

PRESS RELEASE: FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Press Release: A Center for Red Panda Conservation and Sustainable Living Opens on Earth Day

Kathmandu, Nepal — The Himalayan Habre Center will open in eastern Nepal on April 22nd, 2023 — Earth Day. The center is the first of its kind: an education and resource hub for red panda conservation and sustainable livelihoods.

Located in a community-managed forest near Deurali, a mountain village in eastern Nepal's Taplejung district, the Himalayan Habre Center (or Habre Center) will be where local people can develop skills like sustainable energy use and construction, organic farming, handicraft production, sustainable herding, bio-briquette production, nature guide, and ecotrip leadership, rainwater harvesting, water conservation, nursery and homestay management.

Poverty is a problem for the people living in rural Nepal and an obstacle to saving threatened wildlife. However, there is a strong connection between sustainable economic development and species conservation.

The rural communities in red panda range are often impoverished; they depend on a wide range of natural resources and ecosystem services for their well-being. Unfortunately, they are more vulnerable when biodiversity is degraded or lost.

But the environment and economy are interdependent, and as the forests are protected and species' numbers improve, so can the livelihoods of local people. And vice versa.

Red Panda Network (RPN) has a multi-tiered approach to conservation that includes habitat protection and sustainable development. We offer capacity-building workshops and other opportunities for marginalized families, so they can develop the skills needed to create new income streams and opportunities.

Sustainable Mountain Architecture (SMA), a non-profit organization dedicated to sustainable design and improving building methods at high altitudes, has led the design and construction of the Habre Center.

During construction, locals learned sustainable and green building techniques with locally sourced materials. The Habre Center is an education and demonstration site that is earthquake-resistant and features rainwater harvesting, improved cooking stoves, solar technologies, sustainable waste management, biogas plants, organic vegetables, non-timber forest products (NTFPs), and medicinal and aromatic plants (MAPs).

The livelihood benefits continue with opportunities for revenue from ecotourism. How? The Habre center is located on the route to Pathibhara temple, on the Pathibhara peak, a famous Hindu shrine that attracts thousands of visitors every year from Nepal, India, Bhutan, and other parts of the world who often follow this route to trek to Mount Kangchenjunga basecamp. Tourists can stay at the Habre Center, and their payment supports local families and communities. The center will provide a comfortable and undisturbed tourist experience and will be an educational center for students to learn about red panda conservation and sustainability. The forests surrounding the center are habitat for red pandas and many endemic birds, making a natural haven for ecotourists and birdwatchers. Additionally, you could view the world's third-highest mountain, Mt. Kangchenjunga.

The Habre Center will help to preserve red panda habitat and alleviate pressure on forest resources. Since they are linked, local livelihoods will be bolstered through improved ecosystem services and resistance to environmental and climatic changes.

At least 2,000 local families will benefit from The Habre Center with improved living standards and increased annual income. "The Habre Center is more than a building. It represents a better future for pandas and people in Nepal," RPN's Executive Director, Ang Phuri Sherpa, shares the significance of this conservation milestone, which was made possible by support from Nordens Ark and Svenska Postkodlotteriet.

The Deurali Bhitri Community Forest will be responsible for managing the operations of the Habre Center. "We are thrilled to commit to long-term red panda conservation and sustainable livelihoods," says Nima Krikiya Sherpa, chairperson of the Deurali Bhitri Community Forest.

The Habre Center will support biodiversity, conservation, tourism, and sustainability in the Kangchenjunga region in eastern Nepal. In addition, the center will contribute to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals 6, 7, 12, 13, and 17.

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Red Panda Network protects wild red pandas and their habitat through the education and empowerment of local communities. Learn more about our work at www.redpandanetwork.org.

[Photos of the Habre Center.](#)