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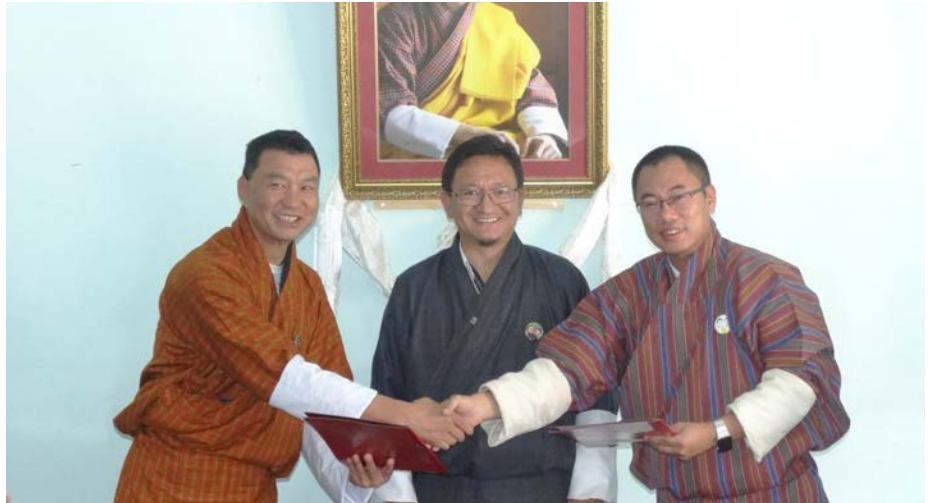
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Become a Member of RSPN

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/become-a-member-of-rspn/>

RSPN and ABTO signs the Memorandum of Understanding



On August 4, 2017, the Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the Royal Society for Protection of Nature (RSPN) and the Association of Bhutanese Tour Operators (ABTO) at the office of Royal Society for Protection of Nature. Considering the interrelation between the tourism industry and the environment conservation, RSPN and ABTO will collaborate to promote a good environmental practice within the tourism

industry. The two signing parties intend to develop a partnership which will help foster collaboration in terms of bringing in more environment conservation members from the tourism industry, diversifying ecotourism activities, exchange of expertise and also advocate on the importance of environment conservation. While the association between the two signing parties already existed, this

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Passaphu and Tshogoenpa benefit from electric fencing



Human-wildlife conflict is one of the major challenges faced by our farmers all over the country. Similarly, the Passaphu and Tshogoenpa villages under Thrimshing and Wamrong Dungkhag respectively have lost large portions of their crops to wild animals every year. Both the villages are isolated from the other villages and surrounded by thick forest, therefore, guarding their crops from different wild animals remained a challenge. Farmers till date used age-old practices of moving around the field and shouting to guard their crops both during day and at night. These tedious methods did not prove to be so effective.

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RSPN and ABTO signs the Memorandum of Understanding

memorandum shall further build on it. It is a major step forward that will help further promote the interaction and achieve the common goals of promoting eco-tourism in Bhutan.

Mr. Dechen Dorji, the Chairperson of RSPN and Mr. Sonam Dorji, the Executive Director of ABTO shared the same excitement and optimism for this partnership. Henceforth, both organizations will work together on the promotion of nature conservation through development of the outreach programs, sharing of networks, publications, workshops and conferences.



Membership program

Getting out of their daily routines, 52 Royal Society for Protection of Nature members and supporters travelled to Chelela, Paro on September 2, 2017 in what was to be; one grand adventure.

The members immersed themselves in the rich biodiversity of Chelela led by Mrs Rebecca Pradhan, Ecologist with RSPN as the resource person. We would be conducting similar events in the future and look forward to your participation. Keep following RSPN Bhutan.





Cleaning program

RSPN along with its partners, the Faculty of Traditional Medicine, Bhutan Toilet Org, Royal Audit Authority, Ministry of Health, and WWF Bhutan carried out three cleanings along the identified half kilometer stretch of Chubbachu stream on July 28, August 24 and September

RSPN would like to thank WWF Bhutan for sponsoring refreshments, Bhutan Water Partnership for providing hand gloves and garbage bags and The Thimphu Thromde for providing a garbage truck. A total of 1700 kilograms of waste was collected during the cleanings.



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Passaphu and Tshogoenpa benefit from electric fencing

In an effort to address this issue, RSPN supported the installation of electric fencing in Passaphu and Tshogoenpa through its Sustainable Agriculture Program (SAP) under Conservation and sustainable livelihoods Program (CSLP). The electric fencing work was implemented successfully in collaboration with the Local Government authority on a cost sharing modality with RSPN providing financial support to procure materials and other necessary equipment while villagers contributed the labor force. Through this initiative, the farmers were also trained on operation and maintenance of the fence. The electric fencing covers 2.35 kilometers of farm land in Passaphu and 3.5 kilometers of farm land in Tshogoenpa benefiting 25 households. The Tshogpas of both the villages shared that the electric fencing is a boon to the villagers



who no longer need to spend sleepless night guarding their crops and reap the benefits from increased yields.



Water Caretakers trained on Operation and Maintenance on Rural Water Supply Scheme / System (RWSS)



SAARC Development Fund (SDF) along with technical support from Engineering Sector of Samtse Dzongkhag provided a five-day basic technical training on operation and maintenance of Rural Water Supply Scheme/System (RWSS) to 12 water caretakers of Yoeseltse and Phuntshapelri Gewogs from August 22-26, 2017 at Yoeseltse Gewog Centre, Samtse. The training was conducted to build capacity on operation and maintenance of RWSS for sustainable management and functioning at the community level; and to provide hands-on-training of the water caretakers on standard operating procedures (SOPs) of RWSS. Safe, adequate and accessible supplies of drinking water combined with proper sanitation were the essential components of primary healthcare, and

lack of it could lead to the spread of communicable diseases, increased health risk and environmental pollution. The National Health Survey of 2012 reports that the proportion of Bhutan's population with access to improve drinking water source is 97.7%, and the report of the Rapid Assessment of Drinking Water Quality, which was carried out by the Royal Centre for Disease Control in 2012 showed that only 17% of the stream water sources and 28% of spring water sources were safe for drinking. This implies that assurance of safe drinking water is still a major challenge in Bhutan.

Bhutan had no standard operating procedures and drinking water quality standard until 2016, and with the

accelerating development and increased in anthropogenic activities, access to safe drinking water and the quality of water resources in Bhutan may be further deteriorating. Therefore, there is an absolute need of capacity building of water caretakers at the community level for operation and maintenance of RWSS for sustainable use and regular monitoring of drinking water. Therefore, the training was conducted at an opportune time and was a great success. WASH Project Officer presented on the water resources and its scenario in Bhutan. The water caretakers were then briefed on their roles and responsibilities, the RWSS module, and the importance of timely operation and maintenance. During the practical session, the engineer and experienced technicians from Samtse Dzongkhag provided hands-on-training on the usage and handling of tools and the routine operation and maintenance work that are vital for assuring quality control of drinking water. The participants were trained on aspects such as joining of mainline and branch-lines using both GI and HDP pipes, fabrication of 'BEND, Y, TEE and CROSS', carrying out repairs works, and finally on how to clean the tanks. Each caretaker was provided with the Water Caretaker's Manual and a Tool Box. The training concluded with the award of certificate to the participants by the Gup of Yoeseltse Gewog.





The Sixth Haa Summer Festival



The Sixth Haa Summer Festival was one remarkable and unique event. The two day festival which was organized by the Dzongkhag (District) officials and funded by Tourism Council of Bhutan commenced from July 7-8, 2017. The Chief Guest, Dasho Dzungda (Governor) graced the festival with an inspirational speech acknowledging the littleness of

the Haa Dzongkhag in Bhutan. He also stated, "Haa is one of the richest districts in Bhutan on the basis of rich natural and cultural prosperity and such festivals are the perfect way to showcase this beautiful wealth."

RSPN partook in the festival with the main objective of creating awareness on

environment conservation and to raise fund for sustainability of various RSPN's program. The festival was also a good avenue to promote RSPN's publicity materials and to showcase the souvenirs of the on-going Community-Based Sustainable Tourism project based in Haa.

The festival saw more than 100 tourists and about 600 locals on the first day and about 40 tourists and 400 locals on the second day. The festival was marked with a variety of traditional dances, folk dances of Haa and contemporary dzongkha songs. The food stalls also showcased varieties of Bhutanese cuisine delicacies especially Hantoe (special dumpling of Haa) were some of the attractions in the festival.

The tourists stayed at the homestays. The Homestay project in Haa, initiated by RSPN was introduced due to increasing number of visitors and limited hotels in the region.



Japanese delegation visits RSPN

A Japanese delegation led by Mr. Saki Kosugi, the president of Kosugi Zohen Co., Ltd, Japan met with RSPN and WWF Bhutan on August 23, 2017.

Kosugi Zohen Co., Ltd is a landscaping company that aims to improve global friendship through sharing of Japanese culture, mainly that of the exquisite Japanese garden culture.





Introduction of Check-dams in Wamrong

As a part of land management activity, the RSPN field office in Wamrong demonstrated the construction of check dams to villagers in three pilot villages under Wamrong Dungkhag. Generally, the check dams can be used to store water during post monsoon season, reduce erosion, modify the velocity of stream flows, trap amounts of channel sediment, and help stabilize channel side-slope. For these villages, since there is no requirement to store water, the check-dams built as part of the demonstration can reduce the soil erosion and the velocity of stream flow during monsoon season.



Souvenir diversification program



Students from Chuo University Sugunami High School, Tokyo, Japan met with the Haa Souvenir Development Group at the Sherab Wangchuk Homestay in Tshaphel village, Haa on August 16-17. During the program, the students presented on the importance of packaging, and maintaining hygiene while preparing edible souvenirs. Later, they witnessed the demonstration of



Khabzay (deep fried pastry) and Hoentay (dumpling) preparation. The students and the souvenir group also shared and exchanged their ideas on diversifying the local products to enhance its marketability. One of the good ideas generated through the program was the recommendation to separately package the ingredients which can be later used by the tourists to make Hoentay upon their return home.

South Korea Team visit



A team from South Korea was familiarized on RSPN's Environment Conservation effort on August 16, 2017. The RSPN family would like to extend our gratitude to Bhutan Birding and Heritage Travels for bringing in the guest and enabling us to spread wider awareness on environment conservation in Bhutan. We would also like to thank the team for donating Nu. 10,000 as a donation in our conservation programs. Your donation will help us to further our conservation efforts.



Field monitoring visit to Hararongchu



The research team accompanied by Executive Director and ADM/HR coordinator of RSPN visited Hararongchu from September 7 – 10, 2017 to monitor the existing WBH along the river stretching from Taksha till Dayou village. Hararongchu, is one of the primary habitats for the critically endangered White-bellied Heron (*Ardea insignis*) (WBH) with three individuals recorded during the Annual population survey, 2017. The ecosystem along the Hararongchu is pristine and undisturbed

and has harbored WBH since decades. People in the past used to sight 7-8 individuals of WBH daily but the number of sightings have drastically declined over the years. The forestry officials and community people still share sightings of WBH along the Hararongchu but the team could not to spot any WBH during the visit.

It was, nonetheless, encouraging to see insulated transmission lines connecting the community which in turn helps to

reduce electrocution of avian species especially the WBH. Another positive observation was the proper waste management practiced by the communities living along Hararongchu. The whole community depends on fishing for their livelihoods and one potential threat to the survival of WBH could be the possibility of extensive fishing. At present, about 27 kilometers stretch of the river has been legalized for fishing, which according to Mr. Penjor, WBH Local Conservation Support Group (LCSG) member and Mr. Ngawang, forest Ranger, is unsustainable and enough for the community and the WBH in the area. However, there is a need to support the communities with improved fish ponds and introduction of high yield crops, to reduce the pressure on fishing in the long run. Other options to improve the livelihoods of the people and support WBH conservation could be introduction of ecotourism trail and homestays programs.

Nature expedition



Led by Dr. Kinley Tenzin, the Executive Director of RSPN as a resource person, the one day nature expedition for RSPN staff was successfully completed with a walk from Hongtsho till Tashigang monastery on August 25, 2017. The staff of RSPN got to explore and learn about the different ecosystems in the forest.





DID YOU KNOW?

2009

RSPN gave an action grant to 10 schools to develop an environmental friendly school.

2010

RSPN in collaboration with Royal University of Bhutan of Bhutan developed an Environmental Education Resource Pack that is used as an optional module for the students and teachers in Samtse and Paro colleges of education.

2011

Under the Joint Support Programme(JSP: UNDP,UNEP and DANIDA) RSPN initiated a pilot project to reduce Human Wildlife Conflict (HWC).

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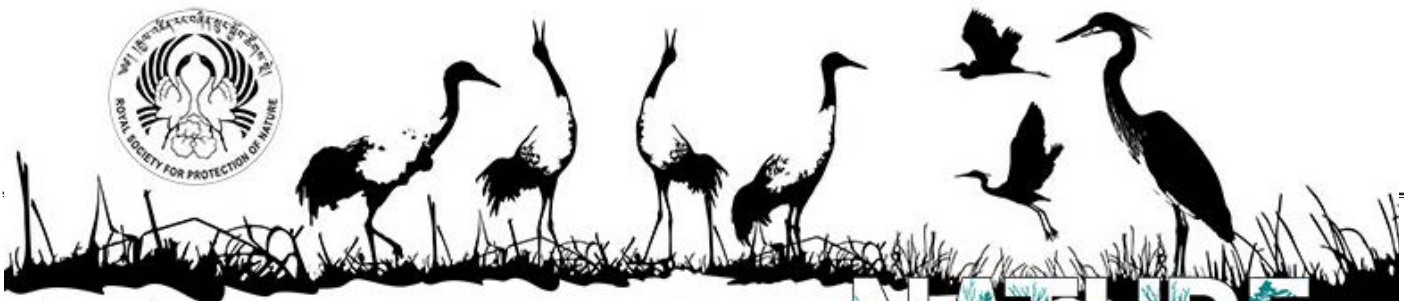
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