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**FEATURED NEWS**

**Helping Local Youths**



**B**uilding local capacity is important for garnering local interest and more importantly their participation in sustainable tourism. With this in mind, since last year RSPN has been providing training in souvenir production to the local communities of Phobjikha, particularly the youths in developing various kinds of tourism

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**Nature Club Institutionalised in Schools**



>> *Hon'ble Minister of Education, Resident Representative, A.I. of UNDP and Executive Director of RSPN launching the handbook*

**C**oinciding with the Social Forestry Day and the Coronation Anniversary of His Majesty the Fourth Druk Gyalpo on June 2, 2009, The Hon'bl Education Minister Lyonpo Thakur Singh Powdel officially launched the Nature Club Management Handbook in Babesa Middle

Secondary School, Thimphu. With the institutionalization of the nature clubs in all the school, Hon'ble Sherig Lyonpo expressed his appreciation for the hard work and determination made by the RSPN in bringing

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**World Environment Day celebrated in Lhuntse**



>> *Dasho Dzungda visits exhibition stalls of varios schools*

>> *Story on Page 2*



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## Nature Club Institutionalised in Schools



>> Hon'ble. Education Minister plants a sapling to mark the Social Forestry Day in Babesa Middle Secondary School

out the book with the financial support from UNDP. His Excellency also "acknowledged the excellent collaboration amongst the Ministry of Education and the Royal Society for Protection of Nature" in delivering

The UNDP Resident Representative, H.E. also commended on the environmental laws of the Royal Government of Bhutan that help to conserve the natural resources that were not possible elsewhere in other

environment education and commended efforts of all students and teachers for "promoting the ideals of Social Forestry". In his words of wisdom, H.E. added that "Social Forestry Day is not an event-it is a process, a habit, a responsibility" and urged to "ensure that what we plant today actually grows into a tree".

parts of the world.

The RSPN's Executive Director Dr. Lam Dorji said that environment education began in schools about twenty years ago and launching of the Nature Club Manual Handbook was possible due to unfailing help and support received from the Ministry of Education. With the institutionalization of nature clubs as a regular co-curricular activity across the country, it was one step for mankind and giant leap for the environment.

felt the need to give such opportunities to Lhuntse to celebrate the WED together with the government officials and community.

Dasho Dzungda, the guest of honour, opened the celebration with the hoisting of the National Flag followed by singing of National Anthem by students. Marchang was offered as a tradition to begin an important event as this. The Principal, Phuyum HSS, welcomed all guests and he expressed that the school is fortunate to host and observe the WED, 2009 in the school which provides opportunity for students to learn and understand about the importance of the environment.

In his address, he conveyed his gratitude to RSPN for supporting the celebration of WED, 2009 and providing 40 numbers of garbage bins to the Dzongkhag which would definitely help to promote cleanliness. He further stressed that climate change is happening now and every individual should work in their own simple ways to combat climate change and make this planet a better place because *Your Planet Needs You*.

As an appreciation to the Dzongkhag Administration, the Environment Education coordinator, RSPN thanked Dasho Dzungdha, Dzongkhag officials, teachers and students for enthusiastically organizing the WED-2009. He said that climate change is being experienced in Bhutan and the recent flash floods in most part of Bhutan were a wakeup call for all of us.

One of the students spoke about the richness of our environment and the threat to it. She said that youths in Bhutan also have a role to support in the conservation efforts of various agencies.

As a part of the celebration, the students from six schools showcased the exhibition related to environment which was enjoyed by hundreds of spectators including Ven. Lam Neten of Lhuntse Dzongkhag, Dasho Drangrab, Dzongkhag Officials, business community and local people. The people gathered in the celebration also took part in the cleanup campaign launched by Dasho Dzungda on the same day.

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## World Environment Day celebrated in Lhuntse



>> Communities in Lhuntse, including the monk body were involved in cleaning campaign on World Environment Day

**"Your Planet Needs You! Unite to Combat Climate Change"** was the kaleidoscopic theme for the World Environment Day (WED) celebrated in Lhuntse Dzongkhag on 5<sup>th</sup> June, 2009 to sensitize the people on

the global issues such as climate change. Till last year, the WED was organized in and around the capital city. However, with the importance adhered to the environment by Lhuntse Dzongkhag Administration, RSPN

## A Ray of Hope for White-bellied Herons

It was yet another hectic journey that Mr. Tshewang Norbu has made to Ada and Nangzhina both under Wangdue Dzongkhag. Crossing the bridge at Kamichu, he walked up hill for five hours under summer sun; through the chir pine forest filled with hot air infested with sand flies, hoping to see more herons-the White-bellied Herons. When he last visited, he was lucky to spot

three nests: two in Nangzhina with two and three eggs respectively, and the other one in Ada with two eggs. If all of them hatch as expected, there would be seven new born and that would be great. Alas! Things are different.

He used his old binoculars to spot the nests and started to count the chicks. The first

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## Towards Sustainable Nature Clubs in Schools



>> *Nature Club focal teachers engaged in practical experiments*

The Royal Society for Protection of Nature (RSPN) and the Ministry of Education's plan to institutionalize nature club as a regular co-curricular activity in the school began when Ministry of Education (MoE) and RSPN jointly produced a nature club activity and management handbook in 2008. The management handbook will guide the schools to establish nature club while the activity handbook is to provide ideas on various activities that nature club can choose and implement.

From 6 to 17 April 2009, RSPN and MoE jointly organized orientation workshop for the District Education Officers or Assistant District Education Officers (DEO/ADEO) and nature club focal teachers of all 20 Dzongkhags in three different regional workshops - Wangduephodrang, Gelephu and Trashigang with the following objectives:



- > Orient DEOs and teachers to the plan of institutionalization of nature club as regular co-curricular activity in school and
- > Train focal teachers to assist needy schools in the dzongkhag.

The workshop had hands-on exercises to explore bio-diversity in the school compound and testing water quality and bio-assessment study in the nearby stream. Besides, there were also sessions on the importance of learning about environment from the MoE's perspective and its linkage to the formal education system.

In some of the concerns shared by the participants, it was expressed that the environmental education activities in schools must be carried out as "School Environmental Program" rather than nature club so that the whole school gets involve

and the activities can be assessed. Yet, considering the difficulties in fitting with the formal curriculum and the prior approval required from the Education Ministry, it was suggested that the environmental education activities in schools be implemented as Nature Club Activities in status quo, till the further instruction.

Further, those schools without nature club must institute one since environment education program has greater opportunities to enhance the academic performance of students besides instilling positive attitude towards environment.

The Chief Program Officer and Science Coordinator from Curriculum and Professional Support Division (CAPSD), Coordinator of School Agriculture and Environment from Department of School Education, Water expert and technician from National Environment Commission (NEC), Ecologist and Environment Education Coordinator from RSPN were involved as resource people throughout the training program in three regions.

The training workshop was supported by United Nations Development Programme, (UNDP) under Support to Environment Education Program in Bhutan project.

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### Helping Local Youths



>> *Executive Director of RSPN visits trainees in Phobjikha.*

products. As a part of the program, about 14 people, mostly school dropouts were trained in embroidery and stitching in producing different artifacts like purses, home slippers and bags that are of interest to the tourists.

In 2008, communities were also trained in developing products like greeting cards, bookmarks, hair pins, clips, table mats and lamp sheds using locally available materials like bamboos and dry leaves. It is hoped that in the long run, the program will help generate alternative income for the local communities and indirectly help to minimize negative impact on the environment.

### Save Ringshu to Save Bangchung



>> *Local community members being trained in proper management of Ringshu*

With modern containers taking over traditional *Bangchung* in Bhutanese houses, *Bungchung* may become a history if appropriate measures are not taken in rural communities like Zhemgang, Trongsa and Trashigang where it is a significant source of livelihood. And to keep it alive, sustainable *Ringshu* (bamboo species used for *bangchung* making) cultivation is one major activity that RSPN is concern about preserving Bhutan's *Bangchung*.

To cut across the problem of depleting

*Ringshu* cultivation, the RSPN provided three days training on techniques for *Ringshu* (*Neomicrocalamus andropogonifolius*) plantation and management to the Passangphu *Ringshu* Tshogpa from May 31 to June 2, 2009 with the following objectives:

- Enhance the capacity of the members with scientific techniques for *Ringshu* sapling preparation and plantation.
- Identify and preserve prominent *Ringshu* habitats in the area.
- Management of *Ringshu* for its sustainable regeneration.



## Human Wildlife conflict program in the Eastern Bhutan



>> Community members of Pasaphu under Kangpara gewog with RSPN surveyors

**H**uman Wildlife Conflict is a major issue in Bhutan and is most heard in the villages. In March 2009, RSPN initiated a program on Human Wildlife Conflict for the first time in the eastern Bhutan. While efforts had been made in the past to address the issue, experience has shown that the solutions were unsustainable, costly and remained more at national level with emphasis on policy. Considering this, the project by RSPN intends to explore solutions at the local level by piloting integrated methods in few selected villages

in the region. RSPN hopes to advocate the successful solutions at a wider level based on the performance of the project.

The idea on Human wildlife conflict originated as a result of the baseline surveys on socio-economic and biodiversity conducted in January 2008 by RSPN. The survey indicated that the human wildlife conflict was one of the common problems in all the four surveyed villages of Pasaphu and Madhuwa in Kangpara gewog and Moshi and Khaimanma in Lumang gewog under Trashigang Dzongkhag.

At this stage, a feasibility study has been conducted in the four areas to come up with a comprehensive proposal on the issue. At a later period, RSPN has plans to raise fund to implement the activities (in the proposal) on a pilot basis. To help understand the issue from different perspectives, experts with backgrounds related to socio-economic or land use, wildlife, ecology and agriculture were engaged in the study. The approach of study encompassed qualitative analysis of the current situation by means of random and informal interviews with the affected farmers, field verification and community focal group consultation. From the areas studied, human wildlife conflict was more intense in Maduwa and Passaphu. The common problems reported by all villagers were wild boars and monkeys.

Apart from the field study, stakeholders at the centre and Dungkhag level were also consulted and informed on the program. Meetings were convened mainly to introduce the human wildlife conflict program to the partners and seek their views and feedback with regard to the approach of study and to gather relevant information to the program.

It is hoped that while helping to address the issue in the selected villages, the project in the long run will complement and contribute to the Royal government's national human wildlife conflict management strategy. The project is supported by the Bhutan Foundation and Blue Moon Foundation, USA.

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### A Ray of Hope for White-bellied Herons

nest he surveyed in Nangzhina had only one chick. Then he went to survey the next nest and found only two chicks. From both the nests, he was missing one chick each. Unable to believe his eyes that pinned through old binoculars, he opened his data book soaked in sweats to read the egg counts. Then surveyed once again with new spotting scope to make the final count. The total chicks were just three, not five.

During their last visit, the team (Prof. Peter Fredrick, Madam Rebecca, Tshewang, Chening) recorded two eggs in the new nest found in Ada. But this time, he saw the nest empty. Parent herons have abandoned the nest for reason he is not sure. Tshewang has many possible reasons: the weaker chicks that hatch late might have died after being pecked by stronger siblings; or the missing chicks might have fallen from the nests and died and bla...bla...bla...

On asking what could have happen to the abandoned nest, Tshewang interprets

### Climate Change and Health in Bhutan

**A**ccording to an exploratory study carried out by Dago Tshering of RSPN and Gambo Sithey, Consultant, Center for Research, Thimphu in 2006, Bhutan is vulnerable to `major adverse effects on health due to change in climate. The study identified that "there would be higher morbidity and mortality from extreme weather and climate events" like riverine floods, flash floods, GLOF and breached landslide-dam which are common in tropical Asia. Further with expected rise in temperature, the study highlights possibility

of rise and expansion of vector-borne and water-related diseases in developing countries like Bhutan. The study considers the need of the timely health sector's primary role in emergency preparedness for damage control and participation in every area vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change. The study recognized advocacy and sensitization among the stakeholders as important preventive measures. The study article was published in *Tiempo* issue no 71. (*Tiempo* is a bulletin on climate and development published by IIED and SEI)

differently. The disturbances from animals and human activities could be one reason. Else, the eggs might have fallen victim to the snakes while the parent herons were feeding. But this he says unusual.

What happens next? With declining WBH population of less than 200 in the world, it is everyone's responsibility to protect them. Bhutan was home to 30 WBH with major distribution along Punathangchu Basin. However with the up-coming

Punatshangchu project, we are skeptical about the future of the critically endangered WBH. We need to balance development and conservation to realize GNH. National Council Environment team was educated on WBH and their importance. There is a ray of hope for their survival. This world belongs to all of us and not just for human.

## Risk and Vulnerability Maps for Thimphu City



>> Risk and vulnerability maps for Thimphu City are available in digital format with RSPN which you can avail for free of charge.

Due to an increasing recognition of the potential impacts of climate change in cities, the Royal Society for Protection of Nature under the Capacity Strengthening of Least Developed Countries

for Adaptation to Climate Change (CLACC) Program had initiated and completed a preliminary study on Cities and Climate Change in developing climate risk and vulnerability maps of Thimphu City.

The study was carried out using existing and easily derivable spatial and non-spatial data from various sources. Various stakeholders were consulted during the mapping exercise presentation and their comments incorporated in the report.

With the increasing number of people living in cities and towns, they bear a large responsibility for causing climate change and are therefore key to alleviating climate change. The study indicated that owing to our location in the young and fragile Himalayan geological region, any change in climate will induced flashfloods, landslides and localized storm water drainage problem that would pose serious threat to the infrastructure, agricultural lands and human health ultimately affecting the economy of the country.

Since many of the cities in the least developed countries lack such information, these maps are prepared as a basis to address climate change problems at city level that would facilitate awareness raising, planning and decision making processes of the concerned agencies and general public.

## Accounting and Book Keeping for Local Communities



>> Participants were given hands-on training on accounting and bookkeeping

The Royal Society for Protection of Nature provided week long training on Open Book Accounting System to the selected members of 'Amtshui Phenday

Tshogpa' (Women's Group) & Phobjikha Environmental Management Committee (PEMC) from 13-17 April 2009. A total of six members responsible for maintaining

treasury of the groups participated in the training.

The main objective of the training was to:

- Build the capacity of the local community groups in basic accounting and book keeping and
- Ensure sustainability and proper management of the community fund.

With increasing inflow of cash contributions from its members and outsiders, the need for proper management and record keeping was found necessary. While similar trainings were conducted in the past, there was a need to continually update and train the members until they are able to manage the accounts independently and efficiently.

The response and enthusiasm from the participants was good and is an indication of the group's growth and stability. Since its inception, these community groups have been functioning as a local entity facilitating community participation in conservation activities in Phobjikha. Those committees were initiated for long term sustainability of conservation activities in the valley.

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## Save Ringshu to save Bangchung

During the three days training cum workshop, the participants learnt to manage Ringshu in a sustainable way including identification of proper habitats, preparation of temporary nursery to preserve the collected saplings with hands-on practical lesson in Rebalingmi.

The training is expected to enhance the

capacity of the members for self management of Ringshu and instill a sense of ownership and appreciation for their local environment as source of their sustainable livelihood.

Meanwhile, RSPN team and participants of the training celebrated Social Forestry Day on 2<sup>nd</sup> June, 2009 in Passangphu Community Primary School with hosting of national flag followed by speeches from guests

and students, cultural items and plantation of saplings. The speakers generally focused on the importance of commemorating the day with special dedication to the Coronation Anniversary of the Fourth Druk Gyalpo Jigme Singye Wangchuck.



## WORD SAFARI

Bhutan has the highest percentage of managed protected areas in Asia. There are ten protected areas covering almost 40% of Bhutan in 18 of 20 Dzongkhags. More than 30% of the country, nearly 12,000 km<sup>2</sup>, falls within the five national parks and some 9% lies within four wildlife sanctuaries and one nature reserve. We have listed the main names of the ten protected areas in bold.

Please find and encircle the names highlighted in bold letters. We have encircled one to help you get start with.

<b>Bumdeling</b> Wildlife Sanctuary
<b>Jigme Dorji</b> National Park
<b>Jigme Singye</b> Wangchuck National Park
<b>Khaling</b> Wildlife Sanctuary
<b>Phibsoo</b> Wildlife Sanctuary
<b>Wangchuck</b> Centennial Park
<b>Royal Manas</b> National Park
<b>Sakteng</b> Wildlife Sanctuary
<b>Thrumshingla</b> National Park
<b>Torsa</b> Strict Nature Reserve



R	S	P	N	K	I	N	G	V	L	P
I	L	<b>P</b>	<b>H</b>	<b>I</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>O</b>	<b>O</b>	R	T
T	B	D	G	S	O	N	I	I	O	S
H	H	U	S	A	K	T	E	N	G	C
R	E	J	M	N	D	K	T	G	L	R
U	F	I	A	D	R	H	N	F	F	I
M	N	G	N	R	E	A	U	L	A	E
S	O	M	A	O	T	L	J	W	L	N
H	C	E	S	Y	O	I	I	A	C	S
I	P	S	T	A	R	N	G	N	O	E
N	R	I	E	L	S	G	M	G	G	G
G	E	N	I	M	A	Y	E	C	E	S
L	B	G	F	A	A	L	D	H	R	A
A	N	Y	D	N	B	L	D	U	I	S
I	T	E	P	A	I	B	O	C	Q	T
R	S	I	G	S	K	M	R	K	W	A
A	R	B	O	R	E	U	J	K	X	H
E	F	T	O	O	R	S	I	M	O	U
W	I	G	H	T	I	N	Z	J	Y	G
W	I	G	H	T	I	I	D	S	T	K
S	M	B	N	X	V	C	Z	E	G	L



Photo: Yeshey Dorji

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