

Nepal 2016 Migration Report



**A *brief* report on migration results,
significant developments and plans for 2017**

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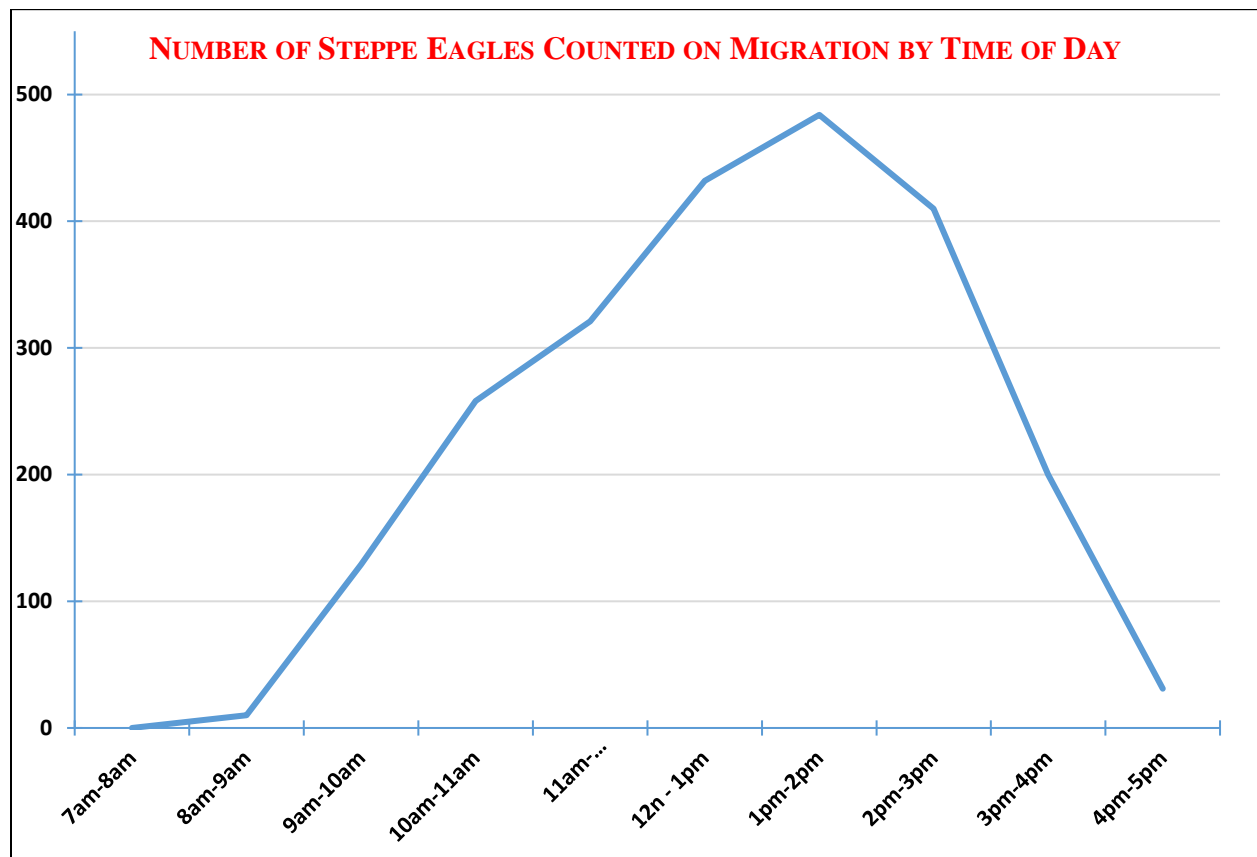
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21 December 2016

Greetings,

In 2016, three major goals were accomplished at the Nepal Raptor Watch located in the foothills of the Annapurna Mountains: we continued our study of Steppe Eagles and other raptors begun in 1999; we came a step closer to acquiring the land where we do our raptor counts; and we received a substantial amount of funding from many people from all over the world. Thank You All! We outline plans for how that money will be spent – see below.

(1) the raptor count continued for the sixth consecutive year: Steppe Eagles and more than 30 other raptor species were observed/tallied/photographed on migration. A concerted effort was made to age Steppe Eagles that passed directly over the watch site: 13% were first (hatch) year birds; 46% were 2nd to 4th calendar year birds; and 41% were adults (5th calendar year or older). A scientific paper detailing results of past years' results on Steppe Eagle migration is in the final stages of review for publication in the *Journal of Raptor Research*.



(2) we began the process of entering into a 10-year agreement with the owners of the land where we do the raptor counts. We will have a final decision in March 2017 – and we are quite optimistic. This will provide us with an environmental center just a few meters from where we do the raptor count, and where Tulsi Subedi and SanDesh Gurung trap and band Bearded Vultures and other raptors. This hillside gives unsurpassed views of migrating (and local)

raptors, and is in an area that gets lots of people from all over the world who come up for a day, or are trekking towards Annapurna Base Camp high in the mountains. We are in conversations with **Himalayan Nature** (<http://himalayannature.org/>), the finest NGO in Nepal, to help run that environmental center – it would be their first center in the mountains in a national park. We look forward to soon catching and banding small birds, and documenting the migration of birds from higher elevation to our site (2050m/approx. 6,300 feet), or even from the other side of the Annapurnas such as those interesting Siberian thrush species.



Steppe Eagle on migration at our watch site. So many of our birds pass at or near eye-level that it is easy to get full-frame images with a 400mm lens. We are the premier location in Asia to get flight images of many species rare elsewhere including Red-headed Vulture (cover image), Bearded Vulture, Black Eagle, Mountain Hawk-eagle to name just a few species. Contact us if you want to visit, and we can help arrange your trip.

(3) we raised approximately \$18,000 USD in three months to support the raptor count: We are committed to spending \$1,000 USD/year for TEN years to rent the land and fine stone building that will be home to the bird migration research and education center. The rest of the money will be spent on intern salaries/food/housing (approx. \$1,500 total per year for two interns), and some incidental equipment such as weather stations, mist nets and other traps for banding all types of birds, etc. This wonderful amount of money is making something no one thought possible just a year ago: a bird banding/migration research/educational center set within a national park and surrounded by some of the most spectacular mountains in the world. We are humbled and overwhelmed by the generosity of everyone – thank You all. This comes one year after Swarovski Inc. gave us more than \$25,000 USD worth of binoculars and spotting scopes to use for our research in Nepal.



Early morning view from the Nepal Raptor Watch of Annapurna South and Annapurna #1.

For 2017: Plans for next year include the first Raptor Migration Festival to be held in mid-November at our watch site. We are working with Krishna Mani Baral and Hemanta Dhakal on a couple of popular articles about eagles and vultures for the local (Pokhara) newspapers to entice more Nepali people to visit us. Similarly, we hope to solicit additional funds to acquire much needed equipment and pay for some of the expenses of our two fine raptor trappers: SanDesh Gurung and Tulsi Subedi. Tulsi is moving ahead with getting his PhD with his research topic of tracking the movements of Bearded Vultures via satellite telemetry. We look forward to welcoming our first two Nepali interns next year (October 2017): Karan Giri and Shah Ganga, with training from Surya Gurung and SanDesh Gurung. Finally, we continue to gather sufficient high quality vulture photos for a booklet on the Vultures of Nepal (nine species), a prelude to a book on the Raptors of Nepal.

Many Thanks! To everyone who gave of their time, ideas, donations...and especially Emmet and Mary Logan of the USA who started the ball rolling to inspire us to acquire the land to do our raptor research; We thank Team Naoroji in Mumbai (India) including Ganesh Dhakal, Mehboob Hussain, Bek Soh (Singapore), and the boss of all bosses, Rishad Naoroji.

...on behalf of Tulsi Subedi; SanDesh Gurung; Aiden Webb (our first Australian intern); Sharad Singh and Hem Sagar Baral PhD along with everyone at Himalayan Nature; Hari KC of Australian Camp at our research site; and Surya Gurung our friend since 1999 – Thank You!



Adult Himalayan Vulture at the raptor watch site

Interested in visiting to see the Raptor Migration or want more info? Send me an email: rdcny@earthlink.net

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December 2016