Developing an Eco-Friendly Orchid Trail for Conservation of Wild Orchids in Makawanpur District, Nepal



Report submitted to San Diego County Orchid Society

Ву

Acknowledgements

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I also thank Map House, Kathmandu, Nepal for publishing this trail map. My special thanks go to the members of local communities, leaders of forest user groups, and representatives of local governments who provided their unconditional support throughout this project.

Bhakta Bahadur Raskoti August 2025

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Pleione praecox

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1. Introduction

Nepal is globally recognized for its outstanding biodiversity, including over 500 known species of orchids—many of which are rare, endemic, or of ecological significance. Among Nepal's diverse landscapes, Makawanpur district, located in Bagmati Province, stands out as a national orchid hotspot due to its wide altitudinal range (400–2500 meters) and mix of tropical, subtropical, and lower temperate forest zones.

Despite its biological richness, wild orchid populations in Makawanpur are under increasing pressure from habitat degradation, deforestation, unsustainable harvesting for medicinal and ornamental purposes, and uncontrolled tourism. In many cases, tourists unintentionally damage orchids by picking flowers or trampling sensitive habitats due to lack of awareness and absence of visitor guidelines.

To address these growing threats, this project was initiated to develop an eco-friendly orchid trail, promote community-based conservation, and enhance sustainable eco-tourism. The approach combines scientific research, local engagement, environmental education, and habitat protection into an integrated conservation model.

2. Project rationale

The rationale behind this initiative is rooted in the unique biological, ecological, and social importance of orchids in the Makawanpur District:

- The district is home to many important species of orchids [White, K., & Sharma, B. (2000) Wild orchids in Nepal: the guide to the Himalayan orchids of the Tribhuvan Rajpath and Chitwan jungle], underscoring its national conservation value.
- Increasing anthropogenic pressures are causing habitat fragmentation, species decline, and local extinctions.
- Local communities often lack access to scientific knowledge or conservation tools, yet they play a critical role in protecting forest resources.
- The region holds untapped potential for eco-tourism that can both conserve biodiversity and support local livelihoods.

By developing an orchid trail based on science and community participation, the project demonstrates a sustainable model for in-situ conservation.

3. Objectives

Overall Goal: To conserve wild orchids in their natural habitats through research, awareness raising, and development of a sustainable eco-friendly orchid trail.

Specific objectives:

- 1. To survey the species of orchids in different forests of Makawanpur district.
- 2. To raise awareness among community people about the conservation importance of orchids.

3. To develop an eco-friendly orchid trail with visitor guidelines in Makawanpur district.

4. Methodology

4.1 Orchid species survey

Field surveys were conducted across four seasons (spring, summer, autumn, and winter) to capture seasonal blooming patterns. Surveys followed standard floristic methods using horizontal transects at 100-meter intervals. In addition, orchids were also documented through random transect walks. Each orchid species was recorded with scientific name, growth form (terrestrial, epiphytic, lithophytic), habitat, host tree (if any), flowering time, elevation, and GPS coordinates.

Note: Terrestrial orchids bloomed predominantly in the monsoon/summer season, while most

Note: Terrestrial orchids bloomed predominantly in the monsoon/summer season, while most epiphytic species bloomed during spring and autumn.

4.2 Community engagement

Awareness programs were conducted in schools, and community forest groups. Sessions included education on orchid importance, conservation laws, and eco-tourism potential.

4.3 Orchid trail development

Based on field results, orchid-rich sites were mapped using GPS and GIS tools. Trail routes were selected to maximize species diversity, scenic beauty, cultural heritage and accessibility.

5. Findings and outputs

Objective 1: Orchid species survey

Findings:

- 161 orchid species were recorded from the district, accounting for around 32% of all known orchids in Nepal.
- Species included terrestrial, epiphytic, and lithophytic orchids.
- Seasonal blooming patterns were observed: generally epiphytes bloomed in spring/autumn, terrestrials in the summer.

Outputs:

- A full checklist of 161 species (Appendix 1), including habitat, and flowering time.
- Identification of key orchid hotspots suitable for conservation and eco-tourism.

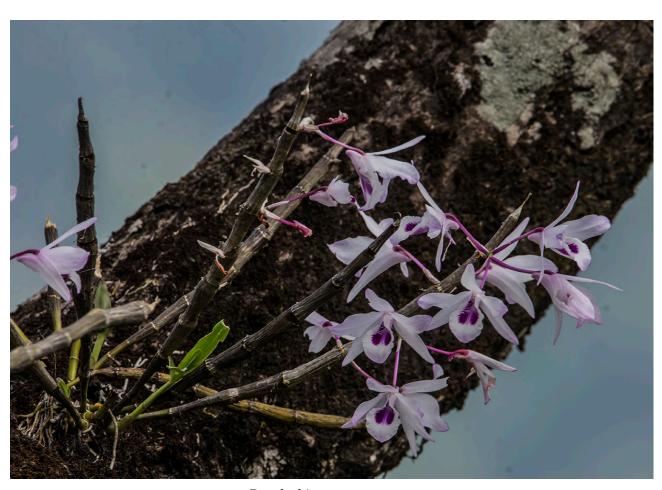


A view of survey sites in the orchid rich-area, Sim Bhanjyang



A scenic view from the orchid trail area of Daman

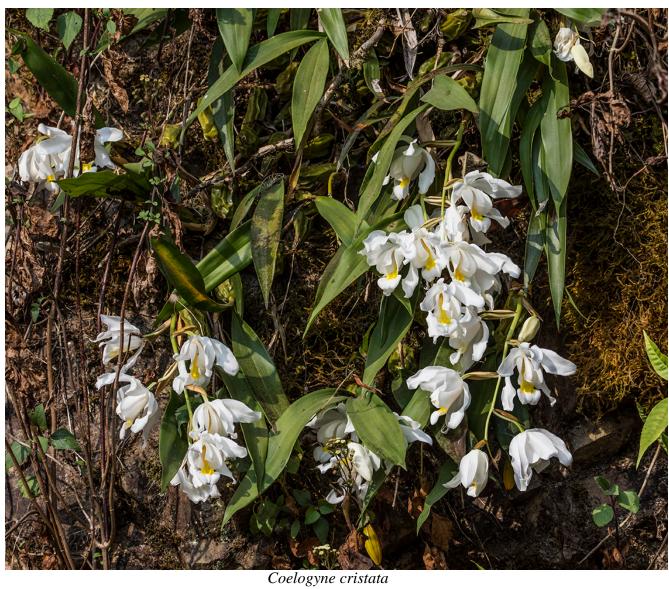
Representative orchid species recorded from fieldwork in Makawanpur district.



Dendrobium transparens



Pleione humilis





Bulbophyllum careyanum



Jewel orchid Goodyera schlechtendaliana



Brachycorythis obcordata



Pleione praecox



Habenaria plantaginea

Objective 2: Community awareness

Findings:

- Initial awareness about orchids was low in rural communities.
- Participants showed strong interest once informed of orchid importance and threats.
- Local groups expressed willingness to support conservation actions and reduce illegal trade.

Outputs:

- Discussed with local government representatives, officials, and community leaders and forest user groups.
- Awareness programs conducted in schools and community centers.
- Posters, flyers, and guidelines developed and distributed.



Community awareness program at the community center

Objective 3: Orchid trail development

Findings:

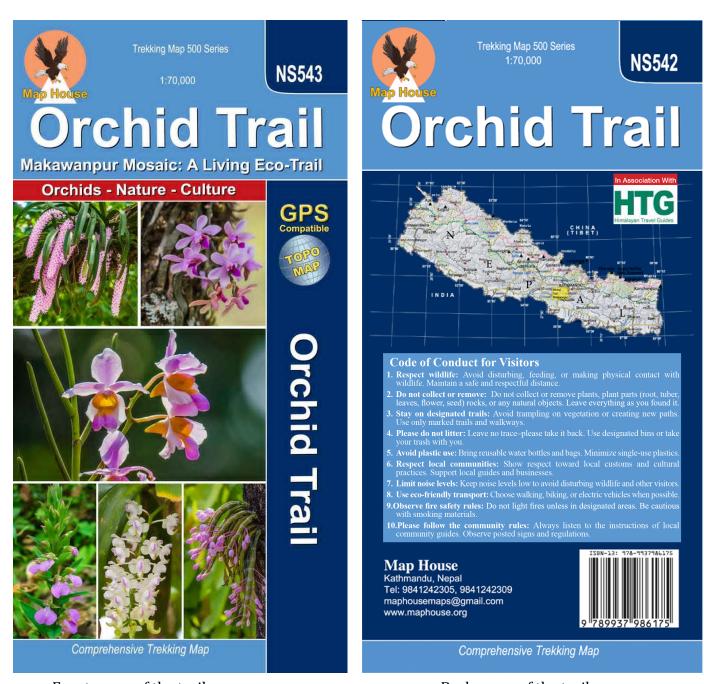
- Forest trails with high orchid population density, and species diversity were identified.
- Trails with scenic views and cultural traditions were marked.

Outputs:

• Orchid trail mapped using GIS, incorporating elevation, orchid hotspots, scenic viewpoints, and cultural settlements.

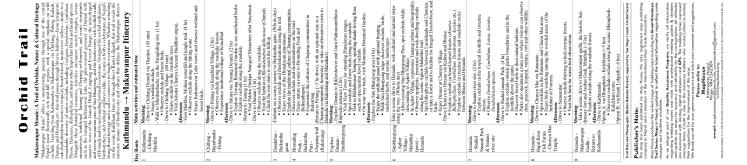


Map of the orchid trail



Front cover of the trail map

Back cover of the trail map



Itinerary for the orchid trail



Back page of the trail map

6. Conclusion

The project has made significant progress in documenting orchid diversity, building local awareness, and preparing for eco-friendly orchid-based tourism. Makawanpur district holds promise as a flagship site for community-driven orchid conservation. With continued support and monitoring, this model can be scaled to other orchid-rich regions of Nepal.

7. Recommendations

- Long-term monitoring: Establish a seasonal monitoring system to track changes in orchid populations, flowering trends, and human impact along the trail. This should also include community-based surveillance to detect and discourage collection and trade of wild orchids, which remains a serious threat to many species in the district.
- **Integration into local plans**: Local government (rural municipalities as well as Province) needs to integrate conservation into eco-tourism in short and long-term conservation plans.
- Capacity building: Provide ongoing training to community members and local youth in orchid identification; trail guiding, and sustainable tourism practices.
- **Infrastructure and promotion**: Install signage, and other basic visitor facilities along the trail. Promote the orchid trail in eco-tourism platforms and regional tour packages.
- **Research partnerships**: Partner with universities and botanical institutions for continued orchid research, species monitoring, and student involvement.

Appendix 1

Table 1: The list of orchid species, habitat, and their flowering time.

Scientific name	Habitat	Flowering time
Acampe praemorsa (Roxb.) Blatt. & McCann	Epiphyte	September-November
Acampe rigida (BuchHam. ex Sm.) P.F.Hunt	Epiphyte	September-October
Aerides multiflora Roxb.	Epiphyte	May-June
Aerides odorata Lour.	Epiphyte	June-July
Agrostophyllum callosum Rchb.f.	Epiphyte	June
Anthogonium gracile Wall. ex Lindl.	Terrestrial	August-September
Arundina graminifolia (D.Don) Hochr.	Terrestrial	March-November
Brachycorythis obcordata (Lindl.) Summerh.	Terrestrial	July-Aug
Bulbophyllum affine Lindl.	Epiphyte	June
Bulbophyllum careyanum (Hook.) Spreng.	Epiphyte	October-November
Bulbophyllum cirrhatum (Lindl.) Hook.f.	Epiphyte	October-November
Bulbophyllum griffithii (Lindl.) Rchb.f.	Epiphyte	September
Bulbophyllum guttulatum (Hook.f.) N.P.Balakr.	Epiphyte	September-October
Bulbophyllum helenae (Kuntze) J.J.Sm.	Epiphyte	August
Bulbophyllum hirtum (Sm.) Lindl. ex Wall.	Epiphyte	Janauray
Bulbophyllum leopardinum (Wall.) Lindl.	Epiphyte/Lithophyte	June-July
Bulbophyllum muscicola Rchb. f.	Epiphyte	September-November
Bulbophyllum polyrhizum Lindl.	Epiphyte	April
Bulbophyllum raskotii J.J.Verm., Schuit. & de Vogel	Epiphyte	April
Bulbophyllum reptans (Lindl.) Lindl. ex Wall.	Epiphyte	November-March
Bulbophyllum roseopictum J.J.Verm., Schuit. & de	Epiphyte	October-November
Vogel		
Bulbophyllum secundum Hook.f.	Epiphyte	June-July
Bulbophyllum sunipia J.J.Verm., Schuit. & de Vogel	Epiphyte	April-May
Bulbophyllum triste Rchb. f.	Epiphyte	April
Bulbophyllum wallichii Rchb.f.	Epiphyte	April

Calantha plantaginga Lindl	Terrestrial	March-April
Calanthe pulnerala Lindl	Terrestrial	March-April
Calanthe puberula Lindl.	Terrestrial	April-May
Calanthe tricarinata Lindl.	Terrestrial	April April
Chilosobista parishii Saidonf	Epiphyte	May-June
Chiloschista parishii Seidenf. Chiloschista usneoides (D.Don) Lindl.	Epiphyte	May-June
	Epiphyte	August
Cleisostoma flliforme (Lindl.) Garay	Epiphyte	September
Colomno alba (Lindl.) Robb f	Epiphyte	April
Coelogyne alba (Lindl.) Rchb.f. Coelogyne articulata (Lindl.) Rchb.f.	Epiphyte	April-June
Coelogyne articulata (Ellidi.) Relio.i. Coelogyne cristata Lindl.	Epiphyte/Lithophyte	March-April
Coelogyne cristata Lindi. Coelogyne demissa (D.Don) M.W.Chase & Schuit.	Epiphyte/Elthophyte Epiphyte	October-November
Coelogyne fimbriata Lindl.	Epiphyte	September-November
Coelogyne flaccida Lindl.	Epiphyte	April
Coelogyne fuscescens Lindl.	Epiphyte	October-November
Coelogyne juscescens Lindi. Coelogyne imbricata (Hook.) Rchb.f.	Epiphyte	June-August
Coelogyne initida (Wall. ex D. Don) Lindl.	Epiphyte/Lithophyte	April-June
Coelogyne ovalis Lindl.	Epiphyte/Elthophyte Epiphyte	September-November
Coelogyne pallida (Lindl.) Rchb.f.	Epiphyte	August
	Epiphyte/Lithophyte	September-November
Coelogyne porrecta (Lindl.) Rchb.f. Coelogyne prolifera Lindl.	Epiphyte/Lithophyte Epiphyte	April-May
	Epiphyte Epiphyte	September-October
Coelogyne protracta (Hook.f.) R.Rice Coelogyne recurva (Lindl.) Rchb.f.	Epiphyte/Lithophyte	August
	Epiphyte/Lithophyte Epiphyte/Lithophyte	April
Coelogyne stricta (D. Don) Schltr. Coelogyne uniflora Lindl.	Epiphyte/Littlophyte Epiphyte	April-May
	Epiphyte	July-August
Crepidium acuminatum (D.Don) Szlach.	Terrestrial	June-July
Crepidium biauritum (Lindl.) Szlach.	Terrestrial	June-July
Crepidium purpureum (Lindl.) Szlach.	Epiphyte	June-July
Cryptochilus lutea Lindl.	Epiphyte	June-July
Cryptochilus sanguineus Wall.	Epiphyte Epiphyte	June-July June-July
Cylindrolobus biflorus (Griff.) Rauschert,		·
Cymbidium aloifolium (L.) Swartz	Epiphyte	May
Cymbidium bicolor Lindl.	Epiphyte	May
Cymbidium cyperifolium Wall. ex Lindl.	Terrestrial	April
Cymbidium elegans Lindl.	Epiphyte/Lithophyte	September-November
Cymbidium erythraeum Lindl.	Epiphyte/Lithophyte	October-November
Cymbidium iridioides D.Don	Epiphyte/Lithophyte	September-November
Dendrobium amoenum Wall. ex Lindl.	Epiphyte	May-June
Dendrobium amplum Lindl.	Epiphyte/Lithophyte	May-June
Dendrobium anceps Swartz	Epiphyte	April-May
Dendrobium aphyllum (Roxb.) G.E.C. Fischer	Epiphyte	April-May
Dendrobium bicameratum Lindl.	Epiphyte	July-August
Dendrobium chryseum Rolfe	Epiphyte	May-June
Dendrobium crepidatum Lindl. & Paxton	Epiphyte	April
Dendrobium darjeelingense Pradhan	Epiphyte	September-October
Dendrobium densiflorum Lindl.	Epiphyte	April-May October-November
Dendrobium denudans D.Don	Epiphyte Epiphyte	
Dendrobium eriiflorum Griff.	Epiphyte	October-November
Dendrobium fimbriatum Hook.	Epiphyte	April-June
Dendrobium formosum Roxb.	Epiphyte	May-June
Dendrobium fugax Rchb.f.	Epiphyte	May March April
Dendrobium heterocarpum Wall. ex Lindl.	Epiphyte	March-April
Dendrobium longicornu Lindl.	Epiphyte Epiphyte	September-November
Dendrobium macrostachyum Lindl.	Epiphyte Epiphyte	April May
Dendrobium moniliforme (L.) Sw.	Epiphyte	April-May
Dendrobium monticola P.F. Hunt and Summerh	Epiphyte	May-June
Dendrobium moschatum (BuchHam.) Sw.	Epiphyte Epiphyte	May-June
Dendrobium polyanthum Wall. ex Lindl.	Epiphyte	April
Dendrobium pulchellum Roxb. Ex Lindl.	Epiphyte	July-August
Dendrobium transparens Wall. ex Lindl.	Epiphyte	May-June
Dendrolirium lasiopetalum (Willd.) S.C.Chen &	Epiphyte	April-May
J.J.Wood	Terrestrial	July Angu-4
Dienia cylindrostachya Lindl.	Terrestrial	July-August
Epipactis veratrifolia Boiss. & Hohen.		May October-November
Eria coronaria (Lindl.) Rchb.f.	Epiphyte/Lithophyte	October-Inovember

Eulophia picta (R.Br.) Ormerod	Terrestrial	August
Gastrochilus calceolaris (Sm.) D. Don	Epiphyte	March-April
Gastrochilus dasypogon (Sm.) Kuntze	Epiphyte	November
Gastrochilus distichus (Lindley) Kuntze,	Epiphyte	April-May
Goodyera biflora (Lindl.) Hook. f.	Terrestrial	July
Goodyera procera (Ker Gawl.) Hook. f.	Terrestrial	July
Goodyera schlechtendaliana Rchb.f.	Terrestrial	April-November
, , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , ,	Terrestrial	July-August
Habenaria arietina Hook.f.	Terrestrial	July-August July-August
Habenaria commelinifolia (Roxb.) Wall. ex Lindl.	Terrestrial	
Habenaria dentata (Sw.) Schltr.		September-October
Habenaria marginata Colebr.	Terrestrial	August-September
Habenaria plantaginea Lindl.	Terrestrial	July-September
Herminium clavigerum (Lindl.) X.H.Jin, Schuit.,	Terrestrial	August
Raskoti & Lu Q.Huang		
Herminium lanceum (Thunb. ex Sw.) Vuijk	Terrestrial	July-September
Herminium latilabre (Lindl.) X.H.Jin, Schuit., Raskoti	Terrestrial	July-August
& Lu Q.Huang		
Herpysma longicaulis Lindl.	Terrestrial	September
Liparis caespitosa (Thou.) Lindl.	Epiphyte	August
Liparis bootanensis Griff.	Epiphyte/Lithophyte	July-August
Liparis cordifolia Hook.f.	Terrestrial	July-August
Liparis deflexa Hook. f.	Terrestrial	July-August
Liparis resupinata Ridl.	Epiphyte	September-October
Luisia brachystachys (Lindl.) Blume	Epiphyte	April-May
Luisia inconspicua (Hook. f.) King & Pantl.	Epiphyte	August
Luisia teretifolia Gaud.	Epiphyte	April-May
Luisia trichorhiza (Hook.) Blume	Epiphyte	April-May
Luisia zeylanica Lindl.	Epiphyte	April-May
Nervilia aragoana Gaudich.	Terrestrial	April-May
Nervilia crociformis (Zoll. and Mor.) Seidenf.	Terrestrial	June
<i>y</i> , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , ,	Terrestrial	
Nervilia gammieana (Hook. f.) Schltr.		April
Oberonia caulescens Lindl.	Epiphyte	August
Oberonia ensiformis (Sm.) Lindl.	Epiphyte	October-November
Oberonia falconeri Hook. f.	Epiphyte	July-August
Oberonia myosurus (Forster f.) Lindl. ex Wall.	Epiphyte	August-September
Oberonia pachyrachis Rchb. f. ex Hook. f.	Epiphyte	November
Papilionanthe teres (Roxb.) Schltr.	Epiphyte	April-May
Papilionanthe teres (Roxb.) Schltr.	Epiphyte	April-May
Papilionanthe uniflora (Lindl.) Garay	Epiphyte	September
Pecteilis susannae (L.) Raf.	Terrestrial	July-August
Pelatantheria insectifera (Rchb. f.) Ridl.	Terrestrial	October-November
Peristylus constrictus (Lindl.) Lindl.	Terrestrial	July-August
Peristylus goodyeroides (D. Don) Lindl.	Terrestrial	July-August
Peristylus lawii Wight	Terrestrial	July-August
Phalaenopsis taenialis (Lindl.) Christenson & Pradhan	Epiphyte	May-June
Pinalia acervata (Lindl.) Kuntz.	Epiphyte	April-May
Pinalia amica (Reich.f.) Kuntze	Epiphyte	March-April
Pinalia apertiflora (Summerh.) A.N.Rao	Epiphyte	July-August
Pinalia bipunctata (Lindl.) Kuntz.	Epiphyte	July-August July-August
Pinalia bractescens (Lindl.) Kuntze	Epiphyte	April
	Epiphyte Epiphyte	June
Pinalia excavata (Lindl.) Kuntze.	Epiphyte Epiphyte	June-July
Pinalia graminifolia (Lindl.) Kuntze		•
Pinalia leucantha Kuntze	Epiphyte	May-June
Pinalia spicata (D. Don) S. C. Chen & J. J. Wood	Epiphyte	July-August
Pleione humilis (Sm.) D. Don	Epiphyte	February-March
Pleione praecox (Sm.) D. Don	Epiphyte	September-November
Porpax elwesii (Rchb.f.) Rolfe	Epiphyte	October-November
Porpax extinctoria (Lindl.) Schuit., Y.P.Ng &	Epiphyte	April
H.A.Pedersen		
Rhynchostylis retusa (L.) Blume	Epiphyte	June-July
Satyrium nepalense D. Don	Terrestrial	July-August
Smitinandia micrantha (Lindl.) Holttum	Epiphyte	April-May
Spathoglottis ixioides (D.Don) Lindl.	Lithophyte	
Spiranthes sinensis (Pers.) Ames	Terrestrial	July-September
Thunia alba (Lindl.) Reichenb. f.	Epiphyte	June-July
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Thunia alba var. bracteata (Roxb.) N.Pearce &	Epiphyte	June-July
P.J.Cribb		
Trichotosia dasyphylla (C. S. P. Parish & Rchb. f.)	Epiphyte	August-September
Kraenzl.		
Tropidia curculigoides Lindl.	Terrestrial	June-September
Vanda ampullacea (Roxb.) L.M.Gardiner	Epiphyte	April-May
Vanda cristata Wall. ex Lindl.	Epiphyte	March-June
Vanda tessellata (Roxb.) Hook. ex G. Don	Epiphyte	March-November
Vanda testacea (Lindl.) Rchb. f.	Epiphyte	May-June
Zeuxine affinis (Lindl.) Benth. ex Hook.	Terrestrial	April
Zeuxine flava (Wall. ex Lindl.) Trimen	Terrestrial	April
Zeuxine strateumatica (L.) Schltr.	Terrestrial	November-March



Fieldwork during the orchid survey

Cymbidium aloifolium