

## Project Update: August 2016

### *Activity 1: Introductory and Consultative Meeting*

A weeklong introductory and consultation meeting was organised in Bjibjokha Lower Secondary School. The community leaders, representative, club coordinators and students have deliberated on the white bellied heron (WBH) conservation issues. The meeting uttered the developmental activities such like road surfacing was the contemporary conservation threats. Besides it, the meeting identified stray dogs and young cow herders unintentionally disturbing birds was a serious threat needs to address immediately. Thus, the meeting resolved to organize dog population control programme (sterilisation) in collaboration with livestock sector. The nature club student would educate young cow herder and road workers on theme "**Keep WBH safe**".

The main outcome of the meeting was revitalization of nature club. Thirty two students have enthusiastically joined the club. Fortunately, more students from lower grades (Grade 4) have joined the club pledging the sustainability of the club.

Table 1. The club member student distribution within different grades.

Grades	Number of Students
IV	26
V	4
VI	1
VII	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>32</b>

The club had planned to conduct several programmes. The activities include school campus beautification, nurturing of trees planted on social forestry day, waste management on campus. The traditional path to commute between district headquarters and valley passes through WHB habitat; club would initiate the cleaning campaign along the path. Along with cleaning activity, the club would educate the commuters on importance of WBH, not to purposefully disturb the birds and relocate some of the resting areas that are adjacent to bird roosting areas.

The main programme identified for the club was involvement during awareness campaign to educate local people of the valley on importance of the WBH conservation. The approach of campaign would be so unique as student would wear a t-shirt with phrase "Save White Bellied Heron-Living in harmony with Heron" and walk into village, agricultural field where handful of people were gathered for some common purpose. Walking towards people would increase the reach of conservation message and save farmers time for their farm work.



Figure 1. The head of School and Local Governor with Club Coordinator and Nature Club students

### *Activity 2: Educational Visit*

To motivate the youth and build the enthusiasm to study nature, the nature club members have paid a visit to Sew La Monastery coinciding with Lord Buddha Parinirvana. The Buddhist practitioners observe this day as very auspicious day to visit monasteries and make offerings. The abbot of the monastery had educated student on accumulation of merits by not harming other life. The vulnerable abbot also urge student not to kill or harm wild animals around them, cut down trees and pollute environment. If we engaged in these harmful activities, it would accumulate demerits and leads to sufferings. He informed student that a large bird like crane, raven, heron has a religious significance. Some religious scholar believes heron is part of six symbols of Longevity Tshering Namdru (Ja (Bird), Mee (Human), Shing (Tree), Chu (Water), Shaow (Deer) and Dungkar (Conch). These six elements symbolise the natural harmony, care of the world, lives a long life of contentment, peace and natural wealth. He honorably urge student not to harm any wildlife species in and around community with special focus on heron which lives along the Phochu Valley.



Figure 2. (A). Sew La Monastery and (B). Abbot briefing nature club members on merits and demerits for not harming and harming other life.



Figure 3. The habitat of White Bellied Heron