



World Wetlands Day-2011

Forests for Water and Wetlands

A Report on

**GENERAL AWARENESS RAISING PROGRAM
(GARP)**

Hindu Kush Himalayan Benthological Society (HKH BENSO)

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WORLD WETLANDS DAY 2011 CELEBRATION

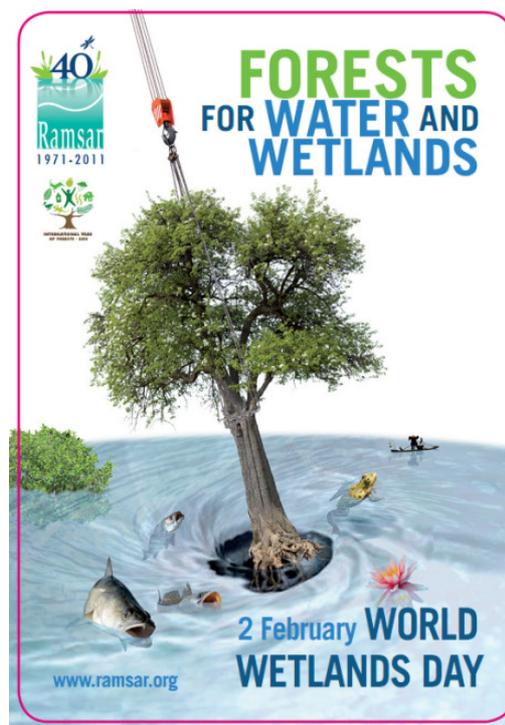
Each year since 2008, Hindu Kush Himalayan Benthological Society (HKH BENSO) has taken advantage of the opportunity to undertake actions aimed at raising public awareness of wetland values and benefits in general and the Ramsar Convention in particular. This year we celebrated 40th anniversary with the slogan “*Forests for water and wetlands*” in celebration of the United Nations International Year of Forests. Forests play a crucial role in the hydrological cycle and as a consequence, in the health of wetlands. This allowed us to look at the ‘big picture’ of forests in our lives. We shared knowledge, understandings & experiences on wetlands & issues of wetlands to generate awareness among students, school teachers, local stakeholders etc.

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. Hindu Kush-Himalayan region extending over 3500 km length over eight countries including Nepal, India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Bhutan, China and Myanmar constitutes the world’s highest mountain range and the freshwater tower. Human pressure and climate change have an increasing influence on the stability of fragile mountain ecosystems and the livelihoods of the people.

The purpose of this day was to raise awareness and appreciation of the significance of the wetlands and of their contributions to the world ecosystem.

Wetlands (called ‘simsar’ in Nepali) means lands with perennial source of water. Swampy rice fields, water logged areas and ponds are also understood as wetlands in the country. Long regarded as wastelands, wetlands are now recognized as important features in the landscape as they deliver significant ecosystem services, are cradles of biological diversity, and support populations of birds, mammals, reptiles, amphibians, fish and invertebrates. Increasing human pressures have led to alteration and degradation of these ecosystems, causing reduction or loss in their biodiversity, their ecological functions, and economic, cultural and spiritual values. Additionally, changes in temperature, rainfall, and soil moisture all affect the fragile ecosystems and challenge their biodiversity. Some species disappear, others migrate, and new ones appear. These changes in the natural landscape impact ecosystem services and threaten the livelihoods and wellbeing of wetland dependent communities.

This year’s theme and slogan brought attention to the role that forests have in our lives. Forested wetlands are biologically diverse areas which not only help freshwater management but also provide carbon storage- a very important property in a world threatened by rising Green House Gas (GHG) emissions and climate change.



PROGRAM DETAILS:

'World Wetlands Day'
observed with commitment
to preserve nature

General Awareness Raising Program (GARP)

HKH BENSO erected a Wetlands Information Center (WIC) in a public place for General Awareness Raising on 2nd February 2011 i.e. World Wetlands Day.

The objective of our public showing was to raise awareness about the wetlands and its importance. The event was organized in the heart of Bhaktapur Durbar Square in cooperation with Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation (DNPWC). Volunteers from HKH BENSO disseminated knowledge about the theme of the wetlands day ("*Forests for water and wetlands*") to the visitors. Several flex, posters, educational banner, and pamphlets were displayed in a large area. On the occasion, Photo Exhibition was also done to show the present status and threats to our wetlands. Further, the distributional materials including leaflet on Wetlands prepared by HKH BENSO were distributed.

School students: More than 400 school students from 7 schools viz. Prabhat Higher Secondary School, Everest English Secondary School, Manakamana Secondary School, Paragon Academy, Padma Higher Secondary School, Bidharthi Niketan Secondary School and Saradha Higher Secondary School visited the **Wetlands Information Center**. Students were briefed on wetlands importance and its status, and received leaflets bookmarks and other distribution materials of their interest. Students were very interested to know about the wetlands issues. Volunteers explained students about the wetlands, its importance and threat. They focused on the theme of wetlands day 2011 i.e. "*Forest for water and wetlands*". School teachers complimented about informative concept and urged to organize more of such programs in future.



We urged the students to adopt healthy activities in daily routine life through which extra ordinary changes would appear in their behaviors in this context.



College students: College students from Khwopa College, Basu Higher Secondary School, Khwopa Engineering College, Necolson College and Bageswori College visited the WIC. Students showed more interest in the topic of wetlands and its present status.

Local people and visiting tourists: People from different walks of life like professionals, government officials and tourists visited the information center. Locals of Bhaktapur commented, "We are happy to know about the importance of wetlands in general and wetlands of Nepal in particular".

We emphasized the citizens for their individual responsible role in combating deforestation and wetlands degradation practices for better future.



Adding to the event corner for Dragonfly facemask coloring was set near the stall. This was set for small children of 6- 12 years age group. Around 25 children took part in this event. The children enjoyed learning the importance of wetlands and its biodiversity.



Interaction Program

Interaction program was organized at EDI. Ms. Mangleswori Dhonju had been in EDI, Ahmadabad, India for training, using this opportunity, an interaction program on the WWD 2011 was done. The target participants of the interaction program were foreign nationals. The participants belonged to countries like Thailand, Afghanistan, Botswana, Iran, Myanmar, Brazil and Zimbabwe with various academic backgrounds from commerce to Biological sciences. The presentation focused on the Wetlands and this year's slogan "*Forests for water and wetlands*". After the presentation question and answer round was held in which the participants raised queries concerning the wetlands conservation. Lots of questions were raised about the wetlands of Nepal specially the Ramsar sites like Gokyo and Gosaikund Lake complex location, route and travel time to travel to those places.



OUTPUTS

- More than 1000 people including school students, teachers, people from different professionals, academia, tourists and local people received updated information on wetlands and its status in Nepal and in the world.
- The theme and slogan of World Wetlands Day brought attention to the role that forests have in our lives among the visitors.

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 through Wetlands Information Center. HKH BENSO and Local Youth Alliance for Climate Change (LYACC) are very confident that the present effort contributed in wetland conservation and raising the awareness level of students and stakeholders. We thank to our supporters for making the event a grand success.





Organizing Committee Members

Krishna Raut, Mangleswori Dhonju, Meera Prajapati, Pramod Bhagat, Ramesh Gautam, Rashmi Koju, Sheela Sharma and Sushila Gwachha



Program:

General Awareness Raising Program/
Wetlands Information Center & Interaction
Program

Venue: Bhaktapur Durbar Square,
Bhaktapur, Nepal.



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