

94 New Species discovered in Nepal

About 94 new species of plants, animals and invertebrates were discovered in Nepal in the last 10 years from 1998 to 2008, a World Wildlife Fund (WWF) report released on Monday said.

The report on 'The Eastern Himalayas - Where Worlds Collide' details the discoveries of scientists from various organizations in the region spanning Bhutan, the north-eastern Indian states of Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, North Bengal, Sikkim, Burma, Nepal and southern parts of Tibet.

Over 350 new species were discovered in the eastern Himalayas including the world's smallest deer and a gecko species dating to 100 million years. Ninety-four species were discovered in the last decade in Nepal alone. They include 40 plants, 36 vertebrates, 7 fish, 2 amphibians and 9 reptiles, the report stated.

According to Mr. Ghanshyam Gurung, country conservation officer at WWF, one of the most remarkable discoveries in Nepal was the *Heterometrus nepalensis*, a scorpion new to the world, discovered in Chitwan National Park in 2004.

"The discovery was significant as it was the first species of scorpion discovered in the country", he said. Similarly, *Psilorhynchus nepalensis*, a fish species was discovered from the Budi Rapti River, near Chitwan National Park in 2008. *Hylarana chitwanensis*, a frog species was another major discovery.

The Himalayan ecosystem provides vital habitats for different globally threatened mammals including the rhino, tiger and snow leopard among others, along with many threatened bird and plant species.

Eastern Himalayas are now known to harbour a staggering 10,000 plant species, 300 mammals, 977 bird species, 176 reptiles, 105 amphibians and 269 types of freshwater fish.

An excerpt from the article - '94 new species found in last decade', from the front page of The Kathmandu Post, 11th August 2009