

# Landmark Supreme Court decision in Nepal helps protect wildlife and ensure social justice

June 6 2023

---



Credit: CC0 Public Domain

A Nepalese conservationist has successfully petitioned Nepal's Supreme Court, securing an order that will see key wildlife conservation laws

better enforced—including among the country's powerful and elite.

The [petition](#) was brought to the [court](#) by conservationist Kumar Paudel, a Nepalese conservationist and researcher who collaborates with researchers at Lancaster University.

His petition argued that the government was not doing enough to crack down on the illegal ownership of protected wildlife items, such as tiger pelts, especially among the country's powerful and elite. His petition highlighted a case involving Nepal's former Prime Minister, who displayed the pelt of a Bengal Tiger during an TV interview in his home.

Nepal has stringent laws prohibiting the harvest and use of protected wildlife. However, Mr. Paudel argued that enforcement of these laws mostly falls on poorer and marginalized people. The new court order requires wildlife collectors to declare their items to Government, tightening the laws on people who own wildlife products, often as status symbols. It also compels the government to act on reports of illegal trade and ownership, regardless of the social standing of the offender.

This view was informed by previous research, done in conjunction with Dr. Jacob Phelps of Lancaster Environment Centre, and Dr. Gary Potter of Lancaster University's Law School. Their [paper](#), 'Conservation enforcement: Insights from people incarcerated for wildlife crimes in Nepal' involved interviews with more than 150 people convicted of [wildlife](#) crimes. Through conducting this research it became apparent that many of those imprisoned were poor, marginalized and illiterate. That paper was also the basis on which the court recognized Mr. Paudel's expertise, and thus his legal right to bring the case.

Dr. Phelps, a Senior Lecturer in Conservation Governance in the Lancaster Environment Centre and coordinator of Conservation-Litigation.org , said, "Not only is this an important verdict, but it

highlights that scientists can lever their science to bring about society change in many different ways—including by going to court. We need to see more of this out-of-the-box, courageous action from scientists."

Dr. Potter, Reader in Criminology in Lancaster Law School said, "This is such an important outcome—for Kumar, for Nepal, and for [wildlife conservation](#). It shows that research and persistent, evidence-based campaigning can change the world for the better."

Provided by Lancaster University

Citation: Landmark Supreme Court decision in Nepal helps protect wildlife and ensure social justice (2023, June 6) retrieved 25 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2023-06-landmark-supreme-court-decision-nepal.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.