

## Project Update: May 2019

### Summary

We are very happy to state that 90% of the project goals had been accomplished. We have been able to generate 207 feeding bouts culminating to 6010 minutes of active foraging observations from a year-long field work in the Punatsangchhu and Mangdechhu basins. We have safely transferred the DNA samples of the white-bellied herons following all the ethical and legal procedures. We have successfully conducted awareness or sensitisation programme for the conservation of the critically endangered white-bellied herons. We have finished analyzing the data and almost done with drafting the final manuscript which is being reviewed by the academic advisors at this moment for onward submission to the journal publication.

### DNA Extraction and Sequencing

We have successfully carried out DNA extraction from nine samples of feather DNA. We will begin extraction of the DNA samples from the faecal matter in June 2019. We have sent the samples for the sequencing and awaiting the results.



Figure 1: (left) Preparing the feathers of White-bellied Herons for DNA extraction. (right) Amplified PCR products visualized on Agarose gel.

## Awareness and Sensitization

Keeping in mind the ability of our minds to bring about a positive change in the society, we nominated two central schools falling within the white-bellied heron's habitat region for the awareness campaign which are Tingtibi Central School in Zhemgang and Mendrelgang Central School in Tsirang. The Mendrelgang Central School's bird club and Nature and Literary clubs in Tingtibi Central School steered the activities which kick started coinciding with the International Earth Day (April 22, 2019) on the theme, "Protect our Species." Numerous talks session, art and writing competitions were conducted for the students and teachers to immerse experientially into the awareness programme. Almost 2000 individuals including the students and general staff were sensitized on the pressing need to conserve the white-bellied herons. We also sensitised numerous local people and illegal fisherman that we meet during our field work on the importance of the conservation of the white-bellied herons. The project leader also gave seminar talk on based on foraging activity patterns of the critically endangered white-bellied herons which was attended by the intellectuals from the Department of Biology, Prince of Songkla University, Hat Yai, Thailand.



Figure 2. Seminar on foraging activity patterns of the White-bellied Herons carried out for department of biology, Prince of Songkla University, Hat Yai, Thailand.





Figure 3: Awareness on conservation of White-bellied Herons in Mendrelgang Central School, Tsirang, Bhutan.





Figure 4. Awareness campaign in Tingtibi Central School, Zhemgang, Bhutan.