

A report on World Wetlands Day 2012

Wetlands and Tourism - a great experience

सिमसार पर्यटन - एक अनुपम अनुभव



Flex mounted on the WWD 2012 occasion in Koshi area

Himalayan Nature

2012

World Wetlands Day was first celebrated in 1997. Since then government agencies, non-government organizations and community groups have celebrated World Wetlands Day by undertaking actions to raise public awareness of wetland values, benefits and promote the conservation and wise use of wetlands. World Wetlands Day is celebrated internationally each year on 2 February. It marks the anniversary of the signing of the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar Convention) in Ramsar, Iran, on 2 February 1971. The international theme for World Wetlands Day 2012 is Wetlands and Tourism - a great experience.

Nepal is a signatory of the Ramsar Convention and has listed nine wetlands as Ramsar Sites: Koshi Tappu Wildlife Reserve, Beeshazari Taal of Chitwan, Ghadaghodi Lake of Kailali, Jagadispur Reservoir of Kapilvastu, Rara Lake, Gokyo Lake, Gosiankunda Lake and Mai Pokhari, with a total area of about 35000 hectares. Globally, there are 1911 Ramsar sites covering about 187 million hectares.

Celebrating World Wetlands Day under the theme of wetland tourism offers the perfect occasion to recall the relevance of this unique natural scenery as one of tourism's greatest assets and a fundamental cornerstone to its long-term growth, while stressing how tourism, when developed and managed in a sustainable way, can be instrumental in safeguarding it.

Under its two thematic areas, Education and appreciation, Restoration, Himalayan Nature (HN) conducts a regular program annually to celebrate World Wetlands Day 2012. Himalayan Nature believes that responsible tourism supports wetlands and people. It has been found that many tourism destinations are at wetlands. Wetlands also provide local tourism and recreational opportunities, including boating, fishing and bird watching.

Besides its own regular activities in Lumbini, Chitwan and Koshi, Himalayan Nature (HN) in collaboration with Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation(DNPWC), Ramsar authority in Nepal, celebrated 41st World Wetland Day and 12th Bird Festival in Koshi Tappu Wildlife Reserve (KTWR) on 2nd February 2012 even though the programmes began from 26 January 2012. As a new initiation, DNPWC along with other national partners decided to celebrate the event in the field. KTWR being the first Ramsar Site the major activities were carried out based in KTWR, defined as a paradise of birds and a heronry of Nepal and homes a total of 493 species of Nepal.

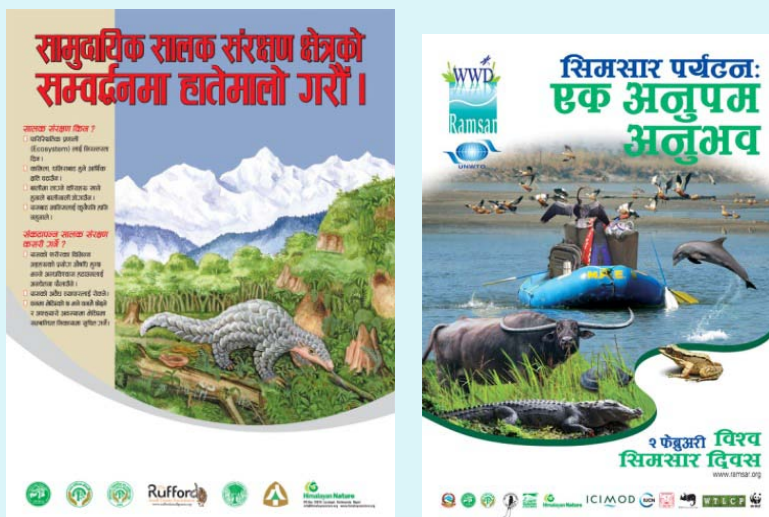
On the occasion of WWD, different events were organized namely volley ball competition, cycle rally, cycle race, and quiz contest to move up the public awareness on importance of the wetland and highlight the prospects of nature tourism in Koshi.

Honorable Minister Mr. Nandan Kumar Datta, Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives and the chief guest of the wetland day celebration programme, released several publications focused on conservation awareness. Cultural dances, drama, parades were also shown in the programme to entertain and educate over one thousand visitors that attended the event.

Publication of Pangolin poster

Let's join hands to strengthen the first Community Conserved Pangolin Conservation Area.

One thousand copies of poster have been published with new title in simple Nepali language. The title pledges to join hands to strengthen the first Community Conserved Pangolin Conservation Area. It gives some fundamental answer to the query why to conserve pangolin and some information has been stated for its conservation. All of the information is in Nepali Language to comply with the local readers.



Inauguration of Posters

Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation and Himalayan Nature as one of its conservation partners celebrated 41st World Wetland Day and 12th Bird Festival in Koshi Tapu Wildlife Reserve (KTWR) on 2nd February 2012. KTWR is the first Ramsar site of international significance. Altogether there are nine Ramsar sites in Nepal. This year, the slogan of the wetland day was 'Wetlands Tourism: a Great Experience'.

Honorable Minister Mr. Nandan Kumar Datta, Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives and other chief guests of the wetland day celebration programme, released our pangolin poster along with other publications on conservation education. We will soon be distributing these posters during our education outreach activities in the study areas and other pangolin range areas of Nepal. All our activities in Koshi was carried out by field staff and field biologist Mr. Sanjiv Acharya and Kosi Bird Observatory (<http://www.himalayannature.org/KBO.htm>) was the main base for carrying out all our activities in Koshi.



Bird watching and sanitation activities in Chitwan

Himalayan Nature and Bird Education Society (BES) together organized bird watching and sanitation activities around Sauraha. Programmes began with the bird watching programme in the morning followed by sanitation activities in the afternoon. Local youths, students from higher secondary schools and local naturalists participated actively right through the set up of the programmes. All the activities in Chitwan were coordinated by Mr Basu Bidari of BES. Furthermore, Himalayan Nature actively participated in the Gharial release programme by Chitwan National Park. A total of forty Gharials was released in the upstream and downstream of the Narayani river, Chitwan.



Bird watching and education awareness programmes in Lumbini

HN conducted simultaneous bird watching activities in Gaidahawa Lake, a key biodiversity area (KBA), Lumbini. Gaidahawa Lake is an important breeding site for Sarus Crane *Grus antigone* and Lesser Adjutant *Leptoptilos javanicus* and also serves as a habitat for a small resident and wintering population of several species of water birds. Besides bird watching activities, Mr Dinesh Giri, Field ornithologist of Himalayan Nature, Mr Dinesh Giri conducted bird watching programme along with awareness programs on conservation of wetland resources and their wise use among the students of local private and government schools. Together with this programme, Himalayan Nature came up with a novel idea of conducting literature writing on birds for the first of its kind in Nepal to promote Lumbini as a bird watching destination. Lumbini is a birthplace of Lord Buddha and has been listed by UNESCO as the World Heritage Site.



Besides celebrating various events in Koshi, Himalayan Nature celebrated World Wetlands Day in its focal areas: Lumbini and Chitwan through innovative initiation of literature writing on birds, bird watching, awareness programmes and sanitation programmes

Lumbini, birthplace of Lord Buddha in southwest Nepal attracts Buddhists devotees from around the world, who arrive to pay homage at the Sacred Garden where the enlightened one was born. Lumbini is the holy place for Buddhist and each year large number of Buddhist and other religion people visit this place. After a decade of civil war, Nepal is now in undergoing peace process. Therefore, the Government of Nepal is willing to promote and establish Lumbini the major image for the world's peace. Recently, the Government of Nepal is planning to develop Lumbini as one of the most centralized and modern Buddhism touristic hub of the world to promote this plan, we are celebrating year **2012 as Visit Lumbini Year**. Nepal Tourism Board, private tourism entrepreneurs, Lumbini Development Trust and many other government and nongovernmental organizations are jointly participating in this national event to promote Lumbini in the international tourism markets. The target of total arrivals is half a million in the year 2012. The aim is to increase the number of visitors traveling to Lumbini by a million in a year.

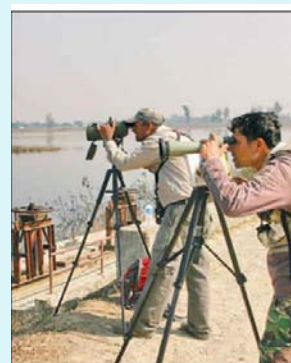
In this background, and in an effort to assist Government of Nepal to spread the message of Visit Lumbini Year, Himalayan Nature proposed to involve nearly a dozen established Nepali writers as possible marketing agents for the same. The plan was to take these poets/writers to Lumbini and familiarize with birds and culture of the area. Thereafter all the writers will write various pieces of stories and other write ups about Lumbini and its bird's. This ultimately promotes a sustainable nature and rural landscape based ecotourism amongst members of the public for travel to Lumbini.

Programme in Kathmandu

Himalayan Nature actively participated in all the programs that were held in premises of Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation on 2nd February 2012. it was marked by mounting a flex of World Wetlands Day 2012 near the gate way of Forestry Complex of Nepal. It was translated into Nepali language.

Radio programme

Radio programme entitled "Samrakshan Chautari" has already been broadcasted from Nepali Ko Radio for 30 minutes on every Saturday of a week at 9:30am to 10:00am. All of activities were aired from this radio for the generation of mass awareness. Many radio news were aired but could not be tracked. Few of the coverage in print media about the program had been pasted.



Ornithologists view water birds through binoculars at the Jagadishpur lake in Kapilvastu district on Saturday. More than 11,000 birds were found in the lake during a two-day bird count.
POST PHOTO: MANOJ POUDIEL

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I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all the conservation partners and all passionate students, conservationists along with the local people of Koshi, Lumbini and Chitwan in making our programme a success. I would like to thank Department of National Parks and Wildlife Reserve, Nepal Tourism Board and Lumbini Buddha Garden, Staff at Koshi Tappu Wildlife Reserve, Kosi Bird Observatory (KBO) for supporting our WWD programmes. Special thanks to Dr Hem Sagar Baral and Mrs Krishna Tamrakar who originally conceived the idea of literature writing program in Lumbini. Last but not the least, I would like to express my thanks to the all the following personnel:

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