



Rural Training Center-Thailand

# 2008 Winter Farm Update

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c/o U. Suttisan, 84 Moo 2 Ban Na Fa, Jompra, Thawangpha, Nan Province, Thailand 55140

www.neighborhoodlink.com/org/rtcth

E-mail: rtc2k5@gmail.com

Community-based environmental education for the self-sufficiency and sustainability of small rural family farms

## Loy Krathong Festival



*Our khrathong made using materials from the garden.*



The full moon of the 12<sup>th</sup> lunar month is usually a time of high water levels in rivers. This is an ancient Lanna-Thai festival about the end of the harvest. H.M. King Chulalongkorn (Rama V) wrote, "*Loy Krathong has nothing to do with any recognized ceremony or rite. It is merely a matter of rejoicing in which all the people take part*". The krathong is gently put into the river to pay respect to the Goddess of Water, Phra Mae Khongkha or to ask her forgiveness for polluting the water.

We gather the materials to make our krathongs from the farm and garden. (See next page making a krathong.) We made our krathong all organic to avoid polluting the river. Some commercially made krathongs use Styrofoam and plastic flowers. What an ironic twist of the tradition!

We decided to go to Thawangpha to loy (float) our krathong on the Nan River. This also gave us an opportunity to see a larger celebration than in our small village. 🌕



*Candles at the gates and the full moon provide light.*



*Loy krathong on the Nan River in Thawangpha.*

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## ***Making Our Krathong***

These traditional skills are often taught in art classes in elementary school. These lessons are important relevant social skills in the lives of Thai villagers.



*A cross-section piece of banana tree trunk*



*Folded banana leaves for the base fringe*



*Other folded banana leaves for the container walls.*



*A candle and 3 incense sticks are added.*



*Flowers add the final touch. The final result is limited by your imagination and available materials.*



## ***Loy Krathong Festivities in Thawangpha***

Loy Krathong is a time of rejoicing and getting together with friends and family.



*Prizing winning krathongs*

*A giant krathong ready to loy*



*Beauty contestants from villages in the district.*

*Easy loy krathong access provided to the Nan River*



*A parade float on display near the river side.*

*Thai-style fast food may not be so fast, but worth the wait*



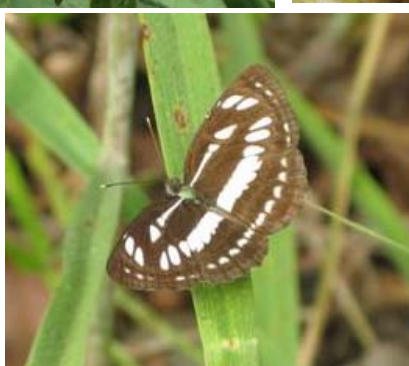
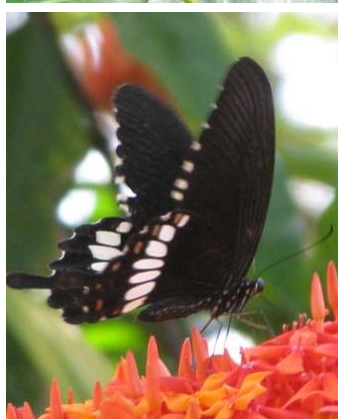
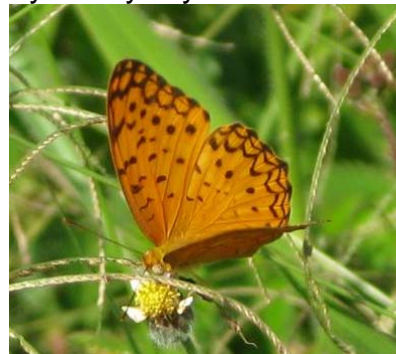
*Launching a khom loy (floating sky lantern) for good luck.*





## ***Butterfly Beauties***

Protecting biodiversity on the farm is a key concern. We haven't used pesticides on the farm since its start in the 1970s. One way to monitor farm toxicity is to look at the diversity of the insects present. Butterflies are among the most susceptible insects to pesticides. Our commitment to diversity is firm (so apologies for letting some moths appear in this gallery). We haven't had time to begin identifying all of these beauties. But we thought we would share them with you anyway. 🌍





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We might not see all of these butterflies each day on the farm. But viewed in a composite summary such as this makes us more aware of the diversity on the farm.



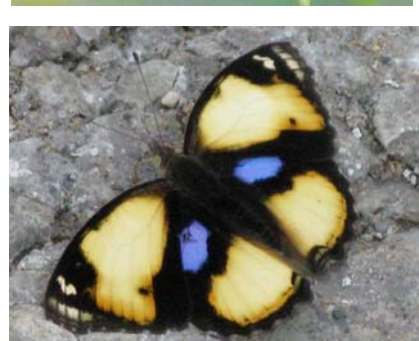


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*Some butterflies are similar to some people I know. On the outside, they seem plain and simple. But given an opportunity, They open up to you, and you learn to see their true beauty. (I can't tell you what this one is whispering in my ear....it's a secret.)*



As you can see, from this brief sample, we have an array of beautiful butterflies on the farm. We aren't entomologists, by this casual observation and monitoring is a coarse level indicator of the environmental health of the farm. It is something that is easily taught to others. And something that children can do on their family farms. These types of basic lessons are part of REEEPP (Rural Environmental Education Enhancement Pilot Program) we conduct at Ban Na Fa Elementary School. Many of the examples used are developed on our demonstration farm. These local examples are very relevant for the students. This makes it easy to take the lessons home. 🌐