

Project Update: January 2021

Summary

We carry out our field survey as per the plans and to date we have spotted 53 roosting sites of the critically endangered, white-bellied heron (WBH). Only eight records were made from Mangdechhu basin while the remaining were made from the Punatsangchhu basin. Probably this is due to more density of the WBH found in latter than the former. There are about 20 WBH in the Punatsangchhu basin while only seven WBH were recorded from the Mangdechhu basin. Seldom infrequent sightings are also made from the other nearby basin in Bhutan. We have completed taking measure of parameters of the roosting trees as well as the control. We have also completed recording the threats posed to WBH in these two major habitats of the WBH. We must acknowledge that due to government restrictions on mass gatherings, we could also carry out awareness in a group of two to three in a household.

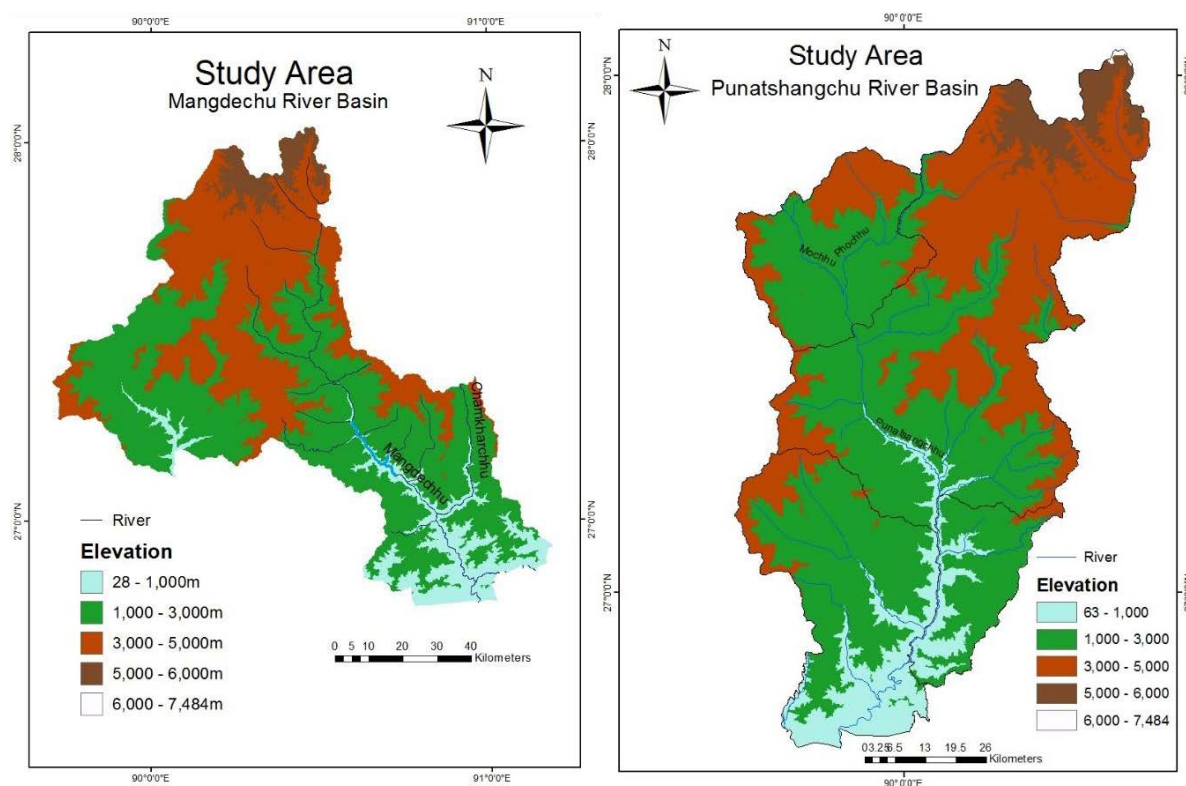


Figure 1. Location of study sites in Bhutan.

Roosting Ecology

WBH roosts on both broadleaved and Chir pine trees along its riverine habitat. Roosting sites are very important for the bird to engage in resting and grooming behaviour which must be included along with its habitat protection and management interventions. While day roosts are usually found far from the human disturbances (average > 500m), it is surprising to note that night roosting can be tolerant of human disturbances. While there could be numerous ecological factors for their roosting site selection and behaviour, this study will be able to understand the roosting site characteristics of the WBH which is important for their conservation.

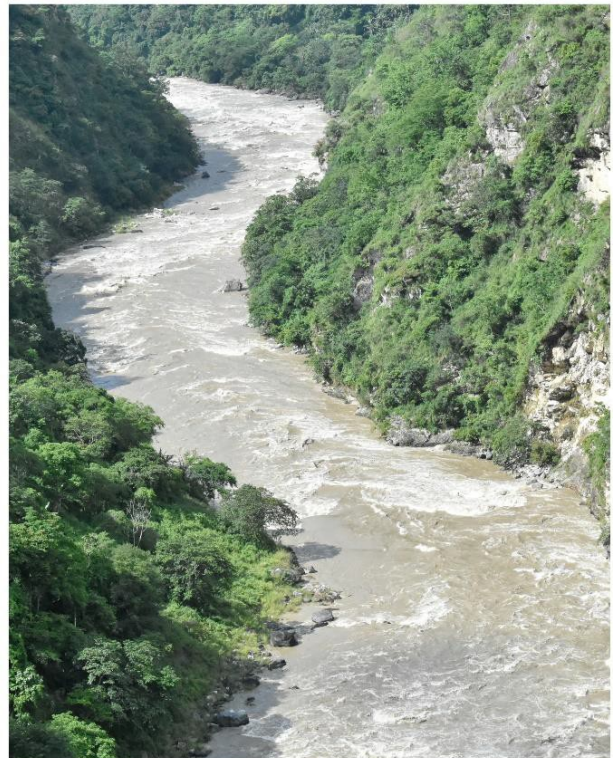


Fig 2: WBH roosting on the tree (top) and panoramic view of the WBH habitat in Bhutan.



Figure 3: Sampling techniques from the field; scanning for WBH from the riverside (top left), measuring the tree height (top right), measuring the tree DBH (bottom left) and setting camera traps (bottom right).



Figure 4: Some of threats recorded: log transportation along the riverbank in WBH habitat (top left), sand mining from the riverbank for household consumption (top right), illegal fishing (bottom left) and fishing traps collected from the WBH habitat which is a potential cause of indirect persecution for WBH.