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Foreword

Despite the fact that turtles and tortoises represent a magnificent group of vertebrates, the group remained shadowed when their present position in conservation status and availability of ecological information are discussed. Distributed throughout the Nepal's Tarai, in varied habitat conditions, turtles are facing several threats related to habitat and populations due to anthropogenic activities. The group is neither included in the protected species list of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation (NPWC) Act 1973, and successive amendments, nor is fully researched. The ambiguity in species occurrence, lack of threat assessments amidst the perceived risks of population declines under thriving exploitation and trade have created gap in species information.

This book is an outcome of a study "Species Accounts, Distribution Status and Threat Assessment of Turtles in Lowlands of Nepal with a Special Focus on Indian Eyed Turtle (*Morenia petersi* Anderson, 1879)", supported by a small grant project of Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF)/WWF Nepal. The young researchers involved in the study mentored by eminent experts, Prof. Karan Bahadur Shah and Dr. Pralhad Yonzon, have given their best to find new and update the existing information regarding this important group of fauna. New record of *Hardella thurjii* (live specimen record from Pyaratal, Kanchanpur) and new distribution records for many species show the level of their extensive work, dedication and commitment. Nevertheless, the development of monitoring protocol, the hardest part of the project, clearly reflects their enthusiasm and thirst. I would like to thank the researchers/authors and mentors including other intellectuals involved in this very important task.

Not only as a field guide, the information from this book can also be used as baseline and updated data to support a long term monitoring programme in Nepal's Tarai wetlands. Regular monitoring of the group would provide information on the trends in diversity, abundance, habitat change, status of globally threatened species and threats to the animals and their habitats.

I hope this book can serve as an essential environmental education material not only to the practitioners and academics but to the students and researchers to further their works also. Thank you.

(Yuba Raj Bhusal)
Secretary

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