

Project Update: June 2020

Summary

Thus far we have been able to make about 18 field visits to our study sites to observe the roosting behavior of the critically endangered white-bellied heron in Bhutan. Although we have put our concerted effort to locate more WBH along the Punatsangchhu basin, we have been able to sight them within the areas where they have been previously sighted or located, which is almost always in the less disturbed areas. We have been able to locate both of their day roosting and night roosting type and gain insight into their daily roosting behaviour. We have been able to make progress with kind support and goodwill from the local people, field assistants and relevant agencies such as Royal Society for the Protection of Nature and Department of Forest and Park services.

Day Roost

We observed that there is a pattern in roosting behavior of the WBH in terms of day and night. We noticed that WBH roosts on the nearby perch, and big rock/boulder along their feeding habitats during daytime. On their roost, WBH involved in various behaviour (e.g. grooming, roosting and resting). The WBH spends mostly about 1-3 hours in its day roost before indulging in their foraging activity. We have taken measures of the roosting site characteristics.



Figure 1: A pair of WBH roosting on a day-roosting perch.



Figure 2: A WBH probably roosting on a big rock.



Figure 2: White-bellied Heron on its day as well as night roosting perch.

Night Roost

Night roosting behaviour of WBH something that we found it very interesting and not observed in other birds or ardeids. We observed that WBH going to their night roosts always after the nightfall when it is barely possible to follow its flight before landing on their night roosts. Night roosting always occurred on a perch unlike day roosting. There is variation in physical and environmental characteristics between the day and night roosts. Camera trapping was found to be effective and non-invasive method in validating and getting more information about the WBH's night roosting behaviour.