



Winter Panda Quarterly

WWF Bhutan Program

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WWF Bhutan Program

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*WWF Bhutan Conservationists would
like to wish all our Supporters, Partners,
Friends, and Well Wishers A Very
Happy New Year, 2014!*





Forestry officials have been able to stop increasing number of poachers due to better anti-poaching methods and better surveillance with support from WWF.

Govt. strengthens anti-poaching laws

The Ministry of Agriculture and Forests has revised penalties for poaching

WWF Bhutan Program has been supporting a number of anti-poaching efforts such as introducing and training foresters on Spatial Monitoring and Reporting Tools (SMART) Patrolling and strengthening coordination among law enforcement agencies involved in detecting illegal wildlife trade and poaching.

These initiatives have helped bring a number of poaching cases to light based on which the government has now upscaled anti-poaching efforts.

In what could be one of the most significant decisions against poaching, the Ministry of Agriculture and Forests (MoAF) recently

revised the fines and penalties for protected species under section 82 (7) of the Forest and Nature Conservation Rules, 2006.

The revision of the penalties was mainly aimed at curbing poaching pertaining to Tigers (*Panthera tigris*) and the Snow Leopards (*Uncia uncia*).

The revised penalties look at further tightening the already existing anti-poaching efforts by increasing the penalty amount and severity.

Such an initiative comes in the backdrop of increasing number of poaching cases surfacing in the country.

There have been cases reported from Jigme Dorji National Park in Gasa where a 33-year old man was arrested for allegedly poaching Musk Deer (*Moschus moschiferus*).

According to recent media reports, while there were three other men involved in the act, they are still at large.

This was the second arrest of poachers within eight days in the locality.

Earlier, on 2nd November, 2013, park officials and police caught two men, aged 28 and 18, for poaching Monal Pheasants (*Lopho-*

phorus impejanus) and Musk Deer.

In another such incident in November, last year, the high altitude wetland patrol at Jigme Singye Wangchuck National Park (JSWNP) caught four poachers at the base of the Black Mountain.

The poachers had killed three Musk Deers and two Monal Pheasants. Park officials have confiscated bags of bush meat and musk deer pod and feathers.

The revised penalties for poaching are as follows:

» Any person found in act of making an attempt to catch or injure the above mentioned species shall be levied a fine of Nu 0.500 million.

» Any person found in an unpermitted taking, destroying, capturing and trade of their parts and products regardless of whether the animal was taken, destroyed or captured in Bhutan or elsewhere will be levied a fine of Nu 1 million or a penalty of imprisonment which may extend up to ten years or both.

» In addition, any animal parts or products possessed by the offender will be confiscated and the following schedule of fines will be levied for any missing animal parts or products:-

1. Entire set of skin: Nu 0.300 million.
2. Any missing parts of a skin: Nu 0.050 million.
3. Set of bones: Nu 0.300 million.
4. Any missing part of bones: Nu 0.050 million.
5. Claws: Nu 5,000 each.
6. Canine: Nu 10,000 each.
7. Any other parts: Nu 10,000 each.



A camera trap footage from the Himalayan Black Bear survey ongoing in WCP

Mitigating HWC through insurance schemes

Meanwhile, a new report on Human-Black Bear conflict is also underway.

In order to mitigate human-wildlife conflicts in Wangchuck Centennial Park (WCP) in Bumthang, WWF Bhutan has initiated a community-based human-wildlife conflict management group in Choekhor gewog.

To kick off the program, WWF provided a total seed money of Nu. 300,000 to Choekhor gewog which was deposited in the Bank account of the management group.

The interests accruing from the seed money, the annual membership fees and cattle insurance premiums collected from the community are to be utilized for paying compensation to the farmers during cases of livestock depredation by wild animals.

WWF has also assisted the Group in framing a business plan with due consultations with the members.

The business plan is the basis on which the Group collects insurance premiums, annual membership fees and determines compensation amounts during such mishaps and the overall growth of the group.

This initiative, according to park officials, would also control the problem of bears attacking livestock. Meanwhile, WCP has been conducting field surveys on Human-Black Bear conflict so that the park can initiate better ways to mitigate such conflict.



Dungkar farmers during a practical session at the Farmers' School

WCP launches Farmers' School initiative

Farmers learn to adapt to climate change impacts on agriculture and livelihood

Wangchuck Centennial Park (WCP) successfully launched the 'Farmers' school' in Dungkar, Bumthang with support from US-AID's Asia High Mountains Program of WWF.

Farmers' school was a platform to learn and share climate change issues that affect farmers.

Farmers get together to discuss intervention measures to common problems such as pest infestation, availability of water for agriculture, soil erosion, seed storage or fertilizers and pesticides.

According to Netra Binod Sharma, the WWF co-manager of the based in WCP, more than 90 percent of the households in

the locality depend on agriculture, forest products and livestock for their livelihood.

With average farm size holdings of less than 1 hectare, loss of agricultural productivity directly impacts the food security of these subsistence farmers.

The Farmers' School initiative also aims at conserving and sharing traditional knowledge on crops and water management. Farmers also get to learn new farming technology, bio-manures and land management.

As of now, around 10 farmers, mostly women, have also been trained on recording daily weather data.



© JDNP/WWF

A Pallas Cat that was spotted in JDNP during the Snow Leopard survey

New species found in RMNP, WCP & JDNP

The Royal Manas National Park has recently recorded three new mammal species and five new bird species found in the park.

The new mammals that were recorded are Asiatic brush-tailed porcupine, Chinese ferret-badger and Hodgson's Giant Flying Squirrel. The new found birds include the Black Baza, Watercock, Lesser Adjutant and Malayan Night Heron.

Three new mammals and five new bird species were found in RMNP alone

The new findings take the total record of mammals in the park to 61 and the total number of bird species to 431.

Camera traps also recorded six species of wild felids. Five of the recorded species are listed on the IUCN Red list. Bhutan has also recorded the Pallas cat in Wangchuck Centennial Park and Jigme Dorji National Park.