

Project Update: June 2016

Brief timeline: 5/05/16 to 23/06/16

A total of 360 households were interviewed in six targeted habitation areas of white-bellied herons and black-necked cranes in Bhutan. From each district, I have randomly selected 60 household and picked up random population of 20 students, 20 officials and 20 civil servants.

On 5th May 2016, we started our journey from Thimphu to Punakha. On 6th May we visited white bellied herons nesting sites in Tshosabu, which is 2 hour drive from Punakha (Phochu) and 6 hour walk and return back to Punakha on the same day.

On 7th May 2016, we started our journey to central Bhutan (Zhemgang) with two college students who also studied in college of natural resources to assist me in data collection. Data collected from Zhemgang from the sample satellite town and villages until 9th May.

On 10th May 2016, we travelled to eastern Bhutan (Trashigang) and reached the sample site on 11th May. We collected data from 12th to 14th May from the sample sites.

We started our return journey on 15th May 2016 via India to southern Bhutan and subsequently to south central Bhutan where white-bellied heron habitats along the river that passes through. On 17th May 2016, we divided amongst ourselves in two locations (Tsirang and Burichu) for the collection of the data and eventually on 18th May I distributed questionnaire in Damphu Higher Secondary School and Lower Secondary School requesting teachers to distribute questionnaire to students because of the fact that schools were conducting exams for their students. I collected the answered questionnaire on the same day. On 19th May I visited the satellite town of Tsirang District and government offices and collected the data.

On 20th May 2016, I went to pateyey geog and rangthangling geog of Tsirang District and collected the data on the same day.

On 22nd May 2016, I returned back to Thimphu.

Expectations:

Warm Hospitality:

During our field visit to the communities and satellite towns, we have not faced any problem and moreover we are fully supported by our organisation Royal Society for Protection of Nature (RSPN) from the head quarter.

Our interviews with the respondents were very successful and I felt that my interviews were actually like creating an awareness programme for them.

The host household and those households I interviewed welcomed me with warm hospitality more than my expectations

Unwillingness and fake response

As we are new to the communities that we have visited; initially, we feared that we might not get good responses. But as we moved on many local people actually welcomed and responded whatever they know about these two birds. The communities, students, government officials, we have visited were supportive and welcoming. We did not encounter any unwillingness to respond but one or two; we have noticed the fake answers.

Difficulty in meeting with respondents

We did not face any difficulties in getting the responses from the people that we have sampled. The sampled people were farmers, students and government officials, who were in fact happy to know about these two birds and their importance in ecosystem dynamics. The interview turn out to be kind of education for those people who are not aware of these two birds existence and their danger of extinction if we do not act on the protection and conservation right away.

Challenges: During the course of 18 days of tour

Difficulty in understanding the local terms

As an enumerator, at times I faced difficulty in understanding the local terms. Different locality had their own local name for these two birds, which I was not aware off. Other difficulty is the dialect that every different community spoke. Many times, I have to hire translator from the samples villages.

Solution: I hired translator from the same villages who could understand our national language or English.

Weather

The monsoons have begun and there were heavy rains everywhere in the country. Travelling by car was not a problem but walking to villages was very tough but I have learned a lot, not only in terms of difficulties but understanding the nature more and even more so the people in the villages association with nature in harmony.

Solution: Waiting for rain to stop was one of the solution but when the rain continued for whole day, using umbrella and to continue our journey was the only options.

What do you need to learn further?

There are many, I need to learn from this field experiences.

- Peoples difficulties in the villages with their livelihood.
- Needing to cope up with difficulties in terms of scientific exploration.
- Conservation ethics getting very strong than livelihood in the villages.
- People dependent on forest for food and in turn threatening the flagship species existence.

Hypothesis base on experience

- Enumerators experience and gaining broader understanding of the whole community in terms of their beliefs and action towards nature.
- Whether the data gathered is accurate.
- Survey is a good way of socialising with people and in understanding them because they are central to conservation and protection.





Critically Endangered white-bellied herons nesting trees in Punakha



White-bellied heron chick in Burrichu under Tsirang District

There are 2945 households in TashiYangtshé District, 1553 households in Bumthang District, 2248 households in Zhemgang District, 6671 households Tsirang District, 2796 households in Wangdi Phodrang District and 4237 households in Punakha District in the habitat areas of Black Necked Crane and in and White Bellied Herons. Out of which 60 households from the entire District were randomly selected for this study.