

## SHEY PHOKSUNDO NATIONAL PARK

Shey Phoksundo National Park, the largest national park in Nepal (area: 3,555 km<sup>2</sup>) represents the trans-Himalayan region (rainshadow of the Nepal-Himalaya). The Park is topographically and climatically varied as it covers both north and south sides of the main Himalayan divide. These varied physical characteristics, coupled with equally complex geology and soil, have supported a unique biotic system. The park vegetation can be grouped into: 1) south Himalaya 2) inner Himalaya; and 3) trans Himalaya. The south Himalaya is characterized by temperate and sub-alpine forests, the inner Himalaya may have floral affinities to the south Himalaya region, and the trans Himalaya is a tree-less area with loose scree that inhibit vegetation growth. Besides 30 endemic plants of Nepal, endangered mammals like the snow leopard and Tibetan wolf, and over 105 bird species primarily of the trans Himalayan region are also found. Snow leopards and Tibetan wolves are considered to kill more livestock than their natural prey. Reports on poaching on snow leopard, musk deer and Himalayan black bear are frequent. Possessions of firearms in these regions signifies social status, and many households have guns. Also overgrazing and illegal harvest of medicinal plants have become serious, all though they are important source of income for most of the households.

