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Fourth Druk Gyalpo Honoured Again

The Fourth Druk Gyalpo has been inducted into the Kyoto Earth Hall of Fame for outstanding contribution to the protection of the global environment.

In a ceremony attended by around 600 people, including Their Imperial Highnesses Prince Akishino-miya and Princess Kiko-Sama and prominent citizens of Japan, Her Royal Highness Princess Ashi Kezang Choden Wangchuck received the hall of fame award on behalf of the Fourth DrukGyalpo on February 13.

The other recipients were Dr. Harada, renowned for his social medical research on environmental pollution issues, beginning with the Minamata disease, and Dr Eleanor Rosstrum, the 2009 Nobel laureate in economics, renowned for her work on management of the commons by communities dealing with environmental problems.

"The Fourth Druk Gyalpo was among the earliest world leaders to become conscious of the mounting pressures of development on the bountiful, yet fragile ecosystem," Her Royal Highness said in her address to the gathering.

"As a result, Bhutan is more green today

than it was at the beginning of Bhutan's developmental process some 50 years ago and highlighted that Bhutan has a forest cover of 72 percent, with almost 50 percent of the country declared as protected areas that host an array of flora and fauna, including some of the rarest and threatened species in the world," Ashi Kezang Choden Wangchuck said. "Such achievements emboldened Bhutan to pledge before the world at the COP 15 that it will forever remain carbon neutral."

In the acceptance speech that was read by Her Royal Highness, the Fourth Druk Gyalpo said that he looked upon the award as a recognition accorded to his people and country for their efforts to live and progress in harmony with the natural habitat. He dedicated it to the people of Bhutan and all those who have been steadfast in their support and commitment to preserve the natural environment in Bhutan and the world.

The ceremony was followed by the Kyoto international symposium, at which Her Royal Highness gave the keynote address on Gross

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RSPN among MacArthur Award Winners



The Royal Society for Protection of Nature was among the recipients of the 2010 Award for Creative and Effective Institutions by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation.

For the nonprofit prize, the foundation did not accept nominations. Instead, it aimed to assist organizations that have been helped by them before. This way, a MacArthur spokesman said, the foundation would know the winners' track record and would have already completed the legal due diligence required to award the grants.

<< MACEI Award certificate

Prayers for Victims of Japan's Earthquake and Tsunami



>> JICA and RSPN officials participated in the prayer ceremony

The Royal Society for Protection of Nature offered prayers and one thousand butter lamps for the victims of Japan's recent earthquake and tsunami on 15 March 2011 in the main shrine of Dechen Phodrang Monastery in Thimphu. The Resident Representative of the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) Bhutan office and other senior JICA officials attended the prayer ceremony.

"I would like to express my sincere gratitude for your warm sympathy for the Japanese people who are affected by the last week's earthquake and tsunami," said Mr. Tomoki Nitta, the Resident Representative of JICA Bhutan office.

"We will convey to our Japanese Embassy in New Delhi and to JICA head office in Tokyo."

The Executive Director of RSPN, Dr. Lam Dorji, said RSPN will continue to pray for the affected people of Japan.

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4th Druk Gyalpo Honoured Again

National Happiness. She said that as Japan looked at ways to deal with its slow economic growth and an aging population, the GNH paradigm might offer useful ideas for envisioning a new and reinvigorated Japan. Over 800 people attended the symposium. It was followed by a panel discussion that included professors from the Chiba and Kyoto universities, as well as the former vice president of the World Bank. The ambassador to Japan and the GNH secretary represented Bhutan in the panel.

Her Royal Highness visited the Ryukoku University in Kyoto on February 14 and delivered another GNH lecture to a packed

auditorium of around 450 people, consisting mainly of university faculty members and graduate students.

While in Tokyo, Her Royal Highness met members of the Imperial Family, including Their Majesties the Emperor and Empress, His Imperial Highness the Crown Prince, His Imperial Highness Prince Akishinomiya, and senior government officials and distinguished citizens of Japan. Her Royal Highness also visited the Juntendo University and the NHK studio and met Bhutanese students studying in Japan.

Source: Kuensel Newspaper

Training in Environmental Education

In January, RSPN's Environmental Education and Advocacy Coordinator Mr. Ugyen Lhendup was one of the eight Bhutanese participating in a unique educational exchange program in Jackson Hole, Wyoming, USA.

The program centered on the concept of "place-based" education and was organized and conducted by Teton Science School in Wyoming. Along with Mr. Ugyen Lhendup, five teachers from Sakteng Community Primary School under Trashigang and two lecturers from Samtse College of Education attended the training course from January 12-26, 2011.

Place-based education is a holistic method of

education that focuses on a local community and its surrounding natural environment as both tools for learning (how people and nature interact in positive ways) and as laboratories for study (how plants and animals adapt to the special conditions of their habitat in a given place).

The Bhutanese participants made field visits to the National Elk Refuge, Grand Teton National Park, a pre-K through 12 private school run by Teton Science School, and the National Wildlife Art Museum. Back in Bhutan, the participants now have enhanced skills

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Phobjikha initiate Wastes Management

Villagers of the sparsely populated Phobjikha valley have been setting positive conservation examples for quite some time. Nestled in a glacial valley that is the home to the endangered black-necked cranes, the people of Phobjikha live in harmony with nature and have often sacrificed development to preserve the environment.

Now in conjunction with RSPN, the community has taken another step in conservation by initiating a solid waste management project and forming a committee. Recognizing and appreciating the initiative, the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) is also helping the initiative take root in the valley. RSPN will implement the project while JICA will provide financial assistance of Nu. 1.8 million and provide training to the operators and local people in managing landfill and waste.

The President of RSPN, Dasho Sangay Thinlay, said that Phobjikha is one of the country's favourite tourist destinations, and it was important to start a solid waste management system.

"It is important to educate the local people if we have to conserve environment," he said. "This is a small project for a great effect." Project formulation advisor, Emi Doyle, said that depending on the success of the project, they would expand the initiative to other dzongkhags as well.

Source: Kuensel Newspaper

Climate Change and Water Resources Workshop



>> Participants participate in a practical session

With the goal of mitigating the impacts of climate change on water resources in mountain ecosystems such as Bhutan, a three-day workshop was held in Paro from 9 to 11 February 2011. Presentations on measures to fight such impacts were made by participants from India

and Nepal. Participants were also briefed on the current water scenario in Bhutan and the related policies.

Addressing the opening of the session, the Director of the Department of Agriculture, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, said that over the years, water resources in

the country have depleted. He further stated that the impacts of climate change would hit mountain ecosystems such as Bhutan hard.

After deliberations, brainstorming and debates, the workshop adopted the resolution to develop an e-networking group among water professionals in order to keep attention focused on the impacts of climate change on water in Bhutan. Furthermore, the group decided it would work together to improve the spring water and adjacent land along the Paro-Thimphu highway.

The Executive Director of RSPN thanked SaciWATERS for supporting the workshop and further assured full support for future collaborations. Accordingly, the Executive Director of SaciWATERS also thanked RSPN for successfully executing the workshop. Twenty-five mid-level water professionals from various government and non-government organizations attended the three-day workshop.

World Water Day 2011



The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development first recommended a day to celebrate freshwater globally in 1992. The United Nations General Assembly responded by designating 22 March 1993 as the first World Water Day, and since then, 22 March has been commemorated as the annual World Water Day with various themes related to water.

“Water for Cities: Shared Water, Shared Responsibilities” was the theme for 2011 World Water Day. In Bhutan, the event was observed in Khasadrapchu Middle Secondary School in Thimphu with various the-

matic programs like talks on water quality, water theme songs, cultural dances, extempore speech and an art competition on the topic.

According to UN Water, the annual event is being marked “as a means of focusing attention on the importance of freshwater and advocating for the sustainable management of freshwater resources.” The official event of World Water Day was held in Cape Town, South Africa, and saw various performances by artists, an exhibition and conferences related to water. The event in Bhutan was supported by UNICEF and the Bhutan Water Partnership.

The 25 most endangered turtles and tortoises

Without concerted conservation action, many of the planet’s turtles and tortoises, iconic survivors from the Age of Dinosaurs, will become extinct within the next few decades. That’s according to a new report from the Turtle Conservation Coalition, a global alliance of conservation groups, including the IUCN Species Survival Commission’s Tortoise and Freshwater Turtle Specialist Group (TFTSG), which names the world’s 25 most endangered tortoises and freshwater turtles.

“Turtles are in serious trouble. They are some of the world’s most endangered vertebrates, more than mammals, birds, or even highly endangered amphibians. Half of their species are threatened with extinction,” says Dr. Anders Rhodin, Chair of the TFTSG and one of the report’s co-editors. “They’re being unsustainably collected from the wild for food, perceived medicinal beliefs and pets while their habitats are being polluted, degraded and destroyed every day.”

Lonesome George, the last remaining Pinta Giant Tortoise (*Chelonoidis abingdoni*), one of Darwin’s famed Galápagos tortoises, tops the list. Close behind is the Red River Giant Softshell Turtle (*Rafetus swinhoei*) of China and Vietnam, weighing over 100 kg with a shell over a meter long. With only three males and one female left in the world, the stakes have never been higher.

The report highlights that turtles in Asia have greatly suffered from decades of illegal

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>> Contd. from page 2

Training in Environmental Education



>> Trainees participate in a workshop

to implement their own plans for place-based education in their respective schools and institutions.

The two-week training program was privately funded and carried out in collaboration with the Ministry of Education. RSPN was invited by Teton Science School as a new partner in the program based on its years of successful programming in environmental education in many dzongkhags of Bhutan.

This Teton Science School training course will provide RSPN and the other Bhutanese participants with new tools and concepts in environmental education that will enhance the curriculum of Nature Clubs and science classes all across Bhutan in the years to come.

Urgent action needed to protect Earth's blue carbon



>> Seagrass, Madagascar

Photo: Keith A. Ellenbogen/iLCP

The destruction of coastal carbon ecosystems, such as mangroves, seagrasses and tidal marshes, is leading to rapid and long-lasting emissions of CO₂ into the ocean and atmosphere, according to 32 of the world's leading marine scientists.

That key conclusion highlights a series of warnings and recommendations developed by the new International Working Group on Coastal "Blue" Carbon, which convened its first meeting in Paris last month. The Working Group was created as an initial step in advancing the scientific, management and policy goals of the Blue Carbon Initiative, whose founding members include Conservation International (CI), the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), and the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) of UNESCO.

Much of the carbon emitted when mangroves, seagrasses or tidal marshes are destroyed is estimated to be thousands of years old because the CO₂ stored in these ecosys-

tems is found not only in the plants, but in layer upon layer of soil underneath. Total carbon deposits per square kilometer in these coastal systems may be up to five times the carbon stored in tropical forests, due to their ability to absorb, or sequester, carbon at rates up to 50 times those of the same area of tropical forest. The management of coastal ecosystems can supplement efforts to reduce emissions from tropical forest degradation.

According to recommendations from scientists in the Blue Carbon Working Group, whose collaboration pools expertise from 11 countries on five different continents, the existing knowledge of carbon stocks and emissions from degraded or converted coastal ecosystems is "sufficient to warrant enhanced management actions now."

"The capacity of coastal wetlands to reduce climate change by capturing and storing carbon dioxide is considerable, but has been overlooked" says Jerker Tamelander, Oceans and Climate Change Manager for IUCN. "If valued and managed properly, coastal ecosystems can help many countries meet their mitigation targets, while supporting adaptation in vulnerable coastal areas."

Draining a typical coastal wetland, such as a mangrove or marsh, releases 0.25 million tons of carbon dioxide per square kilometer for every meter of soil that's lost. Global data shows that seagrasses, tidal marshes, and mangroves are being degraded or destroyed

along the world's coastlines at a rapid pace. In fact, between 1980 and 2005, 35,000 square kilometers of mangroves were removed globally – an area the size of the nation of Belgium. This degraded area still continues to release up to 0.175 gigatons of carbon dioxide each year – equivalent to the annual emissions of countries such as the Netherlands or Venezuela.

"We have known for some time the importance of coastal ecosystems for fisheries and for coastal protection from storms and tsunamis. We are now learning that, if destroyed or degraded, these coastal ecosystems become major emitters of CO₂ for years after the plants are removed. In the simplest terms, it's like a long slow bleed that is difficult to clot. So we need to urgently halt the loss of these high carbon ecosystems, to slow the progression of climate change," says Dr. Emily Pidgeon, Marine Climate Change Director at Conservation International.

"Scientific studies have shown that although mangroves, seagrasses and salt marshes account for less than 1% of the total plant biomass on land and forests, they cycle almost the same amount of carbon as the remaining 99%. So the decline of these carbon-efficient ecosystems is a valid cause of concern," adds IOC Assistant Director-General and Executive Secretary Wendy Watson-Wright.

The working group will meet next in August, and continue their collaborative scientific study. Funding for the group has been provided by the Waterloo Foundation, National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

Source: <http://www.iucn.org>

All eyes on Manas



>> A tiger in the Manas Wildlife Sanctuary, India

Photo: Jim Thorsell

A UNESCO-IUCN monitoring mission to the Manas Wildlife Sanctuary, India's only World Heritage Site on the Danger List, will evaluate the progress made so far to increase the population of key species, including tigers, Indian elephants and great one-horned rhino.

The rapid decline in wildlife and the eradication of the rhino during a decade-long insurgency, led to the inscription of the site on the List of World Heritage in Danger in 1992.

The five-day mission comes after repeated requests by the Indian authorities to remove the site from the Danger List and reinstate its reputation as one of India's richest wildlife areas. Last year's World Heritage Committee meeting in Brazil decided that Manas sanctuary

should remain on the Danger List. The issue will be up for discussion again at the Committee's next session, taking place in Bahrain in June this year.

"We recognise the great efforts by the Indian authorities to support recovery of wildlife populations and improve the overall

park management," says Tim Badman, Head of IUCN's World Heritage Programme. "The mission will be exploring all the issues raised in previous reports and looking to see what progress is being made."

A reintroduction programme for rhinos under the Assam forest department's Indian Rhino Vision 2020 has increased to seven the number of rhinos currently in Manas and more re-introductions are under way. An additional six elephant calves have also recently been moved to Manas and camera-traps are being used to monitor tigers in the park.

Threats such as illegal logging and poaching in the Pambari Range, invasive species and issues with management effectiveness, are also a concern and will be addressed during the monitoring mission, according to IUCN, the independent advisory body to the World Heritage Committee on natural sites.

The report from this monitoring mission will be finalised and provided to the UNESCO World Heritage Committee during its next meeting in Bahrain, where the decision on whether or not to remove Manas from the Danger list will be taken.

Source: <http://www.iucn.org>

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The 25 most endangered turtles and tortoises

<< Pinta Giant Tortoise (*Chelonoidis abingdoni*)

Photo: Anders G.J. Rhodin

<< Northern River Terrapin (*Batagur baska*)

Photo: Rupali Ghosh

and unsustainable trade, with 17 of the 25 most endangered turtles being found in Asia. Every tortoise and turtle species in Asia is being impacted in some manner by the international trade in turtles and turtle products, and laws and conventions in place to protect these animals are not being enforced effectively.

Scientists say that although turtles and tortoises have thrived for 220 million years, their armored shells no longer ensure their survival. "Shells work great against natural predators, but are no match against humans intent on consuming them," says Dr. Peter

Paul van Dijk, Deputy Chair of the TFTSG and a co-editor of the report.

In China the turtle trade is enormous, with millions of turtles being imported annually from all over Asia, Africa and North America to meet the huge demand. Most of China's native turtles are nearly extinct in the wild, with many of their species included on this list of most endangered turtles. Rapid growth of large-scale commercial turtle farming in China is beginning to meet some of the domestic demand, but wild turtle populations around the globe continue to be impacted by this unsustainable demand for meat and medicinal products.

The international pet trade has also devastated populations. Wealthy collectors will pay tens of thousands of dollars on the black market for endangered turtles and tortoises. Unfortunately, in many parts of the world anti-poaching laws are lax or poorly enforced, and international conventions such as CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora) are only partially effective in decreasing the trade. However, recently there have been hopeful signs of some improvement in this sector, particularly in Malaysia, where a few high-profile confiscations and arrests have been made.

Turtles and tortoises are often keystone species from which other animals and plants benefit. For example the Desert and Gopher Tortoises in North America, the Giant River Turtles in the Amazon basin of South America and Pig-nosed Turtles in Australia and New Guinea are part of the web of interacting and co-dependent species that constitute healthy functioning ecosystems. Without turtles and tortoises, those ecosystems and the

critically important services to mankind and people's livelihoods, would gradually suffer from the loss of biodiversity.

The Turtle Survival Alliance (TSA) has taken up the fight to save turtles, focusing on on-the-ground conservation action such as captive breeding. The group is committed to 'Zero Turtle Extinctions'. "Turtles are disappearing fast and we are dealing with one of the most significant wildlife crises of our lifetime. This should be a wake-up call for all of us," says Rick Hudson, President of the TSA and a co-editor of the report. "We are moving into crisis management mode and embarking on a challenge that is unprecedented in terms of risk if we don't succeed. To win this battle, we must see increased investment from the international donor community combined with improved enforcement and well-resourced conservation programs."

Without concerted conservation action, many of the world's turtles and tortoises will become extinct within the next few decades. It is now up to us to prevent the loss of these remarkable, unique jewels of evolution.

Notes

The Turtle Conservation Coalition is an informal alliance of the following organizations: IUCN SSC Tortoise and Freshwater Turtle Specialist Group, the Turtle Conservation Fund, the Turtle Survival Alliance, the Turtle Conservancy / Behler Chelonian Center, Chelonian Research Foundation, Conservation International, Wildlife Conservation Society, and San Diego Zoo Global

Source: <http://www.iucn.org>

WORD SAFARI

In this edition, we have compiled some acts and regulation related to Bhutan's environment conservation. (Please note that this is not a complete list)

Find and encircle the words which are **bold** and underlined. We have encircled one to help you get start with.

1. The National Environment Protection Act (NEPA)
2. The Water Act
3. The Waste Prevention and Management Act
4. The Environment Assessment Act 2000 (EAA)
5. The Regulation for Environmental Clearance of Projects 2002
6. Regulation on Strategic Environmental Assessment, 2002
7. The Forest and Nature Conservation Act, 1995
8. The Road Act of the Kingdom of Bhutan 2004
9. The Mines and Minerals Management Act 1995
10. The Biodiversity Act 2003

E	E	P	A	A	I	R	T	C	E
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W	I	R	O	A	D	C	E	R	N
W	O	A	Q	U	I	F	E	R	S
F	M	B	N	X	V	C	Z	G	E

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Latest News & Events

Captive-rearing of White-bellied heron hatched a chick

May 11, 2011 - The White-bellied heron is a critically endangered species as per the IUCN's category (2007). With the current global population estimated to be less than 200 of which Bhutan has 26 numbers, it is of a great conservation significance to Bhutan to embark on saving the bird.

Latest Announcements

- Notice Inviting Tender for Networking Equipment
- Report on Bhutan Science Policy Dialogue
- Environmental Action Grant for Nature Clubs, 2011
- Vacancy for a Researcher
- Inviting Applications for new Registration of LCSG
- TOR for Program Manager!

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