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Project Title:

Connection between the White bellied heron and the local community of Berti. The people of Berti benefitted by the presence of the WBH bird in their locality.

Introduction:

The digital documentation on the relation between the local community of Berti and the White-bellied has been aired in National Television in march this year. The documentation was done in Berti village under Zhemgang Dzongkhag. The aim of producing such piece was to know the real relationship that existed there for years between the bird and the local people, WBH being an endangered species in the world, many a times I have seen people researching its where about and mostly focusing in scientific research, however at this point of time I felt that it is equally important to know what it means locally and how the local people can help in saving it.

With this document, it is hoped to see that the not only the people of Berti but all over the country the local people will understand its importance and the knowledge they impart locally will definitely help in preserving it. The importance and the significance of WBH locally and how it may impact the eco system from the perspectives of community shall be highlighted. The locations shall be along the basins of Mangdichu and Berti in Zhemgang.

PROJECT AIMS or OBJECTIVES:

The aim to produce such documentary on WBH was to let the people around the world know the relation between the bird and human in the locality. When I talked with the people around they have various stories to tell. Till now although many experts and organisations have done numerous research on the above-mentioned species and preservation activities, but now it was felt that we need to document these birds and their habits, I personally feel that it is now high time that we listen to our farmers, villagers and old people in the community where these animals live and know their habits.

My aim to document this bird is to show the people its importance at this point of time. The people we meet during the period and discussed were;

- a) **Locals of Berti**
- b) **Forestry officials from JSWNP.**
- c) **RSPN officials,**
- d) **Local leaders and the community.**

PROJECT AREA:

The Area for documenting the WBH and its correlations with the public was chosen as Berti in Zhemgang and Mangdichhu basin. The above area has been chosen as the WBH is found in these area, after talking with the locals there I have been told that there are very few of them still remaining and the local people there are the once who have been working and staying closely with the birds since long time back.

METHODS TO ACHIEVE YOUR AIMS/OBJECTIVES:

The methods to complete the project were followed as the standards that we follow while making any other documentaries till date. The cameras and tripod lightings and sound were used professionally, meaning a broadcast quality. We also visited the village repeatedly to get more and accurate information.

There was full involvement of the locals while filming the bird so that we get the bird on camera. I also worked closely with the RSPN office and the locals to get the accurate information's and data.

PROJECT SUSTAINABILITY;

The documentary that I produced was aired in BBS television for the public view, more over the other social medias like YouTube can also have a copy. Furthermore, a copy was also provided to the RSPN office for the future record and benefits.

The copy of report aired on BBS is attached.

The White-bellied heron, one of the fifty rarest bird species in the world have become a boon for the people of Berthi in Zhemgang. People say they have opened their eyes to outside only because of the people visiting the bird.

Today there are only about sixty Herons in the world with 28 of them in Bhutan.

Our reporter Surjaman Thapa finds out more.

VTR

After walking for about two hours upstream of Berti Chhu, the nest of a pair of heron could be seen far away on the pine top.

The locals in Berti call the bird as Bongrilla in their local language.

Although we could not film the bird from near, but waiting for hours we were conformed that the bird was roosting seeing the movement of the bird in the nest.

52 years old Dorji from Berti village is the heron focal person from the community paid by the RSPN. He said that the bird does not create any harm to the public rather it has become a blessing for them.

He said until he dies he would like to continue to look after the bird to give it to his future generation. Today he is the one who looks after the birds' movement in the area.

Up sound

Dorji, Farmer, Berti, Zhemgang(DZO): When we saw for the first time we were afraid that it was a tiger, in 2001, the government did not care much, but by 2006 the conservation from RSPN and government started. We Bertips don't have any other religious sites or tourism sites, it is only the bird that we have. Today just because of this bird many different people Bhutanese and even foreigners come here. we have nothing but just the bird. Some people criticize us but I don't think that we need to criticize because of the bird we receive a lot of help from the government.

Dorji Wangchuk, Farmer ,Berti. Zhemgang. (DZO): The national park provided us with the cardamom seedlings and RSPN gave us fishery tanks, these are all because of the heron, and now people have also understood its importance.

Dawa Tshering, farmer Berti. Zhemgang(KHENG): Besides benefits from the bird there is no harm for us at all, it just feeds of fish, and because of the bird we are getting numerous facilities from the government.

Although farmers in the community have seen these birds hatching two chicks every year, the off-springs are never seen around after they are matured, and their whereabouts is still a mystery and that is the reason why the bird populations never increase in Berti.

The forestry official from Jigme Singye Wangchuck National park in Tingtibi says that the White-bellied Heron have specific habitat requirement, which might have led to population fragmentation after they are mature.

He added that since the bird purely feeds on the fish it is difficult to meet their food if human and the heron thrive on the same stream.

Up sound

Phuntsho, Sr,Ranger. JSWNP. Tingtibi.(DZO)

There is more benefit for the community if they conserve the bird rather than fighting for fish with them for commercialization of the fish. Some of the people there still do fishing along the protected river basins where the heron feeds. And also, the outsiders at night do illegal fishing using electric current, destroying fish in large number at once, these are the challenges for us to protect the bird.

Today to make food available for the heron eleven Kilometers of Berti chhu and five kilometers of Mangdichhu is not allowed for fishing for the community.

To further study the population of bird the Royal Society for the Protection of Nature is currently doing conservation activities like habitat monitoring, population monitoring and conservation awareness in various places where the birds are usually found.