

# THREATS TO THE SMOOTH-COATED OTTER IN THE KARNALI RIVER, NEPAL

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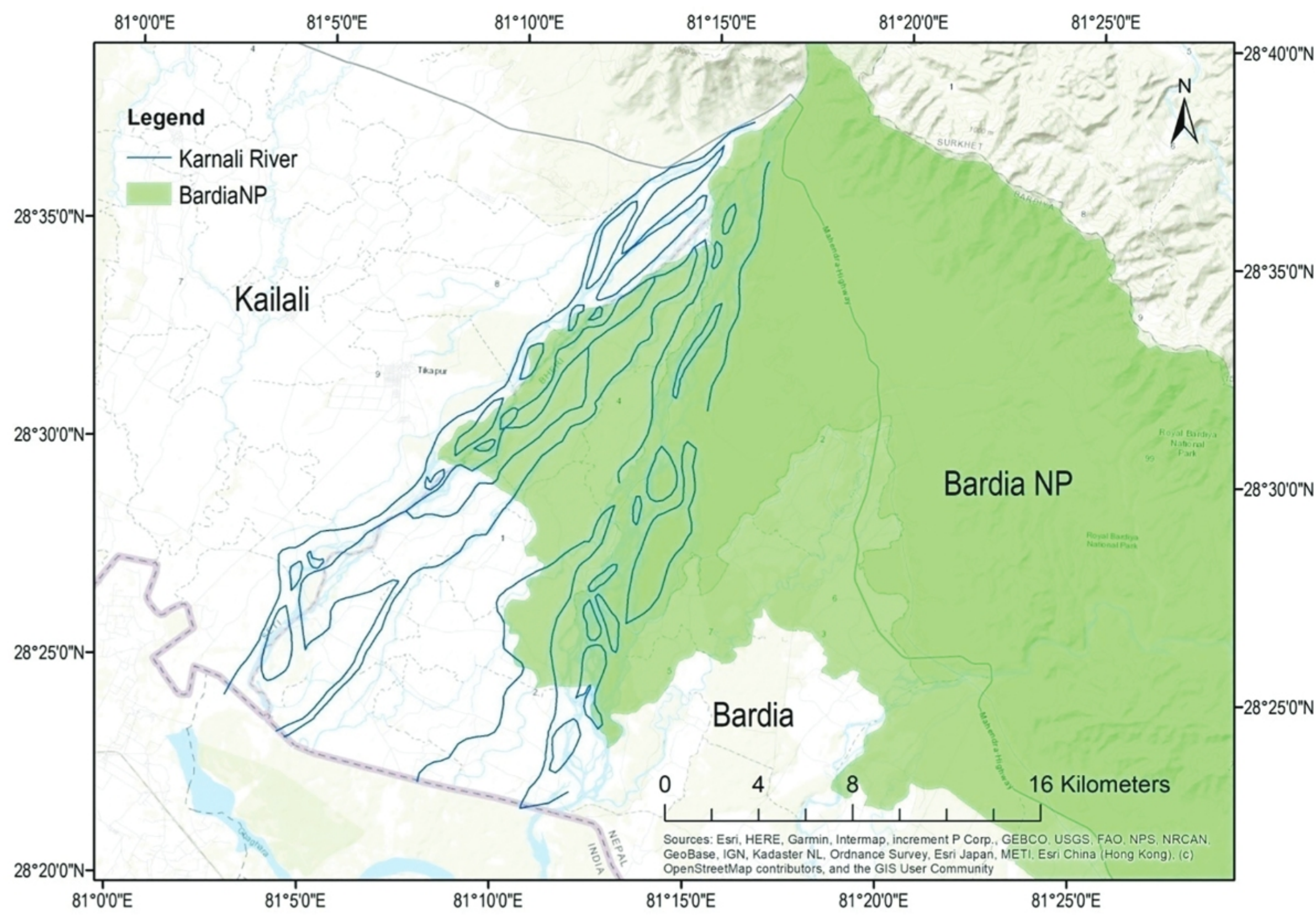


Figure 1: Map showing Lower Karnali River region



Figure 2: Overextraction of river aggregates and overfishing by local communities in the Karnali River.

## ABSTRACT

Illegal poaching of otters has been revealed through confiscation and seizures of 755 pelts during 1989 to 2017 in Nepal. However, the threats dynamics has been changed in recent years. Since 2018, poaching has not been a potential threat by and large. In the Kauralia River (west channel of the lower region of the Karnali River), human disturbance (presence and activities) is the major threat. One of the objectives of the Darwin Initiative funded project “Strengthening communities’ livelihood and stewardship to conserve Otters in Karnali” is to conduct threat assessment of SCO using absolute threat rank system to inform the development strategies for the species and its habitat protection. Altogether 23 threats were listed through literature review of 13 studies during a period of 1984-2021. Direct observations and six community consultations were conducted. Absolute Threat Ranking was applied in which the scope, severity and irreversibility were categorized into three categories with specific valuation and SCO, habitat and fish were the targets. Altogether, 12 threats were listed. Poaching has not been observed, noticed or heard in recent years. Such activities were common during last two decades ago. Rather, there are complain from the river dependent communities on depredation of fishes from their gill nets administered overnight in the river and streams, hence competition between SCO and river dependent communities exist and retaliatory killing at small extent occurs. Conservation strategies should include; changing the current practice of using mosquito nets in the local fishing gears used by river-dependent communities; monitoring and reducing overfishing during the breeding season of fish (March-May), low water flow and dry season; reducing the quantity of river aggregate extraction; reducing intense use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides in the farmlands and discouraging electrocution and poisoning during the fishing.

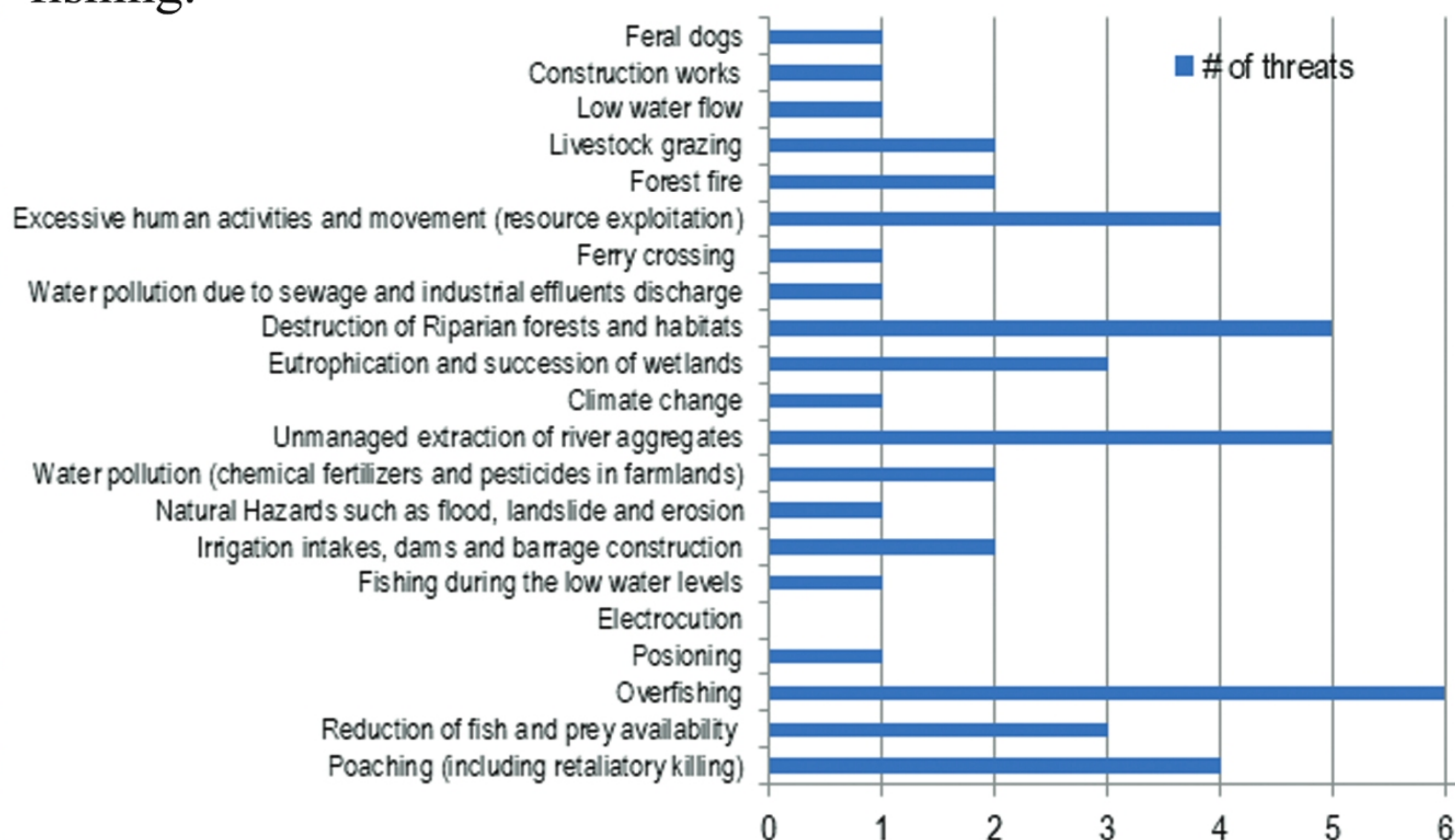


Fig 3: Threats to SCO in western range of its distribution including Shuklaphanta National Park, Bardia National Park

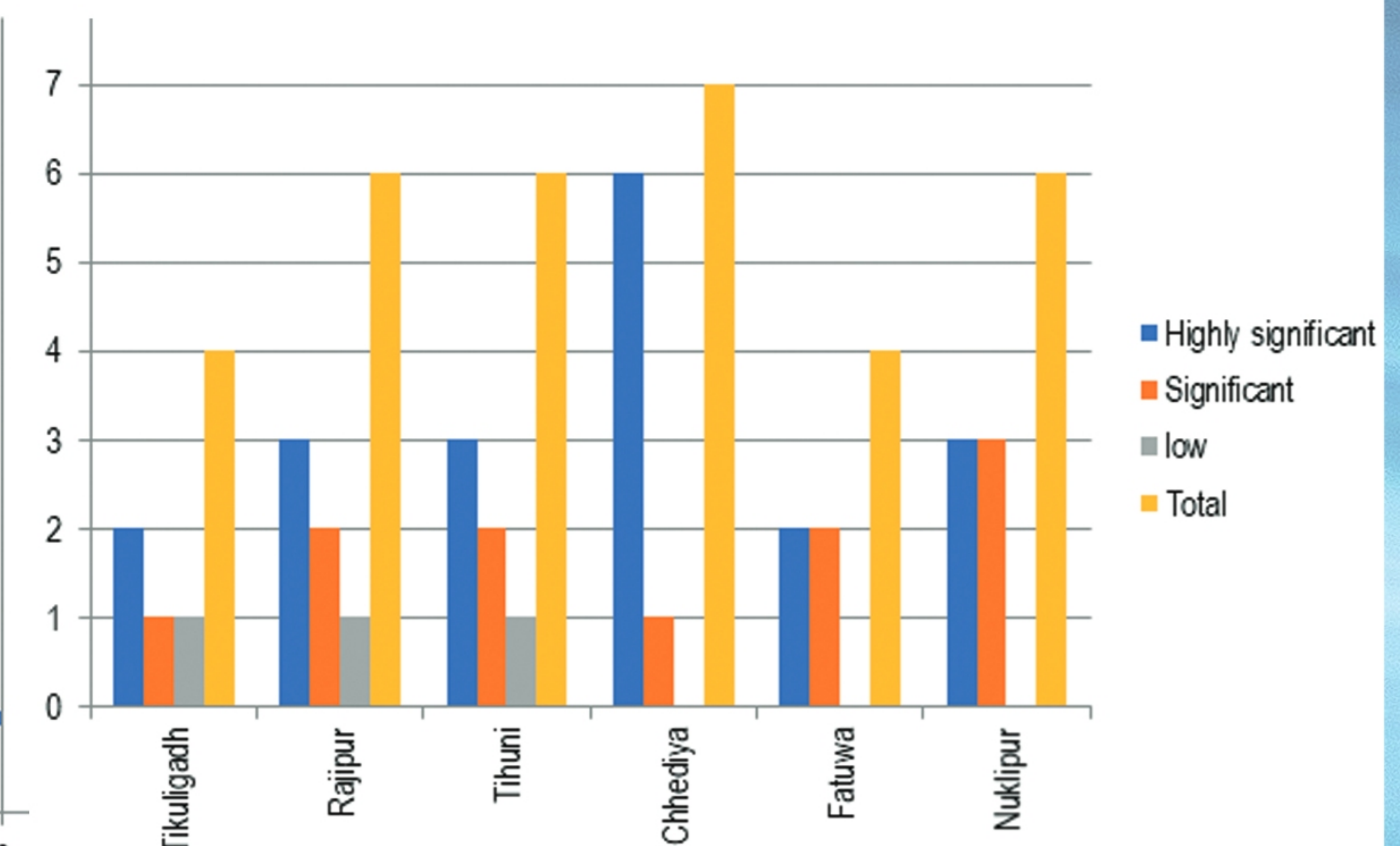


Fig 4: Site-specific threats to otters, their diet, and habitat

