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# RANGZHIN



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## A WBH sighted in a new area

A single White-bellied Heron (WBH) was sighted flying over a bridge at Tharong village (Upper Kheng / Shingkar Bridge) on July 24, 2019, at around 03:36 PM by Sherab Jamtsho and Sangay Choda, Forest Rangers from Nimshong Forest Beat, Khomshar Range under Zhemgang Division. The WBH was sighted during a regular patrolling towards Chamkhar chhu area and is the first sighting in that area.



## A WBH juvenile succumbs to its injuries



In Kisonachhu this year, the first juvenile was reported to have fledged on June 17, 2019, after 73 days, but did not return to the nest for the next three days. However, it returned to the nest after five days on June 23. Normally, the juveniles fledge by 72-73 days (Pradhan, R. 2011). Prior to that, the juveniles are observed flapping their wings and taking short flights from one end of the nest to another. The monitoring partners from Taksha Range office reported that all three juveniles at Kisonachhu had fledged on June 29, and were seen foraging in the river

banks on the opposite side of the nest. Upon receiving the report, the research team from RSPN rushed to the site to monitor the fledged juveniles. The team reached the observation point at 4:00 pm and scanned all the opposite river banks as the nest was empty. A juvenile was sighted foraging just opposite to the nest and one was sighted sitting idle few meters down. However, upon careful observation, the juvenile was observed to have severely injured its left leg (above the wrist). Despite heavy and continuous

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bleeding from the injured leg, the juvenile heron was flapping its wings repeatedly and trying to fly without any success. Immediately, the concerned authorities were informed about the incidents and help were sought to rescue it. However, it was getting dark and attempting a rescue was not possible. Therefore, the team decided to attempt a rescue in the early hours of the following day. On the following day, the research team, hired a team from Explore Bhutan Raft Company and with the generous support of the Taksha Range office attempted to rescue the injured

juvenile despite many difficulties faced. As the team reached the site, the injured heron was almost dead, its left-wing (Ulna and radius) was also completely broken making it flightless. The team gently covered the body with white clothes, tried to apply some first aid and made arrangements to take it to the nearest animal rescue center. Sadly, the juvenile stopped breathing and succumbed to its injuries shortly. The cause of the injury was not known, and the area is one of the least disturbed areas. The wings could have been broken as a result of

hitting the boulders around while trying to balance its body as its leg wrist bone (*tarsometatarsus*) was totally broken. The juvenile was one of the tagged herons and was identified as Sangay (Dharma) through its tag number (tag ID: 5274). The carcass of the WBH was brought to the RSPN head office in Thimphu and detailed measurements were taken. The carcass was later submitted to the Nature Conservation Division (NCD) of the Department of Forests and Park Services, MoAF, to mount and prepare specimens.

## Crane Karma is a Male

After rearing in captivity for three years without knowing its gender, Crane Karma is finally known to be a MALE.

A team of experts from Japan; Prof. Isao NISHIUMI from National Museum of Nature and Science and Kyushu University, Prof. Satoshi SHIMANO from Hosei University and Dr. Tsukasa WAKI from Toho University visited Bhutan on the invitation of RSPN from July 23-28, 2019. They visited both White-bellied Heron and Black-necked Crane habitats in Bhutan. The experts were provided feather samples of the Crane Karma with the request to determine its gender. Finally, it was revealed that the Crane Karma is a MALE. The feather samples were analyzed using Fridolfsson and



Ellegren (1999) method. RSPN has also sent Blood and feather samples of the White-bellied Heron to determine the genetic diversity of the extremely small surviving wild population in the country. RSPN waits for the White-bellied Heron genetics sample result.

RSPN extends our appreciation to Professor Shimano, Professor Nishiumi, and Dr. Waki for the support rendered to RSPN. It was indeed our pleasure to have them in Bhutan and establish this vital partnership and collaboration between the organizations. RSPN strongly believes that conservation cannot succeed in isolation. We must come together to fulfill and address our common objectives and goals for a better world.

## Our new Institutional Members



We are honored to welcome **MY BHUTAN** and **BHUTAN FOR LIFE** as our new Institutional members. We hope our collaboration will have great strides in the conservation of our rich natural environment.





## The successful completion of REDD+ Capacity Building Project



The Royal Society for the Protection of Nature (RSPN) with fund support from Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF), World Bank and project managed by Tebtebba Foundation, an NGO based in the Philippines, implemented phase II REDD+ capacity building project in Zhemgang. The current project was in continuation of the past REDD+ capacity building project for forest-dependent communities in Buli. The overall objective of the project is:

*To prepare the indigenous people of Buli to engage in REDD+ benefits sharing and carbon accounting program through capacity building programs.*

*Build a local knowledge-base to inform REDD+ benefit sharing and carbon accounting programs in the future.*

The project began in January 2019 and completed in August 2019. 13 Community Forests (CF) under Zhemgang Dzongkhag were benefited through training and awareness programs.

### Major Achievements

- Baseline study report on the status of agriculture yield, forest, socioeconomic situation and biodiversity in the context of REDD+ for the project in Buli, Zhemgang developed.
- The Feasibility of eco-tourism in Buli assessed and validated.
- Awareness of REDD+ carbon benefit conducted in 13 Community Forests under five gewogs of Zhemgang.
- Carbon accounting training conducted in 13 Community Forests under five gewogs of Zhemgang.
- 540 members (224 Males, 316 Females) from 13 CF participated during the awareness and training program.
- Forest resource assessment for two community forests in Buli completed, which complemented in the revision of management plans of CF.
- Carbon Stock Assessment in two Community Forests of Buli under Zhemgang Dzongkhag carried out to calculate carbon stock and carbon emission from the CF.
- Three days Knowledge sharing workshop on REDD+ organized with an objective to bring together all the relevant project stakeholders (government representatives, community representatives, local government, CSOs and organization involved in REDD+) to share experiences, good practices and lessons learned, and enhance REDD+ knowledge among stakeholders conducted.

## REDD+ and climate change sensitization program

Under the REDD+ capacity building project, RSPN supported the fund for sensitization programs in 13 schools (middle and higher secondary levels) and the College of Language and Cultural Studies, Taktse, Trongsa. Such awareness programs is expected to enhance knowledge and information on the Bhutan REDD+ readiness program.





## Inauguration of Crane Karma's new home



*Karma in his new home*

The Royal Society for Protection of Nature recently constructed the following facilities at the Black-necked Crane Visitor Center (BNCVC) at the Phobji-Gangtey valley:

- An aviary for crane Karma,
- Toilet facility for visitors at the center, and
- Quarters for the staff of BNCVC.

The completed properties were inaugurated on September 26, 2019, graced by the venerable Kolay Trulku, the head lama of Khewang Lhakhang. The inauguration was also attended by local leaders, communities, and staff of RSPN. With the generous contributions from hundreds of individuals, institutions, and philanthropists from Bhutan and around the world, Crane Karma's aviary has been finally completed. The construction started towards the end of 2018 and completed in August 2019.

To provide Karma with the feel of its natural habitat, the construction was carried out with minimal damage to the site. On the concrete wall of the aviary, mural painting of cranes and summer habitat was painted. A dark room was also built within the aviary for Karma to rest and also to avoid too much heat during the day.

In addition to the aviary, a rehabilitation facility was also constructed alongside the aviary. The facility will be equipped with necessary medical supplies, designated dark room, and first-aid room, mainly to cater to new injuries of Black-necked Cranes in the valley.

On September 10, 2019, with the assistance of officials from the Rescue and Rehab Centre from the Nature Conservation Division based in Taba (Department of Forests and Park Services), and the staff of the Black-necked Crane Visitor Centre (BNCVC) moved Crane Karma to its new home. A quick health check-up for Karma was carried out before he was moved to the aviary.

Basic training on first-aid medication of injured cranes and daily monitoring and record of Karma's health was conducted for the Livestock Officer of Phobji Gewog and staff of BNCVC.



*Officials checking Karma's health*



## AIT, RSPN and IMSL signs an MoU

A tripartite Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), a model academia-industry-civil society collaboration mechanism, was signed on August 9, 2019 at the Institute for Management Studies Ltd., Serbethang to establish cooperation between the Asian Institute of Technology (AIT), Thailand; Institute for Management Studies Ltd. (IMSL) and the Royal Society for Protection of Nature (RSPN). The MoU paves the way for cooperation between AIT, IMSL and RSPN (AIR) on conducting professional development courses; research and innovation; education, communication, and outreach programs in the areas of science, technology, engineering, sustainable development, and well-being, and Gross National Happiness (GNH).

The three organizations will collaborate in:

1. Offering professional capacity development and learning programs,
2. Research and development of innovative applications of science and technology, development of tools and design of approaches specific to mutually agreed on interest areas, and,
3. Collaborative education, communication, advocacy, and outreach through various media.



## Environment Education and Awareness Program

*August 20*

RSPN in collaboration with Watershed Management Division of the Department of Forests and Park Services, MoAF, conducted a five-day environment education and awareness program with the local government, government officials, business community, and the monastic bodies of Gangtey-Phobjikha.

The program aimed to create greater awareness on the wetlands and its linkages to the livelihood of the people and the Black-necked Cranes.





## Education and Awareness Programs on WBH



*August 13-14*

In an effort to create public awareness and community participation in conservation of critically endangered White-bellied Heron (WBH) in Bhutan, Nichula Range, Phibsoo Wildlife Sanctuary, with support from RSPN conducted Public Education and Awareness program.

*August 26*

A community education and awareness program on the White-bellied Heron (WBH) was successfully conducted with communities of Sunkosh and surrounding villages of Dagana and Tsirang districts. The main objective of the program was to stress on the conservation importance of the critically endangered WBH and to introduce the habitats of the WBH along with their locality.

Gups from Tsangkha and Rilangthang, and Range officer from Dagana and Tsirang along with Local government officials and Local Conservation Support Group from Sunkosh attended the program. Of the 49 participants that took part in the program, 27 were male and 22 females.



*September 4*

A one-day awareness program on White-bellied Heron was conducted for all the sector heads of the Tsirang District led by Dasho Dzungda. Dasho's statement, "conservation cannot work with the bordered territory," highlighted the importance of such programs.



## Community Exchange Program

As a part of the White-bellied Heron conservation program, RSPN conducted a community exchange program with the communities residing along the Punatshangchhu basin from September 13-16, 2019. A total of 19 participants constituting from Local Conservation Support Groups (LCSGs), Resource Group and officials from RSPN attended the program.



The program introduced participants to the diverse WBH habitats along the basin, to build partnerships among the groups and share knowledge, understand and identify threats and disturbances. And to understand the diverse mitigation measure that each community adapted to protect and minimize the threats to WBH in their locality.



## RSPN observed Zero Waste Hour

August 2

RSPN observed “Zero Waste Hour” together with our partners from Thimphu Thromde, Royal University of Bhutan, Bhutan Telecom Limited, Faculty of Traditional Medicine, Agency for the Promotion of Indigenous Crafts, Watershed Management Division, Centre for Environment and Development, Bhutan Toilet Organization, Mangdechuu Hydroelectric Project Authority and community living in the buffer of the stream.



The volunteers cleaned the office premises and the Chubachu stream. A truckload of waste was collected from the office and another ton of waste from the stream.



RSPN will coordinate at least a half-day cleaning campaign to observe the Zero Waste Hour on the second day of every month promote Bhutan’s vision of Zero Waste policy in line with the “Zero Waste Hour” to achieve Bhutan’s vision of Zero Waste Society by 2030.



## Training on NRM and Bookkeeping

The Royal Society for Protection of Nature (RSPN) in collaboration with Rural Development Training center conducted 8-days training on Natural Resource Management (NRM) and Bookkeeping to the farmers of pilot villages in Zhemgang. The training was from September 16 - 22, 2019. A total of 55 participants attended the training. The farmers were trained on CBNRM and bookkeeping. The objective and purpose of the training were to impart knowledge on how natural resources are threatened and conservation measures for protecting natural resources. Technique such as rainwater harvesting was also demonstrated to the community. Since every pilot village has a group working as cooperatives, bookkeeping and record keeping was deemed necessary. Farmers were trained on the stock register, bank book, cash book and many more related to bookkeeping.



## A weekend getaway for RSPN members

A weekend getaway for RSPN members was organized from August 17-18, 2019. On the first day, members undertook the trash tag challenge at Chelela, a vital hotspot for biodiversity and visitors in the country. The members besides cleaning the area also conducted an awareness program for tourists, national visitors, and commercial vendors on waste management. The next day, RSPN members trekked the Sagala Trail, a historic seven-hour hike from Haa to Paro. The trekking group traversed through a variety of unique habitats and explored the region's rich natural biodiversity along the way. In support of RSPN's Community-based Sustainable Tourism (CBST) program, the members enjoyed Haap's hospitality with their homestay experiences.



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