

Table of Contents:

Editorial:

Wetlands Sky High

Highlights:

1-Sino-Pak Collaboration for Joint Conservation and Sustainable Development in Pamir Region

2-Saving Wetland Sky –high (Pakistan)

3-Participatory Management and Development of Central Karakoram National Park

4-Community based Conservation of Ladakh urial (*Ovis vignei*) and Associated Biodiversity in Shigar Valley



Wetlands Sky High

A wetland is an area of land that is transitional between aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems and is covered with water for at least part of the year.

Wetlands, not long ago, were usually perceived as wastelands. At the earlier stages of development, even in countries such as America, many wetlands were drained to be replaced by railroads, farmlands and road construction. Not until the recent decades, the importance of wetlands for mother earth has evolved to a much higher level of recognition.

Wetlands provide a rich habitat for a diverse range of animal and plant species, protection from flooding and erosion, and are also important to the nutrient cycle. The direct and indirect commercial, economic and recreational value, which these important ecosystems bring to the society, is of immense magnitude.

Northern Area of Pakistan is blessed with a wide variety of natural splendor, comprising of a total number of 2,420 glacier lakes and 118 HAWs. Over the last 100 years, half of these fragile ecosystems, across the globe, have been destroyed due to numerous threats. Sky high wetlands of Pakistan, in the Northern Areas, are also not safe against the ever increasing natural and anthropogenic dangers like; Illegal hunting of wild ungulates both for meat and sale, excessive cutting of forests for firewood and timber, over grazing of pastures by livestock, contamination of waters with chemicals and toxic wastes, unmanaged tourism, flash floods, glacial failures, land slides and river bank erosion. These threats were found to be stemming out of extreme poverty, ignorance, weak law enforcement and lack of skill in the area. In an attempt to mitigate these perils and to conserve the significant HAW ecosystems, WWF-Pakistan laid the foundation of the project “*Conservation of high altitude wetlands in Northern Pakistan*” back in 2004. As part of the initiative, baseline studies of 12 potential high altitude wetlands sites were conducted, and Management plans were developed for six of the potential sites. Since then, we are endeavoring to implement management plans of the Handrap (North 30° 44’ and East 72° 44’) Langar-Shandur (North 36° 04’ and East 72° 31’) and Utter (36° 38’ North and 73° 39’ East) lakes complexes.

After successful completion of initial phase now the project has been extended over the next three years (August 2007- July 2010) with the title *Saving Wetlands Sky High Programme*, under the umbrella support of WWF fresh water programme on high altitude wetlands conservation. Under this component, the field implementation of the management plans of Utter and Handrap lakes will be carried out during the project extension period.

With the high level of involvement and support from the local communities, Northern Areas Forest and Wildlife department, Fisheries department, Aga Khan Rural Support Programme (AKRSP) and other partners, the wetlands of Northern areas are now in a better position to remain sustainably productive for us and our future generations.

1- Sino-Pak Collaboration for Joint Conservation and Sustainable Development in Pamir Region

A) Regional Workshop on Trans-boundary Conservation

A delegation from Pakistan led by secretary home northern areas attended the regional workshop on trans-boundary conservation on 11th and 12th June 2008 held in Kashgar, China. The meeting ended with a six point resolution prescribing recommendations to enhance collaboration for joint conservation and sustainable development in the border region followed by constitution of a regional steering committee under the chairmanship of Mr. Ashiq Ahmad of WWF-Pakistan.



B) Participatory Management of Wildlife and Pastures

WWF-Pakistan initiated two pilot projects on "livestock insurance" and "pasture management" in Shimshal, Khunjrab and Gulkin communities of KNP. The local communities have to implement the prescribed activities to ensure maximum protection to predators and pastures in their respective areas, as part of the trans-boundary joint conservation initiative.

C) Education and Awareness for Border Communities

WWF-P celebrated the Earth day and World Environment day, jointly with the school students, social workers, and communities



of Khunjerab to familiarize them with the emerging concept of trans-boundary conservation, its significance for conservation of biodiversity and socio economic uplift of communities in the border areas.

2- Saving Wetland Sky –high (Pakistan)

A) Tourist information centre

A tourist information centre at Ishkoman valley is under construction with the active participation of local community and supervision of PIDO to provide baseline information to the tourist and visitors about high altitude wetlands and bio diversity.

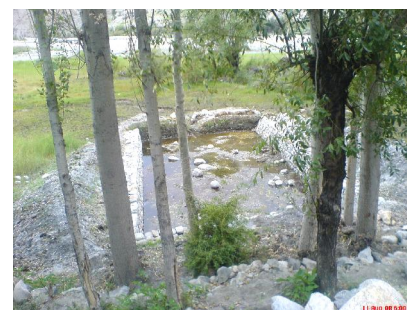


B) Community Based Climate Change Adaptation Plan

To supplement wetland strategy, a community based climate change adaptation plan was developed for Ishkoman and Gupis, after a marathon session with local communities.

C) Demo Fish Pond

With the assistance of PIDO (community based organization), a demo fish pond has been constructed at Ishkoman to minimize pressure on natural fish resources of the area.



D) Depth Calculation of Baha Lake Using GIS Techniques

GIS Professionals of WWF-P, NAs and PWP visited Baha Lake on 26th August 2008 to conduct a detailed survey of the lake. The experts

processed the data to develop a three dimensional elevation map of Baha Lake for the first time.



3- Participatory management and development of Central Karakoram National Park (CKNP)

A) Formation of Valley Conservation Committee

Two conservation committees in Shigar and Balgar Valley were constituted after consecutive initial dialogue with the community elders, ensuring their participation in the management planning process of Central Karakoram National Park

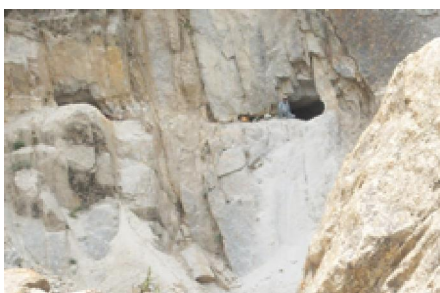


B) Thematic Tourist Maps of CKNP

A GIS expert from WWF-Pakistan collected Geo information in the valleys of Central Karakoram National Park during his visit to Shigar and adjacent areas from August 6-14, 2008. The basic data on camping sites, glaciers, historical places and trekking routes will be used to produce thematic maps for CKNP visitors.

C) Survey on Potential Mineral Sites in CKNP

A team of consultants, including a geologist and a GIS analyst visited Shigar and Haramosh valley to collect

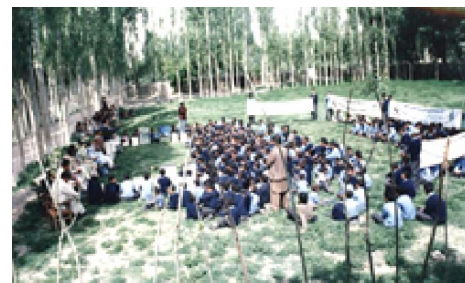


information about mineral sites and dependent communities.

4- Community Based Conservation of Ladakh Urial (*Ovis vignei*) and Associated Biodiversity in Shigar Valley

A) Environmental Education and Awareness Initiatives

In order to propagate conservation values of various environmental ingredients, an art competition was held among the students of Nar-Ghoro valleys that helped to draw attention of the local people towards key environmental issues and threats.



B) Visit of Local Journalist to Project Sites

A group of local journalist participated in the project event organized for environmental awareness. They talked to the community members about different issues.

News

Raja Abid Ali, Coordinator "Saving Wetlands Sky High" project, has been selected as the Deputy Director, Central Karakoram National Park project of the Northern Areas Forest Department. We congratulate and wish him all the success in his career.