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Groundbreaking White-bellied Heron Chick Project is Off to a Great Start



The four-day-old White-bellied Heron chick weighed 59.7 grams.

The White-bellied Heron is a critically endangered species with a global population estimated at less than 200, according to the IUCN (2007). With only 26 White-bellied Herons in Bhutan, RSPN is working in collaboration with the Department of Livestock and Department of Forests

and Park Services on a captive-rearing project to address the high chick mortality rate. This is the first project of its kind in the world for the White-bellied Heron.

In conjunction with RSPN researchers, two experts in endangered bird programs

>> *Contd. on page 2*

First Time Honour for Phurba

From feeding the Black-necked Cranes to fighting for its survival, Mr. Phurba Wangdi, a 65-year-old local Bumdeling resident, is known as the Black-necked Crane Caretaker in Bumdeling in Trashiyangtse. His commitment to the conservation of the Black-necked Cranes was recognized when he was awarded the first-ever Regional Crane Conservation Award at a regional workshop held in Delhi in April.

“I would like to share this honour with my village community, park staff, and conservation organizations working in the area. Without their assistance, tolerance and sup-

port I would not have been able to achieve what I have in the last three decades,” said the award-winner.

The primary objectives of the “Cranes Calling: Regional cooperation for conservation of Black-necked Crane” workshop were to facilitate knowledge-sharing and information exchange among conservation experts, to foster international cooperation among India, China and Bhutan, and to explore opportunities for a community exchange program between these countries.



Mr Phurba with his award certificate >>

>> *Contd. from page 1*

Groundbreaking White-bellied Heron Chick Project is Off to a Great Start



A 12 days old chick weighing 265.3gm (in the captive breeding house)



A 37 days old chick weighing 1.9kg (in the flight pen house)

from the United States were with the chick from before it hatched until 40 days old. RSPN is very grateful to Donald J. Sterner

and Debra Keiko Marlow of the San Diego Zoo Safari Park for their guidance and support.

On 7 May 2011 at around 5:50 a.m., the chick was hatched successfully in its hatchery house on the Phochu in Punakha. After successful rearing of the bird, it will be released.

Helping RSPN Save the White-bellied Heron



Debra Keiko Marlow



Donald J. Sterner

For more than 30 years, Donald J. Sterner and Debra Keiko Marlow of the San Diego Zoo Safari Park have worked around the world to help save endangered birds. With an estimated global population of only about 200, the critically endangered White-bellied Herons need a lot of help to survive.

In April 2011, Don and Debbie arrived to Bhutan to help RSPN with the world's first captive rearing of a White-bellied Heron. All of the known White-bellied Heron eggs and chicks in Bhutan were lost last year because of predators and natural disasters, one of the reasons that RSPN decided to undertake the captive-rearing project.

The White-bellied Heron nests are very high off the ground at the end of narrow branches, making the first step in the captive rearing project — lifting the egg from the nest — a very difficult one. With teamwork and the skillful climbing of a local helper, an egg was successfully taken from the nest. With around-the-clock observation to make sure the egg was kept at the exact necessary temperature, the first-ever captive born White-bellied Heron chick hatched on 7 May 2011.

Don said that watching the chick hatch, grow and thrive were the highlights of his time here. "Working with RSPN was a great experience. Working with such dedicated people who were eager to learn and try to save this bird made the experience that much more worthwhile."

You Can Help Save the White-bellied Heron

Don, Debbie, and RSPN encourage you to help save the White-bellied Heron. With your efforts, we can help this critically endangered species recover. Here is what you can do help:

- Support research on the bird in whatever way you can.
- Educate yourself, your family and your friends about the bird.
- Help keep the rivers where the birds live litter-free.
- Do not disturb the areas where the White-bellied Heron live – try to minimize your activities along the Phochu and Mochu.
- Big trees are prime nesting sites, so please leave these gentle giants standing.

Alternatives to Mitigating Human-Wildlife Conflict



Traditional watchtower to guard the crops

As part of RSPN's pilot initiative to reduce human-wildlife Conflict in one of the most affected areas in Bhutan, meetings with the stakeholders and communities of Passangphu and MadhuwaTshowogs in Kangpara Gewog, Tashigang, were held from 25 April – 1 May. This two-year project, funded by UNDP and DANIDA, will compensate farmers by creating a community-based sustainable financial mechanism. Interested households can register as a member of the scheme by contributing a membership fee and premium. Compensation will be partial and eligible only if the locally elected committee deems the situation appropriate.

This project seeks to address human-wildlife conflict at the local level by identifying and piloting innovative solutions that are in line with the Royal Government of Bhutan's National Human Wildlife Conflict Management Strategy. The project complements the strategy objective "to devolve the management of the current, centrally run compensation program to the communities themselves and introduce an insurance program."

Earth Day 2011 - A Billion Acts of Green



Although Earth Day 2011 has passed, there is still time for RSPN members to make a difference in the health of our planet. This year's Earth Day campaign, called "A Billion Acts of Green," encourages everyone to do something that helps reduce carbon emissions and promote sustainability. Whether you pick up a piece of trash on your way home from work or you organize your community to plant trees, your contribution will show the power of every-day individual acts of green.

To register the act you are taking, visit the campaign headquarters at www.billionactsof-green.org, or find Billion Acts of Green on Facebook or Twitter. The online registration tools are easy to use and only take a minute to complete. Join your family and friends around the world in helping our planet through your own acts of green.

Climate Change Meeting in Bangkok



L-R: Jonathan Pershing, US; Andre Odenbreit, Brazil, for the G-77/China; UNFCCC Executive Secretary Christiana Figueres; Co-Chair Maas Goote, the Netherlands; Co-Chair Richard Muyungi, Tanzania; Sergey Kononov, UNFCCC; Paul Watkinson, France; Artur Runge-Metzger, EU; and Audun Rosland, Norway

The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) met in Bangkok from 3 – 8 April 2011. The meeting included discussions about mitigation plans in developing countries. More than 2,000 representatives from around the world, including Bhutan, attended the meeting.

First Steering Committee Meeting for Community-based Sustainable Tourism in Phobjikha



>> CBST meeting in session

The first steering committee meeting for the Community-Based Sustainable Tourism (CBST) Project in Phobjikha was held on 18th May 2011 at

the Hotel Phuntsho Pelri in Thimphu. This project is a part of the sustainable livelihood program in Phobjikha that aims to develop a model community-based sustainable tourism

destination that contributes to environmental conservation, crane habitat protection, and cultural conservation. One of the project's goals is to bring socio-economic benefits to communities in rural Phobjikha.

This three-and-a-half-year project is supported by the Japan Environmental Education Forum (JEEF) and the Japan International Cooperation Agency. In addition to RSPN and JEEF, the stakeholders in the steering committee include the Tourism Council of Bhutan, Association of Bhutanese Tour Operators, Nature Recreation and Eco-tourism Division under Department of Forests and Park Services, Guides Association of Bhutan, Gross National Happiness Commission, Wangduephodrang Dzongkhag Administration, and Phobjikha Environment Management Committee.

Coordination Meeting on Black-necked Cranes and their Habitats in Bhutan



Meeting in session

In its continuing efforts toward conservation of the Black-necked Cranes in Bhutan, RSPN organized a stakeholder meeting on 30 May 2011 in Thimphu. This meeting brought together people working in the wintering habitats of the Black-necked Cranes in Bhutan and other relevant stakeholders and to share their experiences. The workshop aimed to create a mechanism that would allow stakeholders to regularly share information about the status and conservation of the species from their respective areas.

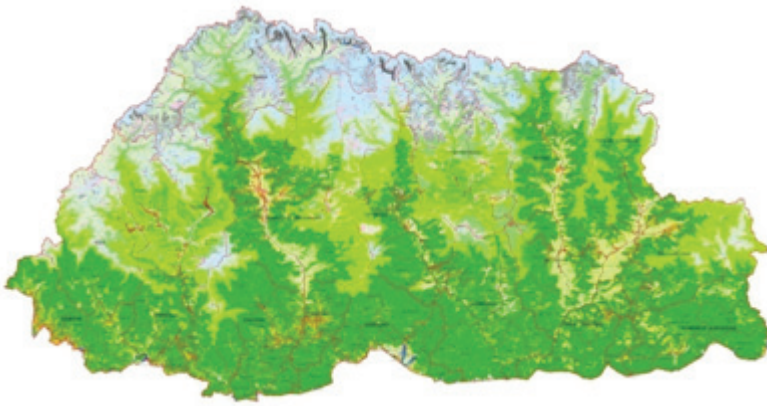
The Black-necked Cranes are the last of the world's 15 cranes species to be discovered and they are endemic to the Asian region. The Black-necked Cranes are designated as a "Vulnerable" species under the IUCN red list category due to their limited number and small distribution range. The latest census worldwide is estimated to be 11,000. Every winter toward the end of October about 500 of these birds migrate to Bhutan.



Participants of the meeting

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Bhutan's Land Cover Maps Updated



The second systematic land cover assessment of Bhutan shows in greater detail than ever before Bhutan's commitment to the environment. In particular, the country's total forest cover stands at 70.46% (based on an area of 38,394km²). This is an increase from the 1995 assessment of 64.36%

(based on the country's area of 40,077km²) forest cover, with an actual area increase of 1,265.9km². This and other changes in land cover figures are mainly due to an improved land cover assessment methodology.

The new land cover assessment shows a national forest cover of 70.46%, of which

62.43% is broadleaf, 22.69% is mixed conifer, 6.77% is fir, 3.98% is chirpine, 2.96% is blue pine and 1.16% is broadleaf with conifer. The shrubs constitute 10.81%, while cultivated agricultural land and meadows account for 2.93% and 4.10% respectively. The snow cover constitutes 7.44% while bare areas constitute 3.20%. Degraded areas, water bodies, built up areas, marshy areas and non-built up areas constitute less than 1% each. Within the 2.93% of cultivated agricultural land, Kamzhing dominates with 61.90% followed by Chhuzhing with 27.86% and horticulture land with 10.24%.

In addition to the improved methodology, other factors such as fluctuation in snow cover, urbanization and fallowing of Tseriland have also contributed in the difference in land cover figures. The assessment was carried out during two and a half years by the National Soil Services Centre of the Department of Agriculture.

Source: Ministry of Agriculture & Forests

Action grant for schools - 2011

Aiming to help schools understand their local environment and be responsible for addressing local environmental issues, RSPN approved funds for 10 projects at 10 different schools. Approved action grant projects:

Sl. No.	Name of School	Action grant purpose
1	Bjoka Community Primary School, Zhemgang	Water source management
2	Drukgyel Higher Secondary School, Paro	Community based waste management and greening
3	Shari Higher Secondary School, Paro	Stream adoption and plantation at water catchment sites
4	Ura Middle Secondary School, Bumthang	Adoption of national highway from Shethang la to Urachu bridge
5	Damphu Lower Secondary School, Tsirang	Spring water protection for drinking water purpose
6	Sisina Community Primary School, Thimphu	Adoption of Sisina stream
7	Dungna Lower Secondary School, Chukha	Protection of marshland for drinking water purpose
8	Tashitse Higher Secondary School, Trashigang	Treatment of waste water Paper recycling
9	Gomtu Middle Secondary School, Samtse	Rain water harvest project
10	NamgayCholing Community Primary School, Samtse	Construction of Rain Water reservoir Fencing of water source

World Environment Day 2011 Celebrated



The guest of honour inspects the exhibition stalls of schools

World Environment Day 2011 on 5 June was successfully celebrated in Paro by dignitaries from the United Nations, environmental organizations, Dzongkhag officials, teachers, students, and hundreds of the public.

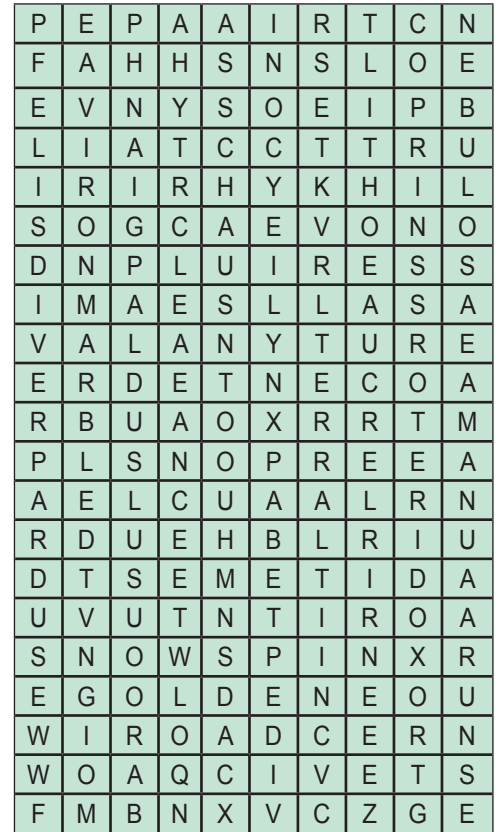
Chief Guest His Excellency Dasho Paljor J. Dorji, Advisor to the National Environment Commission, remarked that under the dynamic leadership of His Majesty the Fourth King, Bhutan has been recognized as a "Champion of the Earth" in environmental conservation. All Bhutanese have played their role in this achievement, and this spirit must continue, he said.

WORD SAFARI

In this edition, we have compiled major cats and the park they are found in. We will publish this data in series of our next Rangzhin editions. (Source: *Bhutan's Natural Heritage - A Legacy of the Monarchs*, RSPN, Thimphu)

Find and encircle the words which are **bold** and **underlined**. We have encircled one to help you get start with.

IUCN Status	Major Carnivorous Mammals		Protected Areas**									
	Common name	Latin name	J D N P	J S W N P	B W S	R M N P	T N P	S W S	P W S	W C P	T S N R	K W S
Endangered	Royal Bengal Tiger	<u>Panthera tigris</u>	X	X		X	X		X			
Endangered	Snow Leopard	<i>Uncia uncia</i>	X							X		
	Common Leopard	<u>Panthera pardus</u>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Vulnerable	Clouded Leopard	<i>Neofelis <u>nebulosa</u></i>				X	X	X	X			
Lower risk	Lynx	<i>Lynx lynx isabellina</i>	X					X				
Vulnerable	Civet Cats	4 genera		X	X	X	X		X		X	X
Vulnerable	Fishing Cat	<u>Felis viverrina</u>		X	X	X	X		X		X	X
Vulnerable	Golden Cat	<i>Felis temmincki</i>		X		X	X					
Vulnerable	Marbled Cat	<i>Felis marm-orata</i>		X		X	X	X	X		X	X
Lower risk	Jungle Cat	<u>Felis chaus</u>				X	X	X	X			
Lower risk	Leopard Cat	<i>Felis bengalensis</i>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Data deficient	Pallas's Cat	<i>Felis <u>manu</u></i>	X			X			X			



** **JDNP**: Jigme Dorji National Park; **JSWNP**: Jigme Singye Wangchuck National Park; **BWS**: Bumdeling Wildlife Sanctuary; **RMNP**: Royal Manas National Park; **TNP**: Thrumshingla National Park; **SWS**: Sakten Wildlife Sanctuary; **PWS**: Phibsoo Wildlife Santuary; **WCP**: Wangchuck Centennial Park; **TSNR**: Toorsa Strict Nature Reserve; **KWS**: Khaling Wildlife Sanctuary

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