



In this issue of Red Panda Network eNews, 100 Forest Guardians and restoring red panda habitat, red panda rescued and released, offset your carbon footprint, and a new RPN infosheet!

RPN Celebrates 100 Forest Guardians By Planting Forests For Red Pandas!

On Thursday, April 18th, Krishna Basnet, and Nar Bahadur Basnet walked into the woods on their first day as Forest Guardians (FGs). Within their quiet footsteps was a well-deserved celebration: after many years and much hard work RPN's Forest Guardian program had grown to 100 members strong!

This journey began in 2006 when the Red Panda Project or Project Punde Kundo (red panda is locally known as Punde Kundo) was initiated in Eastern Nepal in three hilly districts-Panchthar-Ilam-Taplejung (or the PIT corridor)-to conduct the first-ever monitoring of red pandas in their wild habitat.

Surendra Rai, and 13 other local villagers (from Maimjhuwa and Mabu village in Ilam and Prangbung and Sidin Village in Panchthar), were selected as the first FGs by the Red Panda Project. The goal of the FG program was to engage and empower community members to safeguard their forests and protect a rare and endangered mammal of the Himalayas: the red panda.



Forest Guardian Surendra Kumar Rai.



First FGs with RPN founder, Brian Williams.

Rai grew up spending a lot of time gathering firewood and bamboo and herding livestock in the remote hills of Eastern Nepal. "I caught a glimpse of a red panda sitting on a tree branch while walking home from gathering bamboo one day," said thirty-eight-year-old Rai. As a child, he had heard stories of the mysterious tree-dwelling animal from his elders. "People were aware of the presence of red pandas in the forests but had no idea how important they were," he said.

Rai began learning more about red pandas, and as he did, the importance of their preservation became more obvious. It was clear that the surrounding forests were under tremendous pressure due to the activities

of people living in area communities. "I began to educate locals about the importance of forests and wildlife conservation and how we can protect these valuable resources."

In 2010, the Red Panda Project became the Red Panda Network (RPN) with the goal of expanding conservation initiatives to all red panda range countries.

Since its beginning 13 years ago the FG program has expanded beyond the PIT corridor and now includes 10 districts across Nepal. The recent hiring of Krishna Basnet and Nar Bahadur Basnet in the Jajarkot district of Western Nepal has brought the Forest Guardian program to a watershed moment - 100 Forest Guardians.



New Forest Guardians' Krishna Basnet and Nar Bahadur Basnet.



Red panda cub in Eastern Nepal.

[Read full article](#)

How do we save red pandas? This is how!



CONSERVATION OF WILD RED PANDAS AND THEIR HABITAT

Through the education and empowerment of local communities.

EDUCATION AND OUTREACH



Building awareness at local and global scales

Educating **hundreds of thousands** of people living alongside red pandas about the importance of red panda conservation.



Outreach in red panda range schools: red panda conservation manual, curriculum and wall bulletins and International Red Panda Day celebrations.

RESEARCH AND MONITORING



Delivering usable data

Through status surveys, baseline studies, and community-based monitoring to inform conservation strategies.

Conducted the **1st national survey** of red panda population and habitat in Nepal.



In 2007, Red Panda Network created Project Punde Kundo, the world's first community-based red panda population monitoring program.



POLICY AND ADVOCACY

Empowering local communities to preserve their forests and governments to adopt policies that protect red pandas and their habitat.



Provided key support for Nepal's first red panda conservation action plan.

COMMUNITY-BASED CONSERVATION



Working with local communities in establishing wildlife corridors and viable red panda populations.

Supporting Community Forest User Groups in adopting red panda conservation measures into their bylaws and operational plans.



Forest Guardians work with their communities to monitor and protect red panda habitats and educate their communities.

Anti-poaching network



patrols red panda habitat and records signs of poaching, dismantles traps and reports findings to local law enforcement agencies.

SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS

RPN partners with community groups and local NGOs in red panda range.



Providing alternatives to communities for promoting sustainable living and stewardship.



Conservation programs support thousands of families in Nepal.

[Learn more](#)

Red Panda Attacked By Dogs, Rescued By Locals

Locals from a rural village in Ilam rescued a red panda that was being chased by stray dogs. The red panda was later released back into its habitat. RPN Forest Guardian led the effort.

Maijogmai Rural Municipality-3 is located in the Himalayan foothills of Eastern Nepal. It is one of six rural municipalities located in Ilam District.

This area is also part of the [Panthar-Ilam-Taplejung \(PIT\) Red Panda Protected Forest](#).

On Sunday, March 24, at around 5:30 PM, a red panda was being attacked by a gang of stray dogs in Maijogmai Rural Municipality-3. The animal had accidentally entered the village as it was being chased by four dogs until it was rescued by a local named Santosh Rai.

Rai then informed his friend and [RPN Forest Guardian](#), Arjun Rai. "After I received the information about the rescue, I alerted local forest authorities and Community Forest Users Groups (CFUGs). It was already late in the evening when the incident occurred so everyone decided to wait until the next day to release the red panda back to its habitat," Arjun Rai said.



Rescued red panda in box. Photo by Chhabi Dhakal, Divisional Forest Office, Ilam.



Forest Guardian, Arjun Rai.

According to Arjun Rai, the red panda was kept inside a wooden box-where it fed on bamboo leaves-for one night until it was transported by vehicle to a safe location and released into a Community Forest the next day. Local forest authorities and representatives of CFUGs and RPN were present for the release.

Free-roaming dogs (feral, hunting and herding) are a major threat to red pandas in Eastern Nepal. As a result, RPN has been partnering with District Livestock Service Center of Ilam and Taplejung to implement a neutering and rabies vaccination program for local dogs. Learn more in [Free-Roaming Dogs: A Major Threat To Red Pandas](#).



Red panda being released back into habitat.

Offset your carbon footprint!

Thanks to Cleveland Metroparks Zoo and Beatrice Potter all donations will be matched - and your impact doubled - towards our goal of \$7,000 to plant trees and restore red panda habitat in Western Nepal!



[Learn more](#)

habitat through the education and empowerment of local communities.

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