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RANGZHIN



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Inside This Issue

- CBST team attends Ap Chhundu Soekha..... 2
- CBST Team in Haa handovers the homestay assessment report ... 3
- Organic Denmark Visits Bhutan.... 4
- Souvenir Development Training in Haa 6
- Community representative and stakeholders participates in Buli watershed management plan finalization 7

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Handing-Taking over of Environmental Science Curriculum



Royal Society for Protection of Nature (RSPN) and Royal Education Council (REC) officially handed over the environmental science curriculum to Ministry of Education (MoE) on December 21, 2016. The occasion was graced by the Director General, Department of School Education, Ministry of Education as the chief guest, and other officials and dignitaries representing Ministry of MoE, Bhutan Trust Fund for Environment Conservation (BT FEC), REC, Bhutan Broadcasting Service (BBS) and RSPN. Royal Society for Protection of Nature in collaboration with the Royal Education council with the support from Bhutan Trust Fund for Environmental Conservation

initiated the three-year project on, “Introducing Environmental Science in Formal Education system in Bhutan” in 2013. The main objectives of the project was to assess the current standard of environmental science from classes PP-XII and develop curriculum framework. Through this project, Environmental Science textbook for classes nine and ten were developed, which are currently being implemented in all the Middle Secondary Schools and Higher Secondary Schools in Bhutan as an optional subject. The event marked another milestone in RSPN attempt to complement the National objective of creating environmentally conscious citizens.

RSPN joins BBIN regional project on “Expanding Tradable Benefit of Trans-boundary Water: Promoting Navigational Usage of Inland Waterways in Ganges and Brahmaputra Basins”



On October 24, 2016, the project launch meeting on “Expanding tradable benefit of transboundary inland waters” was held at Guwahati, Assam, India. The meeting was attended by around 30 regional representative from Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal (BBIN), and numerous participants from IUCN, ICIMOD, Saci Water, local press and various international organizations and government offices of Assam. The meeting was organized by Consumer Unity & Trust Society international (CUTS), an Indian based NGO which is a consumer protection organization with its head office in Jaipur, India.

The one year project funded by The Asia Foundation (TAF) under the Civil Society Fund of the South Asia Water

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RSPN joins BBIN regional project on “Expanding Tradable Benefit of Trans-boundary Water: Promoting Navigational Usage of Inland Waterways in Ganges and Brahmaputra Basins”

Governance Program project will be implemented by CUTS international in partnership with Unnayan Shamannay, Bangladesh; Royal Society for Protection of Nature, RSPN, Bhutan; and south Asia Watch on Trade, Economics and Environment (SAWTEE), Nepal.

The goal of the project is to ‘contribute to improving institutions (i.e. policies, laws, and regulations) for the governance of inland waterways in the BBIN region from the point of view of transport connectivity and livelihood of those directly connected to identified inland waterways’.

To achieve this goal, the project objectives will be to create an alternative policy discourse for enabling reform measures between policy makers, civil society and communities as well as to share knowledge on policies, laws, and regulations enabling or impeding the governance of inland waterways in the Ganges and Brahmaputra basins. The activity under the project will include diagnostic study for Bhutan, which will be

through compilation of literature review on existing governing policy, acts and rule on inland waters and field research.

The research publication will be followed by national reference group meeting with relevant members with policy-makers, representatives of governmental and intergovernmental bodies, representatives of civil society organizations and community-based organizations and media. It will then be followed by sub national dialogue, national level advocacy meeting and interaction with media as medium for information dissemination, basin level dialogue, synthesis report and finally regional dissemination meeting.

For Bhutan, the project will generate awareness on future prospects of using river for trade and connectivity. The subject on inland water is very new for Bhutan and RSPN as a project implementer for Bhutan will facilitate awareness and advocacy on using trans-boundary water for future prospects for trade and connectivity. The synthesis report for the project will reflect pros and cons of such trade in our region.

CBST team attends Ap Chhundu Soekha



On November 6, 2016, Community-Based Sustainable Tourism Project (CBST) team from Royal Society of Protection of Nature (RSPN) were in Haa to celebrate and observe the “Ap Chhundu Soekha,” which is considered as the holiest day in the Haap calendar. The team partook in the celebration to assess the viability of including the event as one of the unique tourism products that can be part of the

package offered to promote Haa as a tourist destination. The most significant outcome this year’s Ap Chhundu was the collective decision of dzongkhag and gewog officials, along with families organizing the festival to discontinue the sacrifice of animals during the ritual. The celebration ended at around 3:30pm, after which the officials and local people queued up for lunch.

Birdlife International



RSPN Bhutan became the 122nd Partner organization of BirdLife International, the world’s largest conservation Partnership. The approval as a full BirdLife partner was announced after the Global Council of BirdLife International meeting held on November 19, 2016 in Sri Lanka.

BirdLife International is the World’s Oldest International Conservation Organization and has more than 10 million members and supporters. It is widely recognized as the world leader in bird conservation with current work spread over nine global programs; Climate Change, Forests of Hope, Sites and Habitats (IBAs), Invasive Alien Species, Local Engagement and Empowerment, Marine, Migratory Birds, Preventing Extinctions, and Capacity Development.

The BirdLife partnership has 6 Regional BirdLife Coordination Offices throughout the world and a Global Office in Cambridge, UK – together known as “The BirdLife International Secretariat”.

The Secretariat co-ordinate and facilitate the BirdLife International strategies, programs and policies. BirdLife works with one partner per country and it is a great achievement for RSPN to be enrolled as the newest partner. The partnership has ushered RSPN in a global Partnership of national conservation organizations.



CBST Team in Haa handovers the homestay assessment



The Community-based Sustainable Tourism (CBST) Project team from Royal Society of Protection of Nature (RSPN) was in Haa from November 23-25, 2016 to handover the homestay assessment report that was assessed in October, 2016. The assessment was done by RSPN in collaboration with a team from Tourism Council of Bhutan (TCB). The team congratulated those approved home-stay owners for successfully fulfilling the homestay check-list set by TCB. The ones who couldn't fulfill the criteria were advised based on the assessment report. The team observed drastic improvements after the first assessment in both approved and unapproved homestays. The agreement was renewed to be evaluated for second round in March. The team also met the local elected leaders of Kasho, Bjee and Eusu Gewogs and offered kadar.

The first Black-necked

A lone Black-necked Crane descended to Gangtey-Phobji valley on October 22, 2016 at 2.30 pm. It was a clear sunny day and as it was only the last week of October, more cranes were expected to arrive.

Last year, the first three cranes flew arrived in the valley only on November 6 at 1.23 pm. Our records from the past show that cranes arrive at different time of the day and mostly during mid day and of course on clear days.

The first arrival meant that our injured Crane Karma now had its first company, at least in terms of hearing live calls. The two cranes were heard exchanging calls and interestingly the newly arrived crane was seen flying towards the Crane Center where Crane Karma is housed. It marked a good start.



Year	Month	Number of cranes (first arrivals)	Time
2009	October 29	3	3.10 pm
2010	November 2	3	1.25pm
2011	November 7	4	10 am
2012	October 27	3	12.30 pm
2014	October 31	5	1 pm



Farewell note

RSPN bid farewell to Ms. Tshering Choki, Field coordinator, CSLP last month. She was with the organization for the past 13 years and it has been an honor having her as a colleague. We have all benefited from her wit and wisdom, and will be remembered for her invaluable contribution to the growth of the organization. We wish her all the best wishes for her new career.

Organic Denmark visits RSPN



With an onset of partnership program between Organic Denmark and Royal Society for Protection of Nature in August this year, a long standing effort by the two organizations to initiate a formal tie in organic agriculture finally became a reality. A team from Organic Denmark comprising of Mr. Per Rasmussen, Organic agriculture expert, Mr. Jesper Saxgren, Vice Chairman of Global Organic Committee in Organic Denmark and Mr. Tsewang Lhundup visited RSPN from October 25 to November 1, 2016.

Organic Denmark (www.organicdenmark.com) is inspired by Bhutan's Vision of becoming 100 percent organic by 2020. The partnership program seeks to strengthen the relation and understanding between the two organizations; to initiate dialogue on long term collaboration and to enhance understanding of the two organisations in agricultural practices and scenario in the two countries. Beside meetings with relevant partners and stakeholders, the Organic Denmark's programme in Bhutan included field visit to Baeyul Kuenzang one of the potential sites identified for organic agriculture project. Baeyul Kuenzang is a remote village under Bongo gewog in Chukha district with only about 56 households. The village does not have road network and is accessible by a narrow footpath which entails about four hours of walk from the nearest road head at Jimichhu. At Baeyul Kuenzang, the team met with 35 local community members to understand farming practices, issues,

needs and opportunities in the area. The team also had opportunity to visit farms and households and have informal interactions with farmers. The visit concluded with fruitful dialogue on long term future collaboration between Organic Denmark and RSPN in the areas of organic agriculture. While accessibility is a problem, Baeyul Kuenzang is observed to have immense potential for organic farming and agriculture in general. This visit was preceded by similar visit to Denmark by RSPN team in August this year. During the visit, RSPN team visited several areas in Denmark showcasing Organic Denmark's initiatives. The team also had the opportunity to meet the stakeholders of Organic Denmark comprising of farmers, companies and individuals. This preparatory phase program will end by March 2017. RSPN and Organic Denmark intends to further this effort to establish a long-term collaboration in organic agriculture. Organic Denmark (Økologisk Landsforening) is an association of companies, organic farmers and consumers in Denmark. It has more than 160 member companies and is considered the largest representative of the organic food industry in Denmark.

Dasho Dzongda awards certificates to 24 homestay owners' and 16 local guides for completing the homestay training, local guide training and visitor center trainings. On October 28, 2016, Dasho Dzongda awarded certificates to 24 homestay

owners' and 16 local guides for completing the homestay training, local guide training and visitor center trainings. With the implementation of community-based sustainable tourism (CBST) program, it was expected that there will be an increase in the number of overnight tourist in Haa. Sonam Wangdi, a local Guide expressed that he learnt concept of CBST and got the opportunity to explore all the places of Haa which he had never been before. Aum Pema Dema, a homestay owner said that through the training she learnt how to cater the guests starting from how to wash utensils till providing the services. She also said that the living standards of the rural communities was improving each day. Gyeltshen, Planning Officer of Haa Dzongkhag Administration shared his visitor center training experiences from Japan and he requested everyone to cater their guest in a proper manner.

Besides that, CBST project team in collaboration with Tourism Council of Bhutan (TCB) did the assessment of the homestays on October 25 – 27 2016. Out of 24 homestays, 11 fulfilled the criteria set by TCB and were approved. Rest of the homestays still needed some time to renovate and get set to be registered for homestays. All homestays owners were optimistic about tourist arrivals and seemed confident on being able to provide the best services to their visitors. For the rest of the homestays who couldn't fulfill the guidelines, another assessment will be conducted in April, 2017.



Saving Karma

Karma was found in the lower valley of Phobjikha in the afternoon of January 6 2016. It was peak winter and the crane had endured the frosty winter cold and the fear of predation. A few locals who saw the helpless bird called Santa, the manager at the Black-necked Crane visitor center of RSPN. The Center's assistant, Tashi, immediately reached the scene but it took him close to three hours to get hold of Karma. It was with much caution and care that the young bird was caught. The bird was severely injured. It could not move its left wing due to the injury. As we read this story, Crane Karma is already in the improvised facility for eight months. It has not seen its kind for about six months.

With the support of the livestock extension officer, Karma was examined, nursed and fed. It spent its first few nights in one of the Crane center's room, as there was no facility to cater to such cases. Karma's diet comprised food grains such as wheat, corn and chicken feed and fresh water. To further supplement its diet, the crane was fed raw eggs. It was observed that, Karma was restless and constantly making calls. The pain it went through, both physical and mental, is something we can never imagine and comprehend. Later, Karma was moved to a wooden shack near the center, which was little larger than one meter by one meter in size with transparent sheet roof. With passing days, the Center managed to expand the facility in terms of size and ventilation. Tashi, who is an excellent carpenter, made the enclosure facility. Karma now had rectangular mesh wire facility which measured 2.5 meters by 4 meters and roofed with transparent sheet at the height of two meters. A pond was



also made inside the facility, which had fresh water flowing in. To avoid too much attention and to discourage visitors taking photographs of Karma, proper signages were placed at the facility. The staffs started feeding worms, chopped turnips, radish, spinach and grasses. Egg shells were also fed regularly but in quantities appropriate to the bird. At one time, in June, Karma weighed seven kilograms. Upon the advice of ornithologists, a mirror was placed in the facility and viola! Karma's reflection was a delight as it gave an optical companionship to the bird. Karma would occasionally look at the mirror, peck at it, bite and stay stunned. One of our colleagues at RSPN was so amazed to see such behavior that he committed to sponsor a large mirror for Karma. The Center staff also played Black-necked Crane's calls through their mobile phones to make Karma feel at home. Often, it was observed that when crows flew from above and made their calls, Karma would restlessly run around and make high pitched calls. Most of the time Karma would preen its feathers, flap its wings, walk, dig muds with its long and sturdy beak and feed on the grains and edibles in the wood-cut out container. It would calmly sleep on its one leg for

elongated time with its head tugged into its wings or rested on its body. Karma is growing each day, visible by the growth in size and color change in its plumage. It is growing into a healthy and intelligent bird. As soon as Santa would knock at the door of the facility, which is his ritualistic manner to enter and feed the bird, Karma would straighten its neck, feel excited and stay aside while Santa filled up the wooden container. If, sometimes, the meals were not served on time, Karma would make prolonged loud calls. In May, medical examination and radiographic imaging (X-ray) of Karma revealed that multiple bone fractures were found in its left wing and callus formation had commenced. It also had ankylosed joint with dislocation and deformity. The medical report concluded that Karma might never be able to go to the wild. Let alone fly back to Tibet! This is a unique case and Crane Karma is perhaps the first Black-necked Crane that has spent a full summer in Bhutan, at least by RSPN's record since 1987. RSPN continues to raise fund to built a large Crane Rehab Facility and the designs has been already prepared. It is hoped that, with such facility, cranes like Karma and other birds could be rehabilitated quicker in future.



Awarded the National Order of Merit

RSPN is honored and humbled to be awarded the National Order of Merit(Gold) by His Majesty the King, Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck during the 109th National Day Celebration in Trongsa on December 17, 2016. We were further blessed when our very own Mrs. Rebecca Pradhan, Senior Ecologist was also awarded the National Order of Merit (Gold).

Souvenir Development Training in Haa



Royal Society for Protection of Nature (RSPN) and Japan Environmental Education Fund (JEEF) conducted a week-long souvenir development training in Haa from December 12-16, 2016 with the technical support from Agency for Promotion of Indigenous Crafts (APIC) and local experts. The practical hands on training was focused mainly on yak hair products and stone paintings. During the training, participants were trained on how to soften the yak-hair, to segregate the fluffy yak hair from rough yak-hair and to spin the yak-hair to make handicraft products. An expert from APIC trained the participants to make two different types of key hangers while Ugyen, a local expert, trained them on two traditional indigenous patterns. 14 early school leavers from Bjee, Kartso and Eusu Gewog participated in the training. The participants were positive that they would

be able to sell their handicraft products during the next Haa Summer Festival. They even plan to display the products at Chelela point where hundreds of tourist visit in a week.

During the last day of the training, Dasho Dzongda met with all the participants. Haa being located at a high altitude, Dasho commented that the cash income from agriculture products was very less compared to other Dzongkhags. So, he added that the community of Haa should take advantage of the potential market and produce more local indigenous souvenirs. Further, Dasho also encouraged the participants to form a Souvenir Development Group and seek funding from relevant agencies routing the proposals through Haa Dzongkhag Administration.

APIC also suggested the participants to form community groups and apply for revolving fund/interest free loans

starting from Nu. 200,000 to 400,000 from their office. The project is funded by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) under the JICA Partnership Program. RSPN and JEEF are the main implementing partners.

The project is implemented with guidance of the steering committee representing Tourism Council of Bhutan, Association of Bhutanese Tour Operator, Guide Association of Bhutan, Nature Recreation and Ecotourism Division, Dzongkhag Administration and other tourism stakeholders. The week-long souvenir development training ended successfully with a plan to institute a live demonstration on using yak hair to make handicraft products as "Hands-on Activity" and produce different varieties of handicraft products to be sold at the upcoming Visitor Center.

Monitoring of Water Infrastructure Development

The monitoring of Drinking Water Supply Scheme construction in Yoeseltse Gewog in Samtse was initiated from October 24-30, 2016. The objectives of the field visit to project areas were : 1) to monitor the progress and quality construction of the water infrastructure in Yoeseltse; and 2) to meet and inform contractor, engineer, accounts officer and Gewog officials on efficient use of project fund, quality and timely completion of construction. And as part of monitoring, the team also met with proprietor of Tshamchey

Construction, Engineer, Accounts Officer of Samtse District, Principal of Yoeseltse Middle Secondary School, Yoeseltse Gewog Officials and thanked them for their continued support. In addition, the contractor and other officials who were involved for project were briefed on their inputs, efficient use of project fund, quality construction and timely completion of Water Infrastructure Development for the benefit of the rural communities.

It was observed during the visit that the

foundation of the construction of 50m three Overhead Intake Tank and 150m 3 Reservoir Tank in Yoeseltse were already laid with the environment clearance obtained from Divisional Forest Office, and the Gewog had already received the water pipes.

As scheduled, the construction of the two water tanks began in the first week of November 2016 and is expected to be completed by the end of February 2017, and the water supply scheme will benefit around 539 households in Yoeseltse and Phuntshopelri Gewogs.



Community representative and stakeholders participates in Buli watershed management plan finalization



A day long community consultation meeting on Buli watershed management plan finalization was held at Nangkhor Gewog Office in Zhemgang for the ongoing wetland conservation project funded by GEF/Small Grants Program in Buli. The meeting was attended by close to 30 farmers of Buli village and

stakeholders which included Buli Central School, Division Forest Office and Gewog extension sector heads. The meeting was led by the consultant for management plan finalization and facilitated by RSPN Field office in Buli.

The consultation meeting with community and stakeholders was conducted to involve

community participation in finalization of management plan for conservation of Buli watershed and wetlands. The management plan for watershed will be designed as a holistic document for conservation and livelihood development. It will also serve as a legal entity to protect watershed and wetlands from development pressure after it is formally endorsed by Watershed Management Division (WMD) and adopted by Dzongkhag and Gewog. The management plan contains the science based research on social economy of community, biodiversity composition of watershed area and information on health of watershed and wetlands.

With a series of workshop and meeting on developing management plan for Buli watershed at national, Dzongkhag and Gewog level coming up, the final document is expected to be ready by end of November, 2017.

RSPN's Annual Review Meeting



The twelfth edition of RSPN's Annual Review Meeting marked a perfect end to an eventful year. The annual review meeting was held at Jigmechu from December 24-31, 2016, with camps set up at a small village located beside the confluence of the Wang Chhu and Jigme Chhu in Chukkha.

Set up at a picturesque location, the annual retreat presented RSPN staff a perfect getaway with lot of nature based activities. The meeting was conducted in a bamboo hut and the cool river breeze

flowing in kept everyone fresh, making the meeting more interactive. Some of the other side events were visit to the sacred Lake at Khurul, also known as an Oyster lake, trip to Lhamoyzingkha, a quaint little town close to the Indian border was refreshing, camping amidst the bounty of nature, and a day excursion clubbed with a cleaning campaign along the three hour route to Baikunza, a name loosely derived from the word Baeyul Kuenzang (meaning hidden land of prosperity).





DID YOU KNOW?

1992:

The first board of directors was constituted and chaired by Dasho Leki Dorji, Deputy Minister of Agriculture.

1993:

Green Earth, the first quarterly magazine of RSPN was published.
The same year, Takin, the biannual report was released.

1994:

The publication of Takin was discontinued and replaced with Thrung Thrung.
RSPN initiated its first membership drive and 21 individuals joined the society.

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