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The annual crane count in Bhutan



Black-necked crane in Phobjikha valley

With the completion of winter migration, the total number of Black-necked Cranes sighted in the country across all the habitats are monitored as usual and recorded by conducting a simultaneous count coordinated by the Royal Society for Protection of Nature. The count

helps in understanding the population trend of the cranes. The count is normally carried out when the cranes are in their roosts.

For this season the annual count was conducted on 17 January 2014 at 0600 hrs. The date and time were fixed in close consultation

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Bjoka Bamboo Craft Cooperative Group trained



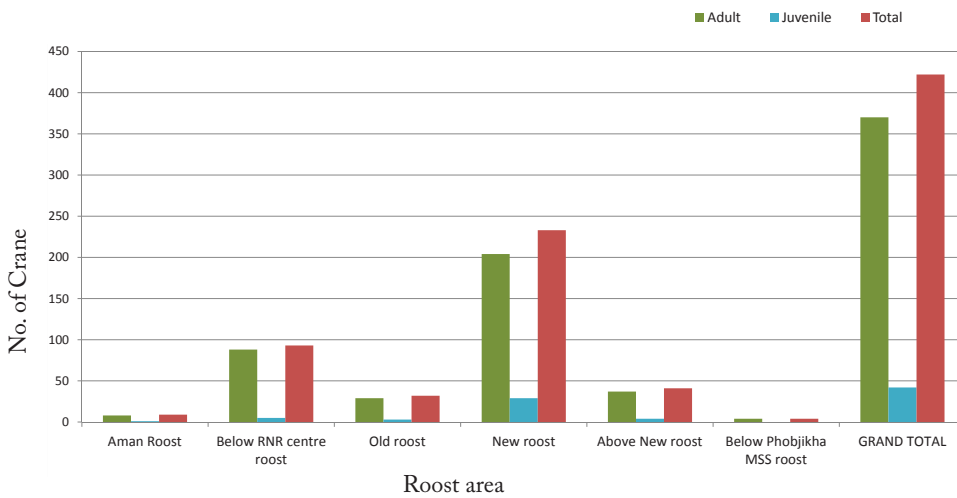
Women engaged in hands-on training

RSPN-Zhemgang Field Office in collaboration with the Bjoka Block RNR Extension Forest Office and Bjoka Bamboo Craft Cooperative Group organized a series of three-day training on Technical Skills on Bamboo and Cane Products to the women members of Bjoka Bamboo Craft Cooperative Group from 20 - 11 March 2014 as part of ADB funded project on "Improving Gender-Inclusive Access to Clean and Renewable Energy in Bhutan".

The training was conducted with the aim to improve the livelihoods of the communities of Bjoka Block through sustainable management of natural forest resources and alternative income generation through bamboo (Yula) and cane based products development and to enhance technical skills for bamboo and cane products development and promoting alternative income generating activities.

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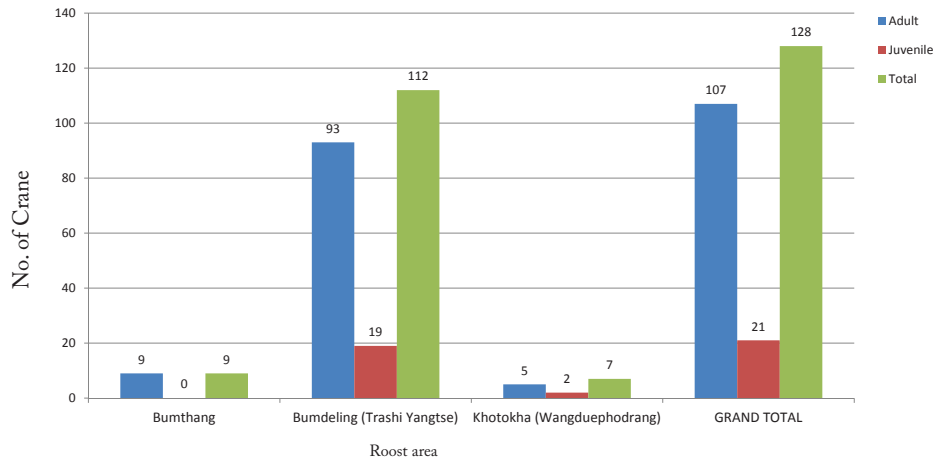
The annual crane count in Bhutan



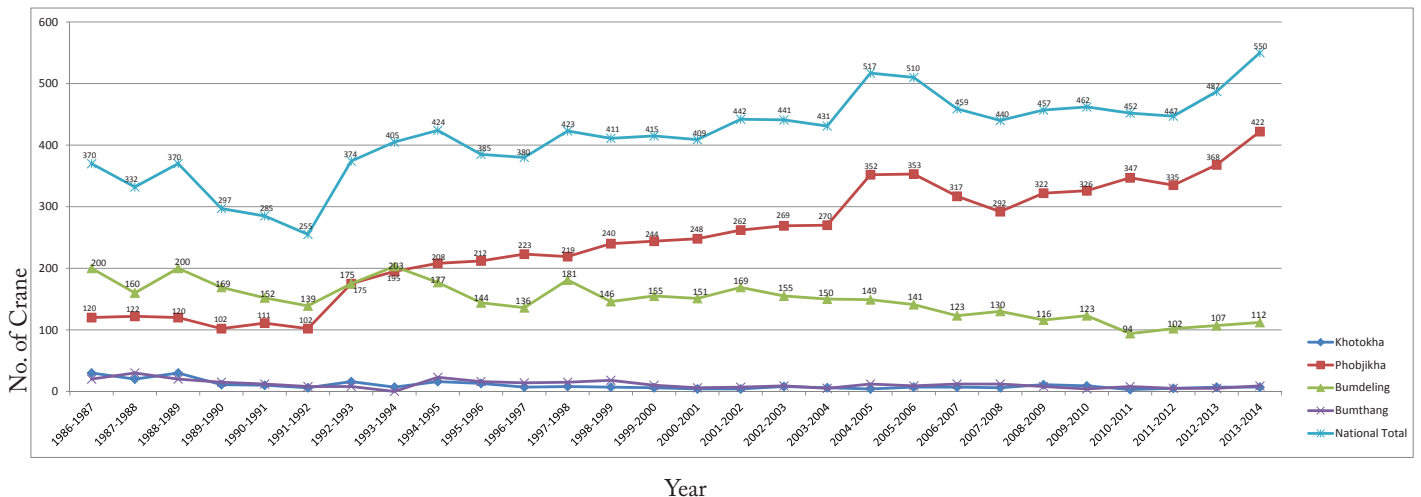
with all the stakeholders i.e. the Forest Beat Office and Gangtey Aman Kora resort in Phobjikha; Khotokha Range Office; Wangchuck Centennial Park and Ugyen Wangchuck Institute for Conservation and Environment in Bumthang and Bomdiling Range Office and Bumdeling Wildlife Sanctuary in Trashi Yangtse.

For accuracy, three counting methods were used. For direct count spotting scopes were used in all the roosts and requires repeated counting, at least four times, to get average final number. The second method used was through photography. Cranes in their different roosts were photographed and counted in a computer monitor. The final and reliable method was counting the departures from the roost and requires lot of time.

Total count of Black-necked Cranes in Phobjikha



Total count of Black-necked Cranes from 1986 to 2014



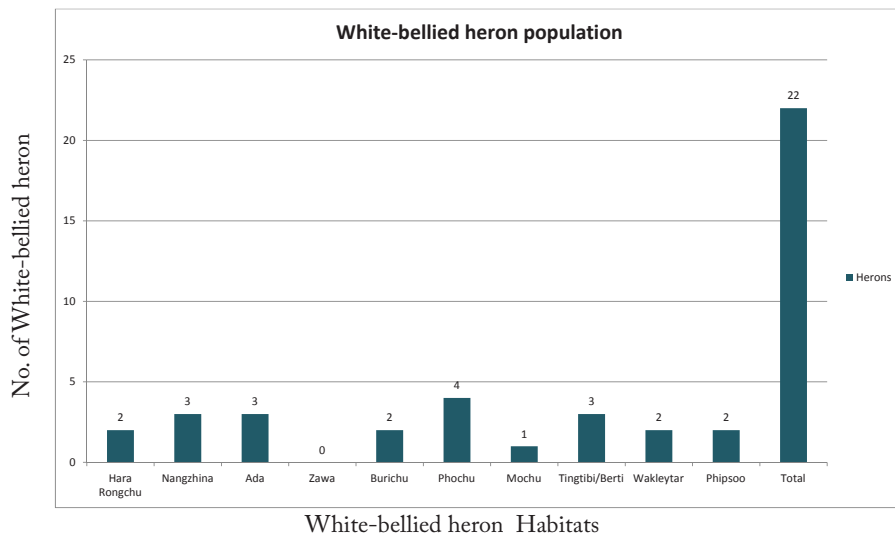
Training on Book-keeping and Silviculture Options

The three-day training on Book-keeping and Silviculture Options to the Community Forest Management

Group (CFMG) members of lower Zhemgang was organized by RSPN Zhemgang Field Office in collaboration with the Block RNR Extension Forest Offices of lower

Zhemgang from 15 - 21 February 2014. About 25 women and 28 men members of the CFMGs attended the three days training.

Two White-bellied Herons sighted in Phibsoo



Graph showing total number of White-bellied herons in major habitats in Bhutan

Presence of two adult White-bellied Heron (*Ardea insignis*) in Phibsoo Wildlife Sanctuary, Sarpang was con-

firmed by a team of RSPN and Phibsoo Wildlife Sanctuary Forestry Officials in February 2014 after conducting the survey for

three days.

It was first sighted on 25th February, 2014. White-bellied Heron is classified as critically endangered because of its extremely small and rapidly declining population, estimated to be less than 200 globally. This decline is projected to increase in the near future as a result of the loss and degradation of lowland forest and wetlands and through direct exploitation and disturbance which are the main threats.

In Bhutan, the annual 2013 WBH population survey conducted by RSPN shows 20 individuals and has increased to 22 in 2014.

“inspiring personal responsibility and active involvement of the people of Bhutan in the conservation of the Kingdom’s environment through education, research and sustainable livelihood opportunities” a one day environmental education and awareness program was conducted for the monks of Gangtey Goemba in Phobjikh on 21 March 2014 for a total of 30 monks and two teachers.

Environmental Education and Awareness Program



Awareness program in session

Environmental Conservation is the responsibility of all people, from all walks of life. As a part of imparting

knowledge about the importance of environmental conservation and with the Royal Society for Protection of Nature’s mission of

RSPN Members Cleaned Kuensel Phodrang Area

A half day membership activity of cleaning the roadsides to Buddha Point was organized in collaboration with Kuensel Phodrang Park Management under Nature Recreation and Eco-tourism Division (NRED) of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forests.

About 52 participants comprising mostly

of RSPN members and the staff from NRED and other divisions under Department of Forests and Park Services took part in the event. It was the first membership activity for the year 2014 and we hope to organized many more activities in future.

The RSPN management would like to thank all the participants and look forward for the continued support from our members.

Chinese Pond Heron sighted near Singye Dzong



Chinese Pond Heron (*Ardeola bacchus*)

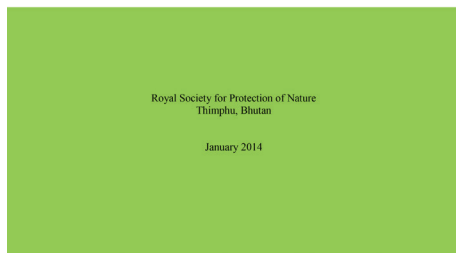
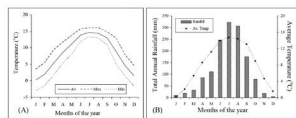
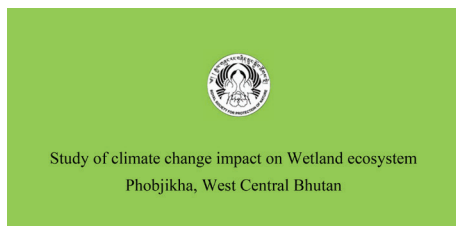
In a rare sighting in Bumdeling Wildlife Sanctuary, a Chinese Pond Heron (*Ardeola bacchus*) was spotted near Singye Dzong at a record altitude of 3600 m in Bhutan.

The Chinese Pond Heron is an East Asian lowland freshwater bird. It is typically 47 cm (19 in) long bird with white wings, a yellow bill with a black tip, yellow eyes and legs.

Its overall colour is red, blue and white during breeding season, and greyish-brown and flecked with white at other times.

Source: WWF Bhutan

A report on Climate Change Impact on Wetland Ecosystem in Phobjikha launched



The published research report

The report on Study of climate change impact on Wetland ecosystem Phobjikha, West Central Bhutan conducted by RSPN in collaboration with Department of Forest and Park Services with financial support from Bhutan Foundation was published by RSPN.

According to the published report, the general objective of the study was to build baseline information and to understand the impact of climate change on the wetland ecosystem. Specifically, the study aimed to compile and analyze existing meteorological data of Phobjikha valley, classify forest types and structural traits surrounding the wetland (NE & SW series) which acts as source of water to the wetland, find the impact of developmental activities on the wetland, monitor and measure water discharge from seasonal and perennial springs into the wetland and compile the vegetation and climate data to understand the current situation in respond to climate change.

Management Training for CBST Group

The management team of the new Community-based Sustainable Tourism (CBST) Group of Phobjikha were oriented to basic office management training workshop from 23 - 27 January 2014 at the RSPN headquarter in Thimphu to build their skills and knowledge on financial and administrative matter.

The management team was formed as a requirement of the CBST business plan for establishment of a CBST Group secretariat and will be responsible for making correspondence, marketing and coordination of the CBST services of Phobjikha between clients and local service providers.

CBST Promotion Meeting with Tour Operators



The meeting in session

A meeting with tour operators to promote Phobjikha Community-based Sustainable Tourism (CBST) was conducted on 22nd January 2014 in Jigme Khesar Environment Resource Centre Auditorium at RSPN in Thimphu.

It was organized to provide a platform to introduce local CBST services to the tour operators. The presentations highlighted on the introduction of new programs and activities including biking facility, trained local guides, homestays and the CBST management group. The tour operators were also made aware about the rates of the tour packages and other CBST facilities that were decided in consultation with the project steering committee and the local community. 35 tour operators attended the meeting.

Kick-off meeting for Green Public Procurement in Bhutan held in RSPN



The kick-off meeting with the stakeholders for Green Public Procurement in Bhutan was held on 31 March 2014 in the conference hall of the Royal Society for Protection of Nature, Thim-

phu. A cross sectorial strategy for sustainable industrial competitiveness, GPP in Bhutan is expected to scale-up public demand for environmentally and socially preferable goods, services and infrastructure, and support the

achievement of Gross National Happiness and 'The Middle Path'.

G PP Project of 3.5 years in Bhutan is funded by the European Union and is expected to be driver of green growth in Bhutan.

The project consortium includes International Institute of Sustainable Development (Canada/Switzerland), Collaborating Centre on Sustainable Consumption and Production (Germany), Bhutan Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Royal Institute of Management and the Royal Society for Protection of Nature. The meeting was attended by government and public from the Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Works and Human Settlement, Druk Holding and Investment, Gross National Happiness Commission and National Environment Commission.

Familiarization on Community-based Sustainable Tourism



A local man demonstrates art of basket making to the participants

RSPN and the Community-based Sustainable Tourism (CBST) Group of Phobjikha organized a familiarization

trip for Bhutanese tour operators to experience the CBST services and facilities established through the CBST project in Phob-

jikha from 16- 18 February 2014 with the objective to encourage and promote CBST as a niche tourism destination.

The familiarization tour was attended by 27 participants, who registered through the Association of Bhutanese Tour Operators (ABTO) that serves as one of the steering committee members of the CBST project. The participants comprised representatives from 14 travel agencies, Tourism Council of Bhutan, ABTO and 10 tour guides. While several CBST activities and services were available for them, they experienced a typical sample of a CBST program of 2 days and 2 nights that gave them the opportunity to experience lifestyle of communities in Gangtey and Phobji Gewogs. Participants were made to experienced homestays and local farm activities including simple craft making, hiking, biking and cultural program. The project is supported by JICA and JEEF.

World Water Day Celebration - 2014: Water and Energy



Participants cleaned up the Paro river

RSPN joined the global community in celebrating World water Day on 22 March 2014 in two separate places - Wamrong and Paro.

RSPN's Field Office in Wamrong, Trashigang observed the day with Wamrong

community and Tashitse Higher Secondary School by organizing an awareness campaign to sensitize the students and communities on importance of water and its conservation. The school also organized essay and slogan writing competition as part of the celebration. Meanwhile in Paro, Bhutan Water Partnership Secretariat which is based in RSPN took the ini-

tiative to create an awareness program in collaboration with Division of Forest by organizing various activities like cleaning the banks of Pachhu, along Lango – Bonday stretch. Schools along the Pachhu took initiatives to adopt the river banks and conserve the area.

Meanwhile in Paro, Bhutan Water Partnership Secretariat which is based in RSPN took the ini-

While the world observed the Earth Hour on 29th March 2014, several RSPN members trekked the Lungchuzekha Hiking Trail (3.5 Kms) which is about 2 hours travel time (one way). The highest point on the trail was about 3569 meters above sea level. The team trekked from Dochula Pass, climbed towards the Lungchuzekha Lhakhang (highest point on the trail) and then descended towards Yusipang via the Tashigang Gonpa covering 9.2 kms. From Lungchutse one could see the spectacular view of Mount Jomolhari, Gang Bum, Gangchen Tag, Masagang, Tsenda Gang, Teri Gang, Table mountain, Hinglae La, Gangkar Puensum and Dagala to mention few.

The trail mostly passed through conifer forest with rhododendron, juniper, hemlock and birch. The rhododendron has not yet bloomed but some primula were bright and in full blossom. We saw several bird species such as spotted nut cracker, white collared black bird, Eurasian tree sparrow and green back tit to name few. On the trail the members collected littered wastes such as sweet wrappers, plastics, PETT and glass bottles.

The trekking program was part of RSPN membership program. RSPN plans to organize such rewarding activities more frequently in future to explore Nature in all its glory.

RSPN members hike the Lungchuzekha Hiking Trial



RSPN Members cleaned trails on a day's hike

WORD SAFARI

In this edition, we have compiled major habitats of White-bellied Heron (*Ardea insignis*) in Bhutan. A total of 22 herons is counted in Bhutan in the latest heron population report.

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



District	Habitat Location	No. of White-bellied Herons
Wangdue Phodrang	Hara <u>Rongchu</u>	2
	<u>Nagzhina</u>	3
	<u>Ada</u>	3
	<u>Zawa</u>	0
Tsirang	<u>Burichu</u>	2
	<u>Wakleytar</u>	2
Punakha	<u>Phochu</u>	4
	<u>Mochu</u>	1
Zhemgang	<u>Tingtibi</u> / Berti	3
Sarpang	<u>Phibsoo</u>	2
Total number of Herons in Bhutan		22

N	E	Z	A	W	A	E	T	P	E
W	A	P	H	S	N	A	L	H	A
A	D	N	Y	S	A	D	I	O	G
K	A	O	G	U	L	B	U	C	L
L	R	S	I	Z	R	E	Y	H	E
E	T	O	R	R	H	E	O	U	S
Y	W	P	N	W	R	I	N	O	S
T	I	H	A	G	G	E	N	U	M
A	N	O	S	N	C	O	L	A	O
R	G	D	H	U	G	H	H	T	C
H	H	R	M	T	G	O	U	U	H
I	N	A	I	H	P	H	R	I	U
S	A	N	R	A	I	G	E	N	P
T	D	G	C	T	E	L	A	E	H
L	T	S	P	C	R	A	N	E	I
I	V	U	E	H	A	I	R	O	B
N	B	U	R	I	C	H	U	X	S
T	I	N	G	T	I	B	I	R	O
B	A	B	B	U	S	H	L	R	O

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