

# Summer Panda Quarterly



## Bhutan Program



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*Community members help park staff to clear debris around a Black Necked Crane roosting site in Bumdeling.*

## Refining ways to conserve pristine ecology

BWS will have a new conservation management plan after 5 years.

Left without a management plan since 2007, owing to lack of financial and technical support, Bumdeling Wildlife Sanctuary (BWS) finally has a draft management plan that has been revised to suit current changes in the environment. The park's first management plan was made in 2001 which expired in 2007.

According to Sonam Wangchuk, the Chief Forestry Officer (CFO) of the Wildlife Conservation Division (WCD), Department of Forest and Park Services (DoFPS), since the park is significant for its unique biodiversity, a renewed management plan was much needed to protect the

ecological integrity of the ecosystems of the sanctuary.

Producing the management plan and conducting the preceding socio-economic and biodiversity surveys and climate vulnerability assessment was supported by WWF, as a component of its support for the Northern Protected Area Complex (NPAC) in the country.

The surveys that were conducted in the park to revise the management plan have found 745 plant species, 42 mammals, 334 birds and 200 butterflies. Eleven globally vulnerable species, including the Red Panda, Marbled Cat, Rufous-necked Hornbill,

Black-necked Crane and Ludlow's Bhutan Glory were also recorded.

The impacts of climate change on biodiversity, water resources and local community have also been documented.

The main threats to the biodiversity in BWS are overgrazing, especially in the alpine habitats, infrastructural development, poaching, retaliatory killing of wildlife and the local community's over-dependence on natural resources.

The park is also vulnerable to natural calamities such as landslides and floods caused by climate change and man made threats such as forest fires, inappropriate waste disposal and changing agricultural practices.

These threats lead to habitat loss, degradation, fragmentation and disturbance which could amount to reduction in the number of certain species, while waste problems inflate carbon footprint.

These findings will help prescribe appropriate interventions that are needed to keep the biodiversity in the park intact and make it climate change resilient. It will also help protect the cultural heritage and people to adapt to climate.

On the other hand, the park is also host to a community of around 800 people, out of which, 95 percent of the households depend mainly on agriculture for a living. Apart from the yak herders, all households are permanently settled in small villages.

These facts further stress the need to not only protect the biodiversity in the area but also address issues that will help the community coexist with the wildlife and environment in and around the park.

The management plan was done in consultation at the national and local levels and it will be finalized soon.

The new plan for the park covers the period from July 2013 to June 2018, the 11<sup>th</sup> Five-Year-Plan period.



*The Black-necked Crane festival in BWS helps sensitize the community on its conservation and attract tourists as well.*





*Her Royal Highness the Queen, Azhi Jetsuen Pema Wangchuck graced the World Environment Day by planting a tree.*

## Taking ownership of a greener future

The World Environment Day saw 8000 students planting 3000 tree saplings in schools.

This year, WWF Bhutan, in collaboration with the Thimphu Thromde and the National Environment Commission marked the Social Forestry Day on June 2<sup>nd</sup> by organizing the 'My Tree' program.

Under the program, a total of around 3000 tree saplings were distributed in 28 schools in Thimphu. Around 8056 students participated in the event.

The program was aimed at reviving ecological responsibility among children by planting trees in their own household compounds as well.

This has helped inculcate a sense of

ownership and love for forest among the youth.

Through the initiative, the program seeks to increase tree cover outside the forested areas as well as on degraded forests.

To organize the event, Thimphu Thromde, on 16th May, consulted school principals in the capital whereby the schools were enthusiastic about starting such a program.

The schools found that it would not only enhance greenery in urban areas but also inculcate the program into Socially Useful Productive Work (SUPW), an important curriculum activity in Bhutanese schools.

## Adopting a clean environment

## School adopts a highway stretch to manage waste disposal.

WWF Bhutan along with Wangduechholing Lower Secondary School, Bumthang launched the “Adopt a highway” initiative on 13<sup>th</sup> April, 2013.

The initiative was to adopt a 5 km stretch of the national highway from Wangduechholing School to Kurjay Monastery in Bumthang.

Every month, around 150 students of the school’s Nature Club clean up all types of wastes along the highway stretch and segregate them.

The recyclable waste is disposed through local scrap dealers and non-recyclable waste is sent to the district waste landfill facility with assistance from the district municipality.

The initiative started mainly to address issues of indiscriminate littering and to engage schools to prevent littering in the

local community. The initiative also helps prevent pollution of streams and rivers in the area. According to Netra Binod Sharma, the WWF-Bhutan Co-manager for Wangchuck Centennial Park, the program has been instrumental in teaching students the concept of segregation of wastes.

“It familiarizes the children with the concept of Reduce, Recycle, Reuse, Replace, Repair and Right Disposal of waste,” said the Co-manager.

Since the initiative took off, three cleaning campaigns have been conducted and a total of around 18 tractor loads of waste have been picked up from the highway stretch adopted by the School.

Three tractor loads of recyclable waste were disposed off through the local scrap dealers and the remaining were disposed in the district’s waste landfill facility.



*Students of Wangduechholing school in Bumthang leading the “Adopt a highway” program to keep the stretch clean.*



## Making rangers patrol-SMART

TRAMCA rangers trained on Spatial Monitoring and Reporting Tools (SMART)



*Rangers get a hands-on training on crime scene investigation during the SMART patrolling training.*

Some 24 field rangers from Phibsoo Wildlife Sanctuary (PWS), Royal Manas National Park (RMNP) and Khaling Wildlife Sanctuary (KWS) attended the Spatial Monitoring And Reporting Tools (SMART) training that was held in RMNP from 23<sup>rd</sup> March till 2<sup>nd</sup> April.

The objective of the training was to provide basic, but vital, knowledge to field rangers of the Trans-boundary Manas Conservation Area (TRAMCA) landscape on law enforcement.

During the five-day long training, participants were trained by Rohit Singh, Tactical Protection and Law Enforcement Monitoring Officer of WWF's Tigers Alive Initiative based in Malaysia.

The training included GPS and map reading, patrol and patrolling tactics, patrol planning, intelligence gathering, anti-poaching operation, use of SMART, legislation and reporting on patrol activities.

SMART is a site-based approach of



*To make routine patrolling efficient, WWF has equiped KWS with motor bikes.*

monitoring, evaluating and improving effectiveness of conservation management. The software has been jointly developed by a consortium of NGOs such as WWF, Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), Flora and Fauna

International (FFI), Zoological Society of London (ZSL), Frankfurt Zoological Society, New Castle Zoo, CITIES, MIKE, and many others.



*Illegal timber seized from poachers. Timber poaching is more rampant than wildlife poaching in RMNP.*