

meet your neighbor

Written by **Debbie Curtis** | Photography by **Dewey Neild**

Lions, Tigers, And Gharials, Oh My!

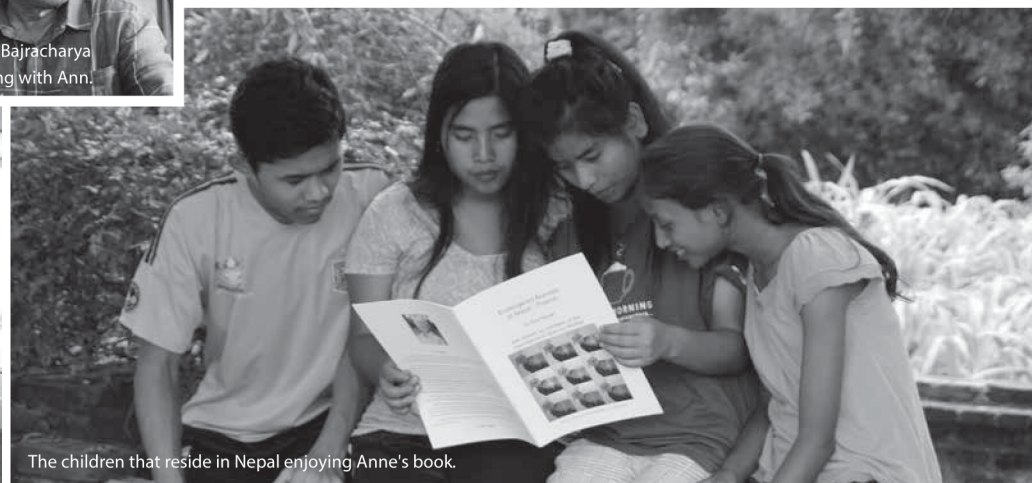
Meet Ann Mayer.



Jagadish Bajracharya
conversing with Ann.



At last the book has arrived, delivered by Maya Holmberg.



The children that reside in Nepal enjoying Anne's book.



Have you ever heard of a gharial? How about a pangolin, or a genetic dolphin? Ann Mayer has, and she is trying to save these and other endangered species of Nepal. Mayer, a resident of Kendal, became aware of the plight of these Nepalese animals through her aide, Jagadish, who is from Nepal. Jagadish, who has a degree in zoology, and Mayer, who graduated from Mount Holyoke College with a degree in zoology, were soon discussing Nepalese culture, and, of course, its animals.

"His blend of eastern and western philosophy and medicine, plus talk therapy, reawakened my interest in other nations and cultures as well as my life-long interest in the animal world," Mayer said.

"When I was young and deciding on a career path, my parents wanted me to study political science, but that wasn't something I was interested in," Mayer said. "We could agree on the study of zoology, however, and I loved it. During my junior year at Mount Holyoke, I was a recipient of the Bernice Maclean Zoology Award, which was for excellence in ecology and cellular biology."

Mayer then obtained a Master's in Education from Harvard University, and taught elementary school for 21 years in the Churchville-Chili district, which is near Rochester, NY.

"During my years as a teacher, I wanted to write children's books. I took a sabbatical leave and wrote three biographies for children, which were published by Creative Education. They were: Sir Frederick Banting - *Doctor Against Diabetes*, Dag Hammarskjold - *The Peacemaker*, and *The Two Worlds of Beatrix Potter*. The Beatrix Potter book won second prize in the Young Adult Literature category of the bicentennial contest of the National Penwomen's Association in 1976. I also have a non-fiction publishing credit. With my father, Harry F. Mayer, I collaborated on a book about UFO's entitled *Who's Out There? UFO Encounters*, which was published by Simon and Schuster."

After she left teaching, Mayer worked for the *Rochester Business Journal*, setting up a filing system and interviewing prominent local people for articles. She has also held jobs in the medical field, helping with clinical studies, editing manuscripts, writing grants, and coordinating professional medical conferences.

With her background in writing, education, and zoology, and inspired by Jagadish, Mayer wrote her first poem, which then evolved into an e-book, *Endangered Animals of Nepal - Poems*. The book has a poem for each of the thirteen animals, with artwork provided by members of the International A-Team for Wildlife, an organization where youth gather to save animals and protect the planet.

"I just started with that first poem to amuse myself. But to my great pleasure, the project snowballed, and I wound up getting involved with some wonderful people. To help fund the book, I began knitting stuffed animals and selling them, which helped

with printing and distribution. It is a lot less expensive to print a publication overseas than it is in the states, but I have always been persistent," Mayer said. "I did all the work on the book without ever leaving home. I am quite pleased that I was able to help in the efforts to save animals, and that my book is also helping children in Nepal learn English in a fun way, while they learn about endangered animals in the process."

Some of the animals, such as the snow leopard or the royal Bengal tiger, are very familiar to people. But Nepal is home to some unique species, such as the gharial, which is the largest relative of the crocodile. A pangolin is one of those strange creatures that is a mammal, but looks like a dinosaur. When frightened, it rolls into a ball that resembles a pinecone. A baby pangolin, when frightened, gives off a terrible smell. There is also a poem about the Ganges river dolphin, or susu, which is a species of river dolphin that is blind. Using echolocation to hunt for food, this dolphin lives in fresh water rivers in some of the most populated areas of the world, in Nepal, and the Ganges River in India.

To enjoy Mayer's poetry about these and other animals, you may download a free copy of the book at: <http://www.a-teamforwildlife.org/e-book>

To read more about Mayer and how the book came about, visit: <http://www.bioscienceresource.org/about-us/our-staff/>

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One of her many poems featured below:

Red Panda (*Ailurus flugens*)

A red panda looks like raccoon
It appears in the light of the moon.
It sleeps in the day and comes out at night
Seeking food to quench its huge appetite.
It makes its home in trees
It eats leaves of bamboo with ease.
Supplemented by lizards and chicks,
Eggs and berries add to the mix.