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# RANGZHIN

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## Become a Member of RSPN

For RSPN Membership details please visit <http://bit.ly/Qglx1y> or scan this QR code:



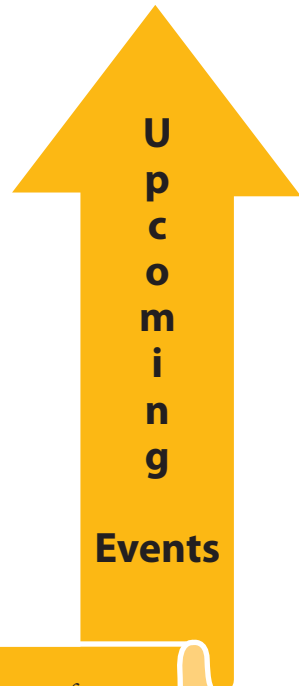
## Community Planning and Management Workshop (CPMW)

The Community Planning and Management Workshop (CPMW) was conducted from May 19 until June 6, 2016 in Samtse. It was a combination of one-day Gewog (Village block) meeting and two-day community planning and management.



Group work in session

The two-day CPMW workshop was attended by a representative from each household who were informed on Rural Water Supply System/Scheme (RWSS). The Workshop was designed to build commitment within individual users of RWSS schemes to sustain management and effective use. One of the major achievements of the CPMW workshop was the development of the blueprint of "Action Plan". A total of 408 people from the local communities of Yoeseltse and Phuntshopelri Gewogs were trained.



- Monitoring Visit to CBST project sites by the delegation team from JICA Head Quarters, Tokyo, in August
- Visit to Sustainable Agriculture project site in Wamrong and Kangpara by Norlha representative from Kathmandu, Nepal in September
- Visit to Denmark by RSPN Team for organic agriculture program in August.



Aspiring local guides of Haa

## Training the Local Guides for Haa

During two separate trainings conducted from May 8 to May 14 and May 31 to June 5, 2016, a total of 16 local youths were trained as local guides in Haa. Although the registration for the training was open to all the local communities, the participants mostly consisted of unemployed local youths who could not complete their schooling.

The training was conducted by an expert guide trainer from the Institute of Management Studies. The participants were introduced to the concept of community-based sustainable tourism (CBST).

The participants also learnt how to get involved in development of CBST programs in their community, be interpreters of their local heritages, and actively practice the methods of sight doing and sightseeing. The participants took part in organizing, coordinating and developing sample tour packages, which were based on nature, culture and human components. They were also trained on important and necessary safety measure and preparedness in the event of disasters by the officials from the Department of Disaster Management.





## 20 homestays selected and trained in Haa

The Community-based Sustainable Tourism (CBST) project team of RSPN in collaboration with the Tourism Council of Bhutan and the Dzongkhag Administration of Haa assessed and selected 20 households from 40 applicants.

The selected households along with some existing homestays were given training on hospitality, basic housekeeping, food and safety measures. The homestays will be operational from July, 2016.



With the home makers of Haa

## Social Forestry Day

RSPN field office in collaboration with Buli Central School observed Social Forestry Day on June 2, 2016. The day coincides with the Coronation day of His Majesty the Fourth Druk Gyalpo Jigme Singye Wangchuck.

The students and staff of Buli Central School, local stakeholders and farmers of Buli village participated in the event. The theme for Social Forestry Day 2016, was 'Plant and Nurture Trees for a Green and Healthy Environment'. It was commemorated with plantation of more than 200 saplings in the barren area and the inauguration of Gyalsey Gene Park in the School.

Gyalsey Gene Park was an initiative of Buli Central School and forms a part of the national initiative of every school across the country as a tribute to birth of His Royal Highness the Gyalsey. The students also planted diverse plant species in the park. Walking trails were also developed.



Gup (village headman) of Nangkor leading by example



Her Majesty the Gyaltsuen at the launch

## RSPN Celebrates Her Majesty Gyaltsuen's Birth Anniversary

Royal Society for Protection of Nature (RSPN) celebrated the Birth Anniversary of Her Majesty the Gyaltsuen on June 6, 2016 in collaboration with Ability Bhutan Society (ABS), Bhutan Kidney Foundation (BKF) and Thimphu Thromde. The celebration was graced by Her Majesty the Gyaltsuen who is the Royal Patron of RSPN, ABS and BKF.

A ramp for Wheelchair Accessibility Adaptation of the Centenary Park was launched during the event.

## BirdLife International team visits RSPN

The Birdlife International team represented by Dr. Hum Bahadur Gurung, Network and Partner Development Manager and Dr. Raju Motiram Kasambe, Vice-Chairman of BirdLife Asia, were in Bhutan for a week-long visit from May 16 to 21, 2016. The visit was in connection to RSPN's proposal to join the Birdlife International as member from Bhutan. As part of the process, the Birdlife International team carried out assessment of RSPN's institutional and program areas.

The assessment process included consultation meeting with RSPN staff, members of the board, and partners of RSPN. This was followed by a field visit to RSPN project site to get an insight of RSPN's field programs and activities.

The representatives will submit their assessment reports of RSPN to the World BirdLife Council in November, 2016.



From left to right: Rinchen Wangmo, Rebecca Pradhan, Dr. Hum Bahadur Gurung and Dr. Raju Motiram Kasambe



# A step towards saving the last White-bellied Herons

With only 60 confirmed individuals throughout its range, of which 28 individuals are found in Bhutan. According to the IUCN Red List, White-bellied Heron (WBH) is one of Asia's rarest birds. This bird species remains at a significant risk of extinction.

Despite witnessing five to eight WBH chicks fledge annually, the numbers of these majestic birds have not increased. It is a disturbing observation that puts an impetus on finding out the reasons behind it. Fledging is one of the critical stages for many large birds with high mortality rate. This makes monitoring and rescue of semi-fledged juveniles very important for ensuring juvenile survival and population increase of these critically endangered species.

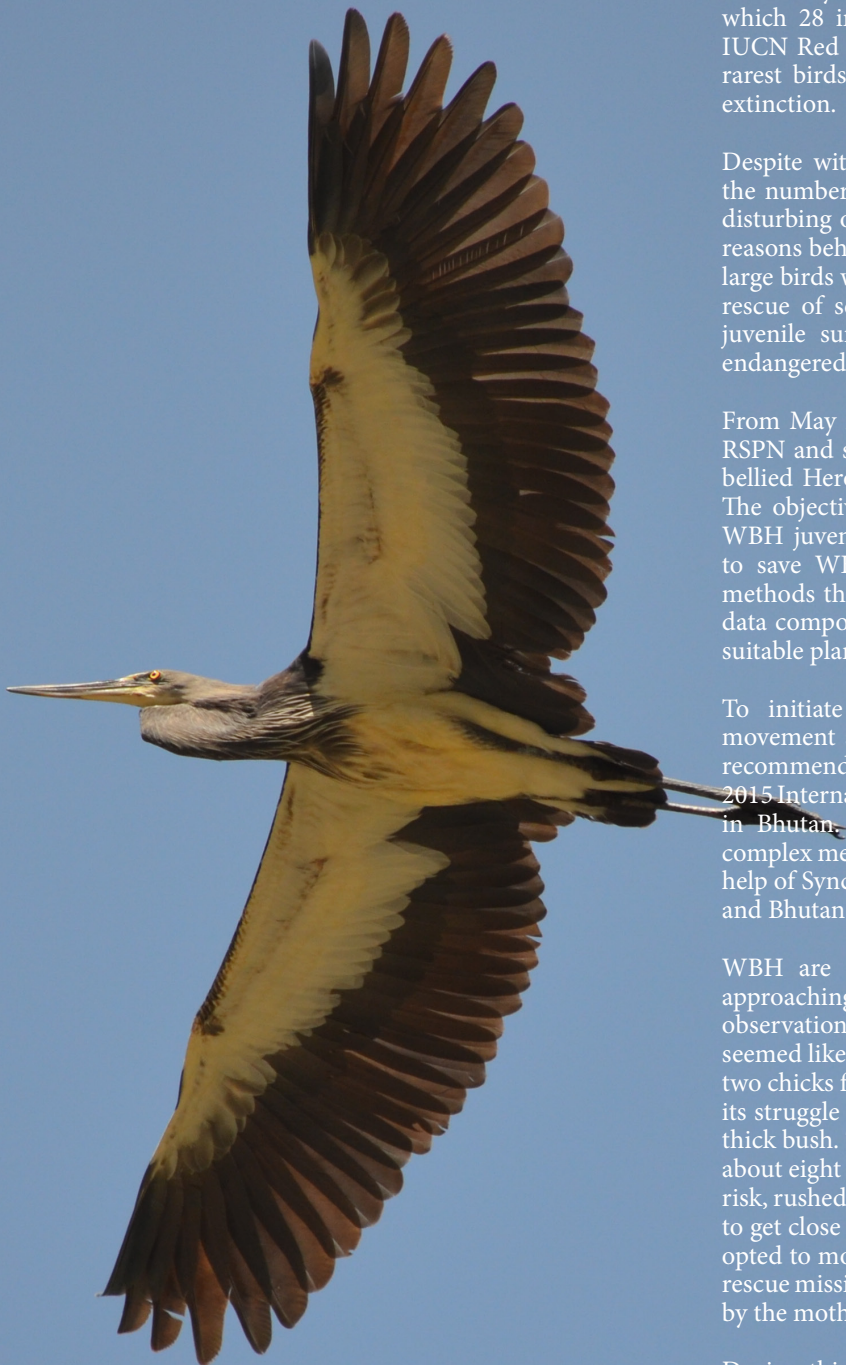
From May 28 to June 16, 2016, the WBH research team from RSPN and specialist Dr. Lubomir Peske, as part of the White-bellied Heron recovery plan project, were in Burichu, Tsirang. The objective of the trip was to study the ideal age group of WBH juveniles to mount satellite and develop a suitable plan to save WBH. Mounting satellite transmitters is one of the methods that would help in gathering crucial information and data components, which would ultimately help in developing a suitable plan to save WBH.

To initiate the tagging program aimed at understanding movement and mortality of the fledged chicks was one of the recommendation of expert consultation held at the December 2015 International White-bellied Heron Conservation Workshop in Bhutan. However, satellite tagging is an expensive and a complex method, and the project could only be initiated with the help of Synchronicity Earth, UK, WWF Bhutan Program Office, and Bhutan Trust Fund for Environment Conservation.

WBH are shy birds and one has to be extra cautious on approaching it. Likewise, it was only on the fourth day of observation that the team from RSPN was presented with what seemed like an accident turn into an opportunity. One out of the two chicks fell off the nest onto a lower branch of the tree, and in its struggle to get back fell further below getting entangled in a thick bush. The team observed the activity of the fallen chick for about eight hours and when it became obvious that its life was at risk, rushed in for its rescue. As this presented a rare opportunity to get close to what otherwise is a shy and elusive bird, the team opted to mount the satellite transmitter on the chick during the rescue mission. Chicks that leave the nest are in a way abandoned by the mother, which spells the end for such unfortunate chicks.

During this time, the other restless chick in the nest suddenly flew out of nest towards Burichu stream and did not return. This was a disturbing sight that set in motion another search and rescue operation. Luckily, the other chick was found the next day, perched on a small shrub beside the stream. The chick was rescued and similarly mounted with a satellite transmitter.

In the end, it was a successful trip that gave a lot of insight on the behavior of these birds. With the tracking system installed on two WBH chicks, the team now can track their movements for the next three years, and gather essential data on these birds. This perhaps could be the start of a new beginning for these birds; one that would ensure that their species survives.



White-bellied Heron adult spotted in 2016





## Critically Endangered White-bellied Heron sighted in two new locations

One White-bellied Heron (WBH) was sighted feeding along Sunkosh River in Karmaling, Lhamoizingkha, Dagana by Forestry official of Lhamoizingkha range on December 28, 2016. Its presence in the area was confirmed by other forestry officials and experts from Ugyen Wangchuck Institute for Conservation and Environment (UWICE).

Upon receipt of information from Lhamoizingkha range field staff, project staff from Royal Society for Protection of Nature (RSPN) visited the area on March 27, 2016 and conducted a detailed survey in collaboration with forestry staff, which confirmed its presence. Communicating with local communities, it was found that a pair of WBH were also sighted feeding along the river a few months ago.

Tour guide training team from UWICE, on their field visit to Trashiyangtse sighted another WBH on April 18, 2016. It was for the first time that a WBH has been sighted in eastern Bhutan. Mr. Karma Wangdi, research assistant at UWICE reported that while they were birding along the river below Gomkora, they spotted WBH feeding in the river. With two new sightings of White-bellied Heron (WBH), the current population stands at 28 individuals distributed across 13 locations in Bhutan.



White-bellied heron chicks

Sl. No.	Location	No. of Sightings
1	Phochu	3
2	Burichu	2
3	Sunkosh	1
4	Ada	2
5	Nangzhina	2
6	Berti	4
7	Phibsoo WS	3
8	Hararongchu	4
9	Digchu-Punatsangchu confluence	1
10	Wagletar	2
11	Mochu	1
12	Kalikhola	2
13	Trashiyangtse (Gomkora)	1
	Total	28

## Cleaning the River banks of Wang Chhu

Royal Society for Protection of Nature organized a cleaning program on May 7, 2016 as a part of our membership program. About 90 Members of RSPN including volunteers participated in cleaning the river banks on either side of Wang Chhu (Thimphu River). The cleaning area stretched from Lungtenzampa Bridge till the Changiji Bridge, covering about three kilometers.



RSPN members and volunteers cleaning the Wang Chhu



The majestic Black-necked Cranes



## Habitat-level Awareness Program on Black-necked Cranes in Bhutan

The habitat-level awareness program on the Black-necked Cranes was conducted from January 5-6, 2016 for the communities of Tang valley in Bumthang. The main purpose of the awareness workshop was to sensitize communities and local officials on the importance of conservation of Black-necked Cranes and its habitats. Communities were informed about the Black-necked Crane's distribution range, its food preferences, habitat type, its behavior, threats and conservation initiatives in Bhutan.

Additionally, a total of Six Black-necked Crane habitats and six Gewogs (Blocks) were covered in three Districts during the awareness program conducted from January 9 - 22, 2016. In each Gewog (block), an average of 50 participants were present during the awareness program, with a total coverage of about 350 people. Gewogs such as Tang and Chumey (Bumthang), Dungkar and Menjey (Lhunntse) and Yangtse and Bumdeling (Trashiyangtse) were covered.

### DID YOU KNOW?

- Her Majesty the Gyalsuen, Jetsun Pema Wangchuck is the patron of RSPN
- RSPN initiated the first nature clubs in 1987
- RSPN created the first waste inventory of Phuentsholing and Thimphu in 2005, and in the Same year secured nine waste compactor trucks from Japan with the support of JICA for the respective municipal offices.

## Continuing the flight of Karma

“Karma”, a juvenile Black-necked Crane, was found wounded on the neck and its left wing unmovable in lower valley of Phobjikha in the afternoon of January 6, 2016. The cause of the injury could not be ascertained as no scientific assessment was done. As this was the first major instance of such occurrence, Karma after a quick nursing was moved to an improvised shed. The improvised shed is a place Karma calls home for now.

Shortly, a more thorough external and internal (through radiographic x-ray) examination was conducted, and it was encouraging to see signs of the wound healing. Today, Karma as a result of periodical nursing and checkups is doing much better. It is placed in an improvised enclosure (an extension of the temporary shed) near the Royal Society for Protection of Nature's (RSPN) Black-necked Crane Visitor center roughly measuring 4 meters by 2.5 meters. It is under routine observation of the staff at Center and is fed with green vegetables, egg and egg shells fresh water, local wheat and rice grains. Chicken feeds is also fed to ensure that Karma's diet is wholesome. However, it was observed that Karma was experiencing a phenomenon called Zugunruhe in migratory birds who become restless in spring and autumn. Karma is the first summer resident Black-necked Crane in Bhutan.

The rehabilitation was made possible with the support, guidance and good will from our partners at the Department of Livestock, Department of Forests and Park Services, International Crane Foundation, and other individuals.

Karma, staying true to the meaning of its name, has managed to bring together different organizations, communities and people, and taught us of our shortcomings, unpreparedness and of things we can and should work on. Karma has inspired RSPN, who is now mobilizing funds to construct a better rehab facility at the center so that “Karma” and cranes like Karma can have a safe and sound rehabilitation in the near future.

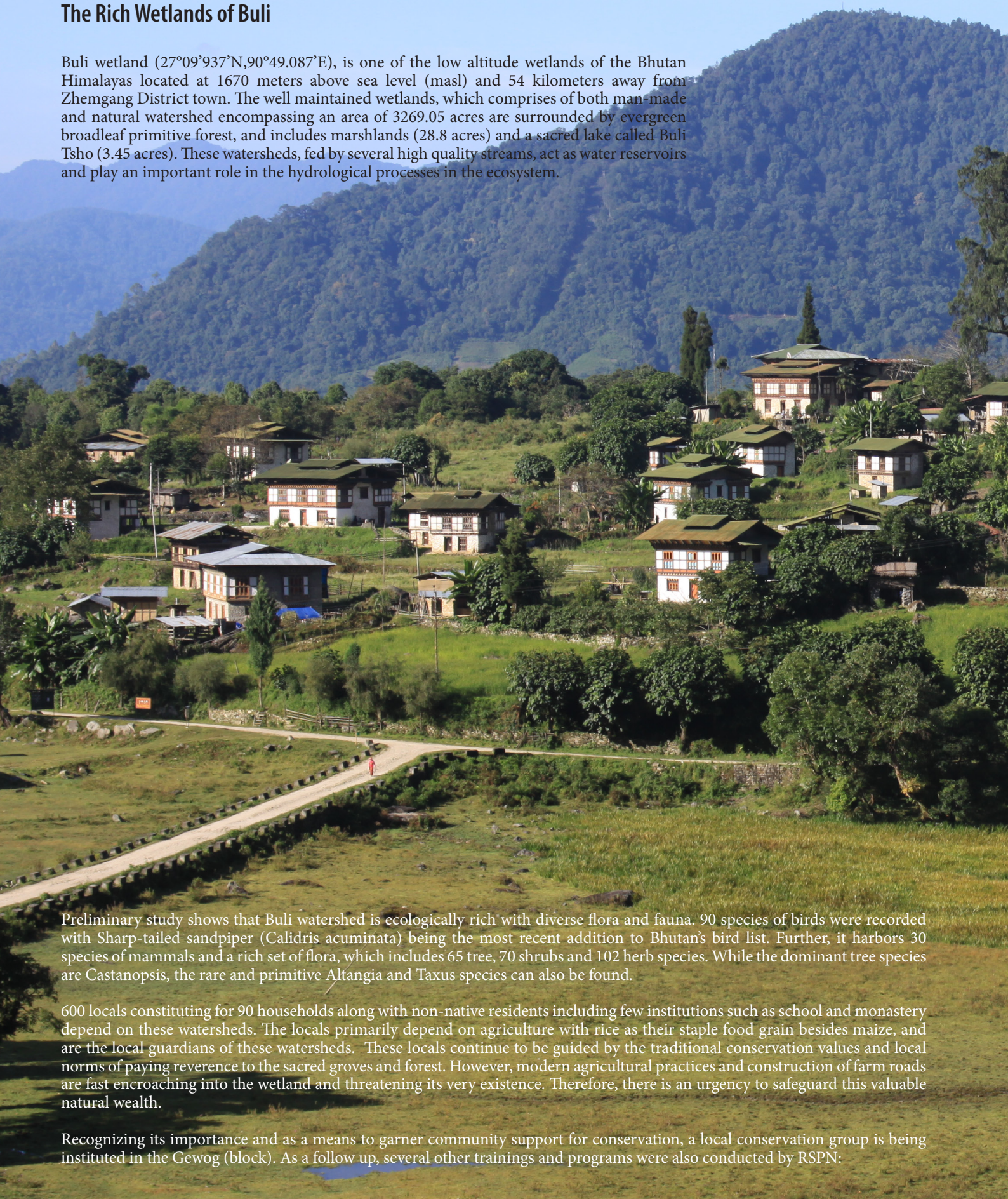






## The Rich Wetlands of Buli

Buli wetland (27°09'937"N,90°49.087'E), is one of the low altitude wetlands of the Bhutan Himalayas located at 1670 meters above sea level (masl) and 54 kilometers away from Zhemgang District town. The well maintained wetlands, which comprises of both man-made and natural watershed encompassing an area of 3269.05 acres are surrounded by evergreen broadleaf primitive forest, and includes marshlands (28.8 acres) and a sacred lake called Buli Tsho (3.45 acres). These watersheds, fed by several high quality streams, act as water reservoirs and play an important role in the hydrological processes in the ecosystem.



Preliminary study shows that Buli watershed is ecologically rich with diverse flora and fauna. 90 species of birds were recorded with Sharp-tailed sandpiper (*Calidris acuminata*) being the most recent addition to Bhutan's bird list. Further, it harbors 30 species of mammals and a rich set of flora, which includes 65 tree, 70 shrubs and 102 herb species. While the dominant tree species are *Castanopsis*, the rare and primitive *Alangia* and *Taxus* species can also be found.

600 locals constituting for 90 households along with non-native residents including few institutions such as school and monastery depend on these watersheds. The locals primarily depend on agriculture with rice as their staple food grain besides maize, and are the local guardians of these watersheds. These locals continue to be guided by the traditional conservation values and local norms of paying reverence to the sacred groves and forest. However, modern agricultural practices and construction of farm roads are fast encroaching into the wetland and threatening its very existence. Therefore, there is an urgency to safeguard this valuable natural wealth.

Recognizing its importance and as a means to garner community support for conservation, a local conservation group is being instituted in the Gewog (block). As a follow up, several other trainings and programs were also conducted by RSPN:





The scenic and ecologically rich valley of Buli

- The Buli Environment Management Committee members were trained on group management and organic farming, and experienced the wetland management practices in Phobjikha, which is the largest wetland in the country. Around 80 female and 20 male farmers were trained.
- The Buli Organic Agriculture group was supported by the project to fence their 50 decimal leased land with barbed wire.
- To keep the watershed clean and waste free, eight waste bins are currently being constructed.
- Two of the three monasteries in the area are provided with fuel efficient cooking stoves and it is expected to reduce fuel consumption by about 50 percent.
- The students of the Buli Central School, monks of the Buli Monastic Institute and the local communities are regularly engaged in wetland and watershed awareness programs.
- The community celebrated the 2016 World Water Day on March 22 with various advocacy programs and sensitization activities highlighting “sustainable livelihoods”.

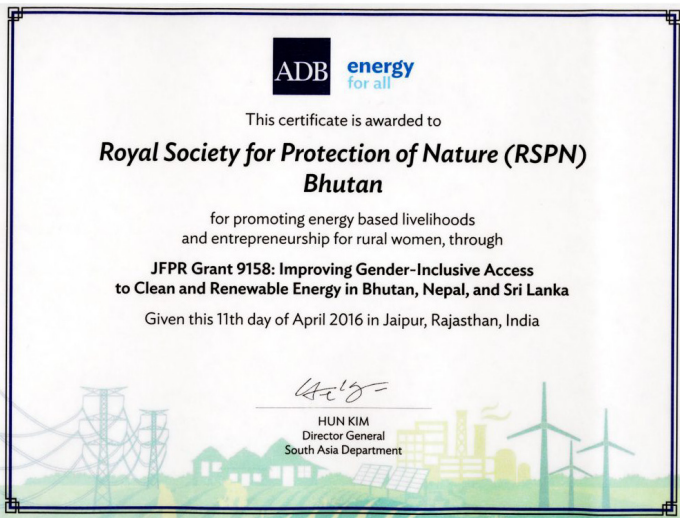
Presently, the Royal Society for Protection for Nature in collaboration with the district and Department of Forests and Park Services are working towards long term sustainability of the wetlands and trying to secure the area for conservation. Perhaps, Buli wetlands will be declared as a national Ramsar site in the near future.



## ADB awards appreciation certificate to RSPN

RSPN was awarded an appreciation certificate by Asian Development Bank during the sub-regional conference, Going Beyond the Meter: Inclusive Energy Solutions in South Asia held in Jaipur, Rajasthan, India on April 11-12, 2016.

The appreciation certificate was in recognition of the good gender outcomes within the ADB portfolio promoted through energy based livelihoods and entrepreneurship for rural women, made possible through JFPR Grant 9158: improving Gender-inclusive Access to Clean and Renewable Energy in Bhutan, Nepal, and Sri Lanka.



## Buli farmers trained on organic farming practices

The Farmers' Training on Organic Farming Practices in Buli, Zhemgang was held from April 20 to 28, 2016 in Gewog RNR Extension Center Hall, Buli, Zhemgang. More than 90 farmers from Buli, Nykhar-Tshegdang, Kikhar-Tali, Goling and Dungmang under Nangkor Gewog in Zhemgang attended the training.

The program included hands-on training on the techniques of making farmyard manure preparation of heap-compost, cyclic-compost, liquid-manure and bio-pesticides using locally available resources. It also advocated farmers on negative impacts of using synthetic fertilizers on their farmlands, such as health hazards, declining soil fertility and crop yield, degradation on environment and wetlands.

In addition, the training also facilitated communities in preparing "Post Training Action Plan" aimed at keeping farmers on track and to encourage them assimilate organic techniques to implement those lessons.



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