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# RANGZHIN



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Royal Society for Protection of Nature

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## White-bellied Heron population survey 2019



Photo: Research Division, RSPN

25 individuals were recorded during the nationwide White-bellied Heron (WBH) population survey, 2019. The survey engaged 21 Forest Resource Group (FRG), 11 Local Conservation Support Group (LCSG) and 10 staff of RSPN for five continuous days from March 2 till 6, 2019. 30 known and potential habitats of WBH within Punakha, Wangdue, Tsirang, Dagana, Sarpang, Zhemgang, Mongar and Pema Gatshel districts were surveyed. Sadly, a heron was reported dead in Pangna, Dagana, District, opposite to Sunkosh village. The cause of the casualty is still under investigation by the

*Contd. on page 2*

## Tagging of Black-necked Cranes

January 21-29, 2019



Experts from Crane Conservation Germany (Kranichschutz Deutschland) and NABU Germany joined RSPN researchers in tagging of Black-necked Cranes in Phobjikha Valley. The team tagged two cranes (one adult and one juvenile) with GPS UMTS transmitters. Through the attachment of the transmitters on the Cranes, the team can collect data on the migratory routes and their summer breeding grounds. The transmitter would further enable the team to monitor daily behavior of the Cranes. The tagged cranes were also ringed with national color combination (red and yellow) on one leg and different combination of colors (two colors) for each crane on the other. This would facilitate identification of the tagged crane from a distance. The data received will be invaluable for the protection of the species. Dr. Günter Nowald and Ms. Anne Kettner from Crane Conservation Germany furthermore conducted a workshop on GPS data management and analysis using computer programs such as Excel and QGIS.

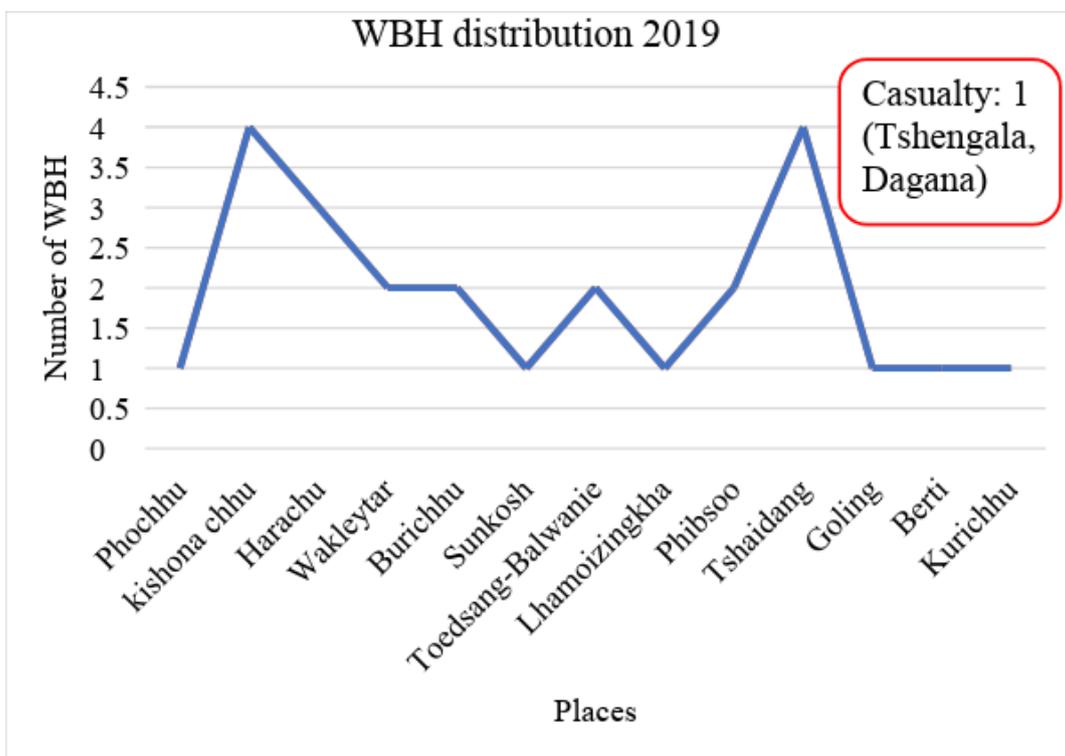
Simultaneously, a team from Ugyen



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Department of Forests and Park Services and RSPN. During the survey, six breeding pairs were observed trying to build nests. However, three of the pairs did not succeed

in building the nest, which leaves three active nests at Kisonachhu, Wakleytar, and Tshaidang. RSPN, LCSG, and FRG are actively monitoring the nests.



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Wangchuck Institute for Conservation and Environmental Research and Bumdeling Wildlife Sanctuary tagged three Cranes (all adults) in Bumdeling. Later, this team joined RSPN researchers in Phobjikha and tagged one more adult Black-necked Crane.

The program was carried out as a part of Black-necked Crane Research and Conservation project. Amongst other, the project aims to improve knowledge on the migratory routes of Black-necked Cranes wintering in Bhutan and identify potential threats during their migration as well as strengthening the trans-boundary

cooperation in the conservation of the birds with neighboring countries. The German team will return to Bhutan for a second field trip in the winter of 2019/20.





## White-bellied Heron awareness program

The White-bellied Heron (WBH) awareness program was conducted on January 26, 2019, at the Tshobalay Forest Checkpost. in Mekuri under Dungmin Gewog and Telung under Dechenling Gewog of Pemagatshel district. A total of 62 participants including three foresters attended the program. The participants represented the villages of Tshobalay, Durung ri and Zabalay under Dungmin Gewog and Telung and Soporong villages of Dechenling Gewog. The female representatives dominated the program with 56% (35 out of 62) of which 44% (27 out of 62) were male.

During the program, the participants were made aware of the current status of the WBH, its distribution, physical features and, dietary habits. The WBH MTV was also screened.



## Management Orientation and Consultation Meeting

The management orientation and consultation meeting were held on March 20, 2019, to orient the CBST beneficiaries on Haa Visitor Information Center Management Plan and to discuss the component of bye-laws. Ms. Khachi Wangmo, Project Officer, RSPN presented on the Haa Visitor Information Center Business Plan and future plans for the center, and Mr. Gyeltshen, Sr. Planning Officer, Haa Dzongkhag presented on the bye-laws of the Community-based Sustainable Tourism (CBST) Group. 26 people participated in the meeting and discussed on membership fees, joint



account opening, booking cancellation charges, etc. In addition to various issues addressed, Dasho Dzongdag deliberated on the future potentials of Haa Dzongkhag and encouraged all the certified Homestay owners to get registered with the CBST group. The center is expected to be open by the end of May 2019.



## Souvenir Refresher Training



12 souvenir group members participated in souvenir refresher training on March 20-21, 2019. The training focused on producing yak hair key hanger, labeling and packaging the finished products. At the end of one and half day training, the participants produced 19 yak hair key hangers which will be sold at Nu. 330 per piece. The money generated from the sale of these souvenirs will be kept as seed money for the Haa Visitor Information Center.





## Consultation Workshop

The 3rd consultation workshop for the development of environmental education materials was conducted from January 14-18, 2019 in Punakha. Teachers from Paro, Thimphu, and Gantey-Phobjikha reviewed the materials under the guidance of Mr. Surjay Lepcha, the consultant for the development of ‘Follow that Stream’ handbook. The Environmental education handbook ‘Follow that stream’ proposes project work concerning water for all levels of students and endeavors to help teachers to conduct them by giving precise instructions. The projects aim to raise awareness and interest in the



students as well as teach sound scientific methods in environmental sciences. Among others, the topics covered in the handbook include pollution and its causes and effects, water-borne diseases and species in and around water ecosystems. During the consultation workshops, teachers working in all levels of education reviewed the activities in order to improve it and make the materials relevant to the school curriculum. The handbook ‘Follow that stream’ is part of the Environmental Education program of RSPN supported by Keidanren Nature Conservation Fund (KNCF)

## Waste Exhibition

March 22, 2019

The Royal Society for Protection of Nature held a waste exhibition to mark the World Water Day with the theme ‘Save our Stream’. The event was held near the Chubachu Stream in collaboration with the National Environment Commission, Bhutan Toilet Organization, Jigme Losel

Primary School and Eco Bhutan. RSPN would like to thank our partners and volunteers for the successful event. On the same day, RSPN’s field office in Zhemgang celebrated the 2019 World Water Day in collaboration with Zhemgang Central School and Municipal Office. The

day was celebrated to advocate on the importance of freshwater and sustainable management of water. The programs included essay writing competition for students, water source and water tanks clean up, and banner displays with water management messages.





## RSPN signs an agreement

January 27, 2019

RSPN signed an agreement with the Crane Conservation Germany (Kranichschutz Deutschland) and NABU to study the wintering Black-necked Cranes in Bhutan. The agreement followed after the approval of the project “Research and Conservation of Black-necked Cranes in Bhutan, 2018-2022” by the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety (BMUB) for financial support. The project aims to improve knowledge on the migratory routes and breeding grounds of the cranes wintering in Bhutan. This would enable transboundary cooperation in the conservation of the Black-necked Cranes.



## Celebrating World Wetland Day 2019

February 2, 2019



To mark the ‘World Wetland Day’ the field staff, interns at Black-necked Crane Visitor Center and the staff of Aman Kora Gangtey, Norbu Bhutan Travels and Wangchuk hotel organized a cleaning campaign in and around the wetland in Phobjikha.





## From the Media

Source: Kuensel

PAGE 6 Wednesday, April 10, 2019 | KUENSEL

# Building a home for Karma is expensive

Phurpa Lhamo | Wangdue

Phobjikha's vast wetland is empty. Its famous winter resident—black-necked cranes have left for Tibet. But not all. Karma, found injured when still very much a juvenile can never fly back to its summer home.

Karma wears a red crown patch, a sign that it is now an adult. It has been living in BNC centre's five-by-three metres enclosure since 2016. It cannot even be let out when the cranes visit in winter.

"It is sad to see her/him trying to get out when other cranes call," said the centre's manager, Santa Lal Gajmer.

Unlike other birds, in which male birds were more flamboyant, it is difficult to identify male and female cranes due to their likeliness, Santa Lal Gajmer said. "But I think Karma is male because it has a slightly thicker voice."

Karma's only company at



► Karma has been living in the enclosure since 2016

the enclosure is a mirror. "The mirror makes Karma feel as though it has a company. A tourist suggested the idea and it works. Karma looks into the mirror and peck at its image."

Karma was found with a

neck injury and broken left wing in January 2016.

It is expensive for the centre to build a good home for Karma. Centre has so far been able to collect Nu 1 million, 2.5 million short of estimated

cost. Karma will have bigger space with a natural pond and a mirror. The centre also plans to build a rehabilitation centre to treat cranes with injuries.

The first case of crane in-

jury was in 2014.

"Unlike Karma, the crane was an adult when we found and was treated for about 10 days. Although the crane was not aggressive in the beginning, the crane became really violent when it grew strong," Santa Lal Gajmer said. "Karma was found when it was about six months."

Karma is about 4 today.

This winter Phobjikha recorded 49 juvenile and 409 adults crane visiting the valley; Haa reported an adult crane for the first time.

Including those in Bumdeling, Khotokha, Tang, Dungkar, Haa, and Chumey the centre recorded 609 cranes this winter. The previous winter saw 626 cranes visit different habitats in Bhutan.

Globally, the BNC population was increasing, Santa Lal Gajmer.

However, feral dogs are a major challenge for crane conservation in the valley.

## RSPN and UWICER signs an MOU

RSPN and Ugyen Wangchuck Institute for Conservation and Environmental Research (UWICER) signed a Memorandum of Understanding on January 18, 2019, at the conference hall of Department of Forests and Park Services (DoFPS). Through this understanding, the two organizations will aim to strengthen partnership mainly in the areas of environmental research and education. Representatives from DoFPS and UWICER led by the Director, and senior officials from RSPN led by the Chair and Executive Director participated in the event. Dechen Dorji, the Country Representative of WWF Bhutan and the Chair of RSPN emphasized the importance of the event by stating that the collaboration shows the commitment of

the two organizations in the conservation effort of the country and together they can enhance their contribution in achieving national goals.





## Environmental Education and Awareness Program

RSPN conducted a 2-day environmental education and awareness program from January 10-11, 2019 in the newly constructed Visitor Information Centre in Haa valley. 25 people including homestay owners and local guides as well as other locals involved in the community-based sustainable tourism program in Haa participated. The talks were given by different resource persons covered

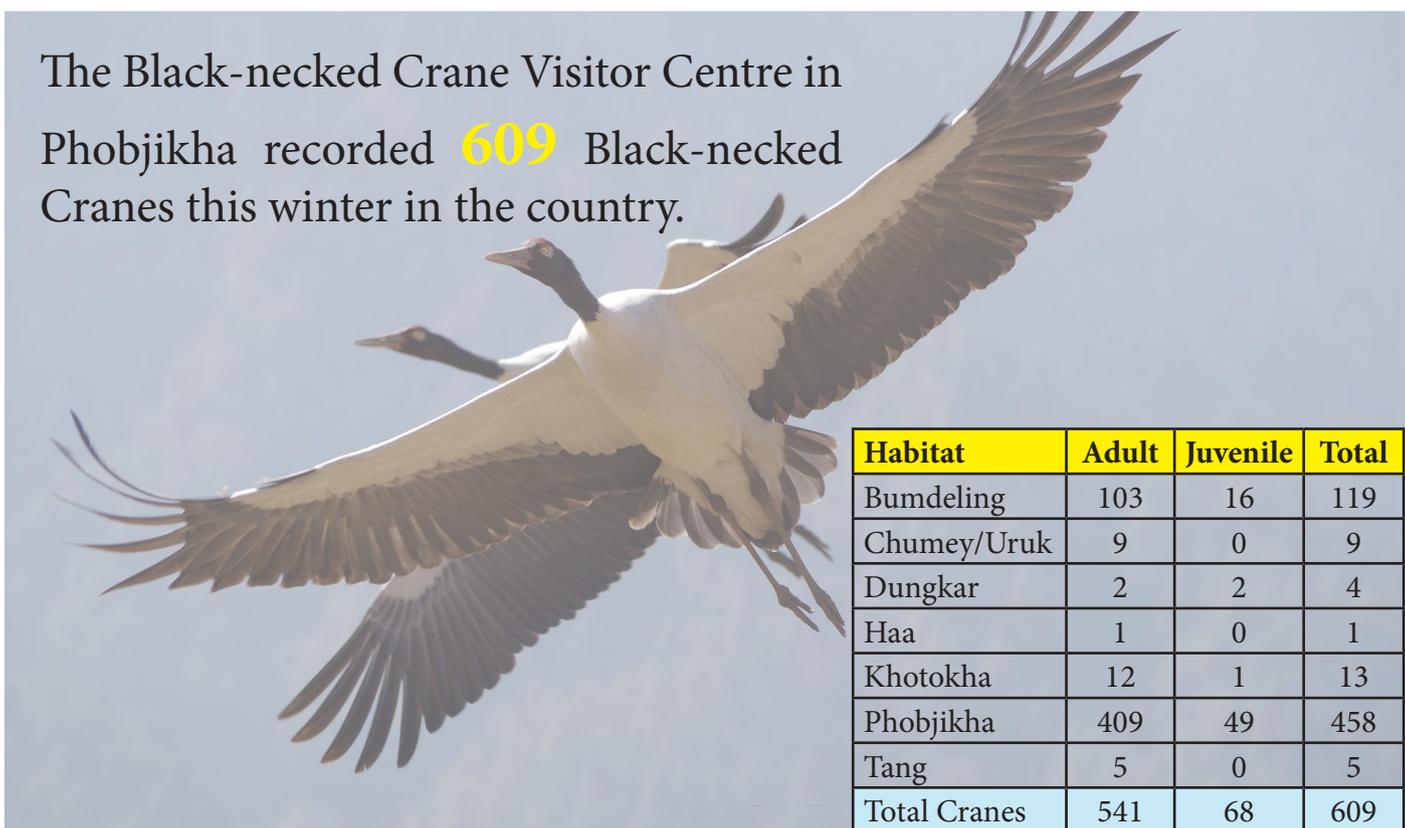
topics such as future tourism prospects in Haa including perceived challenges and opportunities as well as the actions already taken by the Dzongkhag and RSPN. Furthermore, participants could learn more about waste, water, sanitation, and hygiene as well as forest fire prevention. These different talks gave insights into pressing issues and the impact of individual actions.

On the second day, the program concluded with a presentation on waste management followed by a cleaning campaign in Haa town. During the program, participants could voice and discuss their concerns with different resource persons. The aim of the program was to raise awareness of environmental issues and inspire personal responsibility in conserving the environment.



## Black-necked Crane Count for 2018 - 2019

The Black-necked Crane Visitor Centre in Phobjikha recorded **609** Black-necked Cranes this winter in the country.



Habitat	Adult	Juvenile	Total
Bumdeling	103	16	119
Chumey/Uruk	9	0	9
Dungkar	2	2	4
Haa	1	0	1
Khotokha	12	1	13
Phobjikha	409	49	458
Tang	5	0	5
<b>Total Cranes</b>	<b>541</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>609</b>



# How Bhutan bees help our ecosystem

By *Karoline Gore*

PC: [www.pexels.com](http://www.pexels.com)

With around 20,000 species of bee in the world, Bhutan is proud to be home to five main varieties. These tiny creatures can play an enormous role in supporting and enhancing the ecosystems in which they work. By pollinating forests, grasslands and wild flowers, bees help their environments to thrive, and they even help the broader community by providing financial stability through sales of their honey.

## Why is pollination useful?

Bhutan's lush sub-tropical plains in the south and sub-Alpine mountains in the north provide stunning beauty, but this rich diversity can also be difficult to cultivate or pollinate manually. Bees are industrious creatures, able to travel and pollinate in the toughest conditions, and enable Bhutan's forests, flora and fauna to flourish. Bees are said to be responsible for 80% of flowering plants, but the close relationship between bees and forest habitats is also coming to light; one study found that cashew trees were 2 to 3 times more productive if honey bees were present. Largely as a result of bees' work, the birds, animals and other insects in the ecosystem can eat, shelter and survive.

## The business of bees

Not only do bees help their fellow animals, birds and insects by encouraging plants and forests to thrive, but they also help humans too. Bhutan's honey business is thriving, providing a valuable means of income for farmers and beekeepers in all communities. Keeping a hive is also a potential project for older children to learn from at school, both in terms of being responsible for the creatures, and learning how to run a small business. Bees clearly have much to offer their communities. Bhutan's bee species may only be small, but they are perhaps mighty. From pollinating forests and plants to help other wild animals and birds to thrive, to providing an income to communities, these tiny creatures provide huge rewards. Support them by encouraging wild flower growth around your home, and teaching your children how to respect them too. When bees thrive, so do their ecosystems.

## How can you help them?

Bhutan's culture of care towards its natural resources will no doubt extend to these smaller members of the ecosystem. Bees are attracted to bright colors, blues and purples, so why not plant the nation's favorite Blue Poppy in your courtyard at home or with your school or nature club? You could also leave out shallow water dishes in the hottest weather, to give the bees some well earned refreshment. Bhutan has the ambitious aim of being the world's first 100% organic nation; embrace this challenge at home and avoid using pesticides which harm bees as well as the wider ecosystem.



Royal Society for Protection of Nature  
P.O. Box : 325, Lhado Lam, Kawajangsa  
Thimphu, Bhutan



Telephone: +975 2 322056/326130  
Fax: +975 2 323189  
Email: [rspn@rspnbhutan.org](mailto:rspn@rspnbhutan.org)

[www.rspnbhutan.org](http://www.rspnbhutan.org)