

Traditional Uses of Animals among *Jirels* of Central Nepal

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ABSTRACT Nepal harbors rich biodiversity because of a number of factors. Some of the important factors responsible for it could be attributed to the country's strategic location and rugged topography. It is situated along the central and eastern Himalayas, encompassing two zoogeographic realms - Palaerctic and Oriental with faunal elements of both the realms. There are diverse and unique assemblages of flora and fauna within a narrow horizontal expanse of less than 200 km. Equally diverse are the people who have been co-existing with these resources forming discrete blocks through ages. According to the government figures, there are fifty- nine ethnic groups in the country and the group *Jirel* is one of these ancient groups of people. Because of the co-existence with the surrounding faunal resources in continuity for centuries, *Jirels* have accumulated a rich body of ethno-zoological knowledge. This time tested traditional knowledge is now on the verge of extinction for most of the practices are no more in vogue. Present study attempts to analyze and document the vanishing ethno-zoological knowledge of this community from central Nepal. Tools such as questionnaire survey, structured interview, semi-structured interview, PRA and focus group discussions have been employed to gather data. *Jirels* have cultivated relationships with animals at cultural, spiritual and material levels. Altogether 49 species of animals with different ethno-zoological values have been reported. There is erosion of ethno-zoological knowledge among *Jirels* as younger people harbor less knowledge than the older ones. The paper emphasizes that similar studies be carried out in other ethnic groups of the country.