



རང་བཞིན།

RANGZHIN

RSPN Quarterly Newsletter

Vol: 10 Issue: 4

Royal Society for Protection of Nature

December 2017

Inside This Issue

Focus Group Discussion on Environmental Education 2

Environmental Education Advocacy Program in Haa 3

The successful completion of SAP Project! 4

FAM trip for National Tour Operators and Tour Guides 5

The 19th Annual Black-necked Crane Festival 9

The International Advisory Committee Members Visits Bhutan



The international members of the White-bellied Heron (WBH) advisory committee was in Bhutan from November 16-22, 2017 and consequently, the first international committee meeting was held on November 21, 2017, at RSPN head office. The committee was formed this year bringing in experts from around

the globe to provide strategic direction for carrying out both in situ and ex situ conservation of WBH in Bhutan. The meeting was preceded by field visits to the White-bellied Heron Habitat and the site for Captive breeding facility center in Changchey, Tsirang.

The team also participated in an awareness

campaign on WBH held at Tsekha extended class room in Punakha which is a prime WBH habitat. The campaign was led by Tshering Tobgay, a teacher and an ardent birder, and a group of students from Bajothang Higher Secondary School with the financial support from RSPN.

Contd. on page 2

An artificial roosting area for Black-necked Cranes



RSPN staff, along with the locals of Uruk village and Forest Officials of Chumey Range, developed a roosting area for Black-necked Cranes in Chumey, Bumthang, measuring about 20 x 20 meters. It is for the first time an artificial roosting area has been developed in the valley.

Black-necked Cranes require shallow ponds to roost in safely. The splash of water by predators alerts the cranes when they are roosting. Although 22 BNCs were spotted in 2014-2015 winter, only six individual returned last winter.





Contd. from page 1

The International Advisory Committee Members Visits Bhutan

The students are also the members of Young Bhutanese Birders. The meeting stands testament to the global concern on the survival of WBH and support for its conservation. It was a productive meeting and RSPN would like to thank the advisory committee for their invaluable guidance and direction.



Focus Group Discussion on Environmental Education

A Focus Group Discussion with the Principals, environmental Science teachers, Nature Club Coordinators and relevant science Teachers was conducted on November 12, 2017, in Phobjikha. Royal Society for Protection of Nature in partnership with the Japan Environment Education Forum and Birdlife International Singapore will be implementing a project on Environmental Education and Public awareness project on Biodiversity conservation in Asia Pacific Region. In Bhutan, we have selected Phobjikha considering RSPNs long-term engagement in the conservation of Phobjikha landscape and the ecological sensitivity of the area.



One of the main components of the project is to develop environmental education materials which can be used as reference materials by the environmental science students of class IX and X and also for the implementation of nature club activities..





Environmental Education Advocacy Program in Haa



As part of Community-based Sustainable Tourism (CBST) Project, the Royal Society for Protection of Nature (RSPN) in collaboration with Nature Conservation Division (NCD) and with financial support from Keidanren Nature Conservation Fund (KNCF) and United Nation Development Program (UNDP) conducted an Environmental Education Advocacy Program (EEAP) in Haa from October 4-5, 2017.

The program was conducted with the objectives to promote awareness on environmental issues and to ensure environmentally responsible behavior, to provide an understanding of the impacts

of their actions and behavioral patterns on the environment; and to increase sensitivity, concern and appreciation of the environment. The program focused on national policies of water and waste, community management of water and sanitation, park policies and natural resource management, and issues pertaining to waste and its management techniques.

More than 40 CBST homestay beneficiaries, local leaders, business representatives, civil servants and school nature club coordinators partook in the program. The two days program ended

with a mass cleaning in Haa, which also tried to spread waste awareness among the local communities. Business owners in Haa municipality joined the team for cleaning campaign where approximately 500 kilograms of waste consisting of pet bottles, plastic waste etc. were collected.

The program could not have been a success without the technical support from National Environment Commission (NEC), Jigme Khesar Strict Nature Reserve (JKSNR) and Clean Bhutan. RSPN would like to thank these stakeholders and also Haa Dzongkhag administration for their continued support.

Celebrating 30 years in conservation

RSPN turned 30 on October 24, 2017. Led by the Executive Director, RSPN staff celebrated the milestone by connecting and spending time with the Kidu Patients at JDWNRH. Each of the 32 patients housed at the Kidu Patient Guest House were provided with few necessary food supplies.





The successful completion of SAP Project!

The three-year Sustainable Agriculture Program (SAP) project, funded through [NORLHA – Helping People in the Himalayas](#), was successfully completed in December 2017.

A week-long monitoring and evaluation was carried out from November 03-13, 2017 by Dr. Joep Slaats, Head of Operations ([NORLHA - Helping People in the Himalayas](#)), which included and combined discussions with senior management at RSPN staff followed by a joint visit to the project site for discussions with beneficiaries, project staff and partners as well as field observations. Achieving the core objectives, the project involved at least 115 households out of the estimated population of 175 households, thus representing 65% of the village population.

The project began in 2014 with an objective to reduce the use of agrochemical farm inputs and the mitigating degradation of sloping farmland through the application of sustainable organic farming and land management technologies. After a thorough needs assessment conducted, the four villages of Wamrong Dungkhag were selected as its project sites – Passaphu and Madhuwa and Tshogoengpa and Moshi under Kangpara and Lumang Gewogs respectively.

Some of the technologies adopted through the project were: Napier hedgerows, organic fertilizers, bio-pesticides, vermicomposting, electric fencing and the stone bunding. In addition, other technologies such as improved vegetable seeds, improved cow sheds, check dams, and electric fencing were also introduced.

During the visit, it was observed that in fields where hedgerows of Napier grass have been established, the soil retention was better with the land between the rows gradually turning into a terrace. The farmers expressed that erosion has been significantly reduced improving the crop yields. Besides, the hedgerows have provided another benefit to the farmers



Napier grass hedgerows



Land sloping made through hedgerows



Vegetables from improved seed

as the Napier grass are an excellent and much-appraised fodder for animals.

Next, to the success of the Napier grass hedgerows, farmers were seen to have readily adopted organic fertilizers and bio-pesticides. Improved vegetable seeds were proposed in the 2017 technology package upon an observation that the old varieties of vegetables were highly prone to diseases. Farmers grew the vegetables with the new seeds applying the organic fertilizers and bio-pesticides and yielded positive results. They indicated their wish to continue the practice. The improved cowsheds, with the provision of better shelter to the animals and manure, also had positive effects.

The project also supported the installation

of electric fences in Passaphu and Tshogoenpa villages in collaboration with the Local Government. The benefits from electric fencing were immediate. After its installation, the instances of crop damages reduced significantly. However, getting farmers interested in check dams was challenging because the technology nor its effects were not very well known.

Transfer of knowledge and skills concerning technologies is the key to their adoption and the project always kept the communities at the core of its implementation. It was observed that the beneficiaries are most open to and willing to try out SAP technologies after witnessing its implementation and effects. During the review, technologies that brought



an immediate effect on farming results or labor requirements were very much appreciated; beneficiaries even stated their interest to learn supplementary technologies that would have the same effect.

The project in its three years of implementation was able to contribute towards improving the livelihoods of the people in Wamrong through the introduction of Sustainable Agricultural Practices, and

RSPN would like to sincerely thank its project partner [NORLHA - Helping People in the Himalayas](#) for their partnership and support. This project would not have been successful without the collaboration and support from Gewog Agriculture Extensions of Kangpara and Lumang, Wamrong Dungkhag. We would also like to express our gratitude to the farmers of the project areas for their wonderful support and cooperation. With such collective efforts, we can contribute towards the achievement of Bhutan's vision to become organic by 2020.



Monitoring Team with the beneficiaries



Gully erosion



Check dam to stop erosion



Biopesticide preparation



Traditional cowshed



Improved cowshed



Electric fence equipment



Electric fence



CONGRATULATIONS!

National Order of Merit Gold

Royal Society for Protection of Nature would like to congratulate Mr. Dechen Dorji, the Country Representative of WWF Bhutan Programme (Chairperson, RSPN) for receiving National Order of Merit, Gold, in recognition for his contribution to Bhutan's sustainable environment development and Mr. Phento Tshering, Director for Department of Forests and Park Services, MoAF (Board Member, RSPN) for receiving the National Order of Merit for his highest dedication and selfless effort in sustainable management of forest resources for the well being of the people and county from His Majesty the King on the 110th National Day of Bhutan.



PC: Royal Media Office



Mr. Phento Tshering

The Natures Heroes Award

“The Nature’s Heroes Award” was awarded to Dasho Paljor J. Dorji, popularly known as Dasho Benji for his exemplary work in conservation. Nature’s Heroes Award is awarded by BirdLife Partners to communities and individuals doing great conservation work locally. This BirdLife Certificate of Excellence is in recognition of Dasho’s amazing contribution towards conservation program in Bhutan. Dasho dedicated the award to the Great Fourth, Druk Gyalpo Jigme Singye Wangchuck.



Familiarization trip for National Tour Operators and National Tour Guides

More than 50 National Tour operators and Guides joined the Familiarization Trip organized by RSPN in collaboration with Nature Conservation Division under Department of Forests and Park Services on November 18 and 19, 2017. The program was organized to familiarize and educate the participants on the tourism products and services in Haa and to promote Haa as a tourism destination. Haa was opened to tourist only in the year 2002. The participants of the familiarization trip were not aware of the tourism resources available in





Haa, therefore, this program provided opportunities to promote CBST programs. The program aimed to promote cultural and natural assets of Haa and involved trip to Bjee, Kartsho and Eusu Gewog over the period of two days. The tour was a success mainly owing to the support

provided by Association of Bhutanese Tour Operators (ABTO), Guide Association of Bhutan (GAB), Haa Dzongkhag Administration, and Jigme Khesar Strict Nature Reserve (JKSNR). The program ended with knowledge /experiences sharing of the participants who provided

their feedback on respective homestays, local guides and potential tourism resources. The program was funded by Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and ICIMOD through Kanchenjunga Landscape Conservation and Development Initiative.

REDD+ readiness capacity building project awareness and introductory program

As a part of community capacity building project for Buli community on REDD+ readiness program, the Royal Society for Protection of Nature (RSPN) with assistance from Zhemgang Forest Divisional office successfully conducted an introductory meeting with stakeholder and sensitization on REDD+ with community and stakeholders of Nangkhor Gewog under Zhemgang District.

The project introductory meeting was attended by officials from local government, District Forest Divisional office and Gewog Extension Office. A total of 12 participants attended the day-long program which included discussion on the project with a focus on the concept of REDD+ readiness programs in Bhutan. The overall objective of the introductory program was to inform the stakeholders on Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF) REDD+ subgrant on community capacity building project which will be implemented by RSPN; to build awareness on REDD+ and climate change and their components under UNFCCC- REDD+ Readiness program in Bhutan. Also, the participants were introduced on climate change topics which included what climate change is, how climate change is caused its impact, climate change in Bhutan and its effect to people's livelihood and climate-sensitive sectors such as agriculture and hydropower. The role of forest in climate change mitigation and REDD+ readiness program in Bhutan were also presented during the meeting. The presentations were facilitated by RSPN and Dzongkhag Forest Divisional Office.

Following the meeting, Buli community and stakeholders participated in the two days sensitization workshop on REDD+.



More than 60 individuals participated in the program which mostly comprised of women. Besides climate change and REDD+ topics, a series of Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were carried out to discuss traditional knowledge and its importance in nature conservation. The workshop also included activities geared towards identifying climate change impacts in the community, mapping on environment degradation/depletion in Buli, causes of forest degradation and deforestation, and challenges and opportunity involved in Natural Resource

Management. The participants were informed on how the current project will empower Buli community members who are registered as member to Community Forest (CF) in effective decision making and capacity building on sustainable natural resource management. An evaluation and feedback forms were also distributed to assess participants' understanding of the sensitization program. The project in collaboration with Watershed Management Division and District Forest Divisional Office will conduct more such programs in the future.



Combined Meeting for the Project WASH



The 'Combined Meeting for the Project 'Strengthening of Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) Services in Selected Areas of SAARC Countries' was organized as part of experience and knowledge sharing visits amongst the Implementing Agencies (IAs), Counterpart Agencies (CAs) and SDF from December 27-28, 2017 in Colombo, Sri Lanka.

The meeting was organized with objectives to: 1) evaluate the progress made by IAs; 2) facilitate the exchange of experiences between IAs; 3) discuss the issues/problems being faced by different IAs and agree on solutions to solve the same; 4) review and discuss the sustainability plan/revenue generation model for the project; 5) update IAs on SDF policies and procedures; 6) discuss on project closure procedures and formats; and 7) enhance the collaboration among the SAARC countries/IAs.

Followed by the welcome note by Dr. Sunil Motiwal, Chief Executive Officer of SAARC Development Fund (SDF), presentations

on the status of WASH Project was made by Implementing Agencies (IAs) of Afghanistan, Bhutan, India, Nepal and Sri Lanka. Also, SDF policy, procedures, project closure requirements and fund status of Individual Implementing Agency was presented by Yangchen Dukar, Program Officer of SDF.

The Royal Society for Protection of Nature (RSPN) as the IA in Bhutan along with IAs in India and Sri-lanka were applauded for the good outcomes of the WASH project, and were acknowledged for effectively managing the fund, imparting maximum benefits to the rural communities and coordinating the project within the time frame.

During the meeting, the Counterpart Agencies (CAs) and Implementing Agencies (IAs) of Afghanistan, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka unanimously agreed to have WASH Phase-II; and SEWA-India shall lead the proposal concept development; and SEWA-India proposed for a similar field

visit to Gujrat, India in 2018 and SDF has accepted the proposal.

On December 28, 2017, a day-long field visit to Agrarian Service Centre at Angunakalapelessa in Matara District in south center of Sri Lanka was organized. The officials from the Implementing Agencies (IAs) met with the Agriculture Extension Officials and beneficiary communities. The team also visited the Water Reservoir built for irrigation through SDF funding as part of WASH Project activity. The team learnt about drinking and irrigation water issues faced by Sri Lanka despite being an island country and receiving abundant rainfall throughout the year. However, it was observed that Sri Lanka has conserved its limited secondary forest and natural resources efficiently; and is very advanced in terms of technology and expertise.

The WASH project in two Gewogs of Phuntshopelri and Yoeseltse in Samtse Dzongkhag was implemented by RSPN with the fund support from SDF in 2014.



The 19th Annual Black-necked Crane festival



The 19th Annual Black-necked Crane festival was celebrated in the courtyard of Gangtey Gonpa, in Gangteng-Phobji valley on November 11, 2017 coinciding with the Birth Anniversary of the Fourth King of Bhutan.

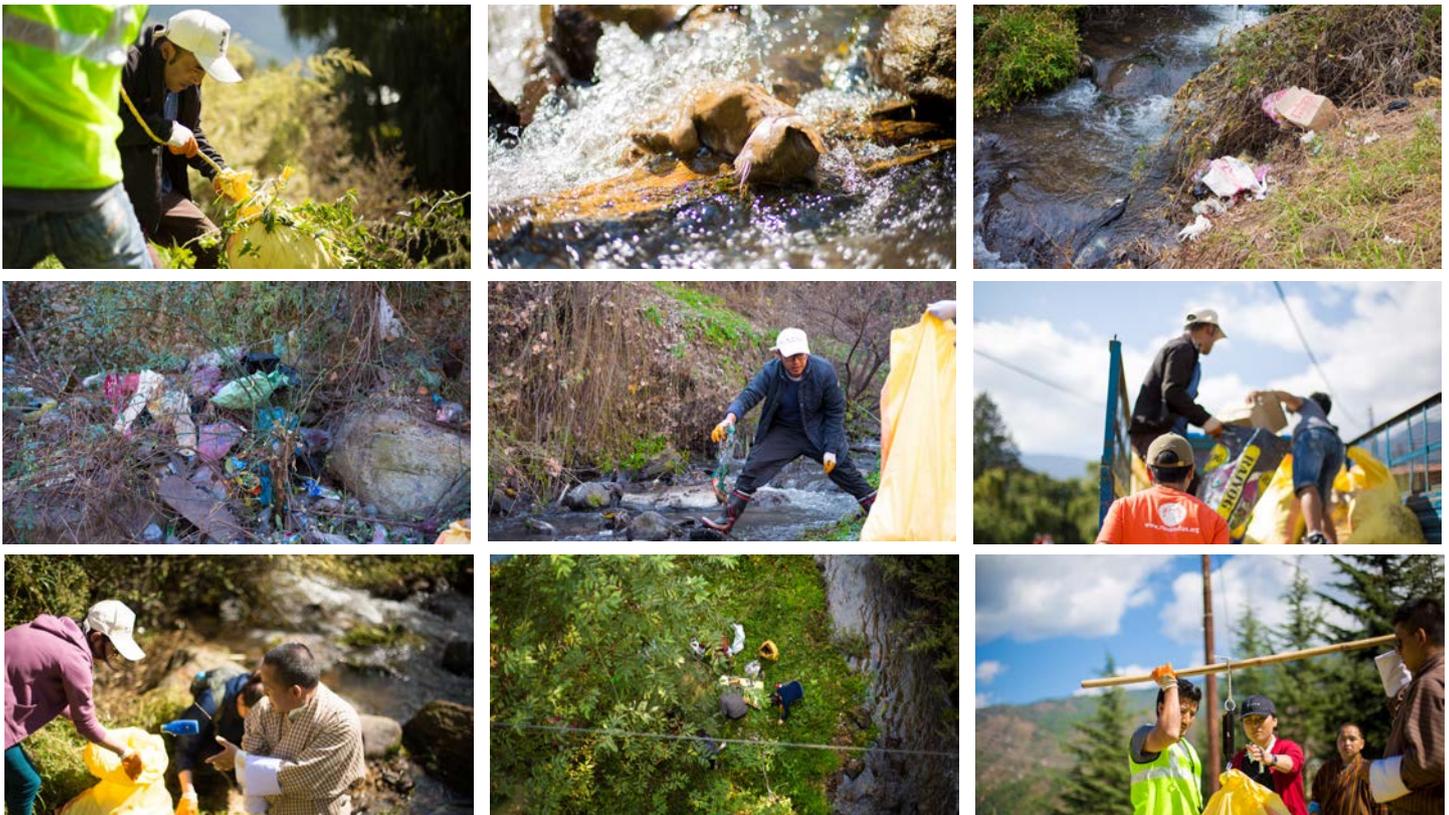
The festival, first started in 1998 by RSPN, is organized every year by Gangteng-Phobji Environment Management Committee (GPEMC), a local group composed of elected local leaders, women, Government representatives, business community representatives, schools, monks and RSPN representative. The festival has now become a part of the local culture in Phobjikha valley and is an occasion for the locals to rejoice and celebrate the arrival of the heavenly bird which becomes part and parcel of their daily lives during the winter months.





Chubachu Stream Cleaning: October – December, 2017

The Royal Society for Protection of Nature successfully carried out the monthly cleaning of Chubachu stream (October – December, 2017). The adoption of the stream was expected to curb stream contamination and improve the mindset of proper waste management. However, dumping of waste was still observed to continue despite the adoption of the stream and community awareness on waste management. A total of 355 kilograms of waste was collected during the campaigns, mostly comprised of clothes, pet bottles, plastics, rubbers, and metals. We thank all our partners for your continued support in maintaining the stream.



Activity date	Volunteers/Supporters		Approx. weight of waste	Any interesting/unusual thing collected
	Organization	No. of volunteers		
October 26, 2017	Royal Society for Protection of Nature (RSPN)	15	180 Kgs.	Sewer lines directly outlet into the streams Multiple waste dumping areas Two dead cats
	National Land Commission	5		
	WWF Bhutan Programme	3		
	Royal University of Bhutan	7		
	Total	33		
November 30, 2017	Royal Society for Protection of Nature (RSPN)	8	55 Kgs.	Community residing near the stream were advocated Multiple waste dumping areas
	Ministry of Health	5		
	Bhutan Toilet Organization	1		
	Total	14		
December 28, 2017	Royal Society for Protection of Nature (RSPN)	12	120 Kgs.	Community residing near the stream were advocated Informed Thromde on the restaurant banner disposal
	Total	12		



Exploring My Gakidh Village

32 members of the Royal Society for Protection of Nature took part in the nature camping trip at My Gakidh Village, the village of happiness on December 16-17, 2017. The members explored the rich biodiversity and the authenticity the village has through nature hike and birding. We will be conducting series of similar outdoor events in the future and we look forward to your continued support and participation.

Keep following RSPN Bhutan, Be a friend of Nature!



Be a friend of nature

Environment protection and conservation is one of the four pillars of Gross National Happiness and an area that forms the core mandate for RSPN. RSPN continually looks to safeguard our natural wealth through understanding pertinent environment related issues and carrying out conservation activities aimed at mitigating it.

Partner us by becoming a member. Register now and if you are already a member, refer a friend. Let us all contribute to the well - being of our environment.



Become a Member of RSPN

Become an RSPN Member and help give nature the home it needs...
RSPN membership is a great way to get close to nature and get fantastic membership benefits.
Show your support and join us today!

Visit <http://www.rspnbhutan.org/be-a-member-of-rspn/>



As an RSPN Member you can enjoy the following benefits :

Free Access to Jkerc Library

The Jigme Khesar Environment Resource Centre Library located in RSPN HQ in Kawajangsa, Thimphu

Invitation to Participate

in day hike/treks, bird watching, networking forums, workshops and seminars hosted by renowned personalities.

Opportunity to Voice Issues

to bring conservation issues to the national audience

Receive Regular Information

on environment and conservation

Free Entrance

and services at the Black Necked Crane Visitor Centre at Phobjikha

“Unless we practice conservation, those who come after us will have to pay the price of misery, degradation, and failure for the progress and prosperity of our day.”

Gifford Pinchot

CONTACT INFORMATION

Royal Society for Protection of Nature
Post Box : 325, Lhado Lam , Building # 25
Kawangjansa , Thimphu - 11001, BHUTAN
Telephone: +975 2 322056 / 326130 Fax : +975 2 323189
E-mail: rspn@rspnbhutan.org
www.rspnbhutan.org