policy formulation.
- Inventory and refine management norms of captive colonies of threatened turtles.
- Collaborate with relevant organizations and regularity agencies towards monitoring and controlling illegal trade
- Engage constituent stakeholders through pertinent sensitization, capacity building, training and alternative livelihood models.



Road sign for turtle conservation set up by TSA India and visit of Kukrail Gharial & Turtle Conservation Centre (left to right: Dr. Shailendra Singh, Tapil P. Rai, Prof. Dr. Hermann Schleich)



After visiting TSA headquarter, Kukrail Gharial & Turtle Rehabilitation Centre (KGTRC), ministry and natural turtle habitats, Arco-Nepal president Hermann Schleich presented a seminar on

Conservation Issues by Arco-Nepal and on Fossil Caenozoic Turtles and Crocodiles from S-Asia.

Many thanks to our host and all staff members of TSA



Visiting typical lowland stagnant river turtle habitats with dense aquatic vegetation to find species like *Hardella thurjii* and *Geoclemys hamiltonii*. Thanks to Mr. Bhasker Dixit for the great day!



Arriving in Nepal, there was already a long to do list prepared.

First activities were meetings with chair persons from SUMMEF, CODEFUND and with the DG from the Department of National Parks. During my short stay in Kathmandu T-shirts and books had to be printed and several other meetings filled the short time schedule available.

A seminar organized by the Dept. Nat. Parks & Wildlife Conservation, National trust for Nature conservation and CODEFUND was held at the Jawlakhel Zoo of Kathmandu. Over 90 participants joined



the seminar given by Arco-president on “Turtle Conservation Needs and Issues by ARCO-Nepal”. After its presentation we had immediate taxi to National airport and flight to Jhapa.

I had a very kind reception at the airport by the mayor and delegates of Jhapa, together with family Prof. K. Rai and Tapil Rai. We immediately headed forward to the TRCC Budoholi and started with full man power and multitasking challenges to fulfil a lot of needs to be done at the TRCC. The inauguration with the minister and hand over of the Turtle Rescue & Conservation Centre (TRCC) should follow within a fortnight.

The tasks were –

- to find solutions against the massive inundations of parts of the TRCC during monsoon,
- to build a tin roof over the breeding centre also for avoiding inundations
- to construct anti escape fencing around the TRCC lake
- to construct a small quarantine area for new arriving tortoises,
- to build show aquaria as visitors are complaining not to see easily turtles in their enclosures
- to finalize the plastering of the earthen 260 sqm pond for breeding bigger soft shell turtles,
- to renovate ponds and planting.

A lot of organisation and shopping was necessary e.g. glass plates, silicon, foam rubber for the aquaria, refrigerators, cupboard and much more. Carpenter, constructors, welding people, gardening staff and many more became much engaged for this time. Turtle traps had to be built, sanitary actions and general health control for the kept turtles were necessary. Finally we received also a proper internet installation that was much needed and security installations with trapping cameras were installed.



150 x 60 x 60 cm sized aquaria to construct under most difficult circumstances –but it ended successful. Most difficult was the construction of big bolder filled concrete sockets that allow to carry the load of the show aquaria being filled with water and animals.



The acceptance of the show aquaria by the visitors of TRCC is great and they have now the best chance to experience turtles from close.



The Breeding Centre was covered by a mesh wire roof, but last year's experiences during monsoon time resulted in massive inundations although it was constructed on a hill site. Thus, all the former roof had to be removed and be replaced by undulated tin roof for better protection.



A great effort by SUMMEF was undertaken to build an anti-escape fencing enclosure around the TRCC lake. It was built with massive concrete wall and topped by a mesh wire to prevent also intruders.



The 260 sqm big earthen pond was for years still an unsolved problem and we could not make proper use out of it. Also this was now done and after final plastering we should make use of it for breeding bigger soft shell turtles. What can be seen to the right is the terrestrial part where egg laying and nesting should be possible.

The official Inauguration Program cum Transference of the TRCC

The official program at the Turtle Rescue and Conservation Centre took place on the 6th of April 2018. It was a great ceremony with Chief Guest Honourable Minister of Industry, Tourism, forest and Environment Mr. Jagadish Kushiyat, Mr. Dev Raj Ghimire, Chairperson of the Sukhani Martyrs Memorial Foundation, officers of SUMMEF and many other high ranking politicians and authorities. After the ceremony the Minister and all invited guests visited the whole area of the TRCC.



The inauguration ceremony by the honourable Minister, SUMMEF chair D. Ghimire and ARCO-Nepal president H. Schleich



All places of the TRCC were visited by the invitees and turtles were donated to the TRCC



Most happily we received a lot of congratulations and assurances for the future development and sustainability of the TRCC.



Prof. Rai and the presidents of Jamunkhadi Zoo and Betana community forest users group handed over valuable rare turtle species to the TRCC.

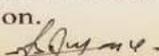


ARCO-Nepal president Prof. Dr. Hermann Schleich received a Letter of Felicitation at the ceremony and Prof. Dr. Rai was granted honourable lifetime member of Arco-Nepal.

 **Sukhani Martyrs Memorial Foundation
Nepal**
Anamnagar, Kathmandu
Letter of Felicitation

This is to honour Prof. *Dr. Hans Hermann Schleich*, President of Amphibians and Reptiles Conservation-Nepal (ARCO-Nepal) for his highly commendable and tireless contribution in the censervation of herpetofauna in Nepal and establishment of Turtle Rescue and Conservation Centre (TRCC) in the premise of Martyrs Memorial Park in Jhapa district of South East Nepal.

We, the *Sukhani Martyrs Memorial Foundation Nepal* Family and the Nepali community at large, would like to felicitate Prof. Dr. Schleich and the ARCO-Nepal team for this invaluable contribution.


Hon. Jagadish Kushiyat
Minister of Indurstry, Tourism, Forest and Environment
Provincial Government of Nepal
Province 1, Biratnagar


Mr. Dev Raj Ghimire
Chairperson
Sukhani Martyrs Memorial Foundation Nepal

April 6, 2018

Visit of Betana Wetlands for the Transfer of big sized Indian peacock softshell turtle



Betana wetlands are situated in the south of Eastern District No. 2 of Nepal and are close to Belbari, accessible easily by the East-West Highway. Betana is heavily visited by tourists. But this place is not only a great water reservoir but also a place for of much endangered wildlife. Amongst them is the Indian peacock softshell turtle (*Nilssonina hurum*) shown on the photo below. Seemingly this animal is living here in a viable population but further studies are needed about its conservation status and finding out whether reproduction is still going on.

We, the visitors from TRCC, had been received most kindly by the chair persons of the wetland centre on various occasions. Now, for the new constructed 260 sqm pond at the TRCC, we were given permit to transfer a couple of this CITES I protected species.



Activities at the TRCC

Volunteering cum Get Together of TRCC – Turtle’s Club

A volunteering cum get together of turtle conservation supporters was held in TRCC on 16th December 2017, Saturday. The main objective of the program was the continuity of conducting regular programs at the Centre. The participants (also organizers) were students of B.Sc. 4th year Environmental Science who have been actively participating in every program of TRCC from initiation. Since, they are also the passing out students from Mechi Multiple Campus the program was also developed as get together of Turtle’s Club with communal lunch. The focused activities of program were as follows:

TRCC Exhibition & Sales

Stall of TRCC material (books, posters, museum specimens, etc.) close to the entrance gate with their rate for selling.



Exhibition and Sales stall



Briefing to the students (organizers)



Crowd of visitors taking information and Students of Kalika Shishu Sadan English School, Arjundhara



Visit of TRCC by officials from department of forest, connoisseurs, leaders and conservationists

Creating Awareness to Visitors – Every visitor to the Centre was given as much information possible by the organizer students for creating awareness on turtle conservation and TRCC / ARCO-Nepal. There were 370 visitor's entries at our TRCC entry book.

General Survey of Herpetofauna encircling Budoholi & TRCC Lake

Budoholi wetland was thoroughly surveyed seeking herpetofauna in the area and taking GPS data.



Herpetofauna survey of Budoholi lake



Inlet of Budoholi lake

Turtle Care – All the cleaning and feeding of turtles were done by a group of students in this section. Due to time constraints taking morphometry of turtles was not accomplished.

Picnicking of Organizers – Finally, the organizers were served with food for their keen participation in every activity of TRCC and we wished them good luck for their future.



Organizers enjoying a treat from TRCC.



A group photo of organizers at the end.

Turtle Rescue and Conservation Centre-TRCC (ARCO-Nepal & SUMMEF)
Salbari Park, Arjundhara-11, Jhapa

“Volunteering cum Get Together of TRCC – Turtle’s Club”
Venue: TRCC, Date: 2017/12/16 (Saturday) [2074/09/1], Time Duration: 9 am – 4 pm (7 hours)
Participants / Organizer: Approximately 20 students; especially B.Sc. 4th year

by Tapil Prakash Rai

Arrival of Spotted pond turtles (*Geoclemys hamiltonii*) at the TRCC and its first breeding for ARCO-Spain at the Science Park of Granada

Arco-Nepal had been greatly supported during the last two years by the Parque de las Ciencias of Granada, thus allowing the construction of the Breeding Centre at the TRCC.



Left: X-ray of the pregnant *Geoclemys hamiltonii* showing the eggs.

Right: First clutch from a female that belongs to ARCO-Spain and had been brought by the European studbook Foundation.



Above: Director Ernesto Páramo Sureda, Granada's cultural attaché and Arco-Nepal president Hermann Schleich at a press release of the first hatchling of the Spotted pond turtle at the Biodomo of the Parque de las Ciencias.

The Science Park of Granada with its "Biodomo" is a unique place amongst the natural history museums of the world to present the biodiversity of our planet. There are exhibited over 250 plant and animal species in an artificial tropical world.

The Biodomo is a window into life on our globe and reflects basically on the biodiversity of this planet. It is a place where one can learn and understand the relations that exist amongst live beings and their ambient, also facts that allow the existence of life and the need of its conservation. Thus, it is the place for environmental education and the understanding and investigation of species.

While we had the presentation of the new born *Geoclemys* in Granada/Spain, our Turtle Rescue and Conservation Centre at Jhapa received a pair of confiscated (see newsletter no. 14/2016 at www.arco-nepal.de) *Geoclemys* from the Jawlakhel Zoo/Kathmandu which we would gratefully like to acknowledge here.

Addition of three snake species to the herpetofauna checklist of Jhapa district, Nepal

Colubridae (Non-venomous)

Coelognathus helena

English: Common trinket snake

Nepali: Gahane sap, Malay sap

Place of occurrence: Bhadrapur Municipality-6, Jhapa

Location: 26°32'57" N & 88°05'14" E

Elevation: 80 m asl

Common trinket snake (juvenile)



Colubridae (Non-venomous)

Oligodon kheriensis

English: Coral red kukri snake

Nepali: Puwale khukri sap

Place of occurrence: Bhadrapur Municipality-8, Jhapa

Location: 26°40'25" N & 88°0'58" E

Elevation: 160 m asl

Coral red kukri snake (adult)



Viperidae (Venomous)

Trimeresurus septentrionalis (ex *albolabris*)

English: Northern white-lipped bamboo viper

Nepali: Seto jibre hareu sap

Place of occurrence: Arjundhara Municipality-11, Jhapa

Location: 26°38'59" N & 88°1'35" E

Elevation: 120 m asl

Northern white-lipped bamboo viper (adult)



Acknowledgements: Sabin Adhikari, Sandeep Dimal, Kamal Singh Rajbansi & Ashok Giri.]

Issue of new Book by Arco-Nepal:

FOSSIL TURTLES AND CROCODILES FROM THE CAENOZOIC OF S-ASIA

Srivastava, R. & Schleich, H.H.



Munich, May 2018

The book covers 311 pages containing 2 main chapters, "Review of Neogene-Quaternary Turtles from the Indian Subcontinent" (156 pages, 41 text figures, 2 tables, 17 plates) and "Review of Neogene-Quaternary Crocodiles from the Siwaliks of India and Nepal" (126 pages, 40 text figures, 7 tables, 14 plates). A third part shows some colour photographs of the fossil material mentioned. *Omegachelys sahnii* SRIVASTAVA & SCHLEICH is described as new genus and species and *Megalochelys sivalensis* FALCONER & CAUTLEY re-described both based on new material collections mainly from N-India.

The book can be ordered from:

The price is 18 EUR + postage

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endangered turtle species in SE-Nepal and S-Spain.
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