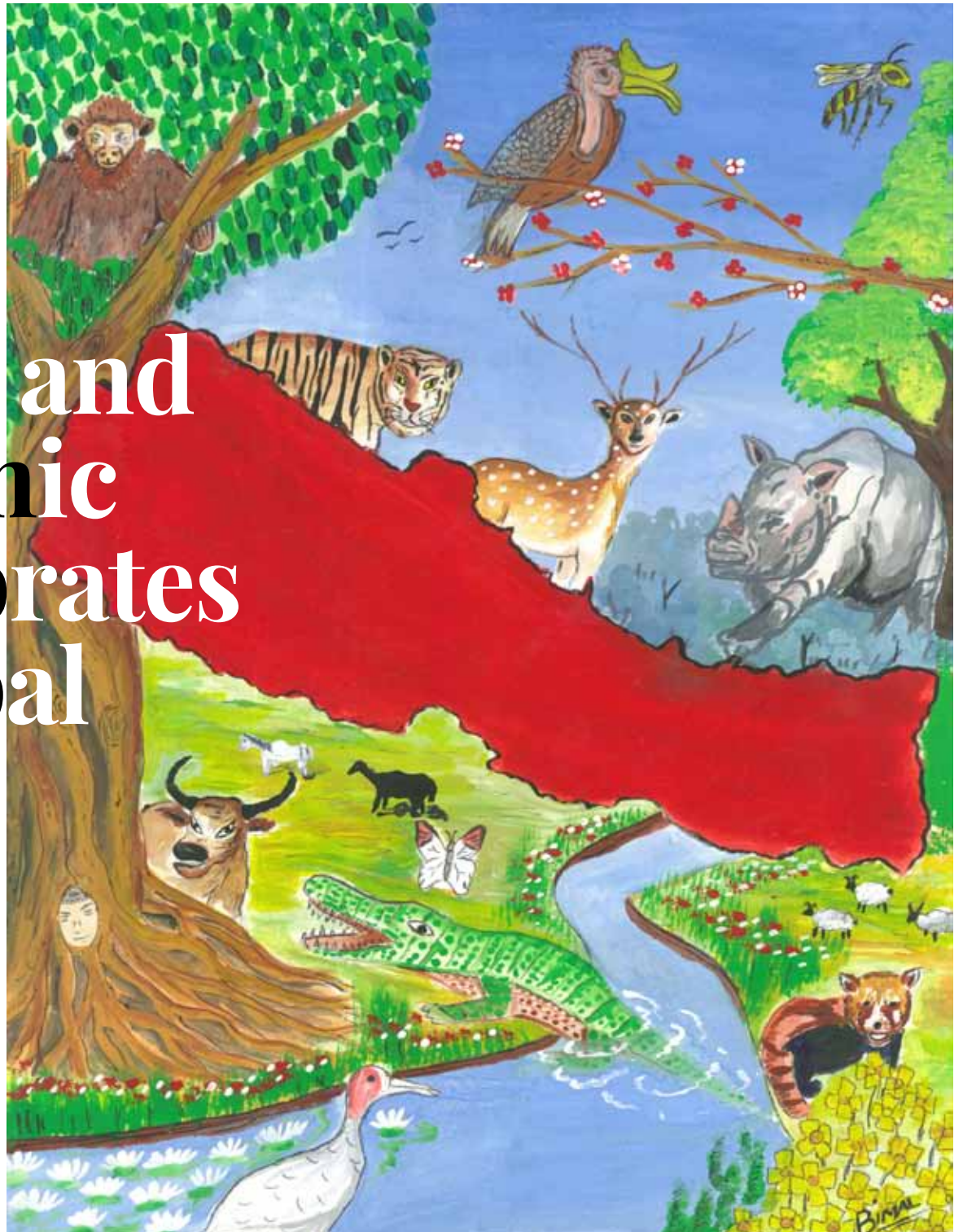

Exotic and Endemic Vertebrates of Nepal

Poems by Ann Mayer

ILLUSTRATIONS BY
Ann Mayer and
Bimal Shahi



An e-book produced for the children of Nepal who have such an amazing variety of natural resources to preserve for future generations.

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*Nepal is the only country without a rectangular flag
It looks like two pennants, one on top of the other*

Welcome to Nepal

Since I promised you not long ago
Another visit to Nepal,
I'm here with you just one more time
To accompany you with words that rhyme.

We'll meet thirteen animals called **vertebrates**:
(Another new word for you to learn).
These creatures have a backbone or spine
Which divides their body at the midline.



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SCIENTIFIC NAME

- R** *Crocodylus palestris*
- A** *Sphaerotheca maskeyi*
- M** *Apodemus gurkha*
- B** *Turdiodesni palensis*
- B** *Megalaima asiática*
- M** *Herpestes urva*
- M** *Melsursus ursinus*
- R** *Indotestudo elongata*
- M** *Hermitargus jemlahicus*
- B** *Upupa epops*
- A** *Hoplobatrachus tigerinus*
- M** *Semnopithecus schistacens*
- B** *Aethopyga siparaja*

**VERTEBRATES
INCLUDED**
Amphibians = A
Birds =B
Reptiles = R
Mammals = M

marsh crocodile



**Marsh Crocodile or
“Mugger”**
(*Crocodylus palustris*)

The mugger is a huge beast—
You hope you’ll never meet.
It hides in shallow water
Watching for prey to eat.

It may seem to be asleep,
But its eyes, in silence, keep
Searching the surroundings
Preparing for a leap.

When the female is ready to mate,
She digs a hole in the sand
At the very same spot
Where she first laid her eggs.
She returns there each year
As if planned.

As many as 48 eggs may hatch
From the hole she dug in the sand.
She will carry the hatchlings to water.
Where they will find food close at hand.

The young muggers feed upon insects:
Crustaceans, small fish and frogs.
Adult muggers eat larger creatures
Which come to the water’s edge
Such as snakes, monkeys, chitals,
And birds beginning to fledge.

Muggers are now protected
And new methods are being applied
To stop this animal’s destruction
In places far and wide.





Maskey's Burrowing Frog (*Spherotheca maskeyi*)

As you walk along a river bank
You may hear the strangest song:
“Awang, awang, awang”
To what could it belong?

You've just heard burrowing frogs –
Amphibians small in size,
Which dig homes along the river,
And peer out with bulging eyes.

Their long sticky tongue is useful
For with it they can seize
Some common harmful insects
Which often carry disease.

As a main link in the food chain,
The frog is a meal, too
For animals such as fish and birds,
Who may die if they find too few.

A healthy frog population
Acts as a signal or clue
That the local environment is healthy
So keep it that way, please do.



Nepalese Field Mouse



Nepalese (or Himalayan) Field Mouse (*Apodemus gorkha*)

The Himalayan field mouse
Is endemic to Nepal.
This small nocturnal creature
Is NOT one loved by all

It's always busy finding food;
The mouse is seldom quiet.
Seeds and roots,
Grains and fruits,
These make up its diet.

It may eat twenty times a day;
At night it finds its nest.
There the family cuddles up
And gets a quiet rest.

Those who think the mouse a pest
Will often try to kill it.
This may leave the whole food chain
Short of food to fill it.





Spiny Babbler
(*Turdoides nepalensis*)

The spiny babbler
Is an endemic bird
Which everyone wants to see.
It's popular in Nepali folklore
As well as poetry.

Yet very few people have seen this bird.
Until about 1945,
For a century people thought it extinct.
When an explorer named Ripley found it alive.

The spiny babbler is hard to study
Because it's small and shy.
Its song mimics that of other birds.
So, however how hard you try,
It's tricky to identify.

A babbler eats mainly insects;
Also small lizards and berries.
It accepts what the female collects.
Its diet rarely varies.

The babbler's nest is cup-shaped
Built of twigs and grass.
It prefers scrubby land
Where few other animals pass.

In this safe spot the female lays
Three or four light blue eggs.
When they hatch, she'll have several
chicks to raise,
Keeping her busy for many days.

The best news to report today
Is that scientists can now say
The spiny babbler is not endangered.
Thanks to the people of Nepal
Who watch for illegal behavior,
The spiny babbler is preserved for all.



Blue-throated barbet



Blue Throated Barbet (*Megalaima asiatica*)

If you see a vividly colored bird
With a fringe of bristles along its bill,
You've probably spotted a barbet
Which, for birdwatchers, is a thrill.

The barbet nests in a hole
Beneath a branch in a dead tree.
Both parents help choose the spot
Where they want their nest to be.

The female lays 2 to 5 eggs
Which are white and oval in shape.
Both parents help keep the eggs warm
And guard the new nestlings from harm.

For food, the barbet likes insects,
Figs, and flowers of pistachio trees.
To protect these birds from extinction,
Preserving their habitat is the key.



crab-eating
mongoose



Crab-eating Mongoose

(Herpestes urva)

What is a mongoose?
Well, it isn't a bird.
It's really a mammal.
You can take my word.

A bird has feathers.
A mammal has fur.
Most birds can fly.
Few mammals will try.

A crab-eating mongoose
Has a grizzly grey coat
And a stripe of white fur
From cheek to throat.

It's a very fast runner;
(20 miles per hour)
And chases its prey
With great speed and power.

It eats mainly crabs
Lizards, rodents, and snails.
It's a strong swimmer
And a hero of folk tales.

It lives in old burrows
Close to bodies of water.
To escape its enemies.
And avoid being slaughtered.

A threat comes from humans
Destroying their shelter and food
And hunting them as well
To sell abroad.
This fate is never good.



sloth bears



Sloth Bear (*Melursus ursinus*)

Here is a bear I would like
you to meet.
It prefers to eat insects
And foods that are sweet .
It favors termites, grubs and bees,
Fruits and petals of mahua trees.
It also craves wood apples and
sugar cane.
When it's fed properly
More strength it will gain.

With its sucking mouth parts and long
long claws,
It can easily capture food in its jaws.

Bear cubs are born in a cave.
At first they are helpless and blind,
And ride on the back of their mother
Where safety they know they will find.

Why do you think
It's called a "sloth bear"?
Is this the label it must always wear?

The reason is this.
It often climbs trees
And hangs upside down
When rest time it needs.
It resembles a sloth
In a jacket of brown.
Some people catch it
To train as a clown.

In Nepal the bear lives in lowlands-
An area called the Terai.
These are grasslands bordering India
Where temperatures may reach
a 40 degree high.
History shows that sloth bears
Have often been treated badly
By people who used them as clowns.
This I report to you sadly.

Some people today are providing
"Retirement homes" for bears.
Where they get proper food,
Protection from harm,
As well as good medical care.





Elongated Tortoise
(*Indotestudo elongata*)

A tortoise is a reptile
Which lives on land.
It eats fruit, flowers, fungi –
Whatever is on hand.

As adults they may reach twelve inches,
And weigh up to seven pounds.
They make little barking noises
And other peculiar sounds.

Now this tortoise is in danger
As people kill it to eat.
They are also sold to use in medicine
Still this list is not complete.

As people work to save our earth's environment,
Taking care of every living thing,
We will find our daily life more pleasant
And experience the happiness this can bring.





Himalayan Tahr
(*Hermitargus jemlahicus*)

You may need to search in mountains far
To see a Himalayan tahr.
Although related to a goat,
It has a different kind of coat.

The male's coat in winter,
Is thick and reddish-brown.
It extends around the neck
To the front legs and down.
When spring arrives
Their coat gets lighter.
In color it becomes much whiter.

Males and females both have horns
Which curve toward the back on the head.
The horns of most goats curve the opposite way
Instead.

A tahr inhabits mountain slopes
And has strong, rubbery feet.
It's active early in the day
Seeking grasses and leaves to eat.

Of enemies it must beware
The snow leopard is one.
But humans are the greatest threat
Hunting them for fun.





Hoopoe (*Upupa epops*)

The hoopoe has a crest of feathers
Resembling a monarch's crown.
It displays these in elegant fashion
For which it has gained renown.

The hoopoe appears in the Bible
And in the Quran as well.
In Persia it stood for virtue.
Pages of history tell.

You'll recognize the hoopoe
By its call of "oop-oop-oop"
It flies like a butterfly
With a long smooth swoop.

To find the nest
Search for a tree
Or a crumbling stone wall
About to fall.

Hoopoes eat insects
Which they find underground.
They probe with their long bill,
Where insects abound.

Since the insects that hoopoes eat
Often carry disease,
People will protect these birds
Which are valued by the Nepalese.



Indus Valley Bullfrog



Indus Valley Bullfrog (*Hoplobatrachus tigerinus*)

Most frogs you have seen
Are probably green;
Some may be brown or grey.
In Nepal you can find
An unusual kind
With a flashy mating display.
To attract the attention of females
This frog, when it's ready to mate,
Will turn a bright yellow color
And sing like it's never too late.

A vocal sac on each side of its neck
Changes to an eye-catching blue.
As it sings.

“ONG WANG”

or

“CRONK, CRONK”

Its rhythmic song everywhere rings.

This aquatic amphibian which lives in
fresh water
Spends lots of time searching for food.
It prefers a diet of small invertebrates
Plus quiet and solitude.

In some countries people eat frogs
As a common part of their diet.
They raise frogs on their land
As their food needs expand.
This leads to greater pollution
With no lasting solution.

Though not endangered at present,
This frog has a fate that seems clear.
Unless people care for and protect it,
It will likely some day disappear.



Nepal gray langur



Nepal Gray Langur (*Semnopithecus schistacens*)

An old man with white hair
Is sleeping in a tree.
He chooses the highest branches
Where he's hidden from you and me.

This animal is a langur,
A mammal I'd like you to meet.
It lives in the Himalayas
And walks mostly on four feet.

Langurs are diurnal;
They come out in the daytime to eat.
The foods they prefer are leaves
Of shrubs and trees
As well as seeds and fruits,
Spider webs, grasses, and roots.

Its enemies are leopards,
Tigers and jackals, too.
Wolves and pythons
Stand ready to chase it,
And catch it when they pursue.

Langurs use sounds to communicate
Grunts, barks, whoops, whistles and
screams
Some sounds help them attract a mate
Could some be a sign of bad dreams?

Preserving the langur requires
Helping prevent forest fires,
Slowing wood cutting, and mining
And more effective laws designing.





Crimson Sunbird
(*Aethopyga siparaja*)

It hovers like a hummingbird.
Its tongue has a bristly tip
Which it uses to drink sweet nectar
Like a straw is used to sip.

This bird eats insects from the grasslands
Where it lives and weaves a sturdy, hanging nest.
The female lays eggs and broods them.
She seldom has time to rest.



Farewell to Nepal

If you count all the animals you’ve so far met,
Thirty-nine is the number you’ll get.
However, you need not feel regret.
Just imagine the number you haven’t seen yet!

Now I’m leaving you on your own.
You may find you enjoy being alone.
I hope you’ll find pleasure
In nature’s treasure
And discover something unknown.



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Ann Mayer is a graduate of Mount Holyoke College with a major in zoology. After obtaining a master’s of education from Harvard University, she taught in the primary grades for 21 years, mostly in the Churchville-Chili district near Rochester, NY. In her retirement she has combined a lifelong interest in poetry and a fascination with animals to write poems for children.

To read a more detailed account of her writing experiences and download a free copy
of her first two poetry books, please visit:

<http://www.bioscienceresource.org/about-us/our-staff/>



PAINTINGS BY BIMAL SHAHI

Bimal Shahi was born in Dolpa, a highly mountainous region of Nepal. Cared for by a grandfather unable to any longer support him, Bimal came to live at Nepal Orphans Home. Bimal is 15 years old and excels in school, dance, acting and painting. Bimal has stated that as an adult he wishes to paint while working in the film industry.

