



# RTC-TH Oct 2013 Update

© 2013, All rights reserved.

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

ชุมชนตามสิ่งแวดล้อมศึกษาเพื่อการพึ่งตัวเองและยั่งยืนชนบทขนาดเล็กครอบครัวฟาร์ม

You may post questions / comments to the Discussion area of our website

[www.neighborhoodlink.com/org/rtcth](http://www.neighborhoodlink.com/org/rtcth)

E-mail: [rtc2k5@gmail.com](mailto:rtc2k5@gmail.com)

## Success at Hamfest India 2013



Basappa (VU2NXM) at Hamfest India 2013

Before an audience of 600 attendees, Basappa (VU2NXM) presented our collaborative "Next Gen EmComm: GECCO" (Next Generation Emergency Communications: Grassroots Emergency Communications Operations). The audience was captivated. They swamped Basappa with requests for copies. You can see both the brief and full versions of the presentation are at [www.neighborhoodlink.com/RTC-TH\\_Tech/pages](http://www.neighborhoodlink.com/RTC-TH_Tech/pages).



### In This Issue

 Saifon & Greg Lee	RTC-TH Co-founders	Success at Hamfest India 2013	1	Pi Tan's Corn	6
		Big Catfish in Our Pond	2	Backyard Garden Harvest	7
		Harvesting Lemons	3	Ban Na Fa Station & Vicinity	8
		Farm Loading Dock Extended	4	Cleaning the East Fishpond	10
		New Chillies are Producing	5	Kwang Beattle Snack	11





## Big Catfish in Our Pond



*A surprise catch at the end of the day: this catfish measured in at 0.85 m long!!*



It was late in the day and our workers were preparing to head home. We decided it would be nice to have some fresh fish for dinner. So we took our throw net and cousin Auwian went fishing.

The first few throws only netted Tilapia of assorted sizes. It seemed no catfish were around today. And then, in the next to the last cast of the net, up came a very large catfish! It measured in at 0.85 m! It's head was wider than the palm of an adult's hand. The store room was locked. We could

Not get the scale out to weight it. See, we do have large catfish in our pond! 🌐





## Harvesting Lemons

Our lemons are ripening. A buyer contacted us. This set the wheels in motion to organize some workers to pick the lemons for the buyer. Most of the lemon trees are in the West orchard with a few trees mixed into the long an orchard on the west side of the Central Gully.

The lemons are picked, carried out of the orchard, bagged and weighed for sale. The buyer shows up, loads the truck, and pays for the lemons.





## Farm Loading Dock Extended



About 5 months ago, we used scrap wood to build a loading dock for the partially rebuilt farmhouse. Once the rainy season began, the wood loading dock became a popular eating spot for our farm workers. The deck overlooks the fishponds. Most of the time, there is a breeze cools this spot. They preferred the wood platform to the concrete floor. Thais are used to sitting on the floor when eating.

We decided to extend the loading dock to the full width of the farmhouse. This adds to another 6 sq meters of space to accommodate a larger workforce for the harvest season.

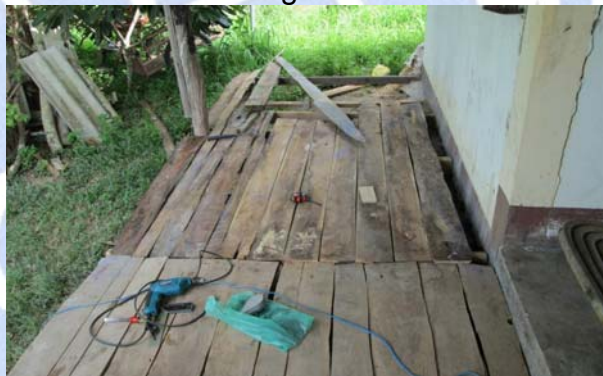
The wood available was a mix of scrap remnants (similar to the original loading dock) and some new unused planks. The planking varied in thickness, width, length, and “unstraightness”. Gaps in the deck are unavoidable. However, these pose no problem for Thais. It is common to put down a grass/straw mat when sitting for meals.



*Loading Dock Extension: Day 1 start*



*End of Day 1*



*End of Day 2*



*End of Day 3*



*Day 4: Extension completed*





*Ming, Pi Jod, Soi, and Mom enjoy the porch extension. The width of the extension fits the mat perfectly.*

## ***New Chilies are Producing!***

It's only been 6 weeks since we transplanted these new "super hot" chilies. We were very surprised to see and pick some chilies. Yes, they are very hot. Saifon is hoping to get a higher price for this variety.

Apparently those who love spicy hot chilies get on an upwardly spiraling craving for hotness. Perhaps their tongues adapt to the flavor and they hit a plateau. What was spicy before seems too tame now. So they crave ever hotter chilies.

The green chilies in the photos below are growing on plants that are barely 22 cm tall! The plant stems seem hardly strong enough to bear the weight of the chilies.

Our family members sampled a few of the new chilies. They are indeed much hotter than other chilies Thai people normally use. 🌍





## Pi Tan's Corn



Pi Tan is our neighbor across the street (and one of the carpenters on our carport ham station project). He recently harvested his corn. They dropped the harvest off in Pi Tan's driveway. Family and friends arrived to help with the husking. The husked corn is bagged and will be taken elsewhere for further processing.

Almost all the work on the farmer's end is manual. In our area, we have not seen any harvesting machinery that is



common on large commercial farms in the West. It doesn't take much imagination to see how the daily life of Thai farmers in past decades hasn't changed very much. While there are many improvements in living standards (e.g. refrigerators, TVs, motorbikes, trucks, etc.), farm working conditions haven't changed that much. 🌐





## Backyard Garden Harvest

In the village, our backyard garden is yielding a bountiful harvest. In one afternoon we picked 5 papayas: 2 large, 3 medium, and 1 small. We don't know the variety, but they tend to be large and sweet. And they are within 4 m of our kitchen.

Mom also picked a bag of Thai chestnuts. The pods turn bright red when they are ready to pick. They split open making it easy to remove the edible seeds.



*Ripened pods split open for easy access.*

*Thai chestnuts out of the pods and in the bag*



## ***Ban Na Fa Station and Vicinity***

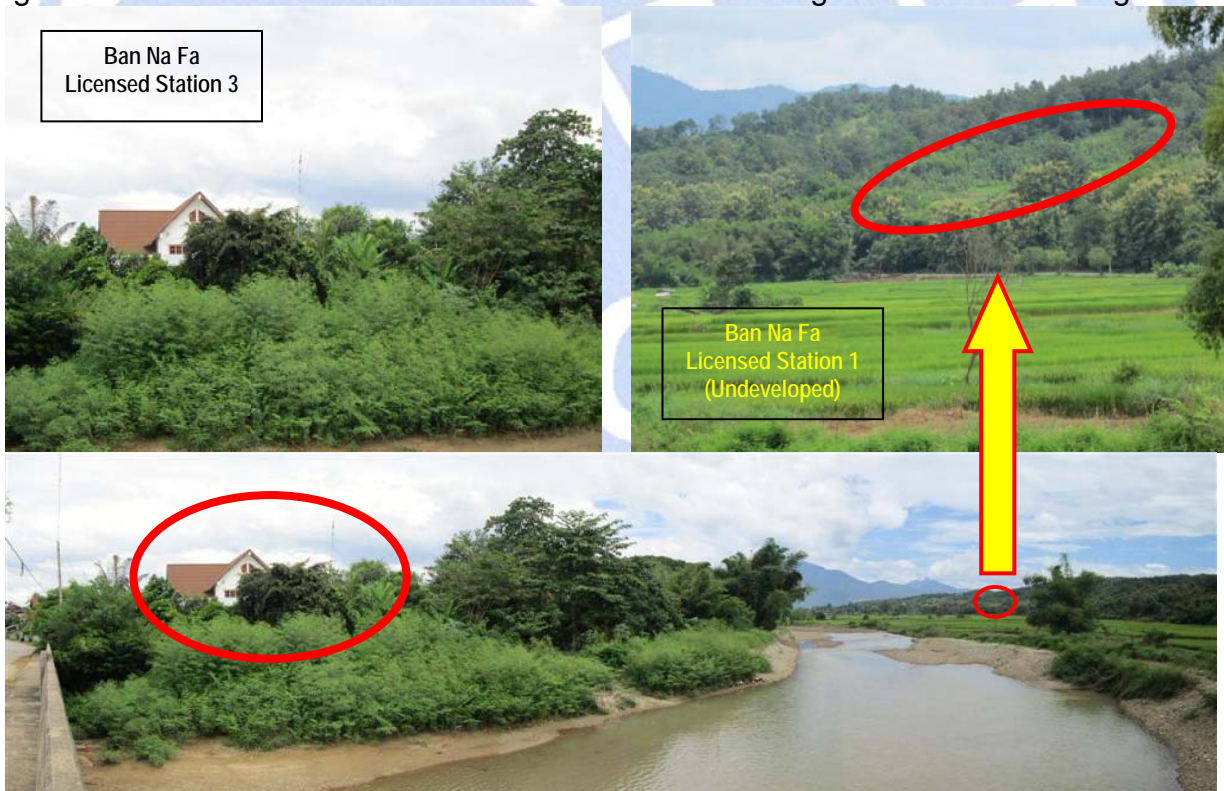


*Hill Top Portable  
Operating Site*

*RTC-TH EmComm  
Licensed Station #3: Ban Na Fa*

*RTC-TH EmComm  
Licensed Station #1: Ban Na Fa Farm  
(Undeveloped)*

This is an illustrated / annotated aerial view of the RTC-TH EmComm Ban Na Fa station relative to the RTC-TH Farm and Hill Top site. The photos below show ground views of these locations from the Ban Na Fa bridge over the Nam Yang River.



The Nam Yang River flows past our station (large red circle). The completed RTC-TH EmComm Ban Na Fa station is within a direct line-of-sight of our farm and the Hill Top site. The straight line distance is 1.1 km. The photo above looks SE and shows the relationship of the Ban Na Station and the farm.



The Farm station was the first one welicensed. However, the station has been undeveloped due changes in our plans. We plan to place a ground rod and a concrete-filled tire mast base near the container. When needed, we can quickly set up a portable radio station here.

The Farm station is well beyond the flood plain. It is a secure alternative EmComm operating site.



The Hill Top site is a detached parcel separate from the Farm. It is currently planted in dry upland rice. Several mango trees are scattered on the crest. Teak trees form part of the boundary. A patch of clump bamboo is on the NW corner (extreme right end of yellow oval).

This is a potential portable radio operating site. The plan is to place a ground rod and concrete-filled tire mast base here. It is about 0.3 km line-of-sight from Ban Na Fa station 3.



*The Hill Top site has a good VHF line-of-sight West to Thawangpha and East to Sila Phet Waterfall, the two extreme ends of the dog-legged Nam Yang valley.*

The RTC-TH EmComm program set the Farm and Hill Top sites as contingency radio operating sites should the Ban Na Fa station #3 or the Ban Wang Wa station #2 be compromised. It is always a good idea to have a Plan B or two. 🌐



## ***Clearing the East Fishpond***

Water lilies began to overtake the East Fishpond. Having some aquatic plants in a pond is natural for the ecosystem. But as the water lilies cover rapidly expanded and approached 75% of the surface, we took action. Cleaning the pond took about two days for three workers. 🌐



*Water lilies covered more than ¾ of the East Fishpond*



*Water lily roots required deep digging.*



*Once uprooted, the plants float freely.*



*The masses of uprooted lilies are dragged to shore*



*The long stems create a significant bio-mass.*



*With water drained to supply the rice paddies, water lily removal is well under way.*



## Kwang **Be**tle Snack



The increased activity of Kwang beetles (members of the *scarabaeidae* family) highlights the middle of the rainy season. The normal life span for Kwang beetles is about a year. They exist as hard winged beetles from the rainy season to the cold season.

The larger male beetle varieties are prized for the sport of beetle fighting. The males and females in these photos didn't make the cut and ended up in the pot. Cooking makes a beetle into a **beatle**.



*Live male (top) and female (bottom) before cooking.*



*A male after cooking converted it to a Thai snack.*



*Beetles in a basket ready for "snack conversion".*



*The beetles get a thorough washing in plain water.*



*Deep frying converts the beetles into **beatle** snacks*



*Pi Oi diligently stirs the deep frying beetles / **beatles***





*Deep frying round #1 completed.*



*Cooled, the second round of deep frying starts.*



*Cooking completed, the beetles get a sprinkling of salt.*



*Now it's time for a tasty beetle snack!*



*To eat: remove wings and legs....but where's the head?*



*Head? What head? CRUNCH!!*

Northern Thais relish a wide variety of “bugs” as delicacies. Considering it “normal”, you can readily see why this cultural practice gives a unique twist to emergency preparedness and food stockpiling. The heat and moisture of the tropics provides Thais with a wealth of natural food in just about any season.

So, to cut to the chase: How do Kwang beetle snacks taste? Well, the price for me photographing Pi Oi cooking the Kwang was to try one. Understand, I don't like food that looks back at me. You start by removing the wing covers, wings, and legs. Pi Oi was nice enough to spare me and took charge of the head....crunch, crunch, crunch. The abdomen has a spongy texture enclosed in a “shell” similar to that of a shrimp. The taste---similar to shrimp, but with less “meat” and more “shell”. Not quite my cup of tea. But at least I kept on Pi Oi's good side by trying it. 🌐