

Gharial Rescue from Kandhesi Minor at Bharthana Town of Etawah District, Uttar Pradesh

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My friend Rajeev Kumar Verma calling me on 20th September 2009 and informed me that he sighted a mugger in Etawah Prakhand Canal, close to Gangasi bridge in Mainpuri. Rajeev has been working in Manepuri District Irrigation Department. One hour later Mr. Ajay Kumar Verma, my volunteer, called me and confirmed that it was not a Mugger but a sub-adult Gharial. He could identify it very well as he had worked with me 3-4 years prior to joining his new job in Irrigation Department. Immediately I informed DFO Deepak Kumar, Mainpur to take necessary action. When he initiated his efforts to take care of it, the Gharial disappeared and we failed to locate it.

Next day, it was sighted on Bhujhia Bridge in the same canal and we were continuously monitoring it. Next day it was sighted at Bansak and next day at Rukaia. Finally, on 24th September 2009, the Gharial walked past Turaiya canal check door to Kandhesi Minor. Then I received a phone call from another volunteer Mr. Amit Kumar who has lived in Bharthana town of Etawah district. He told me that he had information of the Gharial, which was being sighted in Kandhesi Minor close to Jaitiya village. It was not safe to catch the Gharial because it was dusk when he informed me. We were only 30 km far away from that sight but the area was not safe to walk in the night in order to take any action. I informed DFO Etawah, Mr. Sudarshan Singh and requested him to do something to save the Gharial. Also our media friend Dinesh Shakya, who was in touch with Senior Superintendent of Police Mr. Praveen Kumar, who directed Circle officer to safeguard the Gharial in the night hours. SDM Bharthna Mr. A.K. Awasthi directed Irrigation Department's staff to keep checking the water flow in Kandhesi Minor.

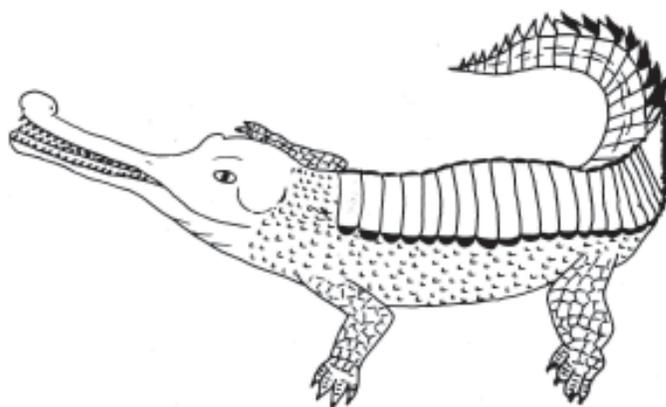
Next day on 25th September 2009 I went there with our film-shooting team but the Gharial disappeared. We were helpless. Even then we kept trying to locate the Gharial, looking over all connecting water bodies with no success. Amit received a call from Bharthana where a Gharial was located close to a canal along the Etawah road for which he was searching. He begged us to come soon as people were pelting stones at the Gharial. We moved instantly in order to protect Gharial and meanwhile we called out the police to provide more protection. A team from the forest department led by Mr. Raj Bahadur, Forester, who brought a professional catcher to start the operation. All the team members had taken tasks according to their abilities. We baffled the sides of the canal with nets and dredged from one end to other. We were successful in our third attempt when the Gharial got entangled in the net while dredging. We released it from the net quickly. It was a 6.5 feet long female sub- adult Gharial, looking pretty and healthy.

Before taking it to National Chambal Sanctuary nearby Udi Bridge we called vets available at the district hospital for a medical check up of the Gharial. We were all delighted to see that Gharial's health in question was quite good and could be released back in Chambal.

In the history of Etawah, this was the first time a Gharial had been sighted in the town area. Thousands of people gathered around to see it first, creating an almost unmanageable but happy situation with a rescued Gharial.

The efforts of Society for Conservation of Nature in reaching there in time to rescue the Gharial was appreciated. We are thankful to the villagers who informed us in time and hope they would keep continuing their support for saving wildlife in future.

See web version for photos ...
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Searching for Gharial in Canal

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Entangled Gharial in Net

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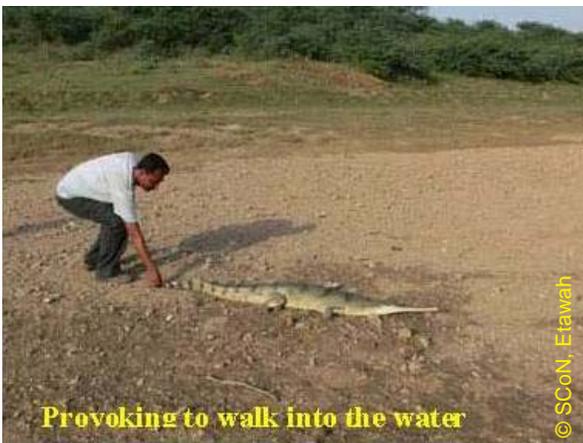
Gharial after getting off the net

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Just ready to release

© SCoN, Etawah



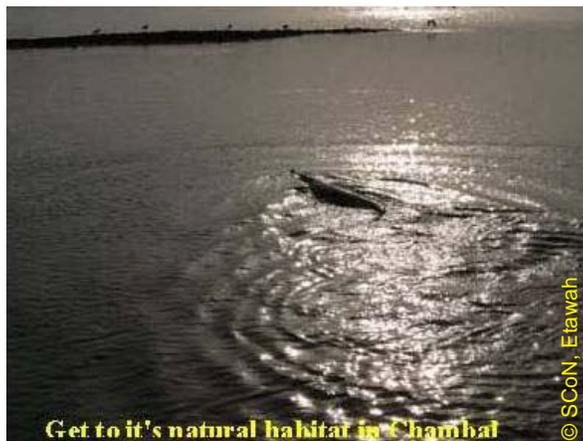
Provoking to walk into the water

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Near to river course

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Get to its natural habitat in Chambal

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