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“SAARC Haveeru” in Thimphu



>> Her Royal Highness Ashi Chimi Yangzom Wangchuck visits exhibition stalls

Her Royal Highness Ashi Chimi Yangzom Wangchuck graciously inaugurated the “SAARC Haveeru,” or ‘SAARC Afternoon,’ on 5th July 2009, coinciding with the 3rd Children and Youth Festival, at Centenary Youth Harmony Village in Thimphu, Bhutan.

RSPN and SAARC Coastal Zone Management Centre (SCZMC) based in Maldives organized the event to create awareness of coastal zone environments in the SAARC region. Besides, the occasion

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Community Forests for Moshi and Passaphu



>> Participants of the workshop on Community Forests conducted by RSPN and District Forestry Office

The Womrong and Kangpara communities depend extensively on forest resources. Forest degradation is already adversely affecting ecological balance. A community forest empowers the community to manage their own forest resources collectively and harvest resources sustainably. It enables the community to sell excess products and also avail timber for self-consumption easily, as no official permits are required. Community forests have the potential to improve livelihood and reduce indiscriminate damage to forest resources.

Community forestry was initiated in Bhutan in 2000.

In collaboration with District Forestry Sector, RSPN initiated community forests in Moshi, Passangphu under Lumang and

>> Contd. on Page 2

>> *Contd. from page 1***“SAARC Haveeru” in Thimphu**>> *The visitors appreciated the diversity of exhibitions showcased by the participating schools*

provided an opportunity to understand the inter-relationships between various environmental systems and human activities in the SAARC setting.

Several schools from non-coastal Bhutan organized educational campaigns on the theme, “Awareness of the Coastal Environment!”

The Regional Coastal Zone Management Centre was established in 1992 on the recommendation of the SAARC Study of the Causes and Consequences of Natural Disasters and the Protection and Preservation of the Environment. In his inaugural address to the SAARC Environment Ministers Conference held in Male on 15-16 October, 1997, His Excellency Mr. Maumoon Abdul

Gayoom, the then President of Maldives, stressed the need to establish a SAARC Regional Coastal Zone Management Centre. SAARC Environment Ministers attending the conference decided to conduct a feasibility study and welcomed the Government of Maldives offer to undertake the feasibility study.

South Asian Youth Summit on Climate Change 2009

Youth representatives from 8 SAARC nations met in Dhulikhel, Nepal, from 3rd to 6th September 2009, to participate in SAYSoCC 2009. The summit formulated a common ‘South Asian Youth Vision’ to tackle climate change at the local, national, regional and global levels. The Vision spelled out 5 commitments and framed several demands. Country based presentations and documentary films communicated the dangers and hardships of people across the SAARC nations with regard to climate change.

The 80 participants committed themselves to forming a youth network across South Asia; they plan to organize follow-up events, sensitize the community and motivate a low carbon life for future generations. One event

is planned to coincide with the International Day of Climate Action on 24th October.

In collaboration with Nazhoen Pelri, RSPN nominated Mr. Keshab Neopani of Y-VIA (Young Volunteers in Action) as the Bhutanese youth representative. Mr. Neopani made a presentation on the 3Rs (Reduce, Reuse and Recycle) which highlighted the roles the Bhutanese youth could play in curbing emerging environmental dangers.

The inspiring summit was jointly organized by Nepal Youth for Climate Action (NYCA), Clean Energy Nepal (CEN), Indian Youth Climate Network (IYCN), Sri Lankan Youth Climate Action Network (SYCAN), Pakistan Youth Climate Network (PYCN) and 350.org.

>> *Contd. from page 1***Community Forests for Moshi and Passaphu**

Kangpara gewog.

- An area of 280.96 hectares has been designated as the community forest to benefit 85 individuals in Moshi
- In Passangphu, 182 hectares has been designated community forest to benefit 47 individuals

The process involved development of a management plan and community capacity development in management of forests.

News in Brief

Environment Education Study Material for Phobjikha

A consultation meeting was conducted with stakeholders in Thimphu on 8th July 2009 to present a preliminary draft of the environment education study material.

The environment education study material will serve as supplementary reference documents for the Non-Formal Education Instructors (NFEI) and Nature Club Coordinators (NCC), providing information specific to Phobjikha, covering biodiversity, ecology and urgent environmental concerns in the valley. The NFEIs and NCCs in Phobjikha were consulted about the materials on 30th June 2009.

Coordination Workshop among Stakeholders.

In order to motivate coordination among stakeholders, a one day consultation meeting was conducted on 24th June 2009. The meeting informed about RSPN's plans and programs, and presented the draft tourism assessment report. The 19 participants were from Tourism Council of Bhutan, Association of Bhutanese Tour Operators, private tour agencies and other related organizations. The deliberations helped to clarify tourism related issues, proposed recommendations and offered feedback for the needs assessment report.

Campsite

Campsite development has been initiated in Phobjikha with financial backing from "Programme for South-South Cooperation" in an effort to foster collective benefit to the local community through community based sustainable tourism. The facility is also expected to reduce visitor encroachment into the wetlands for camping, and provide uplifting experiences to valley visitors.

Community Forests Initiative

RSPN, in collaboration with Department of Forest, initiated community forest management in 5 villages in Phobjikha conservation area in July 2009 in an effort to enhance community based natural resource management.

Forest resource assessment, community consultation and management plans are complete and await the government's final endorsement. About 209.88 acres of land

has been designated as community forest in Mole-Thanka under Gangtey gewog which will benefit 43 households. Similarly, four other areas under Gangtey gewog have been designated as community blessings, including:

- 112 acres of land in Mole expected to benefit 10 households
- 264.9 acres in Gella to benefit 34 households
- 264.9 acres in Tokha to benefit 17 households and
- 402.7 acres at Sangtana to benefit 47 households

Assessment of Community-based Sustainable Tourism Program

An assessment report to identify viable community based tourism products and services have been developed. The report studied the weaknesses and strengths of the current situation, available resources, and potential for further enhancement. Among other findings, the report indicates that benefits to the local people are limited though the tourists to Phobjikha are increasing in numbers, as indicated by statistics. The study involved literature review and consultation with stakeholders, including the community. The assessment report would benefit CBST programs in Phobjikha.

Lhuentse LCSG organized Weekend Market Promotion Programme

Weekend Market Promotion Program was organized on 6th September with support from Dzongkhag Sports and Culture Association. People representing different walks of life attended, including villagers, the business community, students, health, gewog, and regional and dzongkhag staff. Motivated by the gathering, Lhuentse LCSG organized an awareness talk on the negative impact of wastes and our responsibilities concerning waste management.

Participants and LCSG members, led by the LCSG chairperson, carried out a cleaning campaign in the area at the conclusion of the program. The cleaning campaign generated awareness of community activities at the local level to keep surroundings clean and green.

New Conservation Group in Punakha

The new conservation group in Punakha was established with 12 members and hopes to expand in the coming years. Dasha Dzongdag is the chairperson, the members consisting of Dzongkhag officials from different sectors, grassroots leaders and local communities.

The critically endangered White-Bellied Heron will be the first priority in WBH awareness campaigns for locals along the Phochhu River. We also wish to establish a WBH patrol group that will monitor the area at regular intervals. A successful project will lead to the establishment of additional sub-groups for the Punakha LCSG to protect our most important resource- the natural environment.

In addition to the White-Bellied Heron awareness initiative leading to conservation, the group's community voice would also study other pertinent environmental issues at the local level. The group aims to research and inspire environmental activities.

Dzongkhag Forestry Sector Study Tour

With the target of capacity development for the Dzongkhag Forestry Sector under Trasigang Dzongkhag, RSPN organized a study tour for 18 members, including Dzongkhag Forest Officer, Assistant Dzongkhag Forest Officer, Sr. Forest Officers, and Gewog Forest Extension Officers.

The objectives of the tour were:

- Exchange of knowledge and skills for community forest development, natural resources management and enterprise development.
- Creation of a network among the stakeholders and exposure to forestry and RNR related activities through exchange of ideas and knowledge with colleagues from other dzongkhags.
- Enhancement of capacity building of the field staff for sustainable conservation of natural resources.

The group visited several national institutions from 20th July to 3rd August. RNRRCs, RNR Sub-centers, CFs and Private Forest Areas, hydropower stations, RSPN Crane Information Center, small scale entrepreneurship centers, SLMP and watershed areas under Mongar, Bumthang, Trongsa, Zhemgang, Gelephu, Sarpang, Tsirang, Wangdi, Punakha, Thimphu, Haa and Paro Dzongkhags were visited.

Public Waste Management Awareness Program



>> *Students perform on public waste management awareness program*

About 340 students and teachers of Jigme Losel Primary School (JLPS) in Thimphu performed a street play, displayed posters and sang environmental messages on waste management on 5th September to educate Bhutanese people about the escalating nuisance of unmanaged garbage.

JLPS staged the programs at two public places in Thimphu viz. Centenary Farmers Market and Clock Tower. Local businesspersons were extremely supportive and assisted stage preparations. The programs drew positive responses from the audience.

The waste management education programs were initially staged in JLPS on a competition basis and the winners led the final program on 5th. The audience, comprising of parents and shoppers, received the messages through play, dance, song and poster display enthusiastically! The school children got first hand knowledge, experience and exposure to widen their understanding of waste management and social responsibilities while advocating unmanaged waste concerns to the Thimphu public.

RSPN supported the event under the Clean Bhutan Program.

Social Forestry Day in Goshing Community Primary School

Contributed by Kinley Wangchuk, Nature Club Coordinator

Despite its remoteness, like any other schools in the country, Goshing Community Primary School in Zhemgang marked the Social Forestry Day on June 2 2009 in a grand way. The day, unlike the previous years, was another milestone for Royal Society for Protection of Nature (RSPN) and Ministry of Education (MoE) in bringing Nature Clubs to formal curriculum of schools throughout the Kingdom.

The day started off with Chief Guest unfurling of the National Flag and singing of National Anthem.

The speakers highlighted the main rationale of the day - institutionalizing nature clubs into a former curriculum of the schools across the kingdom, which was initiated by RSPN and MoE. The speakers said that this will greatly enhance the rich natural heritage of Bhutan by bringing knowledge of importance of natural environment into all schools and communities.

"Greening Bhutan" was this year's theme for Social Forestry Day. The nature

club coordinator spoke on the importance of the day to keep Bhutan green for all times. "Unlike previous years, making today's event a grand celebration like any other event is to uplift the goal set by RSPN and Ministry of Education in bringing Nature Club to a formal curriculum of all schools. This will help all students and communities to participate in learning to care for our natural environment.", said the Nature Club Coordinator. He added, "If Bhutanese fail to care and upheld the environment values right now, the future generations of Bhutanese will suffer."

The event was attended by staff from Gewog and RNR center. The principal stressed upon the importance of uniting together to mark the occasion which will ultimately help in combating the global climate change in one's own way.

"Today is the day for planting trees and

>> *Contd. on page 1*

CONTRIBUTION FROM NATURE CLUB



Water is very important for all living beings. I cannot imagine life without water. Water is a life-line to all of us because living beings cannot survive at all without it.

With clean drinking water, our health can be maintained healthy. We can have a very clean home to live with proper supply of water which we need for our daily use. With water, we can also make revenue from exporting electricity.

Please do not waste water! Save and care for water because it is very important for all of us.

Contributed by:
Nature Club
Changzamtog Lower Secondary School
Thimphu

News from Local Conservation Support Groups (LCSG)

Compiled by: Sangay Norbu, LCSG Member Secretary, Zhemgang Dzongkhag

Altitudes vs. Forests

Contributed by Nature Club
Ura Middle Secondary School, Bumthang

Ura is located at a geographical altitude of 3165 meters above sea level, bordered by Mongar in the east, Lhuentse in the northeast and Zhemgang in the south. Ura falls within the sub-alpine zone of the Inner Himalayas. Owing to geographical location and diverse vegetation, Ura is a hotspot of the Eco-Nature-based tourism program of Royal Government of Bhutan.

Each household in Ura consumes 4 or 5 truckloads of firewood annually for heating purposes alone, imposing great pressure upon forest resources! Grazing for domestic animals is causing excessive damage too. The majority depends upon livestock farming. Domesticated animals extend to 10 to 15 cattle per household. Construction activity is an apex problem as people prefer traditional methods of building construction, using timber and stones. As a result, the sustainability of Ura's forest resources cannot be assured of a secure future.

Thus altitude is the major factor that leads to high firewood consumption. Heating is necessary throughout the year as severely cold climatic conditions are intolerable. Summer prevails for a very short duration and often requires heating during mornings and evenings. Winter is impossible without prolonged heating even during the day at the cost of precious firewood.

How can we preserve forests against the demands of high altitudes? What alternatives can help society reduce pressure on forest resources? What would the Ura scenario be like in the near future?

Members narrate their impressions of the formation of LCSG

Contributed by Jigme Choki, Punakha LCSG
Focal Person

LCSG at the Dzongkhag and Gewog Levels has become mandatory as there have been a lot of accidents like forest fires, logging and extensive extraction of sand and stone in the Dzongkhag. LCSG is the only communication channel for people to express their concerns. LCSG is an eye-opener for people, allowing them to think globally and act locally,' said District Education Officer, an



>> LCSG members actively participate in training and workshops

active member.

Phuntsho Namgay, Dzomi Gup, member of Punakha LCSG, said: 'We are pleased and excited about the formation of Punakha LCSG. It will provide the opportunity to engage communities at the local level in some conservation issues. These communities too often hear about environmental conservation but do not get the opportunity to be involved first hand. We are certain that there will be greater awareness of environmental conservation; we will be able to make a difference in conserving our precious environment. We hope that local communities will play a vital role.'

Punakha LCSG will hold an awareness program for its members soon. LCSG members are excited to initiate work on the right issues at the right time. It hopes to provide an effective network of advisers to communicate environmental concerns for local and national policy makers. LCSG aspires to be a model for more Punakha groups in the coming years.

Tashi Delek!

Water Source Management System for Dargaythang, Sarbang

Contributed by Langa Dorji, Focal Person,
LCSG

Protecting water sources, especially drinking water sources, has been a major agenda for Bhutan. Although we possess one of the highest per capita water resources, weak management and unprotected water resources have led to severe water shortage problems across the country today.

Community members in Dargaythang village under Sompangkha Gewog in Sarbang have come together to manage water resources and minimize water problems in the area. The only water source in the chewog is called Jesli Kholsii. The community has formed a water source protection committee under the leadership of a senior member. They have also identified a fitter and three other members to support the head in managing group activities to safeguard the water source.

The committee receives Nu. 100 annually from each household to carry out maintenance work and make payments to the



>> LCSG focal members learn plant and bird species identification methods

fitter who receives Nu.1000 every year. The group has been successfully carrying out such activities over the last three years.

The chairperson believes that government support and funds cannot be depended upon at all times. The citizens must initiate activities. We feel that we are contributing to good causes and encouraging similar independent activities in other communities.

Sarbang dzongkhag has established LCSG with RSPN initiatives to inspire local people to protect the environment through indigenous involvement. Sarbang dzongkhag has a technical group at dzongkhag headquarters and a sub-group at the gewog level in Dargaythang chewog. LCSG will construct a new water tank and put up wire fencing at the water source in 2009. Plantations will be carried out in 2010 as per the LCSG proposal.

Village strategy to minimize human-wildlife conflict

Human-Wildlife conflict in Bhutan has been steadily rising over the last few decades. The conflict has only engendered confusion; viable solutions to mitigate the age old problem have not been found. The government has been promoting various mechanisms to counter human-wildlife conflict but has been unsuccessful so far in fulfilling the hopes of the villagers, with

numerous cases of crop depredations by wild animals being reported.

Trashigang Dzongkhag villagers have adopted an easy functional solution, successful to an extent, thereby drastically reducing sleepless nights guarding the fields! If you toured the fields in this season, you would find a single round of metal wire around the fields. At first glance, it does appear that electric current is being used to keep way wild pests. The reality is that the metal wire is a dummy to fool the animals! The animals may have learnt bitter lessons elsewhere and avoided the fields; the method



>> RSPN conducts various workshops and trainings for LCSG members

has significantly reduced destruction of crops by wild boars in Bartsham and Kanglung villages.

Bartsham Gup informed that farmers incur huge losses because of destruction of crops each year, especially by wild boars, as they are unable to stand guard every night. The Dzongkhag Agriculture Sector conducted a pilot program at Pam under Samkhar gewog, called 'Repellant Trial,' using a light and sound mechanism. The device consists of a steel fan that rotates at intervals, producing loud sounds and flashing lights periodically in all directions to scare away destructive animals. Successful in the beginning, the mechanism seems to have lost its effect later; the disadvantage being that the loud sounds disturb the peaceful night!

RNR Research Centre at Wengkhar is currently experimenting with a low voltage electric fencing for 19 households at Mugtangkhar under Bartsham gewog. The fence works, since Mugtangkhar is a clustered village and fields are close together. The disadvantage with this method is the use of electricity.

Importance of Local Deities to the Environment

Bhutanese have lived with vibrant cultural beliefs and practices that dominated their quest for spirituality over the centuries; the second Buddha, Guru Padmasambhava, visited Bhutan in 746 AD and Buddhism had a profound impact.

Environmental awareness can well be manifested in cultural terms. Our pristine environment has other spiritual occupants



>> LCSG members share their views and opinions on conservation issues

besides human beings, plants and animals. The environment citadel is home to green house deities like Nadag, Zhidag, Yullha and Kyellha, inhabiting almost all the remote Bhutanese villages- the crags, groves, cliffs, trees and water bodies- and propitiated through the existing Shamanic practices.

Dangkhar village in Trong (Zhemgang) has a similar practice of invocation rites or 'tsolkha' which is performed to appease the Zhidag (Lord of the Settlement) known to them as 'Dartang Naspo.' The village local deity is personified in a tree (Womchawaseng in kheng dialect) in the midst of the settlement. Villagers consider the deity their Protector or Guardian Deity. Invocation

rites are performed during the 4th and 5th months of the Bhutanese calendar, well before the paddy cultivation.

Local divinities play a crucial role in preserving the environment, apart from cultural benefits. Holy places are left undisturbed, leading to a protected habitat in Dangkhar village. Nobody dares to cut down a small tree, fearing fateful eventualities!

The worship of deities has also brought 'Charchu' (rain water) to maintain the water cycle. The villagers invoke the deities with fervent prayers whenever they are short of water for drinking or irrigation, who bless them with bountiful rain water and usher

in plentiful harvests. The beliefs have also helped control diseases and natural disasters.

An exciting aspect of the religious practice is that crop damage is minimal when deities are appealed to through prayer. Career levels may also be augmented through efficacious prayer.

Urbanization and globalization have increasingly detached people from age-old traditions, diluting consecrated cultural and environmental values passed down the generations. We pray that preservation of geo-sensitive areas will go a long way in instilling the ethics of conservation in little ways, adding up to an inspiring future.

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Social Forestry Day in Goshing Community Primary School

all schools, institutions, private and corporate organization including monastic bodies are celebrating the day", said the chief guest. Sangay Passang, a class VI student clearly highlighted on the values that we derive from the nature.

The students entertained the people gathered for the day with some cultural

items. The students and staff planted around 60 numbers of bamboo (*Dendrocalamus hamiltinii*) and 40 numbers of Teak (*Tectona grandis*).

The day was ended with a mass clean up activity in the school and with a Tashi Lebey.

CONTRIBUTE

Contribute your views and opinions on environment conservation online at

<http://www.rspnbhutan.org>.

We will feature the selected article in our quarterly newsletter, **RANGZHIN**

WORD SAFARI

In this edition, we compile some of the common bird species found in Phobjikha under Wangdue phodrang district. (*Explore Phobjikha, Travel Guide, RSPN, Thimphu 2009*) Phobjikha is one of the largest wintering habitat for black-necked crane.

Please find and encircle the names highlighted in bold letters. We have encircled one to help you get start with.

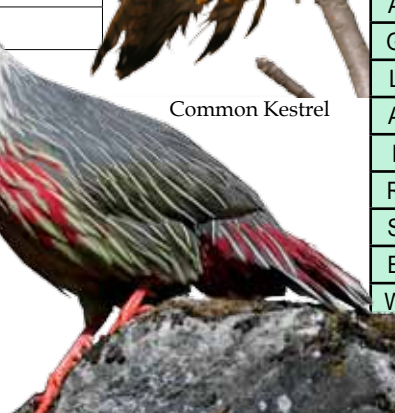
Blood Pheasant
Common Kestrel
Alpine Accentor
Grey Winged Blackbird
Satyr Trogon
Streaking Laughing Thrush
Whiskered Yuhinia
Winter Wren



Common Kestrel

Blood Pheasant

Satyr Trogon



R	S	P	N	K	I	N	G	V	L	P
I	L	H	H	I	B	S	O	O	R	T
T	K	E	S	T	R	E	L	I	O	I
H	H	A	S	R	K	T	E	N	N	C
Y	E	S	M	O	D	K	T	I	L	R
U	F	A	A	G	R	H	H	F	F	I
H	N	N	N	O	E	U	U	L	A	E
I	O	T	A	P	Y	L	J	W	L	N
N	C	E	S	A	O	I	I	A	C	S
I	P	S	A	N	R	N	G	N	O	E
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M	B	N	X	V	C	Z	E	G	L	



Whiskered Yuhinia



Streaking Laughing Thrush



Grey Winged Blackbird



Alpine Accentor

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