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<u>Checklist</u>

A checklist of mammals of Gaurishankar Conservation Area, Nepal

Understanding the mammalian fauna is one of the first steps for protected areas management. Proper

taxonomic identification is essential for initiating long-term conservation management and species

action plans. Here, we present the checklist of mammals of Gaurishankar Conservation Area based on direct observation, field reports, key interviews, focal group discussion, and a literature review.

Seventy-seven species of mammals belonging to eight orders and 26 families were known to occur in

the region. Of these, only 32 species were of confirmed occurrence and are based on direct observation

and camera trap records. The remaining 45 species listed in the checklist were based on interviews

and literature. Small mammals of orders Chiroptera and Rodentia were reported less based on

interviews and literature surveys, hence needs further studies to confirm their existence. The highest

species belonged to the order Carnivora (25 species), followed by Chiroptera (21 species), Rodentia (12 species), Cetartiodactyla (7), Lagomorpha (5), Eulipotyphla (3), Primates (3) and Pholidota (1). A

more robust taxonomic study particularly focusing on small mammals is warranted considering the

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ecological gradients and topography in the region.

Keywords: Checklist; Chiroptera; Carnivora; Order; Rodentia; Species

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Abstract

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1 | Introduction

Understanding the mammalian fauna in a protected landscape is one of the first steps for protected areas management. Proper taxonomic identification is essential for initiating long-term conservation management and species action plans. Nepal is rich in mammalian biodiversity and constitutes about 4.2% of global mammalian fauna (Jnawali et al. 2011). The National Red List Series of Nepal's mammals compiled existing data and reported the presence of 208 species of mammals, of which 38% are considered Data Deficient (Jnawali et al. 2011). Out of 208 species enumerated, 79 species listed are from lower mammalian taxa, with 48% of species assessed considered as Data Deficient. In the proposed study area, the existence of 76 mammalian species has been reported but mostly based on anecdotal reports (GCA 2013). Small mammals are underrepresented in the list. There is a high possibility of the existence of new small mammalian taxa as research on lower taxa has not been prioritized in the Himalayas. In the study area, the vertical topography and high variation in altitudinal gradients have created a mosaic of habitats suitable for many species of global significance. A recent camera trapping study has identified the presence of many important charismatic species in the region (Koju et al. 2020; Koju et al. 2021; Pandey et al. 2021). Therefore, systematic taxonomic research in this area is sorely needed to understand mammalian fauna in the region.

The series of explorations of the mammalian fauna have been documented since early 1820 (Thapa 2014). Brian H. Hodgson collected 373 specimens of 70 genera and 114 species of mammals from Nepal (Mitchell 1975). Since then, many biologists and researchers added to the existing list of Hogdson. Shah and Baral (2008) updated 208 species in their book Mammals of Nepal. Based on the literature review, Pearch (2011) updated

the small mammals of Nepal enumerating 118 species. But some of the taxon enumerated by Pearch (2011) might not exist in Nepal and needs further verification (Thapa 2014). For example, the presence of Sorex thibetanus, a species endemic to China (Smith & Xie 2013). The taxonomic classification of this species is still subject to controversy. The National Red List Series of Nepal's mammals is the first initiative undertaken at a national level in Nepal to assess the mammalian faunal status using IUCN categories and criteria (Jnawali et al. 2011). However, the taxonomic representation of the species is confusing and contradictory. Some species which might not exist in Nepal are also listed in the National Red List Series (see Thapa 2014). Later Thapa (2014), confirmed the occurrence of 192 species of mammals representing 37 families and 12 orders. The list includes two endemic species: Apodemus gurkha and Myotis csorbai. Additional two species new to Nepal are added to this checklist namely, Mus pahari and Scotozous dormeri. Amin et al. 2018 reported the presence of 212 species in Nepal, out of which eighty-three species of the mammalian fauna are listed as data deficient. A recent review on Nepal's mammalian fauna reported the presence of 213 species in the country (Bist et al. 2021).

The present manuscript aims to prepare checklist of mammalian species that thrives in Gaurishankar Conservation Area (GCA). This information will generate interest among scientist and conservationist for conducting further research in this important region that induced by anthropogenic activities such as infrastructure development.

2 | Materials and methods

2.1 | Study area

The GCA is located between E 85° 46.8′ - 86° 34.8′ and N 27°34.2′ - 28°10′. The area lies in between two important national parks- Langtang National Park (LNP) in the west, and Sagarmatha National Park (SNP) in the east and acts as a biological corridor for several globally threatened species (Fig. 1). The northern border is adjacent to the Tibetan autonomous region of the People's Republic of China and both wild and domestic animals move between borders. This area also falls within the Sacred Himalayan landscape (WWF Nepal 2012). GCA covers an area of 2179 km2 along with three districts-Dolakha, Rammechap, and Sindupalchok. The physiographic and climatic zones vary from mid-hills to high mountains and from sub-tropical to arctic. Within

a short span of 120 km, the altitude rises from less than 1,000 m to over 7,000 m. Eighteen types of forest habitats exist within the region. Approximately, 67000 people are living within the GCA (GCA 2013). As local communities are within the GCA, pressure on forest habitats is high. Since its inception in 2010, the National Trust for Nature Conservation-Gaurishankar Conservation Area Project is managing the area and has initiated important conservation work in partnership with the concerned stakeholders and local communities.



Figure 1. Study area showing the habitat types

In terms of wildlife, the most common animal that is seen at lower altitudes is the Himalayan goral (*Naemorhedus goral*). Three primate species are also found in the region including the globally nearthreatened Assamese macaque (*Macaca assamensis*) (Boonratna et al. 2020). Higher grazing pastoral areas harbor several species of rodents, mustelids which are not explored to date and may probably be new to science. At higher altitude rangeland are used for grazing livestock such as goat, sheep, cow, horses, dzo (yak-hybrid), and yak. To escape severe winter, some northern villages also have a tradition of temporary migration at lower altitudes for 3-4 months along with livestock herds.

2.2 | Methods

We compiled the mammalian species list based on direct observation, data collection from the field, villagers' reports of sightings, signs left in livestock predation and crop damages, infant and sick animals received from local communities, key informant interviews, and focal group discussion (FGD). FGD (3 events) were conducted in Dolakha, Ramechhap, and Sindhupalchok districts in September 2021 to confirm the presence of species. We also reviewed the existing literature on the mammals of Nepal (Abe 1971; Mitchell 1975; Abe 1977; Suwal et al. 1995; Shah & Baral 2008; Jnawali et al. 2011; Thapa 2014; Amin et al. 2018; Sharma et al. 2019; Bist et al. 2021). In addition, we also used recent camera trap data that was placed in GCA. We followed the taxonomic and threatened categories updates based on IUCN (2022).

3 | Results

Our results showed the occurrence of 77 species of mammals that belong to 8 orders and 26 families in GCA. Out of these, only 32 species' presence is confirmed through direct observation and camera trap records. Most of the species belonging to the order Chiroptera (n=20) and Rodentia (n=8) are listed based on probable occurrence, key interviews, FGD, and literature surveys (Annex 1).

4 | Discussion

GCA is least explored in terms of biodiversity research. Recent research in the area reported the presence of snow leopard (*Panthera uncia*), Himalayan wolf (*Canis lupus*), Asiatic golden cat (*Pardofelis temminckii*) (Koju et al. 2020; Koju et al. 2021; Pandey et al. 2021). The existence of red panda (*Ailurus fulgens*) and Chinese pangolin (*Manis pentadactyla*) was also confirmed in this

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study. These two species are rescued by the local communities that enter the village and are released into natural habitats. The checklist provided in the management plan of GCA needs to update as some species which are not present in Nepal are reported (GCA 2013) for example- Miniopterus schreibersii which is a resident of Europe and part of Turkey-Asia (Gazaryan et al. 2020). The presence of Semnopithecs ajax is also contradictory in Nepal (Thapa 2014). According to IUCN, the species is restricted to Himachal Pradesh in India and found in Jammu and Kashmir (Kumar et al. 2020) only. Further study is needed to verify the extent of this species in the Nepal Himalayas. Twenty species that belong to the order Chiroptera were from literature review and interviews. Similarly, only two species of rodents have been so far confirmed and the remaining eight species are listed based on literature review (Jnawali et al. 2011; Thapa 2014) and interviews. This shows that lower animal taxa are of the least priority in the context of Nepal. A detailed taxonomic study of bats and rodents is very much needed in GCA. Many of the species' presence particularly small mammals in Nepal as well as GCA have contradictory taxonomic information. This needs further study using robust techniques such as the use of DNA and genomic study to verify the species and sub-species.

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Conflicts of interest

Authors declare no conflict of interest

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S	Scientific Name	Common Name	Order	Family	Methods of			IUCN
Ν					Con	firma	tion	Status
					DO	IT	LT	
1	Herpestes edwardsii (È. Geoffroy	Indian Grey	Carnivora	Herpestidae		0	۵	LC
	Saint-Hilaire, 1818)	Mongoose						
2	Herpestes javanicus (È.Geoffroy	Javan Mongoose	Carnivora	Herpestidae	۵			LC
	Saint-Hilaire, 1818)	-		-				
3	Lutra lutra (Linnaeus, 1758)	Eurasian Otter	Carnivora	Mustelidae		0	Ø	NT
4	Mustela altaica Pallas, 1811	Altai Weasel	Carnivora	Mustelidae		0	Ø	NT
5	Mustela sibrica Pallas, 1773	Siberian Weasel	Carnivora	Mustelidae		0	Ø	LC
6	Martes flavigula (Boddaert, 1758)	Yellow-throated	Carnivora	Mustelidae	٥			LC
		Marten						

Annex 1. A check list of mammals of GCA

7	Martas foina (Ervlohop 1777)	Booch Marton	Carnivora	Mustolidao		<i>.</i>		IC
	Viverra zibetha (Linnaeus, 1758)	Large Indian Civet	Carnivora	Viverridae	0			LC
9	Paradoxurus hermanhroditus	Common Palm	Carnivora	Viverridae		രി	ര	LC
	(Pallas, 1777)	Civet	Cullintolla	· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·		Ū	0	20
10	<i>Vivericula indica</i> (È. Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire, 1803)	Small Indian Civet	Carnivora	Viverridae		۵	۵	LC
11	Paguma larvata (C.E.H. Smith, 1827)	Masked Palm Civet	Carnivora	Viverridae		۵	۵	LC
12	Ailurus fulgens F.G. Cuvier, 1825	Red Panda	Carnivora	Ailuridae	Ø			EN
13	<i>Canis lupus</i> Linnaeus, 1758	Grey wolf/Himalayan wolf	Carnivora	Canidae	۵			LC
14	Canis aureus Linnaeus, 1758	Golden Jackal	Carnivora	Canidae	0			LC
15	Vulpes vulpes (Linnaeus, 1758)	Red Fox	Carnivora	Canidae	٥			LC
16	Vulpes ferrilata Hodgson, 1842	Tibetan Fox	Carnivora	Canidae		۵	Ø	LC
17	<i>Ursus thibetanus</i> G. [Baron] Cuvier, 1823	Himalayan Black Bear	Carnivora	Ursidae	٥			VU
18	Melursus ursinus (Shaw, 1791)	Sloth bear	Carnivora	Ursidae		٥		VU
19	Neofelis nebulosa (Griffith, 1821)	Clouded Leopard	Carnivora	Felidae		٥	٢	VU
20	Prionailurus bengalensis (Kerr, 1792)	Leopard Cat	Carnivora	Felidae	۵			LC
21	Felis chaus Schreber, 1777	Jungle Cat	Carnivora	Felidae	0			LC
22	Pardofelis temminckii (Vigors & Horsefield, 1827)	Asiatic Golden Cat	Carnivora	Felidae	۵			NT
23	Panthera pardus (Linnaeus, 1758)	Common Leopard	Carnivora	Felidae	Ø			VU
24	Lynx lynx (Linnaeus, 1758)	Eurasian lynx	Carnivora	Felidae			0	LC
25	Panthera uncia (Schreber, 1775)	Snow Leopard	Carnivora	Felidae	٥			VU
26	Sus scrofa Linnaeus, 1758	Wild Boar	Cetartiodact yla	Suidae	Ø			LC
27	Moschus leucogaster Hodgson, 1839	Himalayan Musk Deer	Cetartiodact yla	Moschidae	ø			EN
28	Muntiacus vaginalis (Zimmermann, 1780)	Northern Red Muntjac	Cetartiodact yla	Cervidae	۵			LC
29	Naemorhedus goral (Hardwicke, 1825)	Himalayan Goral	Cetartiodact yla	Bovidae	۵			NT
30	Capricornis thar (Hodgson, 1831)	Mainland Serow	Cetartiodact yla	Bovidae	۵			VU
31	<i>Hemitragus jemlahicus</i> (C.H. Smith, 1826)	Himalayan Tahr	Cetartiodact yla	Bovidae	۵			NT
32	Pseudois nayaur (Hodgson, 1833)	Bharal/Blue Sheep	Cetartiodact yla	Bovidae	٢			LC
33	Cynopterus sphinx (Vahl, 1797)	Greater Short- nosed Fruit Bat	Chiroptera	Pteropodidae			۵	LC
34	Rousettus leschenaulti (Desmarest, 1820)	Leschenault's Rousette	Chiroptera	Pteropodidae			۵	LC
35	Miniopterus pusillus Dobson, 1876	Small Long- fingered Bat	Chiroptera	Miniopteridae			٥	LC
36	Rhinolophus affinis Horsfield, 1823	Intermediate Horseshoe Bat	Chiroptera	Rhinolophidae		0	۵	LC
37	Rhinolophus ferrumequinum (Schreber, 1774)	Greater Horseshoe Bat	Chiroptera	Rhinolophidae		۵	۵	LC
38	Rhinolophus lepidus Blyth, 1844	Blyth's Horseshoe Bat	Chiroptera	Rhinolophidae			٢	LC
39	Rhinolophus macrotis Blyth, 1844	Big-eared Horseshoe Bat	Chiroptera	Rhinolophidae			۵	LC

40	<i>Rhinolophus pearsonii</i> Horsfield, 1851	Pearson's Horseshoe Bat	Chiroptera	Rhinolophidae			۵	LC
41	<i>Rhinolophus pusillus</i> Temminck, 1834	Least Horseshoe Bat	Chiroptera	Rhinolophidae			٢	LC
42	Rhinolophus sinicus K. Andersen, 1905	Chinese Horseshoe Bat	Chiroptera	Rhinolophidae		۵	۵	LC
43	<i>Hipposideros armiger</i> (Hodgson, 1835)	Great Himalayan Leaf-nosed Bat	Chiroptera	Hipposideridae		۵	۵	LC
44	Hipposideros gentilis	Andersen's Roundleaf Bat	Chiroptera	Hipposideridae	٢			
	K. Andersen, 1918							
45	<i>Megaderma lyra</i> E. Geoffroy, 1810	Greater False Vampire	Chiroptera	Megadermatidae			۵	LC
46	Myotis blythii (Tomes, 1857)	Lesser Mouse- eared Myotis	Chiroptera	Vespertilionidae			۵	LC
47	Myotis nipalensis Dobson, 1871	Nepal Myotis	Chiroptera	Vespertilionidae		0	0	LC
48	Myotis muricola (Gray, 1864)	Nepalese Whiskered Myotis	Chiroptera	Vespertilionidae			۵	LC
49	Nyctalus noctula (Schreber, 1774)	Noctule	Chiroptera	Vespertilionidae			0	LC
50	Philetor brachypterus (Temminck, 1840)	Short-winged Pipistrelle	Chiroptera	Vespertilionidae			۵	LC
51	Pipistrellus coromandra (Gray, 1838)	Coromandel Pipistrelle	Chiroptera	Vespertilionidae			٢	LC
52	Plecotus auritus (Linnaeus, 1758)	Brown Big-eared Bat	Chiroptera	Vespertilionidae			۵	LC
53	<i>Plecotus austriacus</i> (J. Fischer, 1829)	Gray Big-eared Bat	Chiroptera	Vespertilionidae			۵	NT
54	Soriculus nigrescens (Gray, 1842)	Himalayan Shrew	Eulipotyphla	Soricidae		٥	Ø	LC
55	<i>Nectogale elegans</i> Milne-Edwards, 1870	Elegant Water Shrew	Eulipotyphla	Soricidae		٥	٢	LC
56	Suncus murinus (Linnaeus, 1766)	House Shrew	Eulipotyphla	Soricidae		0	0	LC
57	Ochotona macrotis (Günther, 1875)	Large-eared Pika	Lagomorpha	Ochotonidae	0			LC
58	Ochotona nubrica Thomas, 1922	Nubra Pika	Lagomorpha	Ochotonidae	0			LC
59	Ochotona roylei (Ogilby, 1839)	Royle's Pika	Lagomorpha	Ochotonidae	0			LC
60	Lepus nigricollis F. Cuvier, 1823	Indian Hare	Lagomorpha	Leporidae	۵			LC
61	Lepus oiostolus Hodgson, 1840	Woolly Hare	Lagomorpha	Leporidae		٥	Ø	LC
62	Manis pentadactyla Linnaeus, 1758	Chinese Pangolin	Pholidota	Manidae	0			CR
63	Macaca assamensis (M'Clelland, 1840)	Assam Macaque	Primates	Cercopithecidae	٢			NT
64	Macaca mulatta (Zimmermann, 1780)	Rhesus Monkey	Primates	Cercopithecidae	0			LC
65	Semnopithecus ajax (Pocock, 1928)	Kashmir Gray Langur	Primates	Cercopithecidae	٢			EN
66	Marmota himalayana (Hodgson, 1841)	Himalayan Marmot	Rodentia	Sciuridae	٥			LC
67	Neodon sikimensis (Horsefield, 1841)	Sikkim Vole	Rodentia	Cricetidae		۵	۵	LC
68	Rattus nitidus (Hodgson, 1845)	Himalayan Field Rat	Rodentia	Muridae		0	۵	LC
69	Rattus rattus (Linnaeus, 1758)	House Rat	Rodentia	Muridae		٥	۵	LC
70	Bandicota bengalensis (Gray, 1835)	Lesser Bandicoot Rat	Rodentia	Muridae		۵	۵	LC
71	Cricetulus alticola Thomas, 1917	Tibetan Dwarf Hamster	Rodentia	Cricetidae		۵	۵	LC

72	Mus booduga (Gray, 1837)	Common Indian	Rodentia	Muridae		Ø	Ø	LC
		Field Mouse						
73	Mus musculus Linnaeus, 1758	House Mouse	Rodentia	Muridae		Ø	Ø	LC
74	Funambulus pennanti Wroughton,	Five-striped Palm	Rodentia	Sciuridae		Ø	0	LC
	1905	Squirrel						
75	Dremomys lokriah (Hodgson,	Orange-bellied	Rodentia	Sciuridae	0			LC
	1836)	Himalayan Squirrel						
76	Petaurista petaurista (Pallas, 1766)	Red Giant Flying	Rodentia	Sciuridae		Ø	0	LC
		Squirrel						
77	Hystrix brachyura Linnaeus, 1758	Malayan Porcupine	Rodentia	Hystricidae	0			LC

Note: DO = Direct Observation, IT=Interviews, LT= Literature Review, LC=Least Concern, NT= Near Threatened, VU= Vulnerable, E=Endangered, CR= Critically Endangered.