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RSPN Quarterly Newsletter

Vol: 10 Issue: 1

Royal Society for Protection of Nature

March 2017

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Construction of White-bellied Heron Captive Breeding Facility Center begins



The Groundbreaking ceremony for the White-bellied Heron (WBH) Captive Breeding Facility Center was held from 11 am on January 27, 2017 at Changchay Dovan, Tsirang Dzongkhag. The event was graced by the Hon'ble Speaker, Lyonpo Jigme Zangpo as the guest of honor, members of parliament, dignitaries from government agencies, and Punatsangchhu Hydropower Project Authority. During the

event, a WBH music video dedicated to the first birth anniversary of His Royal Highness, Gyalsey Jigme Namgyel Wangchuck was also launched.

It marked an important milestone in the conservation of the WBH, one of the 50 rarest birds of the world and most threatened avian species in Asia. WBH was first spotted in Bhutan by His Majesty the Fourth King in 1976 and under his

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Dr. Kinley Tenzin honored with the “50 Most Impactful Green Leaders” award



Dr. Kinley Tenzin, Executive Director of the Royal Society for Protection of Nature (RSPN) was honored as one of the “50 Most Impactful Green Leaders” during the sixth edition of The World CSR Day held at Taj Lands End, Mumbai, India on February 18, 2017. The award is endorsed by Global Green Future Summit and Leadership Awards. 50 global leaders passionate and committed to bringing social change were recognized with the award in light of their extraordinary work and achievements. The award recipients were chosen from a pool of global green leaders by a jury comprising of Dr. R L Bhatia, Founder, World CSR Day and

World Sustainability, Dr. Saugata Mitra, Chief People Officer & Group Head HR, Mother Dairy Fruit & Vegetable Pvt. Ltd, Prof. Y.K Bhushan, Senior Advisor & Campus Head, IBS, Mumbai, Professor Indira Parikh, President – Antardisha, & India’s Iconic HR Leader, and Geography jury in each country/ location. The criteria for the award were Energy Conservation and Efficiency, Waste reduction, recycling and responsible disposal, Exemplary leadership, assistance and substantial support in response to one or more environmental emergencies and Effective leadership and participation

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Construction of White-bellied Heron Captive Breeding



PHPA I. One chick, hatched and reared in captivity was successfully released in the wild. With that experience, RSPN has initiated establishment of permanent WBH captive breeding facility center. The center is being established through multiple donors and will be completed by 2018 with captive breeding program expected to begin by 2019. Royal Government of Bhutan supported the allocation of 18.224 acres of land and the Punatsangchu Hydroelectric Project Authority I&II (PHPA I&II) is supporting the construction of infrastructure for the center. Further, MAVA Foundation based in Geneva, Switzerland supported WBH endowment fund of USD 1.5 million to meet the operation cost of the Captive Breeding Facility.

Majesty's command, the conservation and protection was carried forward by Royal Society for Protection of Nature. Today, Bhutan harbors 28 individuals, which is the highest count amongst the WBH habitat range countries in the world. The numbers are still worryingly low.

Considering the current population status, survival rate, distribution

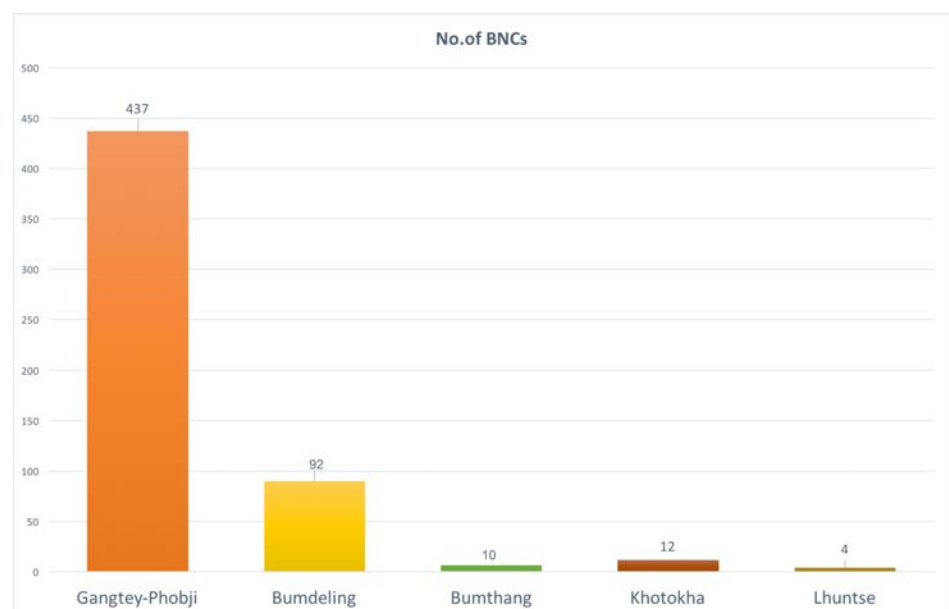
and threats arising out of changing environment, establishment of a safe and reliable ex-situ gene pool through captive breeding for WBH has become necessary. It is perhaps the most urgent of needs that shall enable the continuation of research and conservation programs. In 2011, Royal Society for Protection of Nature (RSPN) initiated captive rearing for the first time in the world funded by

The conservation of WBH is collaborative effort of RSPN and Department of Forests and Park Services. The efforts are also supported by national and international organizations; WWF Bhutan Program, Bhutan Trust Fund for Environmental Conservation, Synchronicity Earth, Felburn Foundation, International Crane Foundation, The GEF Small Grants Program, Bhutan Foundation, Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund and Whitley Fund for Nature.

Black-necked Crane Count , 2016 – 2017

As per our final count of Black -necked Crane for the season 2016-2017 done on February 4, 2017(0600 hrs -0730 hrs), following are the numbers of counts of crane at following stations in the country (Bhutan).

The total count in the country for this season is 555 cranes including 52 juveniles. BNCVC/ RSPN have noted the highest count of 609 cranes in the country in 2015 -2016 over 30 years of its effort in conservation of these elusive birds. We thank you for your continued support in conservation of the Black-necked Cranes and their habitat.





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Dr. Kinley Tenzin honored with the “50 Most Impactful Green Leaders” award

in awareness-raising on environmental issues in humanitarian action

Brief profile of Dr. Kinley Tenzin

Dr. Kinley began his career as an Assistant Forest Research Officer at Research and Development Center,

Ministry of Agriculture and Forests in 1998. In 2003, he was appointed as Forest Research Program Officer. He also served as the National Counterpart to an International Project funded by Boku University, Austria, the same university from where he obtained his PHD degree in 2008. In 2012, he was appointed as the

Program Director of Renewable Natural Resource Research and Development Center, Yusipang, Thimphu, Bhutan and spearheaded several Research and Extension projects in the five western and southern districts of Bhutan. In 2015, Dr. Kinley assumed the post of Executive Director of RSPN.

National Level Interactive Deliberation between state bureaucrats and CSOs on Trans-boundary Water Governance of Brahmaputra River



On March 2, 2017, RSPN and SaciWATERS based in India have jointly organized the day-long event on ‘National Level Interactive Deliberation between government officials and CSOs on Trans-boundary Water Governance of Brahmaputra River’. The event was a part of the activities of the year-long regional project on ‘Building Capacity of the CSOs and Communities for effective engagement in trans-boundary decision-making process of Brahmaputra River’.

About 11 experts from India attended and presented on trans-boundary water governance from the Indian perspective while officials from National Environment Commission Secretariat, Department of Disaster Management, Department

of Hydro-met Services and Watershed Management Division presented on the existing plans, policies and strategy on water governance and management, disaster management and mitigations, weather and its information systems in context to Bhutan. Around 35 relevant officials from government agencies and CSOs from Bhutan and India attended the day-long event.

The event was graced by Honorable Secretary of the National Environment Commission Secretariat. Hon’ble Secretary expressed his gratitude and acknowledged RSPN and SaciWATERS for organizing the event, which provided a platform to state actors and non-state actors (CSOs and CBOs) to share and

discuss for a collaborative effort on how to take forward the trans-boundary water governance from local level to state level and then to the regional level.

The event has also enabled sharing of local trans-boundary concerns with government representatives, enhanced the trust between key stakeholders and improved the understanding of government plans, policies and strategies on water governance and management, disaster management and mitigations, weather and its information systems in context to Bhutan. The event concluded with day-long field visit to project sites in Punakha and Wangduephodrang Districts on March 3, 2017.



From the Field



White-bellied Heron (WBH) conservation project team from Royal Society for Protection of Nature visited key WBH habitats that included past and present nesting areas in the county from February 14-24, 2017. The team also met with members of local conservation support groups, local people and forestry officials and discussed on White-bellied Heron, its habitat and sightings in the area for the last one year. The first WBH nest in the country at Zawa, was also visited. The nest at Zawa was sighted in 2003 and it is the first nest found in the world after the



last historical nest, which was reported in Myanmar in 1929. The sighting of WBH at Zawa has declined since 2013, and the decline according to the locals is primarily attributed to the construction of Athang farm road and the bridge across Digchu, above Punatsangchu-Digchu confluence near Kamichu.

Though the first nest has been abandoned since 2007, the Chirpine tree on which first nest was found still stands across the stream at the end of the village at

Domthang. The area is important for conservation of White-bellied Heron as the first nest found after 1929, which has given a new hope for conservation of this species in the world.



Athang, Nangzhina and Hararongchhu are other key habitats of WBH along the Kisonachu. Two to four individuals of WBH has been found in Athang since 2003. While the first WBH nest at Athng was found in 2007, no live nest was located in the area since 2015.

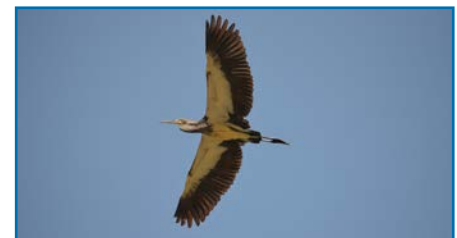
Nangzhina had the highest number of birds and known nest until 2013. During 2009 to 2011, there were seven individuals of WBH and three live nests in the area. No nest has been located in the area in 2016; however remnants of four nests are still seen on top of Chirpine trees on cliffs across the river.

Harachhu is another promising habitat of WBH. Three to five individuals of WBH are found in the area since 2006. One live nest each has been found in the

area since 2006. In 2016 two juveniles fledged from the area.

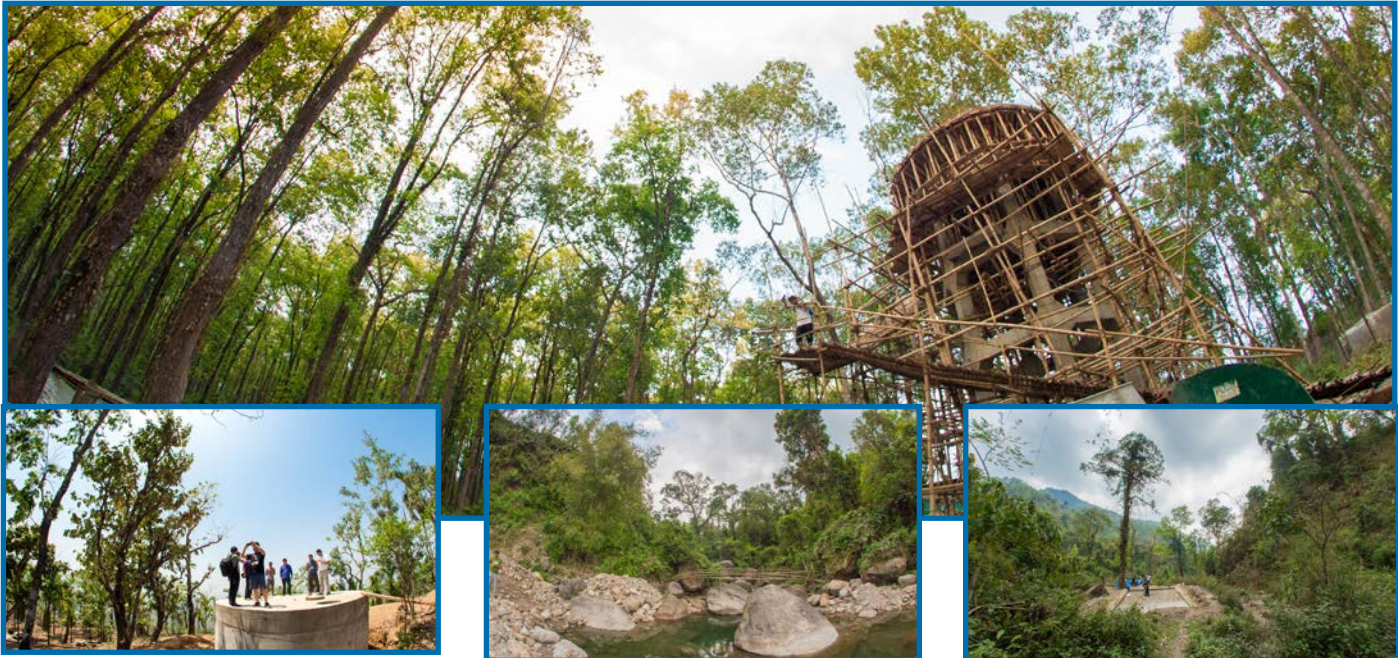
Berti is another small area in Mangdechu basin where WBH is found. It was first sighted in 2006 and one live nest was located in the area in same year. In 2016, four individuals were recorded in the area and two juveniles fledged from this nest. Since 2013, the sightings of WBH in Wakleytar, Burichu and Sunkosh area have been increasing. In 2016, seven individuals of WBH were counted along the Punatsangchu stretch under Tsirang and Dagana region. There are two regular breeding pairs of WBH in the area.

In 2016, three individuals of WBH have also been reported from two new locations, Kalikhola and Trashi Yangste. Three live nests were found in 2016 at Harachu, Burichu and Berti, and six juveniles fledged from these nests in 2016. The annual population of WBH in Bhutan was 28 and 60 globally in 2016. White-bellied Heron nationwide population survey for 2017 will be conducted from March 7 to 11, 2017.





‘Scarcity of drinking water – in what may be called as tragedy of the common’



Yoeseltse Gewog and Dumsidara village under Phuntshopelri Gewog in Samtse Dzongkhag do not have sufficient clean and safe drinking water. Scarcities of drinking water in these areas are a long-standing problem and several attempts were made in the past to connect the villages with clean and safe water supply systems/schemes without much success. Water has become one of the scarce resources in Bhutan and more so in southern parts of Bhutan. The water scarcity is associated with various factors starting from fast depletion of upstream watersheds and aeration of water sources caused by increasing population and by farm road constructions, mining,

landslides, flash floods and climate change. Poor management, operation, and maintenance of water supply systems/schemes are other attributing factors.

To address this issue, RSPN through SDF funding with technical support from Engineering Cell of Samtse Dzongkhag and Public Health Engineering Division of the Ministry of Health is constructing two water supply systems/schemes. The use of gravitational technology would help reach water to the people of Yoeseltse Gewog and submersible pump technology to the people of Dumsidara village in Phuntshopelri Gewog. To oversee and expedite the progress and quality construction of the water infrastructures,

efficient use of project fund, quality and timely completion of construction; a week-long monitoring was initiated from March 6-11, 2017 by Project Officer and ICT Officer to document the water infrastructures. With the completion of the two water supply systems/schemes by June, 2017 more than 539 households will have access to 24 hours safe and clean drinking water.

Support RSPN to eliminate this issue of the rural communities of Bhutan together. ‘True development lies not in building concrete structures in the cities but in bringing a change in the lives of the rural community where 70% of the Bhutanese lives’.



Fond Farewell to Mr. Tshering Phuntsho

RSPN bid farewell to Mr. Tshering Phuntsho, Coordinator, Conservation and Sustainable Livelihoods Program (CSLP) who left the organization after nine years of dedicated service. Tshering started his career as Project Officer, Wamrong Field Office, RSPN in 2007 and was appointed as the Coordinator for CSLP in 2011. We shall always remember and remain thankful for his wonderful contributions and commitment to RSPN. We wish him all the best for his new career at UNDP.



Adoption of Chubachhu Stream in observation of World Water Day, March 22 ,2017



RSPN along with its partners: WWF Bhutan, Ministry of Health, Royal Monitory Authority, National Land Commission, NRED, APIC, BTO, Water Shed Management Division, adopted and carried out the cleaning campaign along the identified half kilometre stretch of Chubbachu stream.

To mark the World Water Day, the stream adaptation and cleaning along the Chubachhu stream was organized by Bhutan Red Cross Society (BRCS) in partnership with National Environment Commission, RSPN, Thimphu Thromde and Clean Bhutan. His Excellency Prime Minister of Bhutan graced the opening

Ceremony and other dignitaries joined the occasion. More than 22 organizations were involved in the adoption. We would like to thank Bhutan Water Partnership for providing gloves, garbage bags and cleaning equipment for the cleanup along the half kilometer stretch.

Meeting with CUTS International (Consumer Unity & Trust Society)



An introductory meeting on the project “Expanding tradable benefit of transboundary inland waters” was held between CUTS International and RSPN. The CUTS International was represented by Mr. Prithviraj Nath, Associate Director, Kolkata office and Mr. Saurabh Kumar, Policy Analyst, Jaipur office while RSPN was represented by senior officials including the Executive Director. The meeting was held on January 9, 2017, at the RSPN conference hall with primary focus on overall project activity followed by a brainstorming session on the most feasible approach the project could adopt in Bhutan. The project is funded by The Asia Foundation (TAF) under Civil Society Fund of the South-Asia Water Governance Program. The visit of CUTS International team also included meetings with various other government and non-government stakeholders in Bhutan.



White-bellied Heron Research Grant

List of recipient of research grants under White-bellied Heron recovery plan project 2017

Sl no	Recipient & Address	Research Topic
1.	Chhimi Dorji Dzomi, Punakha	Assessment of fish population, feeding success and threats at foraging sites of White-bellied Heron in Chachey-Burichu, Punatsangchu.
2.	Jigme Dorji Royal Manas National Park, Gelephu	Assessment of White-bellied Heron (<i>Ardea insignis</i>) distribution range in lower Mangdechhu River
3.	Karma Lhendup College of Natural Resources, Lobesa	Habitat sustainability of white-bellied Heron at Adha Lake in relation to anthropogenic eutrophication of lake.
4.	Phurpa Wangdi DoFPS, Doksum Range, Trashi Yangtse.	Assessment on possible habitat and feeding area preferred by White-bellied Heron along Dangmechhu River
5.	Surjaman Thapa BBSCL, Trongsa	Connection between the White-bellied Heron and the local community of Berti.
6.	Dhan Bdr. Gurung College of Natural Resources, Lobesa	Assessment of Macroinvertebrate Diversity in Dagachhu Hydropower Dam under Dagana Dzongkhag
7.	Tashi Wangdi Divisional Forest Office, Mongar	An inventory of White-bellied Heron (<i>Ardea insignis</i>) along Sheri Basin from Murung Bridge to Sherichu.

Royal Thimphu College Students on CBST Study Tour in Haa

On March 25-26, 2017, twenty-seven Continuing Education students from Royal Thimphu College (RTC) accompanied by their module tutor were on the study tour to experience Community-based Sustainable Tourism (CBST) in Haa. The objective of the field visit was to let students experience CBST as part of their theoretical module titled "Sustainable Development".

Mr. Karma, Class Representative said, "Haa as a tourism destination has great potential for CBST with various tourism resources to support community's livelihood". He also shared his concerns about the need to institute proper waste management from the initial stage.

Mr. Sonam Wangdi, a local guide, proudly said, "It was a great opportunity for me to be a guide and to learn more on how to handle guests". The module tutor



Mr. Ugyen Lhendup shared his heartfelt gratitude to RSPN for making the trip successful. He said, "The students were very happy with the CBST services provided by the homestay owners and

local guides. It was a precious opportunity for them to interact with the community and understand how they benefit from sustainable tourism development."

DID YOU KNOW?

1997: RSPN received the first companies registration incorporated under the Companies Act of Bhutan.

1999: His Majesty the King (then Crown Prince of Bhutan) granted Royal Patronage to RSPN.

2001: RSPN establishes its first field office with Black-necked Crane Information Centre in Phobjikha, Wangduephodrang, Bhutan.

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