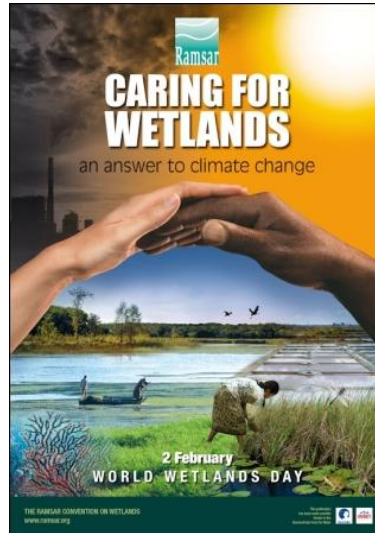




WORLD WETLANDS DAY 2010 CELEBRATION

Caring for wetlands - an answer to climate change

Report



Submitted by:

Hindu Kush Himalayan Benthological Society (HKH BENSO)

Kaushaltar, Madhyapur Thimi, Bhaktapur

E-mail: info@hkhbenso.org, hkhbenso@gmail.com

For details Contact: Pramod Bhagat (pramodbhagat@hkhbenso.org)

Contact no.: 01-2043422, 9841323337

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ORGANIZATION: Brief description

HKH-BENSO:

The environment of the world is gradually being deteriorating which has challenged the sustainability of the economic development and human progress. The freshwater resources, an important component of the nature and human survival, are at the apex of severe deterioration. Human pressures on freshwater resources are intense and will increase in the coming decades. About 10,000 species of freshwater invertebrates around the world are already extinct or imperiled. Hindu Kush-Himalayan region extending over 3500 km length over eight countries including Nepal, India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Bhutan, China and Myanmar and constituting the world's highest mountain is the freshwater tower. In this region, human pressures are more intense as it composes one of the most dense population in the world which has posed risk to freshwater species extinction. In addition, the scientific knowledge about the freshwater invertebrates is limited and is far less than vertebrates for which contemporary conservation biology was designed. This lacuna gave the birth of Hindu Kush-Himalayan Benthological Society.

Hindu Kush Himalayan Benthological Society (HKH-BENSO) is non-profit, non-political and non-governmental research oriented scientific organization. It is founded by an enthusiastic scientific community including international and national scientists. It conducts and promotes research on freshwater resources and environment building excellence in freshwater conservation.

1. HKH-BENSO was established in 2006 as a non profit, non political, non government organization.
2. HKH-BENSO is registered with CDO office, Bhaktapur and affiliated with Social Welfare Council.
3. HKH-BENSO Constitution enables trained members to vote for a policy making body of 11 members.
4. HKH-BENSO now has a network with Bhutan, India, Pakistan and Bangladesh

MISSION

1. HKH-BENSO will be a Model Professional Research Organization (PRO) dedicated towards wetland conservation and management
2. HKH-BENSO will organize programs so as to built up mechanism of networking between various stakeholders
3. HKH-BENSO will enhance community awareness for wetland conservation and management

World Wetland Day 2010

The Ramsar Convention defines wetlands as: “areas of marsh, fen, peat land or water, whether natural or artificial, permanent or temporary, with water that is static or flowing, fresh, brackish or salt, including areas of marine water, the depth of which at low tide does not exceed six meters.” Wetlands are the most productive ecosystem on the earth. Wetlands store excess water in the rainy season acting as sponges for flood abatements and provide irrigation water for agricultural production. Wetlands are the cradle of aquatic biodiversity upon which countless species of macrophytes, macro-invertebrates and several plants and animals depends for survival.

Koshi Tappu Wildlife Reserve (KTWR) was gazetted in July 1976 under the National Park and Wildlife Conservation Act, 1973, realizing the importance of the area for the conservation of the last remnant population of critically endangered wild water buffalos, migratory birds and their habitat. It was designated as the first Ramsar site of Nepal in 1987. It covers 175 km² consisting 16 VDCs that spread across three districts of Sunsari, Saptari and Udayapur with a population of 105,706 from 18093 households (Simsar 2008a). The Reserve is famous for marshy lands, open water bodies and the largest Saptakoshi River which covers 30% and become the best destination for migratory birds, Vultures, Muggar Crocodiles and Dolphin. The wetlands in Reserve and its buffer zones are riverine wetlands like Perennial River, River Floodplain, Lacustrine (Oxbow lake and ponds), Palustrine (Marshes and Swamps) and man-made (Water storage area, Canals, Paddy fields). Most of these wetlands are facing anthropogenic disturbances thus they are becoming shallow and eutrophic with luxuriant growth of aquatic vegetation.

World Wetlands Day is celebrated in the 2nd February each year. It marks the date of the adoption of the Convention on Wetlands on 2 February 1971, in the Iranian city of Ramsar on the shores of the Caspian Sea. Each year since 1997, government agencies, non-governmental organizations, people of all levels of the community have taken advantage of the opportunity to undertake actions aimed at raising public awareness of wetland values and benefits in general and the Ramsar Convention in particular. Accepting the importance of wetlands Hindu Kush-Himalayan Benthological Society (HKH BENSO) in partnership with local stakeholders (UCHEP - Nepal, KODEF - Nepal, and NCHCC - Nepal) with kind co-operation of Department of National Park and Wildlife Conservation (DNPWC), Koshi Tappu Wildlife Reserve and Buffer Zone Management Committee celebrated WETLAND DAY 2010 by organizing different programs with the following objectives.

OBJECTIVE

- To share knowledge, understandings & experiences on wetlands & issues of wetlands
- To generate awareness among students and local stakeholders through dissemination of wetlands knowledge & understandings

RATIONALE

Wetlands occupy approximately five percent (5%) of the total area of Nepal in the form of rivers, streams, lakes, reservoirs, village ponds, paddy fields, marshes and swamplands. Rivers, lakes, ponds and marshes perform a vital function in filtering and purifying fresh water, rendering it 'clean' for human consumption. Nevertheless, wetlands can only provide us with clean water if we keep them healthy through effective management. These wetlands function should be undisturbed and there is an urgent need for continuous monitoring of wetland ecosystems. To develop a group of young conservationist interested in wetland conservation, we felt need for generating awareness among students particularly those who are involved in the wetland clubs and conservation activities. Also several stakeholders (Teachers network; Buffer zone institutions- BZMC, BZUC, BZUG, BZCFUG; DDC/VDC/local NGOs/Youth Clubs etc actively participated in the Program. HKH-BENSO and the collaborating local NGOs partners made an endeavor in this field during World Wetland Day 2010. We organized a week long key programs. These were:

1. Inter School art competition
2. Talk Program
3. Wetland tour
4. Interaction Program on “*Integrating IBA Monitoring in Ramsar Sites*”

PROGRAM DETAILS:

1. Inter School Art Competition (District level)

On the mark of World Wetland Day 2010, the art competition was organized for secondary school students of Sunsari, Saptari and Udayapur districts. 4 schools of Saptari, 1 School of Udayapur and 5 Schools of Sunsari district was invited to participate in the competition. There were about 40 students (4 participants from each school) who participated in the art competition. The competition was organized separately in Saptari and Sunsari district in the same day (24th January, 2010).



The art competition was held on the theme of WWD 2010, “*Caring for Wetlands- an Answer to Climate Change*”. The event was held simultaneously in two different sites of Koshi Tappu areas. One was carried out in Kamaldaha in Saptari district and other was in West Kushaha in Sunsari district. Ms. Meera Prajapati and Ms. Mangleswori Dhonju from HKH-BENSO and Mr. Pralahad Singh Tharu and Mr. Dibash Kumar Chaudhary from CSUWN-KTWR had facilitated the event in the Kamaldaha, Saptari and West Kushaha, Sunsari. The

representative from HKH-BENSO and CSUWN briefed the participants of the art competition on the importance of wetland. They also briefed about the slogan of this year and its relevance in present context.

The art was evaluated by the judge panel (Mr. Nilamber Mishra, Warden/KTWR; Mrs. Renu Sah, Chairperson/BZMC; & Mr. Narayan Prasad Yadav, Chairman, BZTNF/Koshi Tappu). The selected best five arts were awarded with certificates and prizes.



2. Talk Program

On the occasion of world wetland day 2010, The Talk Program was held in schools of Sunsari, Saptari and Udayapur district. Teachers and students, especially from secondary level were the main participants of the Talk Program. This program was organized at five locations (2 Saptari, 1 Udayapur and 2 Sunsari) in which the nearby school students were invited. Basically the talk was related to the slogan of this year (*Caring for wetlands: an answer to Climate Change*). This program helped to sensitize school students i.e., at grassroots level.

2-a: TALK PROGRAM AT SHREE JANATA SECONDARY SCHOOL, Saptari

Talk Program was launched in Shree Janata Secondary School, Kamalpur-6, Bhagani-Maleth, Saptari district on 25th Jan, 2010. The Talk primarily focused on the wetlands, its importance, threats to its existence and the Ramsar Convention. The briefing also included the issues of climate change and its effect on the wetlands and vice versa. The Talk Program was divided into four sessions. First part was introduction about the talk program by Mr. Pralahad Singh Tharu followed by presentation. Mr. Pramod Bhagat from HKH-BENSO briefed the audience through power point slides about the wetlands and its importance.



In the third part question and answer session was held. Students asked various questions regarding the wetland and Ramsar Convention. Finally the conclusion session was held with the remarks from chairperson of Shree Janata wetland club, Mr. Maheshwor Yadav. He talked about the climate change issues in the present world and its effect on the Himalayas of Hindu Kush Region and the people residing in the developing countries like Nepal. Altogether 240 students participated in the program.

2-b: TALK PROGRAM AT **SHREE BHIRKUTI SECONDARY SCHOOL**, Saptari

On 26th Jan, 2010 the Talk Program was held in Shree Bhirkuti Secondary School of Dharampur. The participants were from Bhirkuti wetland club of Shree Bhrikuti Secondary School and Shree Laxmi Narayan Wetland Club of Sarbodaya Higher Secondary School, Kanchanpur. Mr. Pralahad Singh Tharu hosted the program. Presentation was shared by Ms Mangleswori Dhonju and Ms Meera Prajapati. Ms. Prajapati discussed about the importance of wetland its types and Ramsar convention while Ms. Dhonju talked about the climate change, inter-relationship and the various threats to the wetland.



Finally the conclusion session was held by Mr Uma Kant Chaudhary, coordinator of Laxmi Narayan Wetland Club. Mr. Chaudhary focused on the importance of wetland from socio-economic point of view and the effect of climate change. Altogether 54 students participated in this program.

2-c: TALK PROGRAM AT **JANATA BELAWA HIGHER SECONDARY SCHOOL**, Udayapur

On 27th Jan, 2010 the talk program was held in Janata Belawa Higher Secondary School in Purandahe-4, Udayapur. Mr. Ashok Kumar Sah, SM-CSUWN/KTWR hosted the program. The presentation session was shared by Ms. Mangleswori Dhonju, Ms. Meera Prajapati and Mr. Pramod Bhagat from HKH-BENSO. Ms. Dhonju talked about the Wetlands and Ramsar Convention while Ms Prajapati talked about the types of Wetlands its importance and ecological contributions. Finally Mr. Bhagat concluded the session by putting light on the threats to the wetlands and its relationship with the climate change. The program was concluded by Mr. Rajendra Yadav, the principal of Janata Belawa Higher Secondary School. He emphasized on the importance of wetland conservation for none but us.



2-d: TALK PROGRAM AT **KOSHI SECONDARY SCHOOL**, Sunsari

On 28 Jan, 2010 Talk Program was organized in the Koshi Secondary School, Paschim Kushaha, Sunsari. The opening session was conducted by Mr. Ashok Kumar Sah, SM-CSUWN/KTWR. The presentation opened with Ms Meera Prajapati talking about the Wetland, its types and wetlands found in Nepal. Presentation was followed by Mr. Pramod Bhagat talking about the Ramsar Convention, climate change and threats to the wetland. Mr. Hari Narayan Yadav, vice principal of the Koshi Secondary School concluded the program by talking about the role of students and teachers on the wetland conservation in order to mitigate and adapt to the impact of climate change. He hoped that more of such awareness program must be launched on wetland related subjects in near future too.



2-e: TALK PROGRAM AT **JANATA HIGHER SECONDARY SCHOOL**, Sunsari

The Talk Program (29th January, 2010) for the celebration of World Wetlands Day, 2010 on the slogan “*Caring for Wetlands - an answer to Climate Change*” was carried out in the Janata Higher Secondary School. The School is located in the Madhuvan-5, Sunsari. Here the opening and closing session was held by Ms Kiran Pathak of CSUWN-KTWR. The presentation was carried out by Ms Mangleswori Dhonju and Ms. Meera Prajapati. Ms Prajapati



talked about the wetland its types and importance to the human being while Ms. Dhonju talked about the climate change and its threat to the wetland.

3. Wetland Tour

The wetland tour was organized on 30th January 2010 in Kamaldaha and its surrounding areas. The school students of surrounding areas of Koshi Tappu participated in this tour. From the tour, they learnt how the Conservation practices are done and what challenges and shortcomings are faced in the process. We shared success stories, strengths, new opportunities and ideas from each other. Also we emphasized students to better understanding of the linkage between biodiversity conservation and sustainable income generation and also to see the possibilities where students and teachers can play a role in wide awareness activities for wetland conservation and sustainable use.

The participant students shared with their communities back home what they have learnt and how they could implement good conservation ventures. Students agreed to make and follow-through on a commitment that benefits their households as well as the community at large, and which draws upon lessons learned from the tour. The outputs of the wetland tour are increased awareness among students from surrounding area of Koshi Tappu of the context and key elements.



After the tour students produced a joint report describing the sites visited, activities undertaken, key lessons learned and offering specific recommendations for continued wetland conservation and its sustainable use, along with promoting the community's role in conserving and managing local natural resources and wildlife.

4. Interaction Program on “Integrating IBA Monitoring in Ramsar Sites”

At the end of a week long program - the Interaction Program on “Integrating IBA Monitoring in Ramsar Sites” was organized in joint partnership with BCN, KTWR, CSUWN, BZMC, BZTNF, NCHCC to mark the World Wetland Day 2010. The program was held on February 01, 2010 at Hotel Fulbari, Inaruwa, Sunsari. The participants from various local NGOs/CBOs, Teachers network; Buffer zone institutions- BZMC, BZUC, BZUG, BZCFUG; DDC/VDC/local NGOs/Youth Clubs and etc actively participated in the program.

Wetland specialists, biodiversity experts, environmentalists, environmental lawyers, government officials, planners, representatives of INGOs, NGOs, environment school teachers and



several stakeholders of KTWR/BZ were our prospective guests for this Interaction Program. Altogether 100 participants participated in this important Interaction Program.

The program was congregated by Mr. Rabin Ghimire, President of UCHEP-Nepal. Mr. Nilamber Misra, Conservation Officer-KTWR welcomed all participants of the programs. After that the program switched into the presentation sessions. The first presentation was presented by Mr. Deependra Joshi, executive officer from the Bird Conservation Nepal. Mr. Joshi has presented on the title of “INTEGRATING IBA MONITORING IN RAMSAR SITES OF NEPAL.”



On his presentation, Mr. Joshi described the activities of Bird Conservation Nepal (BCN). He gave insight into Ramsar Convention and Nepal, Important Bird Areas (IBA) monitoring, its importance, direct links between IBA criteria and Ramsar criteria. He finally discussed how IBA monitoring supports the implementation of Ramsar Convention.



Likewise Mr. Nilamber Mishra, conservation officer of KTWR presented on the Wetlands, its type, Ramsar Convention and Nepal. He focused on significance of Wetland diversity. Mr. Mishra also discussed on Ecosystem Services provided by aquatic ecosystem. He also presented about Koshi Tappu Wildlife Reserve including CSUWN and its activities. He concluded with present status and threats to wetlands of Nepal and linked the importance of wetlands to counteract the

present issues of Climate Change.

Similarly, the third presentation was presented by Dr. Bharat Raj Shubha from Nature Conservation and Health Care Council on the topic “BIODIVERSITY ASSESSMENT OF KOSHI TAPPU WILDLIFE RESERVE AFTER KOSHI FLOOD DISASTER 2008”. The presentation was mainly focused on the KTWR objectives, Avifauna survey, Fish survey, Dolphin count, Wild water buffalo survey, Habitat studies and forwarded suggestions and recommendations. Likewise he strongly recommended on mitigating/neutralizing these above objectives, by controlling the human pressure on biodiversity, monitoring the wetlands effectively, fishing, illegal firewood collection, cattle grazing and fodder collection etc. Similarly, he focused on the Ecosystem protection in an integrated way by providing alternative way for the fisherman thus controlling fishing in the reserve area, strictly reduction on the problem of overgrazing, other



human activities that degrade the natural habitat and local villagers should be educated on the importance of reserve, conservation of natural resources.



Mr. Rabin Ghimire from UCHEP Nepal Prakashpur gave the final presentation. He outlined the Present Condition of Water, Wetland Coverage area in Nepal, and history of Conservation Area. Mr. Ghimire mainly focused on the Koshi Tappu. He described about the establishment of Koshi Tappu including its importance. In his presentation, he also mentioned the local level challenges and risk of Koshi Tappu Wildlife Reserve. Nonetheless he mentioned the opportunities

within the challenges in KTWR. He finally showed the database of population estimates of wild buffalo at Koshi Tappu and some pictorial diagrams of dependency on wetlands.

Finally, the short remarks were given by Mrs. Renu Sah (Chairperson/BZMC), Mr. Nageswor Sah (Treasurer/BZTNF), and Mr. Devi Choulagai (Chairman/Janjagaran CFUG). Mr. Ram Poudel, Eastern Regional Forest Director concluded the program.



FEEDBACK

Feedback is one of the main components for the judgment of the successful program. So, the comments and queries were documented. Some major queries from the participants, both students and teachers were: the programs (art competition, talk program and wetland tour) were very successful and need to organize in regular basis, such programs are required in all schools.

OUTPUTS

- Information sharing, awareness in different levels of society & walks of life
- Provide the best ways & strategies to manage the wetlands
- Greater insight and understanding of wetlands through the interaction of counterpart.
- Identification of elements associated with wetland that is to be addressed for conservation and sustainable use of KTWR wetland

CONCLUSION

This program generated awareness among different stakeholders, students and teachers of school level on wetlands. In the meantime, people from different walks of life also benefited. It also raised awareness on the importance of wetlands. HKH BENSO including all local partner organizations (UCHEP, KODEF, NCHCC, BZTNF) is very confident that the present effort contributed in wetland conservation and raising the awareness level of students and stakeholders of Koshi Tappu.

Mrs. Ram Devi T. Shah

Aquatic Ecologist

HKH BENSO, Kathmandu, Nepal.

E-mail: ramdevishah@hkhbenso.org