

Newsletter Wet Notes

www.pakistanwetlands.org

May 2007



The monthly newsletter of the Pakistan Wetlands Programme (PWP) is published to inform donors, scientists, academics, researchers, environmentalists and environmentally concerned individuals of all qualifications and ages about the Programme, its projects and upcoming events while giving insights and updates on research, education, and habitat management activities. The PWP's objective is to conserve the globally important wetlands biodiversity in Pakistan while alleviating poverty. It is a progressive initiative of the Federal Ministry of Environment and is being implemented by the World Wide Fund for Nature, Pakistan (WWF-P). It is funded by a consortium of national and international donors including, the Global Environment Facility (GEF), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Royal Netherlands Embassy (RNE), WWF - Network and the Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund (PPAF).

Articles in this Edition:

Who we are and what we do
Programme's Launch and
Inception Workshop
World Wetlands Day Festival
Wetlands Nature Carnival

Also Lurking Inside:

Programme Updates
Technical Innovations
(“Coolstuff”)
Events
World Wide Wetlands
Public Events
Other News

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“Nothing Slips By”

Astola Island, Baluchistan

Who we are and what we do

In this first edition of the monthly newsletter Wet Notes, the National Programme Manager/ Chief Technical Advisor, Programme Manager National Programmes, Staff and Newsletter personnel wish to give you an introduction to the Pakistan Wetlands Programme (PWP).

Chronology

Begun in 2005 and officially launched in December, 2006, the PWP is a progressive initiative of the Federal Ministry of Environment that is being implemented by the World Wide Fund for Nature, Pakistan (WWF-P). It is the result of numerous years of negotiating with Government of Pakistan officials and members of the foreign donor community. Together we constructed a project which would cover the entire country and examine in depth the dynamic yet fragile wetlands ecosystems of Pakistan from the offshore coral reefs to the high altitude wetlands of Pakistan's Northern Areas.

In Pakistan

Pakistan can boast of having more than 2,753,375ha of wetlands within its borders, comprising about 10 per cent of its total land mass. There are more than 225 significant wetlands in Pakistan identified to date, of which 19 have been recognized as being of international importance by the Ramsar Convention. This convention is the Swiss-based, international arbitrating committee established to determine and designate significant wetlands. However, there are also an estimated 130 million people permanently living, and another three to four million temporarily living, in areas having a direct impact on these wetlands



and placing them under immense anthropogenic pressure.

Partnerships

Funded by a consortium of national and international donors including GEF, UNDP, RNE, WWF Network, and PPAF, the PWP's objective is to conserve the globally important wetlands biodiversity in Pakistan while alleviating poverty.

The PWP has formal partnerships with key academic institutions throughout the country and has, for example, signed Memoranda of Understanding with Kinnaid University and Government College and Punjab University in Lahore.

Other partnerships are being cultivated with such academic institutions as: Quaid-e-Azam University, Islamic University, Arid Agricultural University and the Federal Directorate of Education in Islamabad. Meanwhile, in Karachi collaborations are also being established with the Center for Excellence in Marine Biology and National Institute of Oceanography. The PWP, working in concert with these institutions, will address such important issues as policy, awareness and capacity to conserve at the national level in order to create an enabling environment for innovative and enhanced conservation of wetlands.

The PWP is strengthening existing conservation initiatives. It will provide baseline information hitherto unavailable about the wetlands of Pakistan and this data will be used to improve the decision making process at all levels. In addition, the Programme will work in conjunction with the existing National Wetlands Conservation Strategy with special attention being given to securing the long-term user rights of access by rural people to wetlands resources while establishing sustainable commercially viable resource-use regimes. Meanwhile, the Programme is

confronting the dire need for training to enhance human capacity and skill levels in wetlands management by government and private sector personnel in Pakistan. This will range from assessment work to the implementation of community-based conservation measures. In so doing, it will address a major objective of the PWP which is to substantially improve awareness of the need for wetlands conservation. This will be done at all levels in Pakistani society by developing proactive conservation methods and regimens where necessary, and reinforcing those already existing.

Mission

The PWP will reach out to all sectors of the Pakistani community through trainings, educational activities, conferences, carnivals, school-events and other conscious raising activities. Through Wet Notes these will be announced in advance, and described after the event. Wet Notes will also be the medium by which the PWP can explain, describe and highlight the overall activities of the PWP and inform the people of Pakistan as to its mission. While some aspects of the PWP's work will be of a scientific and technical nature many other aspects will be instantly

recognizable and graspable by members of the public of all age groups.

Ultimately, the PWP will address the long-term sustainability of wetlands conservation measures and find means and ways for the conservation of Pakistan's wetlands to be a self-sustaining, financially viable and environmentally successful initiative.

By realizing that we are all in it together the ultimate goal of understanding Pakistan's precious wetland heritage and how they can benefit the people of Pakistan will be achieved.

It is therefore, the intention of Wet Notes to share all of these aspects with its readership and to stress that no aspect of wetlands conservation is either too advanced or too basic to not be appreciated --- or understood --- by all. It will also be the mission of this newsletter to share your observations about the dynamics of wetlands morphology, their natural wealth, conservation, utilisation and preservation with other readers. It is, indeed, our intent in presenting information about the PWP in particular, and Pakistan's wetlands in general, that "Nothing Slips By."

Programme's Launch and Inception Workshop

The Pakistan Wetlands Programme was formally launched by the Federal Minister of Environment, Makhdoom Syed Faisal Saleh Hayat at a four-day event held in Islamabad from December 6th to 9th, 2006.

Launching the Pakistan Wetlands Programme (PWP) Mr. Hayat said that this was a great day for Pakistan and an even greater one for the cause of Wetlands conservation. Mr. Hayat said that the Programme, an innovative seven year project being implemented by the World Wide Fund for Nature, Pakistan

(WWF-P) on behalf of the Ministry of Environment, would bring together many diverse aspects of wetlands research, conservation, education and management in a way never before attempted in Pakistan. He said that this was a world-class project which had been carefully crafted and would be undertaken in such a manner that many people in Pakistan would benefit. He observed that many Pakistanis lived near wetlands but had no understanding of their value. This programme would change that and educate others about what



PWP's Inception Workshop 2006

wetlands are, how they could be utilised and conserved.

The event served to pull together at a public forum the principal donors and members of different communities concerned about the multi-faceted aspects of wetlands. It was designed to foster a sense of common purpose in wetlands conservation while encouraging aspects of non-invasive sustainable development.

Among the workshop areas of concentration were the introduction of the Programme Team, its Steering Committee, Programme Management Committee and

Programme Partners. It presented the kinds of commitments and momentum expected to be sustained by the Programme's implementation and made public what the Programme seeks to achieve. It also presented the roles of the team members in contributing to the Programme's objectives, and how the Programme intended to achieve its set goals.

Technical sessions and ethnographic and cultural discussions on wetlands also took place along with conscious-raising performances about the uniqueness of the Indus River dolphin. The Inception



Makhdoom Syed Faisal Saleh Hayat
Federal Minister of Environment

Workshop was also the venue for the launch of the Pakistan Wetlands Network, a comprehensive website designed to enhance understanding of wetlands along with the mission and projects of the PWP. Its web-address is: www.pakistanwetlands.org.

A souvenir poster entitled "Cranes of Pakistan" by the internationally renowned Pakistani wildlife artist Dr. Ehsan Qureshi of Abbottabad was unveiled at the event, and the event's brochure carried artwork depicting a pheasant-tailed jacana, a marsh bird indigenous to Pakistan, on a lotus leaf. This artwork was created also at the suggestion of the Federal Minister for the Environment.

Public Events

World Wetlands Day Festival

The Pakistan Wetlands Programme celebrated its first World Wetlands Day by staging a nine-day long multi-media "festival" from February 2nd to 11th, 2007

World Wetlands Day annually commemorates the signing of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands on February 2nd, 1971, in the Iranian city of Ramsar. The Convention is an intergovernmental treaty which provides the framework for national action and international cooperation for the conservation and wise use of wetlands and their resources.

Pakistan has 19 Ramsar sites



PWP's Wetlands Festival 2007

located in Sind, Punjab, Northwest Frontier Province and Baluchistan. Overall, wetlands cover about 11 percent of the country and constitute a valuable natural resource that can be found in almost every part of the country, even in remote corners of the Northern Areas.

This year's international theme for the World Wetlands Day was "Wetlands and Fisheries." In accordance, the Pakistan Wetlands Programme (PWP) began its multi-media celebrations by holding a primary and secondary schools art competition for students in Lahore, Karachi and Islamabad.

Other events included a nationwide Wetlands and Fisheries Poetry Competition, while at a two day event in Islamabad there were wetlands and fisheries plays, puppet shows, 3-D model presentations and special guest appearances. These all added to the interest, appreciation, and fun of conserving wetlands.

Meanwhile, the PWP in partnership with the national radio network



PWP's Annual Art Competition 2007

FM89 presented informational "spots" highlighting wetlands and environmental biodiversity along with announcing wetland activities and events taking place in celebration of Wetlands Day. In addition, the PWP's National Programme Manager, Mr. Richard Garstang, gave a half hour presentation on wetlands dynamics and answered "call-in" questions from the public.

Throughout the nine day festival the nation's Press, both Urdu and English, print and television ran



Play Performance at PWP's Wetlands Festival 2007

numerous stories about the event and the efforts by the PWP to heighten wetlands awareness throughout the country.

PWP Travelling Wetlands Nature Carnival

Throngs of people crowded around numerous displays at the Pakistan



Media Coverage of PWP's Wetlands Festival 2007

Wetlands Programme's Wetlands Nature Carnival when it opened in Lahore for a one day event on March 4th, 2007.

This event was a sequel to the well attended wetlands carnival event which took place in Karachi on



PWP's Wetlands Nature Carnival 2007

February 25th, 2007.

The Pakistan Wetlands Programme (PWP) 'Wetlands Nature Carnival' was a means of reaching out to the public to raise their awareness and understanding for the need to conserve, protect and manage Pakistan's wetlands resources, and the valuable scientific and social roles they occupy within the country and region. It also served as a vehicle for government agencies and the private sector to show their

involvement and concern in protecting the country's wetlands.

Among the distinguished attendees from the government, corporate and scientific sectors at these two events were the Minister for the Environment, Sindh, Dr. Saghir Ahmed, Conservator Forests Sindh, Mr Ghulam Rasool Channa, Mr. Fayaz Rasool, Karachi Port Trust and while in Lahore Dr. Bashir Ahmed Wani, and Conservator Wildlife NCCW, Mr. Umeed Khalid. The event attracted interest by corporate sponsors who



PWP's Wetlands Nature Carnival 2007

established stalls showing their participation in environmental sensitivity especially where wetlands were concerned. In addition, the carnivals served as a means for public outreach by corporations which have become more proactive in wetlands conservation and management, and as a way for them to publicly demonstrate this resolve.

The corporate participants were Nestle Pakistan, NIDO, Maggie Pakistan and ICI Pakistan. NIDO Pakistan, in particular, had a big multi-participatory presence with wetlands art competitions, a wetlands quiz, and a speech competition.

Public and private school students throughout Lahore and Karachi from level 1 through high school were sent open invitations to contribute art work and three-dimensional interactive displays. A prize distribution ceremony was held for the best student's art work depicting issues relevant to wetlands in Pakistan.

Events

On April 22nd 2007, Islamabad hosted the third Wetlands Nature Carnival at F-9 Park Islamabad. The event started at 2.p.m and continued until 6 p.m. Following this the travelling Wetlands Nature Carnival was held in Faisalabad on April 29th 2007. It is anticipated that the event will continue to be an annual spring Wetlands Carnival.

Sing and Save ! A Sham – e – Ghazal to preserve wetlands

The Pakistan Wetlands Programme hosted a Sham-e-Ghazal with a performance by the legendary, internationally renowned singer **Abida Parveen**.

Funds raised by the event will "Support the Sustainable



Livelihoods of Wetlands Communities" by saving their environment. The event took place on May 5th, 2007 in the Crystal Ballroom at the Marriot Hotel, Islamabad. This event attracted participation by individuals from both the public and private sectors along with institutions and environmentally concerned organisation.

The Indus Walk 2007.....A walk for a cause....Crossing boundaries

The Pakistan Wetlands Programme in partnership with

the Pani Pakistan National Consortium is orchestrating a 2900 km Indus River Walk as a way of conveying the need to conserve this valuable resource. Beginning in China and ending at the Arabian Sea, the Indus River Walk will follow the river from its very source to its delta.

Along the way and organised by the PWP there will be a series of events including sensitizing seminars, training and capacity building workshops, water melas, and mobile information booths in all four provinces and in the Northern Areas.

It is planned that in July, six walkers will begin the journey to follow the river all the way. However, beginning on April 19th 2007, the first of four country-wide awareness campaigns commence among local people in Punjab.

Programme updates

The Pakistan Wetland Programme seeks to cover the country with in depth studies on all facets of wetlands in addition to highlighting all aspects relating to wetlands education, conservation and management.

The wetland areas have been broken down into the following regions:

- North-west Alpine Wetlands Complex (NAWC);
- Salt Range Wetlands Complex (SRWC);
- Central Indus Wetlands Complex (CIWC); and
- Makran Coastal Wetlands Complex (MCWC).

Within these areas, different projects and aspects of these projects will be highlighted each month. Because some of these projects are seasonal, not all programmes will be updated every month. Also, because of the nature of scientific research and public outreach, it may seem as if time has passed between updates but that does not mean that projects are not ongoing or that accomplishments are not being achieved.

Since the formal Inauguration of the PWP in December, 2006, Programme accomplishments are already apparent. For example:

- In the Salt Range Wetlands Complex (SRWC) a

Baseline Ornithological Survey of the Salt Range took place in December. The five lakes assessments yielded significant populations of terrestrial and wetland birds and it was estimated that more than 40,000 birds were present. Among these, the sighting of small flocks of the globally significant White headed duck (*Oxyura leucocephala*) on the Khabbeki and Uchhali lakes was particularly significant.

- Along the Indus Rivers a Flood Season investigation was carried out to establish that, in the majority of cases, the Indus Dolphin could only pass down stream during periods of flooding. This observation has provided useful insight into the realities underlying the current distribution of dolphin in the main stream of the Indus River and will aid in understanding genetic distributions within the species.
- In Punjab a cooperative venture between the PWP and Kinnaird College, Lahore, assessing the Qadirabad Irrigation Headworks produced interesting results into the ecology of bulrushes (*Typha latifolia* L.), an important wetland plant that is harvested for diverse commercial purposes.

- Prior to the PWP's inauguration, during the Summer, 2006, in the North-west Alpine Complex, David Johnston of Oxford University, working in conjunction with the PWP and Government College, Lahore, completed his research and was subsequently awarded his Masters of Science Degree with Distinction for his thesis entitled "Reflected Water," Assessing the Impacts of the Shandur Polo Festival." With guidance from the PWP his research and thesis

have led to significant rethinking of the impact of the annual polo event at Shandur Lake, and means to protect this significant watershed while still enabling this significant and unique event to continue. The Makran Coastal Wetlands Complex has seen significant activity in the coral reef areas off the coast including significant discoveries on the northern shore of Astola Island. (See Wet Notes Article: Environmentally Significant Reef).

Technical Innovations ("Coolstuff")

During the course of these newsletters Wet Notes will introduce its readership to various technical innovations which are being used by the PWP to help facilitate wetlands data gathering and information dissemination. This month's featured "Coolstuff" is the sonar emissions recording device, or T-POD. This is being used by the PWP in its Indus Dolphin Study to reveal details of the threatened dolphin's movements up and down the river. It was recently successfully deployed in the vicinity of Manrah and Miran villages. PWP's Indus dolphin Research Fellow Gill Braulik told Wet Notes that the T-POD was "cutting edge" technology which had never before been used in the Indus or in Pakistan.

"The T-POD has revolutionised our ability to track dolphins, especially in the Indus. One of the best features is that the T-POD can be anchored in the river and information can be automatically collected through continuous recordings. A lot of things are beginning to become known to us through PWP's use of the T-POD," Gill said. Meanwhile, according to the manufacturer, TPODs, or 'POrpoise Detectors, are fully automated systems that can be deployed for up to a year for the detection of porpoises, dolphins and other toothed whales. The T stands for timing and the current version of the

POD is the v5 T-POD. Deployment is by anchoring the POD directly to the sea bed or by attaching it to some other fixed mooring. The manufacturers say that T-PODs have been used for environmental impact assessments, investigation of fishery interactions, assessment of bycatch mitigation methods, and in studies of distribution, habitat use, behaviour, and acoustic repertoire. Species with long, highly tonal (narrowband) clicks are best suited to this method of monitoring as fewer other click sources are similar. These species include all porpoises, Cephalorhynchus sp., Kogia, and probably the beaked whales.

Other News

The PWP's National Programme Manager Richard Garstang gave a major technical presentation to more than 200 Pakistani and foreign naval officers at the International Maritime Conference 2007 held at Karachi's Bahria University on March 5th 2007.

Speaking on the "Significance of



Maritime Conference, March 2007

Marine Wetlands in a Desert Ecosystem," Mr. Garstang said that Pakistan now, more than ever before had a chance to take a leading role



Maritime Conference, March 2007

in regional marine wetland conservation by creating several new marine protected areas such as Astola Island.

World-wide Wetlands PWP heightens world-wide understanding of Pakistan's wetlands.

Senior personnel from the PWP travelled world-wide since the Programme's official inauguration in December 2006 to spread the word of Pakistan's commitment to wetlands conservation and to describe the workings of the new Pakistan Wetlands Programme. Spanning the globe from Hong Kong to Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, USA conferences were attended, papers delivered, technical details discussed, initiatives presented and trainings marked all in the cause of raising awareness and understanding of the role that Pakistan is taking in its multifaceted 'world of wetlands' ecological initiative.

In Hong Kong in January, National Awareness Raising and Communication Coordinator, Marriyum Aurangzeb, and Survey Programme Coordinator, Najam-ul-



Regional Ramsar Meeting 2007

Huda attended the 1st Wetlands Link International Asia Symposium where they established links with many other international environmental organisations. Through their presentations about the Pakistan Wetlands Programme Marriyum and Najam established their credentials as wetlands conservationists and were selected to be members of the Wetlands Link International-Asia (WLI-Asia) executive committee. This followed widespread acclaim by their fellow attendees---numbering more than a hundred ---for their presentation and demonstration of the dynamics of wetlands issues. During their visit, Marriyum and Najam also visited the Hong Kong Wetlands Park and the Hong Kong Ocean Park which enhanced their understanding on what was being done internationally. It gave new dimensions and directions for their wetlands education and information dissemination projects in Pakistan. Following a visit to the internationally

Environmentally Significant Reef

Discovery of an environmentally significant formation of coral reef thought not to exist in Pakistani marine waters has been facilitated by the Pakistan Wetlands Programme in conjunction with the Centre for Excellence in Marine Biology

renowned Mai Po Nature Reserve they explored ways of bringing a hitherto untried method of wetlands preservation to Pakistan. In February Masood Arshad, PWP Manager for National Programmes, travelled to Ramsar, Iran where, at the site of the historic Ramsar Wetlands Convention signing in 1971, he attended this year's Regional Ramsar Meeting devoted



Wetlands Link International Asia Symposium 2007

to Central and Western Asian cooperation in wetlands understanding and information sharing. Once there, Masood helped to finalise the draft strategy for the center, gave technical support, helped to develop a working group for effective communication among regional participants and generally let it be known that the PWP was now a fully functioning arm of the Pakistan Ministry of Environment

and was perusing its mandate of wetlands conservation, management and education. In March PWP Manager for Regional Programme, Ahmed Khan, travelled to Myrtle Beach, South Carolina in USA to attend the 27th Annual Symposium on 'Marine Turtle Biology and Conservation' organised by International Sea Turtle Society.

One of 250 scientists from 40 different countries, Ahmed was part of the technical session devoted to world-wide marine turtle conservation. In the symposium section entitled "Side Meeting Indian Ocean South East Asian Marine Turtle," he updated scientists about the plight of the Indian Ocean Marine Turtles and PWP's proposed methods for helping to save this species.

Pakistan Wetlands Programme. The discovery took place on the northern side of Astola Island, which is situated in the northern Arabian Sea, approximately 25 km off the mainland, and 40 km East-Southeast of Pasni. The island is roughly 4km in

length and 0.75 km in width with an estimated height of 40m at its highest point. The island is inhabited by extremely

species of anthozoans, all of them marine, although most do not make reefs and many zooxanthellate scleractinians

earth. Reefs have functions ranging from providing food and shelter to fish and invertebrates to protecting the soil from erosion. People all over the world depend on reefs for protection from the waves. Many tropical islands and beaches are constructed completely of coral fragments.”

This is why for centuries fishermen have gone to Astola Island because of the abundance of fish congregating around the reefs. But it was not until now that Pakistani scientists were able to learn that these were Scleractinian and that is why this discovery is so significant.

The Programme and its team of scientists which was led by Dr. Rupert Ormond, a world authority on Corals, will continue examining the reefs of Astola



Coral Reef formations, Astola Island, Baluchistan

venomous viper snakes and poisonous sea snakes are also found in the waters around the island.

But it is what is beneath those waters of the island that has created the excitement of new discovery.

There can be found the kind of Scleractinian coral that build big coral reefs such as those associated with Australia's Great Barrier Reef and the reefs of the Caribbean.

These were not thought to be found in the waters off Pakistan but they now have been discovered through the efforts of research teams sent to Astola Island to do comprehensive fauna and flora baseline studies above --- and below--- the waves.

According to scientists at the University of Miami in the United States, “the reef-building (or hermatypic) corals are of the order Scleractinia in the class Anthozoa. There are about 6,000

do not get large enough to contribute significantly to reef construction.”

But those big reef-builders may be off Astola Island where 25



Coral Reef formations, Astola Island, Baluchistan

species of Scleractinian coral along with 77 species of reef fish were identified.

Meanwhile, Japanese scientists have written that “coral reefs are among the most diverse and productive communities on

Island as will the government of Pakistan explore the possibility of designating Astola Island a Marine Protected Area. Further observations and developments will be reported here in Wet Notes