

# Press Release 18.11.05

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The Asia Section of the Society for Conservation Biology (see [www.conbio.org/asia](http://www.conbio.org/asia)) is currently holding its first regional conference in Kathmandu, Nepal during 17-20 November 2005. The conference, entitled "Biodiversity Conservation in Asia: Current Status and Future Perspectives", has attracted 162 participants from mostly eastern and southern Asia, including students and professional conservationists from Korea, Japan, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Laos PDR, Cambodia, Thailand, India, Pakistan, Israel, Bhutan and of course Nepal itself. Overall, 19 countries are represented.

This conference is somewhat unusual in its high percentage of young, local conservationists actively participating with oral presentations and posters. The Society for Conservation Biology is an international society for conservation professionals, with the goal of encouraging and strengthening conservationists. For this reason, the SCB actively encouraged young professionals to attend this conference, and has invested much effort in facilitating their participation. Roughly a third of the active participants in this meeting are Nepalese graduate students and young field conservationists, another third are young scientists from other Asian countries, with veteran conservationists from universities, governmental organizations and NGO's making up the remaining third.

Dr. Pralad Yonzon, this year's President of the Asia Section, prepared the ground for this meeting with help on logistics from his organization (Resources Himalaya) based in Kathmandu, and assisted by the Board of Directors of the Section, the international organizing committee for this meeting, SITA World Travel Nepal, and Nature Nepal. The conference has also been greatly helped by ICIMOD and the Mountain Forum Secretariat, organizations based in Kathmandu. Other organizations participating in the program with information tables and speakers include IUCN Nepal, WWF, Wildlife Conservation Society, Asian Elephant Conservation Fund (USFWS), Society for Conservation GIS, the International Crane Foundation, and the Snow Leopard Trust.

Topics discussed in this first conference include Endangered Species, Transboundary and Trade Issues, Local People and Biodiversity, Data Networking, Landscape Ecology, Conservation Education, Protected Areas, Sustainable Use, Technology and Methods, Biodiversity Assessments, Managing for the Future, and Thinking Creatively about Biodiversity.

The general goal of this conference is to identify future directions for the development of the SCB Asian Section, which was formally established in 2003. The Asia Section intends to hold future regional meetings on a biannual basis in different parts of Asia, and is very happy that its first meeting is being held in Nepal, which is both geographically and ecologically central in the vast Asian continent.

In Nepal, the Asian Section has an opportunity to hear and experience in depth the conservation concerns of a country which are representative those throughout this continent, as well as how those concerns are being addressed. The interaction of young Nepalese conservationists with their counterparts from countries such as Indonesia, Israel, Laos, and Japan is both novel and very exciting. We are pleased to note that many young professionals are establishing contacts and identifying shared professional interests in a way which will help their development and the advancement of conservation in Asia.