

ROYAL SOCIETY FOR PROTECTION OF NATURE

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ANNUAL REPORT
1 July 2007 — 30 June 2008



The Kingdom of Bhutan is blessed with an exceptional and largely intact natural environment. I have joined RSPN in its mission to raise awareness of the challenges that faces us now. We must all accept our individual responsibility to conserve the rich diversity of Bhutan's plant and animal species for the benefit of both the natural world and our children's future.

**His Majesty the King
Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck**

(On the occasion of assuming the patronage of RSPN in 1999)

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Executive Director's Report

I am pleased to report yet another productive and progressive fiscal year. Our publication was delayed this year as we awaited the annual audited accounts that we try to include with each report. Nevertheless, the successes of the 2007-2008 fiscal year remain fresh in our memories and we are pleased to summarize them here. We have divided this year's report into four main program areas: 1) Research and Conservation, 2) Environmental Education, 3) Sustainable Livelihoods, and 4) Emerging Issues.

Our research this year focused strongly on biodiversity surveys and expanding our understanding of White-bellied Heron ecology. The study on the White-bellied Heron has become particularly critical in anticipation of the habitat changes that will occur with the upcoming Punatshangchu Hydropower Project. The biodiversity surveys in Phobjikha support our ever-strengthening sustainability efforts in the valley that support the Conservation Area protecting Black-necked Crane habitat. The cranes are doing very well again this year and we have included information on the 2007-2008 crane count. We have also expanded our presence in the East by setting up sustainability programs similar to Phobjikha's in the Wamrong-Kangpara Conservation Area. A major biodiversity survey there will inform a long-term management plan.

The effort to raise awareness and develop environmental literacy has continued in force with our education programs. The role of grassroots community advocacy for local

issues has become absolutely crucial in Bhutan's new democratic era. We are well aware that RSPN's voice alone is not enough. We are pleased with the recent establishment and training of Local Conservation Support Groups. These groups are the beginning of a nationwide backbone for environmental advocacy. It's an old issue, but it seems we need some innovative ideas to make our trash go away – that is, to make it go away responsibly. The Clean Bhutan Campaign was our most recent stab at this perennial problem. The network of nature clubs continues to expand, and we were excited this year to use this network to everyone's advantage as a means to collect data on the state of environment. Also of great interest are the Action Grant Projects funded by UNDP where six schools planned and implemented a variety of projects that directly ed both their communities and the environment.

Our sustainable livelihoods program is livelier than ever in the Phobjikha valley and we are now applying the lessons learned to the conservation area in Wamrong-Kangpara under Trashigang Dzongkhag. We instituted training programs in handicraft production in Phobjikha to compliment our parallel efforts to connect established tour operators with the great potential for ecotourism in the valley. Khaimanma village under Trashigang saw training programs in bioengineering to help local people affected by land degradation to restore these areas with plantations. This leads us into a summary of our initiatives related to emerging issues in the Bhutanese environment in connection to climate change

and national water policies, all geared towards improving the livelihood of the local communities.

Finally, we cannot emphasize enough the invaluable contributions of our membership, donors, and partner organizations. In the final section of this year's report, we endeavour to thank the people and institutions that make it possible for RSPN to fulfill its mission. In these difficult economic times, it is especially noteworthy that our donors continue to come through with the means to allow RSPN to lead the effort to preserve Bhutan's incredible natural heritage. Thank you all, very much.

We depend upon your support.

Dr. Lam Dorji
Executive Director

RSPN - The Organisation

RSPN was founded in 1987 by Dasho Paljor J. Dorji to monitor Bhutan's populations of Black-necked Cranes, a globally endangered species. Over the years, RSPN has grown to tackle a broad spectrum of issues, from conservation research to environmental education and initiatives that encourage sustainable livelihood. RSPN maintains a flexible and practical approach to environmentalism, preferring to engage communities at the grassroots, science with direct research, and policy makers with one-to-one dialogue.

A pioneer environmental NGO in Bhutan, RSPN is now fully engaged in the new challenges presented by our democracy. RSPN intends

“To inspire personal responsibility and actively involve the people of Bhutan in the conservation of the Kingdom's environment through education, applied research, and information dissemination, in collaboration with concerned agencies and indigenous institutions.”

Five Year Strategic Plan

The Five Year Strategic Plan, a living document that outlines RSPN's objectives and goals. Every five years the document is rethought and revised to better aim for and achieve these goals. The plan frames institutional development as the foundation for the growth of RSPN's capacity to effect positive environmental change in Bhutan. Three areas are identified as essential for the sustainable growth of RSPN:

1. Growing a million-dollar endowment fund from which the interest funds the core operational costs.
2. Building a permanent headquarter office building.
3. Strengthening organizational policies, procedures, and staff capacity.

Patronage and Board of Trustees

RSPN enjoys the Patronage of His Majesty the King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck, the Fifth Druk Gyalpo of Bhutan. The organization is managed on a day-to-day basis by the Executive Director, Dr. Lam Dorji, who reports to the eight member Board of Trustees. The Board meets to approve work plans, proposals, annual operational budgets, and the policies of the organization.

In accordance with the requirements of the Civil Society Act 2007, RSPN submitted its registration documents to the then Prime Minister. While awaiting confirmation, RSPN dissolved its Board of Directors and reconstituted it as a Board of Trustees according to the new mandates of the Act which called for three board members from the private sector, two from government, three from the RSPN

membership, and the Executive Director. The new board members were chosen through a series of meetings of the entire RSPN staff.

For their long and dedicated service to RSPN, we give our heartfelt and humble thanks to the outgoing Board members: Dasho Ugen Dorji, Secretary to the 5th Druk Gyalpo, Ms. Kezang Choden, Ministry of Finance, and Mr. Tobgay S. Namgyal, Director, BTFEC. We welcome the new Board of Trustees:

Private Sector Representatives:

- Dasho Sangay Thinley, (Retired) (Chairman of the Board.)
- Tshering Tashi, Proprietor, Jojo's Adventure Bhutan.
- Pema Choden, Managing Director, Bhutan Broadcasting Service Corporation.

Government Representatives:

- Karma Drukpa, Director, Department of

Forest, Ministry of Agriculture.

- Tshewang Tandin, Director, Department of School Education, Ministry of Education.

RSPN Member Representatives:

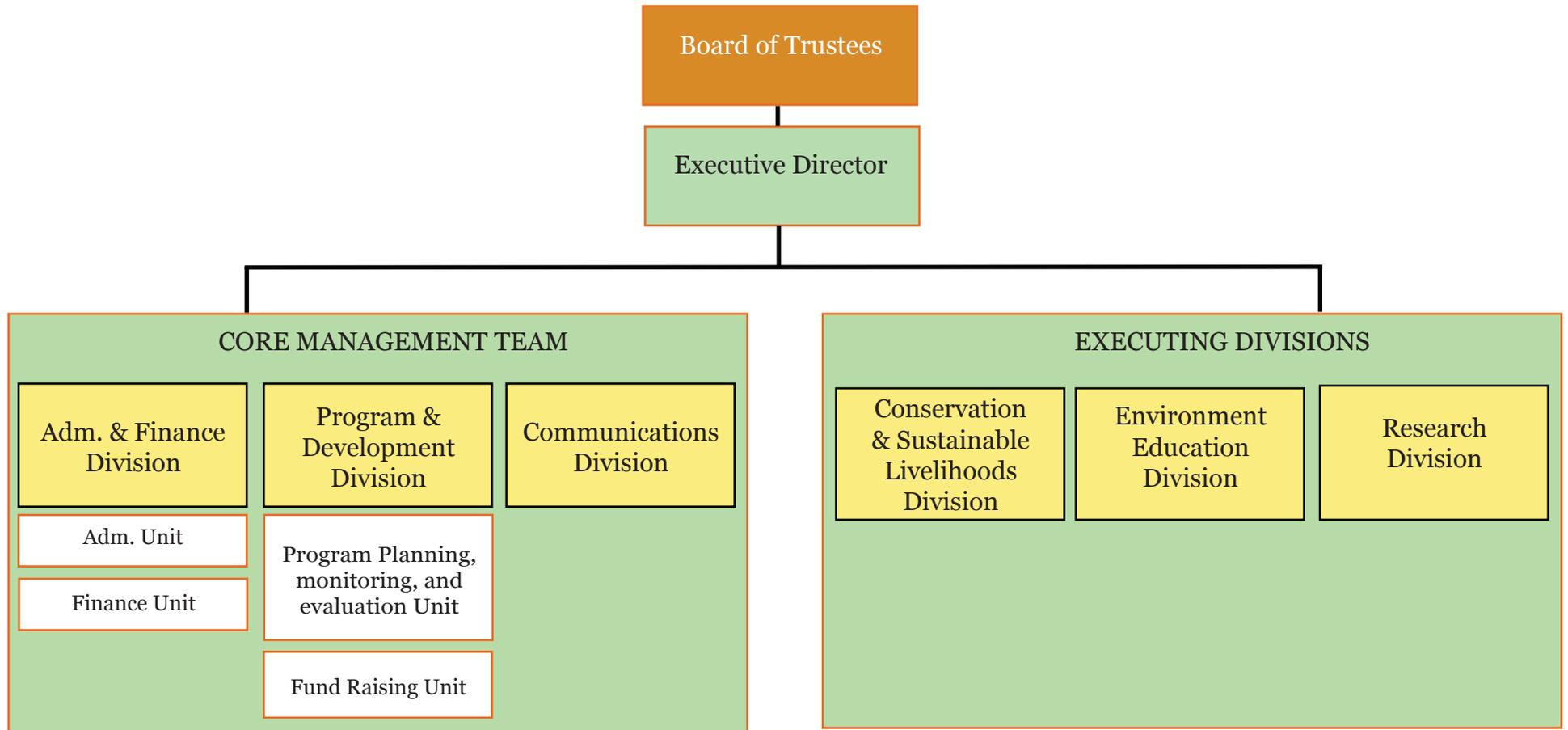
- Hishey Tshering, Proprietor, Bhutan Birding & Heritage Travels.
- Ugyen Wangdi, Proprietor, Ugetsu Communications.
- Sangla, Chhoekhor Gup, Bumthang.

Staff

RSPN has four units, each headed by unit coordinators, who engage in the frontlines of our programs and administration. In the 2007-2008 fiscal year, RSPN had 22 staff engaged in operations management and program implementation, each employed on renewable contracts. For details, please refer to the staff list and flow chart below.

Sl. No.	Name	Designation
1.	Dr. Lam Dorji (Ph.D)	Executive Director
2.	Mrs. Rebecca Pradhan	Ecologist
3.	Mrs. Tshering Lham	Program & Development Coordinator
4.	Mrs. Yangchen Lhamo	Administration & Finance Coordinator
5.	Ms. Rinchen Wangmo	Conservation & Development Coordinator
6.	Mr. Ugyen Lhendup	Environment Education Coordinator
7.	Mr. Sonam Dorji	Communications Officer
8.	Ms. Tshering Choki	Project Officer, Phobjikha
9.	Mr. Dago Tshering	Field Coordinator, Phobjikha
10.	Mr. Sonam Jamtsho	Asst. Finance/Administration Officer
11.	Mr. Pema Gyamtsho	Asst. Communications Officer
12.	Mrs. Manju Giri	Program & Development Officer
13.	Mr. Tshewang Norbu	Asst. Research Officer
14.	Mr. Tsheten Dorji	Project Officer, Wamrong
15.	Mr. Jigme Tshering	Project Officer, Phobjikha
16.	Mr. Tshering Penjor	Project Officer, Bumthang
17.	Mr. Tshering Phuntsho	Program Officer, Bhutan Water Partnership
18.	Mr. Chening Dorji	Sr. Driver
19.	Mrs. Tshewang Choden	Receptionist
20.	Mr. Cheten Dorji	Driver
21.	Mrs. Cheki Lhamo	Messenger/Caretaker
22.	Mr. Lobzang	Caretaker, Phobjikha

RSPN Organisational Structure



Infrastructure

The RSPN headquarters is based in Thimphu with three field offices. In addition to the long-standing field office in Phobjikha, this fiscal year RSPN opened two more field offices in Bumthang and Trashigang to expand our presence across the country.

Thimphu headquarters is currently housed in a rented building, but we have se-

cured a lease of land measuring 17,000 square feet in Kawajangsa on which we plan to build a permanent building. The drawings for the headquarters are complete and have been submitted for approval to Thimphu City Corporation.

The building will showcase energy efficiency and lightweight construction with a minimum use of wood. The building plan

also incorporates an Environmental Resource Centre (ERC) that will consist of a library with online access, space for researchers, and a small auditorium for a variety of forums, including lectures, workshops, and exhibitions for the exchange information on the environment among members, students, and professionals.

RSPN's International Memberships

RSPN is expanding its memberships in regional and international environmental networks:

- International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN): RSPN became member of the IUCN in 2007. IUCN has a volunteer network of around 10,000 technical and scientific experts working in global commissions, protected areas, species survival, ecosystem management, environmental education, and communications, environment, economics and social policy and environ-

mental laws. RSPN is the only Bhutanese member organization.

- Climate Action Network of South Asia (CANSA): CANSA is a regional network on climate change hosted by the Bangladesh Centre for Advanced Studies. RSPN's Executive Director is a member of the CANSA Board of Directors.
- South Asia Forum of Responsible Business (SAFoRB): RSPN is one of the founding members of the SAFoRB, a network organization working toward the promotion of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR).

CSR is a new concept in Bhutan, so RSPN and the Bhutan Chamber of Commerce and Industry organized an introductory workshop in Thimphu, in February 2008, for both government and corporate participants.

- South Asia Youth in Environment Network (SAYEN): RSPN is the focal agency for SAYEN in Bhutan, a network based in the Center for Environmental Education, Ahmedabad, India. SAYEN organizes youth conferences on environmental issues.

Programs – Making a Difference

The programs' goals are outlined by the Five Year Strategic Plan, which are designed and continually updated to meet the challenges of the changing times. Our program goals are:

1. Conserve endangered species outside the protected area system.
2. Develop ecosystem-based approaches to management in areas outside the protected area system.
3. Support management of emerging urban environmental issues.
4. Enhance institutional capacity for environmental education, ecological research, and community-based natural resource management.



Research and Conservation

A large element of RSPN's mission is in applied research to find the right solutions to the conservation dilemmas that Bhutan faces. We are focused on fieldwork and measures that can be practically applied on the ground by local communities and by conservation groups. If our conservation efforts are to be properly directed, it is vital that they are based on facts. To achieve this end, we engage in primary research on biodiversity and threatened species in collaboration with many institutions and individuals.

White-bellied Heron Monitoring

Since the 4th Druk Gyalpo sighted Bhutan's first White-bellied Heron (*Ardea insignis*) in 1975, many more have come to call our country home. The WBH is now classified by the IUCN as critically endangered because fewer than 200 are thought to live in the whole world. RSPN's research efforts have found 32 WBH living in Bhutan mostly in Punatshangchu basin and its tributaries. The up-coming Punatshangchu Hydropower Project will alter the flow and riparian habitats of this river, so it is necessary to study WBH habitats and needs in depth.

The Breeding Seasons

In 2007, for 86 days from egg-laying in May to fledging in late July, we engaged in a continuous 24-hour per day monitoring program of the breeding pairs at Rurichu and Ngangsingna. Field staff hired for the research used binoculars to observe the birds. For behavioural comparison, a parallel monitoring program for non-breeding herons was also carried out with intensive, 24-hour per day monitoring by both RSPN and hired staff.



> *White-bellied Heron (Ardea insignis) at Phochu, Punakha*

Questions were answered about the number of chicks per nest, the mortality rate, feeding times, chick behaviour, foraging by parents, and food preferences. Fallen feathers were collected for DNA analysis, though this has not yet been completed. At the end of July

or early August, the chicks leave their nests to begin living on and feeding from small tributaries. In the winter, when water levels have decreased, the birds all go to the Mochu and Phochu to join the non-breeding herons.

What Ruffles Their Feathers?

In November, 2007, over a two week period, we tried to answer the questions: What disturbs the herons and how far do they fly? How far do they fly when they are not disturbed? 43 flights were observed, of which one third were due to disturbance. In these flights the herons covered a total distance of 13.2 km.

It was also observed that the disturbed flights are generally short, just enough to escape the zone of perceived danger, while regular flights are usually long, for example to reach a new feeding ground. Even though the flights are short, it affects the bird's immediate chances of catching a fish and may move them from the prime fishing zones. The main disturbances, and the threshold distances at which WBH fly away, are trucks within 200m, humans on foot within 120m, kayaks within 100m, and cattle under 10m

Regular and Ongoing Observation

Throughout the year, RSPN maintains a watchful eye on several of Bhutan's herons, and also engages in frequent expeditions to check up on more remote herons and to look for new ones. In winter and spring, we try to catch the WBH to mount a special collar with both Platform Telemetric Transmitter (PTT) and radio transmitter to monitor them better. The PTT is a Platform Telemetric Transmitter tracked by satellite, and the radio transmitter can be located by field staff on the ground with telemetry equipment. Unfortunately, we have had great difficulty catching the birds and have been, so far, unsuccessful.

RSPN staff also travel widely at intervals through the year, looking for new nests and new birds on other rivers, as well as to check up on the WBH we already know. In Zhemgang, we know of four birds and a nest on Ber-

tichu, and one bird on Mangdichu. In Mongar, Trashigang, and Lhuentse, we have scoured Sherichu, Kurichu, Kholongchu, Gamrichu, and other rivers to no avail. Further Cerichu, Harachu, Salamjikhola and Ada lake are good habitats for the WBH.

In the Punatshangchu basin, we find birds on the Mochu and Phochu all year round. All year, hired staff monitor the Phochu daily and record all observed WBH behaviours. Monitoring is from 6am to 6pm from November to February, and mornings and evenings from March to October.

In November, 2007, RSPN ecologist Rebecca Pradhan ran a one day training workshop for six villagers, two Wangduephodrang Forestry officials, and two RSPN staff. The main emphasis was on trapping the birds and mounting the PTT/radio collars. The workshop participants also discussed wildlife diseases such as Bird Flu, and the impacts of fungicides and pesticides.

> RSPN staff preparing to trap White-bellied Heron for PTT banding in Phochu, Punakha



Black-necked Cranes

Each year, roughly 500 of an estimated global population of 6000 Black-necked Cranes (*Grus nigricollis*) migrate from Tibet to spend the winter in Bhutan. With ongoing financial support from the MacArthur Foundation and technical assistance from the International Crane Foundation, RSPN has con-

tinued its long-term monitoring efforts to help us better understand the interaction between human land use and Black-necked Crane habitat in Bhutan, particularly in Phobjikha Valley. This year, the annual Black-necked Crane census was carried out as usual, and the population trend over the years is reported below.

Table: 1 - The 1991-2008 Black-necked Crane Census

Winter of	Phobjikha (Wangdue Phodrang)	Khotokha (Wangdue Phodrang)	Bumthang (Gyetsa/ Chumey/ Thangbi/ Dhur)	Bomdeling (T/yangtse)	Paro and Lhuntse (Dungkhar)	Total
1991-1992	102	6	8	139	-	255
1992-1993	175	16	8	175	-	374
1993-1994	195	7	-	203	-	405
1994-1995	208	16	23	177	-	424
1995-1996	212	13	16	144	-	385
1996-1997	223	7	14	136	-	380
1997-1998	219	8	15	181	-	423
1998-1999	240+	7	18	146	-	411
1999-2000	244	6	10	155	-	415
2000-2001	248	4	6	151	-	409
2001-2002	262	4	7	169	-	442
2002-2003	269	8	9	155	2 (Paro)	443
2003-2004	270	-	5	150	-	425
2004-2005	352	3	-	151	-	506
2005-2006	353	7	9	140	-	509
2006-2007	317	7	12	123	3 (Lhuntse)	459
2007-2008	292	6	12	130	3 (Lhuntse)	443

> Black-necked Crane, Phobjikha



Biodiversity Surveys

In 2007-2008, RSPN engaged in biodiversity surveys in key conservation areas. The surveys were designed to give information that will help us better understand the natural resources in these areas and to help prepare management plans. These plans are vital to strengthen the legal status of the conservation areas and to garner the support and cooperation of government institutions. For example, our socioeconomic and biodiversity surveys in Phobjikha allowed RSPN to develop a management plan that has secured the approval of the Ministry of Agriculture. We are now working in close collaboration with the Wangdue-phodrang Territorial Division of the Department of Forest to review and implement the plan. We hope to follow a similarly successful

course in the Wamrong-Kangpara Conservation Area. Below, we present a brief account of the sampling methods we employed, and a general summary of our main results.

The first biodiversity survey covered Zawa and Etama villages under Ada geog (Athang) which fall within the Phobjikha Landscape Conservation Area and falls between the altitude range of 850m to 1400m. In general, the forests in the villages of Zawa and Etama are ecologically sound, as indicated by a high quantity of trees' seedlings and controlled grazing practiced by the communities. The areas' forests included warm broadleaved forest, pure pine forest, and mixed forest. The survey found 36 tree species, 73 shrub species, 176 herb species, and 57 seedling species for a total of 301 plant species in 79 families.

Gray Langur, Barking Deer, and Wild Boar were spotted in the survey areas, in addition to 36 species of birds. The most commonly seen birds were the Black Bulbul, Hill Partridge, Green-backed Tit, White-colored Blackbird, Blue Whistling Thrush, and Jungle Babbler. Other sightings included four butterfly species, 2 caterpillar species, 3 grasshopper species, and one chameleon.

The second biodiversity survey focused on the Wamrong-Kangpara Conservation Area in Trashigang, at an elevation of 1500m to 2300m, and covered Pasaphu, Madhuwa, and Tshogoenpa. All the forests in these areas are secondary warm broadleaf forests. Secondary forests are not original forests, in this case because of the widespread practice of shifting cultivation. Consequently, the forests are very high in plant diversity which attracts a great deal of birds. On the other hand, the thicker vegetation impedes other wildlife and the forest has a lower diversity of economically viable plants, medicines, and wild vegetables. The survey found 69 tree species, 78 shrub species, 96 herb species, 45 fern species, 30 orchid species, 6 bamboo species, and 2 moss species for a total of 225 plant species in 104 families.

Though no animals were seen, Sambar and Barking Deer droppings were found in all transects, and disturbed ground indicated that Wild Boar forage in the forest. 48 bird species, the most common being the Black Bulbul, Hill Partridge, Green-backed Tit, White-colored Blackbird, Blue Whistling Thrush, and Jungle Babbler have been recorded. A number of frog, beetle species and scorpion were also seen.



> Biodiversity survey in Kangpara, Trashigang

Education for Sustainability

One of the main components of RSPN's mission is to educate the citizenry about the importance of the environment. Through educational programs in schools, monasteries, and community groups, we hope to sensitize people to the complexities and real-life implications of these issues. We feel these efforts are especially important in our new age of democracy, so that citizen groups are well-informed and are able to exert appropriate pressure on the political system to enact environmentally correct policies.

Building Grassroots Civil Society Support for Biodiversity Conservation

This project, funded by the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF), helped RSPN establish Local Conservation Support Groups (LCSGs) in four dzongkhags: Trashigang, Bumthang, Zhemgang, and Sarbang. Two more dzongkhags, Paro and Wangduephodrang, are in the process of forming LCSGs. LCSGs are formed by individuals who share a genuine concern for the environment and a strong desire to support conservation through local actions. The group allows them to collect their talents and to be better environmental ambassadors to promote sustainable livelihoods and develop solutions to local environmental issues.

RSPN held introductory meetings to discuss the concept of support groups, their purpose and function, and their potential to effect real changes. Meetings were also held in Paro and Wangduephodrang where community members are in the process of forming their own LCSGs.

The rationale behind Local Conservation



> LCSG members introduced to Important Bird Area (IBA) identified by BirdLife international in Bumthang

Support Groups (LCSGs) has several dimensions. Across the country, there are many significant conservation sites that fall outside of the protected areas system managed by the Royal Government. These include habitat linkages within the Bhutan Biological Conservation Complex (B2C2), many rivers and

forests without formal conservation management, and some places recognized as global priorities such as Important Bird Areas (IBAs) and Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs).

Though government initiatives to support these areas are important and noteworthy, RSPN recognizes the active participation of



> Nature club members actively involve in various environmental programs in their schools

civil society at the grassroots to be the most effective means of long term conservation. RSPN alone is not sufficient for the tasks of watchdog and advocate, and Bhutan desperately needs a strong network of advocates to raise local environmental problems to both regional and national policy makers.

LCSGs actively involve Bhutanese in local environmental issues and are a community voice to raise environmental concerns. We are heartened by this development, sure in our belief that the active, grassroots involvement of Bhutanese is the surest way to sustainably conserve the Kingdom's natural riches in a way that also supports human livelihoods. These groups have a very important role to play in Bhutan's democratic future, and we hope they will be a model for many more such groups in the years to come.

Educational Initiatives by Nature Clubs

We are grateful to a long history of support from the United Nations Development Program – Bhutan (UNDP) which supports variety of nature club activities mainly in schools. Through such funding, RSPN was able to collect information on State of Local Environment, which are reach and informative. Yet another successful project was that of Action Grant Projects that benefited both the community and the environment.

Action Grant Projects

In 2007, RSPN advertised for proposals to receive funding from UNDP through RSPN's Action Grant Projects. Across the country,

people assembled their ideas and submitted them to RSPN. Of the many proposals received, six excellent ones were selected for Action Grant support, and are described below.

- Nangkhor HSS Nature Club: The Nature Club of the school organized cleanup campaign to remove the trashes that contaminated the water source. A series of presentations and a slogan competition educated the school and community on the importance of water. They built a retaining wall near the water supply and repaired and replaced the damaged pipes, the filter system and the fence around the source. The improved water supply sys-

tem now benefits nearly 600 students, 16 staff and nearby institutions like hospital, Bhutan Power Corporation and Bhutan Telecom.

- Samtse HSS Nature Club: Sukruti village, in Samtse geog, Samtse, suffers from degraded land in several areas, both due to landslides and due to a seasonal stream. In October and November of 2007, SHSS Nature Club organized a forester to teach land restoration techniques to local farmers including plantations of hedge rows and soil binding species, and building check dams from live cuttings, wood, and stone. Over two weeks, a group of paid labourers implemented these techniques to shore-up a recent landslide zone. The fol-

Environment Education

lowing June, to counteract land degradation associated with a seasonal stream, a group of 80 SHSS students planted about 3500 saplings of bamboo, retha, and chakrasi.

- Gelephu HSS, Class XII Science Students: Students from GHSS, Sarbang, came up with a fascinating project that stands as a practical example of sustainable resource use and waste disposal. Meeting on Saturday mornings, the students designed and contracted out the construction of a small-scale biogas plant with an attached kitchen. Biogas plants use biodegradable waste including kitchen scraps and cow dung to produce both a potent fertilizer for the fields and a combustible gas that can be used for heating and cooking.
- Jakar HSS: A group of 16 JHSS students and 3 teachers decided to study the ecology of crows (*Corvus macrorhynchos*) in Chamkhar valley, Bumthang. Besides strong cultural significance, the students were also intrigued by reports that crow population was decreasing in other parts of Bhutan though it was increasing in Bumthang. The project began with a line transect to estimate the crow's population that involved behavioural observations on treks and camps. As a result, the study produced a report on the crow's habits, including roosting, nesting, foraging, and breeding.
- Peljorling HSS Nature Club: PHSS and the surrounding community in Samtse occasionally suffer from acute water shortages, a problem compounded by improper waste disposal. To address the practical



> Bird enthusiasts nature club members

issue of water supply and to develop a sense of collective responsibility and ownership over the local water resource, Peljorling HSS Nature Club organized both paid and volunteer community labour to build two concrete water tanks and install pipes. The main tank at the water source 7 km from the school supplies a tank at the school itself. The project overcame budgetary constraints with community good will, including volunteers who cleared the sites and spent one and a half months digging the foundations through stony ground.

- Sherubtse College, Department of Geogra-

phy & Planning: In Ghaney village under Kanglung geog, the supply of clean drinking water was limited due to old bamboo pipes which often needed repair due to heavy sedimentation. A group of students and professors built two concrete water tanks and laid permanent underground pipelines that benefited the village

The projects were very successful and highly encouraging. We hope they will stand as an example of how small groups of dedicated people can make a significant and lasting contribution to both their community and the environment.

State of the Local Environment

To learn more about the condition of Bhutan's environment, RSPN collected data from nature clubs right across the country. We asked the clubs to write about the state of and the impacts on their local environment under five subject headings: Forests, Water, Air, Land, and Wildlife. The format was open, allowing the clubs to report on the issues that were most important in their community. The results were compiled and published in the December 2008 Rangzhin, the RSPN newsletter.

Most respondents were from rural areas and

have clean water, clean air, and vibrant forests around productive farm land. Landslides were common in many areas, often linked with road construction. Several schools reported water shortages or contamination. Some communities noted serious decreases in arable land due to urban expansion and a rise in local population. On the other hand, rural-to-urban migration has left some communities with vacant fields.

Some respondents were from semi-urban and urban towns. Here too, most people have clean water and fresh air and are not far from an escape into green pastures and forests. More than their rural counterparts, urban re-

spondents noted the problems associated with bad vehicular emissions and urban plans that have not included sufficient green space. Perhaps the worst problem for all respondents was the prevalence of trash and improper defecation, particularly near important water sources.

Overall, we were heartened by people's pride in Bhutan's beautiful countryside. Their comments displayed the kind of optimism that will ensure a healthy future for our environment. This exercise has helped us understand the vital role that the nature clubs can play as environmental watchdogs. In future, we look forward to many more correspondences with our young and astute partners.

Institutionalisation of Nature Clubs in schools

To supplement environmental education, RSPN initiated and established nature club programs in schools across the country in 1987. Each year, the number of clubs and the range of their activities have increased. Club activities give students and teachers a way to contribute valuably to their communities, their environment, and their own learning through everything from nature hikes to awareness campaigns. RSPN provides technical and financial support to the clubs so that they can conduct conservation activities.

Within the primary and secondary school systems, RSPN is affiliated with 102 nature clubs. We are very pleased that the nature club model continues to proliferate, and now there are many more nature clubs that are not formally affiliated with RSPN. With the increase in nature clubs every year, RSPN has found it difficult to provide support to all the schools.



> Land degradation caused by soil erosion in Eastern Bhutan

Environment Education

To overcome this problem, RSPN and the Ministry of Education have agreed to institutionalize nature clubs within the extracurricular program at some time in the 2008-2009 fiscal year. That is, the clubs will become a regular activity to support formal environmental education. This will also allow the nature club program to expand into the as-yet unreached schools.

RSPN's role in nature clubs will shift to coordinator training. To help schools run their nature clubs independently, RSPN produced and published a Nature Club Activity Handbook for students and a Management Handbook for coordinators. The Activity Handbook addresses a variety of environmental issues in a thematic approach that focuses on forests, water, waste, wildlife, birds, and biodiversity in general. The Management Handbook describes the role of nature clubs to help conserve the local environment and the responsibilities entailed when forming a club. The issues addressed include member enrolment, activity planning, reporting, finances, and club management.

Teachers and principals were consulted to ensure the book met their needs, and many useful comments were incorporated. Officials from the Ministry of Education were actively involved in the production of the books. 5000 copies of activity handbook and 4000 copies of management handbook were printed and are ready to be supplied to all the schools.

> Volunteers from Sherubtse College initiated the East-West highway clean up campaign as a part of Clean Bhutan activity in 2007

Clean Bhutan Campaign

The need to address littering and the increasing problem of inappropriate disposal of solid waste is clear. RSPN has long been associated with ad-hoc clean-up campaigns, but we have observed that the effects are typically temporary. For some time, RSPN has advocated for more lasting measures.

RSPN initiated the 'Clean Bhutan' program to bring together public and private

stakeholders in a concerted effort to solve the issue of litter. The program, guided by a steering committee comprised of stakeholders, used research, publications and advertising to support policies that incorporate a "polluter pays" principle, to raise public awareness, and to advocate for both adequate disposal facilities. One shouldn't underestimate the importance of public awareness, as the success of policies and facilities must be coordinated with a change in human behaviour.



Coinciding with 100 years of independence, peace, and prosperity in the kingdom, the Clean Bhutan Committee, in collaboration with Ministry of Works And Human Settlement and Thimphu City Corporation, organized an awareness campaign on solid waste management and its status in Thimphu on December 17th 2007. The Prime Minister graced the occasion with a strong message on individuals' responsibility to manage the waste issue in the country.

The 'Clean Bhutan' campaign provides a platform for local campaigns and fundraising. Our ultimate goal is nothing less than nation-

wide coverage at all level, from both minor and major municipalities to Dzongkhag administrations. Everyone can be involved in different capacities to initiate clean-up campaigns and move towards systems that sustainably manage our waste.

As a herculean example of the kind of work done, a total of 56 student volunteers from the Social Service Unit (SSU) and the Singye Karm Nature Club of Sherubtse College initiated a massive cleaning and awareness campaign in collaboration with RSPN. Over ten days, two groups of volunteers cleaned 500 kilometers of national highway connecting Thimphu and

Environment Education

Trashigang. After their hard work to sweep this enormous strip, they were warmly received in the heart of the capital city.

Also since the December 17th awareness campaign, the Thimphu City Corporation, with support from the Ministry of Works and Human Settlement, initiated temporary penalties for those who litter or inappropriately manage their waste. The Ministry of Works and Human Settlement organized a national workshop on solid waste management, and The National Environment Commission has engaged stakeholders to pass a Solid Waste Management Act for long term and national

application.

The Policy and Planning Division of the Ministry of Home and Cultural Affairs has also given great support to the Clean Bhutan initiative, culminating in an Executive Order to annually mark November 1st as Clean Bhutan Day.



> His Excellency the Prime Minister Lyonpo Kinzang Dorji launching Clean Bhutan project's mascot on 17 December, 2007

Awareness Programs in Phobjikha

The following educational projects have direct implications for our sustainable livelihoods program in the Phobjikha valley. It is only through broad-based education on environmental issues that RSPN can realize long term conservation objectives, both socially and politically. Awareness, knowledge, and understanding are all tools for local people to participate effectively in conservation, but also to develop livelihoods for themselves that operate harmoniously within their natural ecosystems and within the nation's economy. It is certainly RSPN's hope that the youth we train will later become actively involved in environmental advocacy at the local and national government levels.

Awareness Building in Phobjikha's Nature Clubs

The three local schools in Phobjikha are affiliated to the network of nature clubs under RSPN. They are actively involved in environmental education activities like bird watching, waste management and cleaning campaigns, stream adoption, nature gardening and drawing, and quiz competitions on environmental themes. The schools also present environmental exhibitions during local festivals and organize World Environment Day celebrations.

RSPN provides technical assistance in a variety of other environmental activities initiated by these schools. For example, RSPN organized foreign volunteers to give art lessons, workshops on picture storytelling, and vocational training, including pottery. Build-



> Community members of Phobjikha participating in one of the clean up activities

ing these skills increases the confidence of individuals and also inculcates a deeper sense of appreciation for the natural environment.

Outside of the school system, Non Formal Education (NFE) centers and local communities in Phobjikha were also involved in various environmental education and awareness

programs. As a result, the NFE centers have integrated some environmental activities into their programs. RSPN plans to continue to enhance community education by developing educational packages relevant to communities in Phobjikha valley.

Cleaning Campaign

On 4th August 2007, a mass cleaning campaign was organized all over Phobjikha. The campaign was initiated by the Phobjikha Environment Management Committee, a local community group, in response to the valley's growing waste problem. Over three hundred people took part in the campaign that in-

involved students and teachers from all three of Phobjikha's schools in addition to non-formal education learners and teachers.

The waste collected consisted mainly of plastics, packages, wrappers, rubber, tins, and rags. The primary aim of the cleaning was to educate the local community and instill a sense of responsibility towards waste management. It also complimented the nationwide "Clean Bhutan" campaign launched by RSPN

in December 2007, with events that continued throughout 2008.

Following the campaign, separate geog meetings with the community were organized by village leaders. These meetings aimed to take advantage of the momentum generated by the cleaning campaign to streamline the waste management system in the Phobjikha Conservation Area.



> Students of Phobjikha valley actively participating in a clean up activity

Sustainable Livelihoods

The areas richest in biological diversity, such as Phobjikha, are often home to the poorest communities. Additionally, local people have the greatest stake in the long term sustainability of the natural resources in the area, but it is only when their livelihood needs are met that communities prioritize conservation. Development must be based on a realistic perception of people's way-of-life, and build on local strengths and aspirations to improve their standard of living in concert with conservation objectives.

RSPN's programs focus on community capacity building to enhance local knowledge so people feel secure in long-term self-sufficiency, and to build incentives for local people to participate in conservation activities. RSPN strives to provide for livelihood alternatives that are environmentally friendly by encouraging organic farming methods, ecotourism ventures, handicraft production, and the installation of renewable energy systems such as solar panels. We also focus on development initiatives such as improvements to the rural water supply, drainage, and sanitation systems



> Potato is one of the important cash crops for the communities of Phobjikha

Phobjikha Environment Management Committee

Since the inception of the Phobjikha Environment Management Committee (PEMC), a local community group, its contribution to local conservation efforts has become more visible. In this ecologically sensitive area, the PEMC has taken part of RSPN's responsibility in conservation management, and now has a clearly defined constitution to guide its function. Though initiated by RSPN, PEMC has become increasingly self-operational and we are pleased to witness greater participation. One simple example is PEMC's solo organization of the annual Black-necked Crane Festi-

val, which used to be a major task for RSPN.

The PEMC subcommittee, the Phobjikha Women's Group has been very successful, with a larger membership this year and much effort directed to expand the area's ecotourism potential. We are deeply thankful for the continuous support given to the PEMC initiative by the specific support for local capacity building programs under the MacArthur Foundation's Strengthening Protection and Management of Phobjikha Conservation Area Project.

Familiarization Trip for Tour Operators

For some time, RSPN has been working to promote Phobjikha as an ecotourism destination. A major roadblock has been a relatively weak linkage between established tour operators, our clients as it were, and the community in the valley. Tours have come to see the Black-necked Cranes, but leave soon afterwards without tasting the other delights the valley has to offer, such as nature trails, local handicrafts, cultural programs, horse riding, and even home visits with residents who provide food, drink, and hospitality.

To put Phobjikha on the map and familiarize tour operators with the ecotourism products and services, a trip was organized for the operators from 7-9 September, 2007. This was the first time stakeholders were brought together to discuss issues related to ecotourism in Phobjikha. The program included day hikes along the nature trails, visits to places of cultural interest, lunch and tea with the local communities, a cultural program, and dinner with a local family. For the first time, locals were also hired for the trip, giving them hands-on experience as guides. Undoubtedly, the trip strengthened the partnership between the operators and the community.



> Group of tour operators on a familiarisation trip for tourist trails in Phobjikha

Conservation Programs Initiated in the East

Though our sustainable livelihoods program began in Phobjikha, we have recently taken our fifteen years of experience to the East and have initiated community-based natural resource management in Wamrong and Kangpara, Trashigang. The communities in these densely populated areas are directly dependent on their natural resource base, but their pursuit of development may be detrimental to the ecological stability of the area.

A field office was established in September 2007 and a staff member was appointed to oversee activities in these areas. As a start, four villages (Moshi, Khaimanma, Madhuwa and Pasaphu) were selected to pilot the activities. In January 2008, a baseline biodiversity survey was performed and a socioeconomic survey using the Participatory Rural Assessment (PRA) tool identified the community's needs.

The results of the PRAs varied from village to village as the issues faced were different. In general, most people are subsistence farmers and the major issue faced was crops lost to the wildlife, which is probably related to the area's extensive forest cover. Nevertheless, these villagers depend heavily on the forest for fire wood, construction timber, and for other non-wood products like mushrooms, bamboo, cane and forest dyes. Drinking water shortages and contamination was also a problem common to most villages.

To directly involve local communities in conservation programs, RSPN carried out intensive consultations with different sectors in the local governments including the village



> RSPN's field office in Wamrong, Trashigang

leaders (Gups) in each geog. Through such programs, RSPN hopes to multiply the experience gained from Phobjikha to the East and strengthen conservation programs and sustainable livelihoods across the country.

Training for Khaimanma Community

Khaimanma village is subject to heavy rainfall and is known to be vulnerable to regular and heavy landslides and soil erosion. These are partly the consequence of defores-

tation and poor land management practices. An awareness training was organized on 14-15 July, 2007, to educate local communities on the issues and to prepare them to better adapt to such environmental adversity. The training involved community leaders and representatives from 28 households and discussed sustainable forest uses and the effects of defor-

estation, overgrazing, and shifting cultivation. Particular emphasis was placed on remediation techniques for degraded land and to control landslides and soil erosion.

As a part of the initiative for land and watershed management, about 500 saplings were planted in the landslide prone area on the 30th and 31st of August, 2007, by commu-

nity members and the students of Tshogonpa CPS. A demonstrative workshop on rainwater harvesting was also conducted for the communities in Tshogonpa. Both activities were carried out in collaboration with the Wamrong Dungkhag Office.



> Farmers in being educated on some environmental issues

Emerging Issues

We have to keep our eyes forward, to focus on what's next. As climate change looms large over our glaciers and changes to weather are starting to be felt by all of us, we feel a strong need to develop our research capacity in this field. This is especially important given the potential for water shortages predicted by some climate models. On the issue of water, RSPN has also been looking forward to the kind of policies that Bhutan must enact if we are to sustainably manage this precious resource.

Climate Change

RSPN's capacity in the field of climate change research is limited, but we feel it is important to develop as we consider the dire effects predicted by global climate models for Bhutan's environment under a warming scenario. To this end, and with support from the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED), RSPN is enhancing its capacity in the field of climate change through training and participation in international negotiations and conventions. We also conducted research and published a report on "Health and Climate Change," which is, as far as we know, the only publication on climate change with regard to human health issues in Bhutan.

Water Issues

Based on RSPN's extensive work in the area of Water, the Royal Government of Bhutan has entrusted RSPN with the responsibility to host the Bhutan Water Partnership (BhWP). Under the guidance of an executive committee, the BhWP has assisted the National Environment Commission (NEC) to monitor



> GLOF is the immediate threat caused by climate change

water quality and to formulate the Bhutan Water Policy, Vision, and Act. Furthermore, we have been engaged in extensive water quality monitoring throughout the country.

RSPN Partners and Finances

RSPN operations are guided by its Administrative and Financial Guidelines, which have recently been completely revised into two documents. The new Administrative and Human Resource Management Manual (AHRMM) has been completed and development of the Financial Manual is underway. For efficiency and proper record keeping, RSPN is also establishing a sound electronic financial accounting system.

Fundraising is always a challenge, one that will only become more difficult as the global economy struggles to find secure footing. Nevertheless, with the help of individuals, organizations, and donors who have faith in RSPN, we have managed to secure funding for our wide variety of projects, as well as a million-dollar endowment fund to support the core operation of our organization.

The RSPN Endowment Fund

In the first half of this decade, a major fundraising campaign raised \$550,000 for an endowment fund. The Bhutan Trust Fund for Environmental Conservation (BT-FEC) matched this amount with an additional \$450,000. By June 2007, the fund had accrued interest to reach US\$1,247,477. In June 2008, this amount had reached US\$1,341,393.

Each year, some of the interest earned from the fund is used to cover RSPN's core expenses and the rest is reinvested to help the fund grow. Despite the financial crisis that began in 2008, we are pleased to report that the potential losses have been substantially mitigated by the wise management of the fund by the BTFEC and their financial advisers. Thank you.

Partners

Each project receives direct support from a variety of charitable institutions. Every year, we are pleased to receive funds from individuals and institutions and we are also happy to report here the list of 2007-2008 "Guardian" members. Your generosity helps keep RSPN vibrant with new initiatives and programs and we thank you all.

Table: 2 - Lists of RSPN's major partners and donors

PROJECT	PARTNERS
Clean Bhutan	SGP/GEF – UNDP (Small Grants Program / Global Environment Facility)
	WWF (World Wildlife Fund – Bhutan Program)
	BTFEC (Bhutan Trust Fund for Environmental Conservation)
	UNDP (United Nations Development Program)
	Bhutan Foundation
	ABTO (Association of Bhutanese Tour Operators)
	Embassy of Finland
	NEC (National Environment Commission)
	Thimphu City Corporation
	South South Cooperation
	SDS (Sustainable Development Secretariat)

RSPN Partners and Finances

CSR Workshop	PIC, New Delhi (Partnership in Change) ; UNDP;
Phobjikha Conservation Area	MacArthur Foundation
Monitoring of improved clay stove	Austrian Coordination Bureau
Sustainable Livelihoods	Sustainable Development Secretariat
Eco-tourism	UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization)
Health & Climate Change	IIED (International Institute for Environment and Development)
Environment & Health	WWF (World Wildlife Fund)
Religion & Environment	Embassy of Netherlands, (New Delhi)
Local Conservation Support Groups	CEPF (Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund); UNDP
Support of 102 nature clubs	KNCF (Keidanren Nature Conservation Fund)
Institutional strengthening	Bhutan National Commission for UNESCO
Endowment fund management	BT FEC (Bhutan Trust Fund for Environmental Conservation)
RSPN office building construction	The Philanthropic Collaborative
White-bellied Heron Conservation Project	WWF; Felburn Foundation;
Community-based Natural Resources Management (CBNRM)	Embassy of Finland
Community-based Sustainable Tourism	SDS (Sustainable Development Secretariat)
Sustainable Fuelwood consumption	UNDP-SGP/GEF
Support for Biodiversity conservation	UNDP (United Nations Development Program)
Individual donors	Ruth Urban
	Salisbury School, U.S.A.
	Teton Science Schools
	Dong Cheeseman
RSPN Guardian members	Mr. & Mrs. Daniel Pierce, MA, USA
	Mr. & Mrs. Jim Rogers, MO, USA
	Mr. William Tacon, DE, England
	Ms. Michael Mayers, CA, USA
	Mr. Judith Brown, CA, USA
	Ms. Marian Phelps Pawlick, IL, USA
	Paul King & Gail Murray, IL, USA
	Ms. Sabine Liebherr, Vevey, Switzerland
	Mr. & Mrs. John & Marcia Harter, CA, USA
	Ms. Kathleen Fung, CA, USA
	Ms. Sara L. Simmonds, LA, USA
Dr. Klaus Topfer, Nairobi, Kenya	

Membership

The constitution of Bhutan states that protection of the environment is a fundamental duty for every citizen. Although RSPN is a non-political organization, we believe that we fill an imperative role within our new democracy to promote environmental conservation at every scale across the country. Furthermore, it is RSPN's mission to act as an environmental watchdog. These goals are impossible without the support of individuals and organizations that are also committed to protect Bhutan's incredible environment. In particular, RSPN's objectives depend pivotally on the RSPN membership.

Each year we try and recruit more members. Until recently, RSPN membership was largely confined to the Thimphu area. This has begun to change with the establishment of RSPN field offices in conservation areas in other parts of Bhutan. In due course, we hope the support base will both increase and spread nationwide.

By the end of the 2008 fiscal year, RSPN membership stood at 3090 including, guardians, donors, foreign and national members, members from 102 nature clubs, and institutions.



> RSPN members engaged in some educational activity

Special Thanks

Many people and institutions offer RSPN personal and technical assistance, beyond funding, that is absolutely invaluable to our programs.

Research and Conservation

We are thankful to the help of many institutions and individuals. In particular, the Department of Forests, and especially the Director, have made our tasks much easier by helping with logistics, connections, and other arrangements that improve our working situation. The Chief Forest Officer in Wangduephodrang, Mr. Phento Tshering, has also been very useful to our fieldwork. He is always supportive, involved, and willing to help. George Archibald has been a constant source of connections for technical support, and he always finds the right person to work with us. We would be remiss not to mention the ceaseless assistance we receive from the communities of Jawa, Ada (Athang), Ngangsingna, and Phochu. These people are always ready to help us in our tasks, show us birds and wildlife, and discuss the issues of their community and environment.

Environmental Education

We could not get our message across without the ceaseless support of many individuals. The Ministry of Education has been very supportive, especially the Department of School Education, within which the Coordinator of the School Agriculture and Environment Section has been a constant source of connec-

tions, ideas, and collaborative assistance. The Ministry of Works and Human Settlements and Thimphu City Corporation have always been ready with technical support.

Sustainable Livelihoods

Our projects have been supported by a great variety of people and institutions. In Wangduephodrang and Trashigang, both district's administration have been immensely helpful. In both dzongkhags, the Renewable Natural Resources, Agriculture, and Health Sectors have always been ready with useful information and contacts. The Divisional Forest Office of both Wangduephodrang and Trashigang have been very receptive to our questions and requests, openly giving technical support and assistance whenever needed. Furthermore, the Tourism Council of Bhutan has given us help and information regarding ecotourism, and the International Crane Foundation USA and Japan International Cooperation has been invaluable for its technical assistance regarding the Black-necked Cranes. The communities have been wonderful allies. In Phobjikha, nature clubs from the Phobjikha Primary School, Ramachen Primary School, and Beyta Community School have worked hard and actively to raise environmental awareness, organize campaigns, and get other youth involved. The Phobjikha Environment Management Committee has been very active,

and we would like to make a special mention of its subcommittee, the Phobjikha Women's Group. These community members have been endlessly helpful, coordinate several activities throughout the year, and represent their community very well. Also we thank the volunteers Naoko Nagao and Haruki Nagao for their help training local community members to make natural handicrafts.

ROYAL SOCIETY FOR THE PROTECTION OF NATURE
STATEMENT OF AFFAIRS (BALANCE SHEET) AS AT 30 JUNE, 2008

	Schedule	For the year ended June 30, 2008				For the year ended June 30, 2007			
		(A)	(B)		(A+B)	(A)	(B)		(A+B)
		NU.	US\$	Equivalent NU.	TOTAL (NU.)	NU.	US\$	Equivalent NU.	TOTAL (NU.)
Assets									
Fixed Assets (Net Block)									
Furniture & Fixture		480,242.73	-	-	480,242.73	353,450.51	-	-	353,450.51
Office Equipments		2,807,912.25	-	-	2,807,912.25	2,142,008.64	-	-	2,142,008.64
Trekking Equipments		286,940.78	-	-	286,940.78	337,577.39	-	-	337,577.39
Vehicles		2,092,074.02	-	-	2,092,074.02	2,461,263.55	-	-	2,461,263.55
Communication/Other Equipments		193,458.13	-	-	193,458.13	227,597.80	-	-	227,597.80
Building (Observation Center)		1,533,518.17	-	-	1,533,518.17	1,580,946.56	-	-	1,580,946.56
Investment with BTFEC		-	1,341,393.00	57,478,690.05	57,478,690.05	-	1,247,477.00	50,148,575.40	50,148,575.40
Total Fixed Assets	VI	7,394,146.09	1,341,393.00	57,478,690.05	64,872,836.14	7,102,844.45	1,247,477.00	50,148,575.40	57,251,419.85
Current Assets									
Cash		3,188.93	(76.50)	(3,278.03)	89.10	8,990.74	78.50	3,155.70	12,146.44
Bank		9,956,330.62	193,735.08	8,301,548.18	18,257,878.80	12,703,512.37	254,475.58	10,229,918.32	22,933,430.69
Advances	V	1,552,514.93	1,724.00	73,873.40	1,626,388.33	1,165,387.21	(1,724.00)	(69,304.80)	1,096,082.41
Stock Balance	VII	235,450.00	-	-	235,450.00	236,070.00	-	-	236,070.00
Total Current Assets		11,747,484.48	195,382.58	8,372,143.55	20,119,628.03	14,113,960.32	252,830.08	10,163,769.22	24,277,729.54
Total Assets		19,141,630.57	1,536,775.58	65,850,833.60	84,992,464.17	21,216,804.77	1,500,307.08	60,312,344.62	81,529,149.39
Financed by:									
Capital Fund		(909,786.99)	34,744.30	1,488,793.26	579,006.26	(4,870,551.73)	264,547.14	10,634,795.03	5,764,243.30
(Surplus Income)									
Accumulated Fund	IV	20,051,417.56	1,502,031.28	64,362,040.35	84,413,457.91	26,087,356.50	1,235,759.94	49,677,549.59	75,764,906.09
Total Accumulated Fund		19,141,630.57	1,536,775.58	65,850,833.60	84,992,464.17	21,216,804.77	1,500,307.08	60,312,344.62	81,529,149.39

Note: Dollar equivalent calculated at exchange rate of USD 1= Nu. 42.85 as of June 30, 2008(Oanda FX Converter Interbank exchange rate)

Prepared by:



(Yangchen Lhamo)
Adm/Finance Coordinator

Verified by:



(Lam Dorji, Bh. D.)
Executive Director



(Dasho Sangay Thinley)
Chairman





Royal Society for Protection of Nature
P. O. Box: 325, Drimen Lam
Thimphu : Bhutan

Telephone: +975 2 322056/326130

Fax: +975 2 323189

E-mail: rspn@rspnbhutan.org

Website: <http://www.rspnbhutan.org>

