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16th Black-necked Crane Festival in Phobjikha



The crane dance performance by students

Photo: Christof Hahn

Coinciding with the birth anniversary of His Majesty the Fourth Druk Gyalpo Jigme Singye Wangchuck, the 16th Annual Black-necked Crane festival was organized in the courtyard of Gangtey Goemba in Phobjikha on 11th November 2014. The organizing committee, Phobjikha Environment Management Committee, an

initiative of the Royal Society for Protection of Nature, unanimously came up with the theme, "Community in harmony with the cranes", for the 2014 Black-necked Crane festival. More than 300 international tourists from around the world joined the community in celebrating the day.

Training on Bamboo and Cane Products Development

Zhemgang RSPN Field Office in collaboration with the Bjoka Block RNR Extension Forest Office and Bjoka Bamboo Craft Cooperative Group organized three-day training on technical skills on bamboo and cane products development to 61 members of Bjoka Bamboo Craft Cooperative Group and 10 participants from Ponchula under Phangkhar Gewog (block) from 2 – 10 October 2014. The training was organized as part of ADB funded project on "Improving Gender-Inclusive Access to Clean and Renewable Energy in Bhutan". A total of 71 participants were trained.



A resource person shows on how to dye bamboo raw materials (above)

Participants (L) and the one of the training achievement(R)



WASH project Inception Meeting held

As part of SAARC Development Fund (SDF) Secretariat funded project on “Strengthening Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Services in Bhutan” (WASH), the inception meeting with Public Health and Engineering Division (PHED), Department of Public Health, Ministry of Health was organized by RSPN on 30th September, 2014 in RSPN’s Board Room, Kawajangsa, Thimphu.

Two Officials from PHED and 5 officials of RSPN attended the meeting. It was aimed at presenting the detail project profile, garner support, seek input and suggestion and for

collaboration to avoid duplication and to supplement the government in WASH related program in the country.

Mr. Tsheten Dorji, the project officer, presented the details of the project including the objectives and expected outputs and outcomes of project activities. He emphasized that the meeting is a continuation to the earlier two formal rounds of meetings with PHED officials for proper collaboration with the concerned division and to share potential constraints and changes that may be required for refinement. He also pointed out that since the project is WASH related, the project would

work towards supplementing the government by using the government (MoH) expertise and use majority of the existing materials and resources of the government following the government norms and standards.

Based on the above presentation, thorough discussions were held, and the officials made recommendations and suggestion for the further refinement. They also expressed their willingness for collaboration, ensured to share information and render support while implementing the activities.

Stakeholder’s Inception Workshop on WASH Project



The workshop was chaired by Dasho Dzongda

In continuation to the introduction meeting with Samtse district administration on SAARC Development Fund support-

ed project on strengthening Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Services in Bhutan (WASH), the stakeholder’s inception workshop on

WASH project in Samtse was held from 4 - 5 December, 2014 in the Regional Revenue and Customs Office’s (RRCO) Conference Hall, Samtse.

Gracing the meeting, Dasho Dzongdag acknowledged RSPN and SNV for conceptualizing the project and supplementing the Ministry of Health on WASH Program for the benefit of the rural communities of Samtse district. He also mentioned that they are grateful to the Ministry of Health and two funding organizations for choosing Samtse district after successful WASH program in Lhuntse and Pemagatshel, and he assured for full cooperation support in implementing the project.

Representatives from PHED, RSPN, SNV, DYS, Ministry of Education and more than 55 local government officials (stakeholders) comprising Dungpas, engineers, Gups, Mangmis, Gewog Administrative Officers (GAOs), Health Assistants of 15 Gewogs and representatives from Dratsang (Monk Body) attended the workshop.



Representatives from PHED, RSPN, SNC, DYS and local government officials participated in the workshop.

Cranes arrived in their winter habitats



Crane and the people.

Art by Rinchen Wangdi

The first group of five Black-necked Cranes arrived in Phobjikha at around 1:00PM BST 31 October 2014. The other major winter habitats namely Bumdeling in Trashi Yangtse also saw three Black-necked Cranes at around 11:30AM on the same day.

In 2012-2013 winter, Phobjikha saw its first flock of cranes on 27 October 2012, while Bumdeling, had its first flock of cranes on 30 October 2012.

The total number of cranes counted in Bhutan during 2012-2013 winter was 550 including 63 juveniles, while the total number of Black necked Cranes recorded as of 10 December 2014 is 484.

JKERF Grant

To strengthen the Jigme Khesar Environment Research on environment, ten recipients were awarded Jigme Khesar Environment Research Fund (JKERF) for 2014-2015 as tabled below:

SL. NO.	NAME & INSTITUTE	RESEARCH TOPIC
1	Sonam Tshering, CNR	Mixed Conifer Species regeneration Assessment in Gogona FMU, under Wangdiphodrang Dzongkhag
2	Sangay, CNR	Aquatic biodiversity assessment in Changchay Chu and its tributaries, Southern Bhutan
3	Pema Rigzin, CNR	Floristic composition and structural dynamic of Yakpugang water catchment, Mongar, Eastern Bhutan
4	Sonam Wangchuk, CNR	Comparative study of litter fall in Plantation, Chirpine and Broadleaf forests at Talo gewog, under Punakha Dzongkhag
5	Kuenzang Dorji, CNR	Diversity of Small Mammals in Core Wetland of Phobjikha Conservation Area
6	Tshering Phuntsho, CNR	Decomposition and nutrient release patterns of Pine dominated stand (Conifer forest), Oak dominated stand (broadleaf forest) and Cupressus plantation leaf litters.
7	Pema Rinzin, CNR	Structure and Floristic Composition in Natural Wetland at Khotokha (Ramsar Site) under Wangduephodrang Dzongkhag
8	Leki, CNR	Winter population structure, distribution, and habitat use of blue sheep in central part of Jigme Dorji National Park, Bhutan
9	Jigme Wangchuk, CNR	Aquatic Biodiversity Assessment in Phobjikha Valley
10	Sonam Wangchuk "B", CNR	Carbon Sequestration Potential of <i>Dendrocalamus hamiltonii</i> at different age class in two different field conditions (Managed and unmanaged clump)

Dog sterilization program in Khotokha



Dog sterilization program was carried out by Dzongkhag livestock officials.

Khotokha valley, located at the North of Wangduephodrang District and at an altitude of 2500 masl, is one of the important winter habitats of the endangered Black-necked Cranes in Bhutan. About 6-7 individuals are recorded every winter in the valley. However, the increasing number of stray dogs in the valley posed content threats to the Black-necked Cranes as well as to the people.

As a part of environmental education program and controlling the dog population, the officials from Livestock sector under Wangdue Dzongkhag Administration and RSPN carried out the dog sterilization program in the valley from 10th to 12 August, 2014. The program was funded by Keidanren Nature Conservation Fund (KNCF).



The participants of one of the environmental outreach programs in Phobjikha.

CONTRIBUTE YOUR ARTICLES / PICTURES

We welcome news articles and pictures on any environmental related issues from all. Your articles will be featured in our quarterly newsletter and online on our website at www.rspnbhutan.org.

Send your articles or pictures to rspn@rspnbhutan.org

Theme: Bhutan has claimed to have rich natural resources including water. But with climate change, water resources are becoming scarcer.

The following entry won first position in the Category I of Essay Competition on above theme.

Bhutan is indeed known for its rich natural resources in the world, but careless, greedy and self-centered people make them vanish these resources from the world. Everyone is aware that climate plays the most important role in preserving these natural resources, yet they pretend to be ignorant of it. Climate is given least priority by humans because they are busy in their own world making profits and securing future for their generations. In the process to make assets for their future generations, they destroy every natural environment created by gods. In my opinion, I feel that preservation of climate would be the best asset that the present generation would leave behind for the future generations. But, would they inject this in our people and when would they realize them?

I am afraid that the cost of pretending to be ignorant about climate change may bring disasters for every living being on this earth. We, as humans can feel the changes and speak for it to correct, but what about animals which can feel it but remain helpless? Perhaps, this is the reason for wild animals coming to our

cities and towns. They may be thinking that they should live with humans or indicating that there is not much enough forest for them to live.

I am a student of class VIII and I don't know much about the climate change, but I am a victim of climate change and I held our elders responsible for this. If climate change has made difference to me as a child, it would have definitely affected the world at large.

When I was in Class V, every winter I went to my village because I found my village to be the best destination to spend holidays. Everything in my village was pure and natural. I used to wash and drink from the spring water that flowed next to my house. I now walk about two miles to wash and fetch water for drinking and cooking. That spring water too is drying because people wash cars in that small stream. I used to walk to the monasteries through green trees that provided shade during hot summer days. Now, I walk with umbrella to protect myself from the heat because those trees are taken by furniture and construction industries. I used to

strong relationship and cooperation among villagers; cold weather to make snowfall possible; melodious songs from my grandfather in his fields; and livelihoods of my villagers with enough water to cultivate paddy and other crops. But, the greedy people, for their own interests, started felling trees, driving vehicles, establishing industries, building hydro power projects and many artificial resources that resulted into climate change which dried up many water resources.

From class V to VIII, only three years have passed. But in the last three years, lots of changes have taken place. The wetlands have turned into dry land, streams have become garbage collector bins, green trees have turned into furniture, horses have been replaced by vehicles, traditional houses have turned into concrete buildings, mule tracks have turned into motor-roads, oxen have turned into power tiller, playing fields have turned into sewerage, fresh air have turned into air conditioner air, and many more.

As an individual, I have also lost many good things of my life. Now, I have just memories and moments of my past life. I am sure that nobody can get back what I have lost. There could be many children like me who lost everything of their past life. So, whom should be blame for this? Definitely, our elders, who did not bother for our future, but we are not going to be like our elders. We will make a difference in saving our natural resources. Every possible efforts will be made to preserve our rich natural resources. To begin with, we are going to start plantation of saplings in our schools and communities, stop washing cars in the rivers, segregate perishable and non-perishable waste, etc. With these habits, we may not be able to replace what we have lost, but I am confident that these events would contribute in preventing and saving from further destructions.

Lastly, I pledge our elders to support us in preserving our rich natural resources before it comes to an end. It is not the climate that changes on its own, it is the people who make it change. So, let us all come together to change this change.

Phuntsho Choden Tenzing
Class VIII C
Phuntsholing Lower Secondary School,
Chukha

“It is not the climate that changes on its own, it is the people who make it change.”

get fresh vegetables from the kitchen garden. I can now see a kitchen built on that same spot where I used for growing my vegetables. I used to sleep peacefully with my windows wide open, but I now have to shut my windows to protect from bad air and sleep with electric fans on. I used to play snowballs in my village, but I now have to travel to Dochula pass to find snow as there is no more snowfall in my village. My grandmother used to give me fresh cow's milk. But she now gives me packet-milk as cows no longer survive without enough grazing land. I used to enjoy horse riding from the nearest road-head. But I travel by car till my village as new roads have come and horses are no longer used.

Many villages used to come and see me with their own home-made food items. But many have now migrated to towns in search of better lives and I can't see them anymore. I used to listen to my grandfather's melodious songs while ploughing his paddy fields with two strong oxen. He no longer sings or

ploughs his field as his fields are dried due to inadequate water. I saw my grandmother using watermills to make flour, but the mills are now powered by electricity as there is no more running water. I used to enjoy the waterfall that made my village beautiful. The waterfall is no longer there as the whole water is stored to supply to the whole village. I remember seeing villagers coming to help each other during paddy cultivation. But, villagers are now in their own world. They started selling their land to buy food items because paddy fields have become dry due to inadequate water.

I have been deprived of all above opportunities because my elders have not protected natural resources, especially water. I now realize that every good memory of the past existed because of enough water. It was the water which made green trees to provide shade; healthy life from clean drinking water and green vegetables; strong horses to carry loads; fresh air to breathe and sleep peacefully;

Winning entry of Art Competition

To commemorate Coronation of His Majesty the Fourth King of Bhutan and Social Forestry Day, RSPN conducted art and essay writing competition among students in different categories in June 2014. We will feature winning art entries of in this section for next few issues.



Title: My Village

(The entry won 3rd position in Category-II which was for class IV-VI)

Badal Pradhan
Class VI B
Dagapela MSS, Dagana

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