



Four Eurasian Eagle Owls get freedom

A team led by Ranger Madhav Baral of Pumdi Bhumdi Range Post of Pokhara on Friday, June 19, 2009, released four Eurasian Eagle Owls in Jaikot Community Forest. Roots and Shoots, an organization working on checking wildlife trade had received information of 38 such owls in Pokhara. But by the time they reached Pokhara from Kathmandu, only five owls were found, out of which one that was in a poor condition died.

The team comprised of officers from the Post and members from Roots and Shoots who went undercover as customers. The owls were raised by local people and were later handed over to District Forest Office before freeing them in the forest.

As per Nepal's Wildlife Protection Act 2029 and Wildlife Protection Regulation 2030, it is illegal to domesticate the owls. A brief orientation was given to these people on the need to conserve the owls. They later freed the owls, in presence of the officers of the Post and local journalists in the forest which is well protected by the community. They said they felt more satisfaction in freeing than keeping them.

Eurasian eagle owls are called Huchil in Nepali. These animals have a good market in Pakistan, India and countries in the Middle East. In Nepal, people domesticate these animals for various reasons, one being its use in witchcraft. In some countries, these endangered nocturnal animals are killed to use their 'night-vision' in biometrics.

In Nepal, the price of such owl goes up to Rs 4 lakhs. Generally, the female weighs around 3.5 kgs and the male weighs around 2.5-3 kgs. More weight means more money.

Manoj Gautam, Country Coordinator of Roots and Shoots, who was a part of the undercover team hopes that the concerned authorities would take action in time to prevent the trade of these Eurasian Eagle Owls and conserve the endangered species.

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