



WWF

BHUTAN

# ANNUAL REPORT 2024-2025

A sustainable and just Bhutan for nature and people

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Cover photo: A highlander in Soe, a key part of the snow leopard landscape ©Nima / WWF-Bhutan













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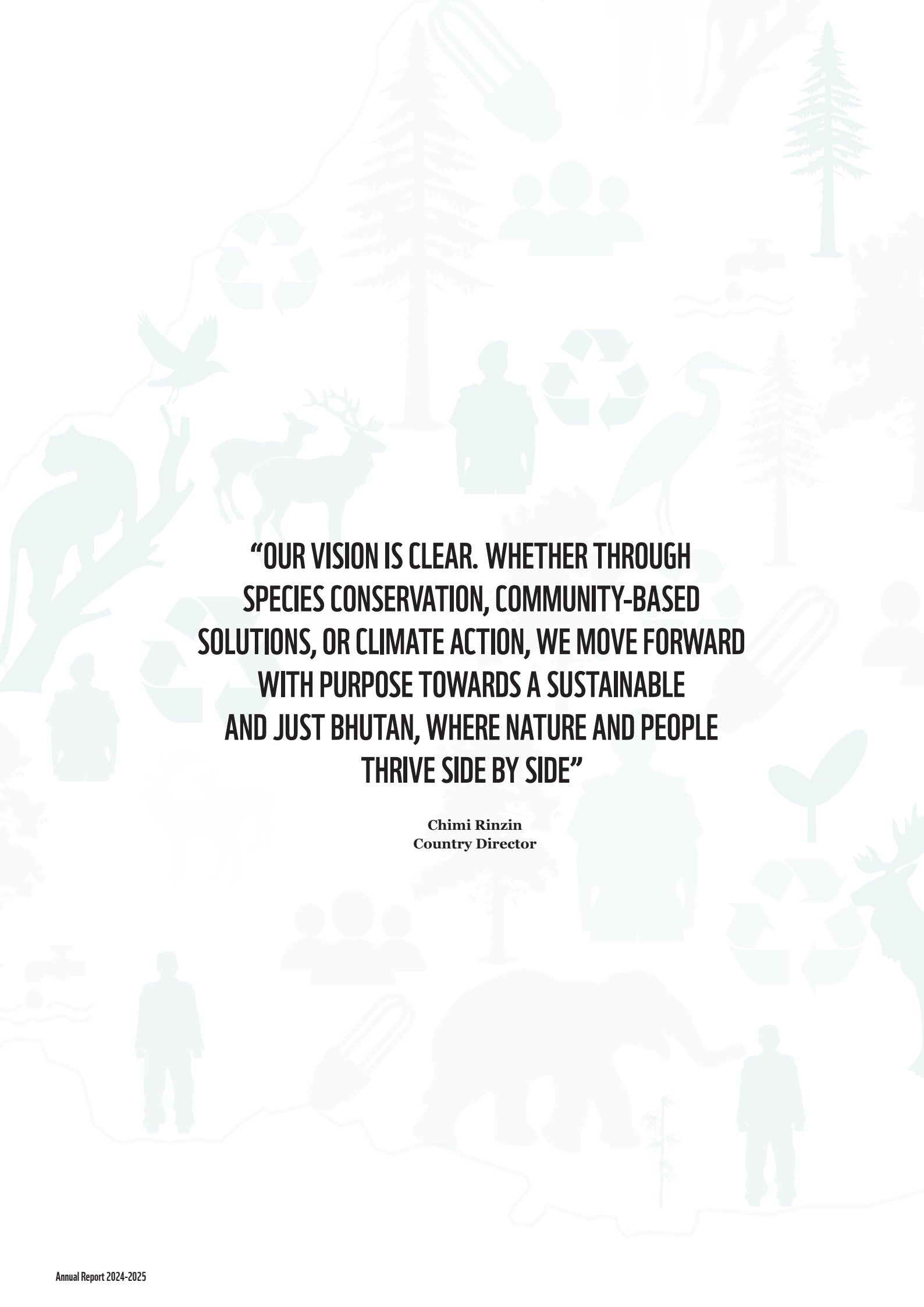
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The background of the page is a light green illustration of the map of Bhutan. Overlaid on the map are various white silhouettes representing nature and community. These include several evergreen trees, a mountain peak, a group of three people, a single person, a deer, a bird, a tiger, a recycling symbol, a water tap, and an elephant. The text is centered over this background.

**“OUR VISION IS CLEAR. WHETHER THROUGH  
SPECIES CONSERVATION, COMMUNITY-BASED  
SOLUTIONS, OR CLIMATE ACTION, WE MOVE FORWARD  
WITH PURPOSE TOWARDS A SUSTAINABLE  
AND JUST BHUTAN, WHERE NATURE AND PEOPLE  
THRIVE SIDE BY SIDE”**

**Chimi Rinzin  
Country Director**

# Foreword



Some years are defined by numbers, others by action. Last year, we turned our strategy into impact, bringing our Strategic Plan (2025-2029) to life at the grassroots level, where nature and communities meet.

This was driven substantially by works of preceding years, during which the findings from the national surveys of red panda, tiger and snow leopard indicated the rising population of these key species. The increase in population is, no doubt, a conservation win.

But at what cost? Can we make conservation work for people as much as it does for wildlife and nature? Is our approach, be it policy, tools or mechanism, evolving fast enough to address the increasing cost of human-wildlife conflict? Are we investing enough in solutions that protect nature, wildlife, and the communities?

These considerations have shaped WWF-Bhutan's partnership offer to the Royal Government of Bhutan and partners, ensuring we are purpose driven, designing impactful program, and setting a clear course to sustain conservation gains without

impeding the economic aspiration of the Government and communities.

Therefore, the strategic upstream policy work on wildlife friendly infrastructure, nature and wildlife-based tourism, and Other Effective Area-based Conservation Measures (OECM) offers a transformative pathway, one that ensures Bhutan achieve its economic ambitions while leading the region in nature positive development and aligns with Gross National Happiness (GNH) values of environmental stewardship.

To bring these policy solutions closer to the people they impact, WWF-Bhutan piloted the conflict to coexistence project in Trong, Zhemgang, and launched Climate Crowd initiative in Jigme Dorji National Park and Jomotsangkha Wildlife Sanctuary, supporting communities to address issues at the intersection of conservation, climate change, and economic development. The Edge Species project ensured protection and conservation of red pandas and snow leopards through habitat preservation while offering priority economic safeguards to the community.

For the first time, a conservation area outside a national park — managed by the Zhemgang Divisional Forest Office — has received Conservation Assured| Tiger Standards (CA|TS) accreditation, alongside Jigme Dorji National Park. This takes the total CA|TS sites to four. This milestone is a powerful affirmation of Bhutan's global leadership in conservation, demonstrating that the country's commitment to protecting wildlife and ecosystems extends far beyond protected areas. It reinforces the reality that all of Bhutan is, in essence, a living conservation landscape.

A milestone partnership with the Central Monastic Body culminated in the launch of the Faith Long-term Partnership, reaffirming the spiritual roots of conservation in Bhutan.

Our vision is clear. Whether through species conservation, community-based solutions, or climate action, we move forward with purpose towards a sustainable and just Bhutan, where nature and people thrive side by side.

**Chimi Rinzin**  
**Country Director**







# Introduction

The Annual Report 2024-2025 presents a comprehensive account of WWF-Bhutan's work, implemented in close collaboration with our partners. Anchored in the priorities of our Strategic Plan (2025-2029), the report is structured around three core themes of Integrated Conservation, Conservation Stewardship and Education, and Nature-based Economy and Livelihoods.

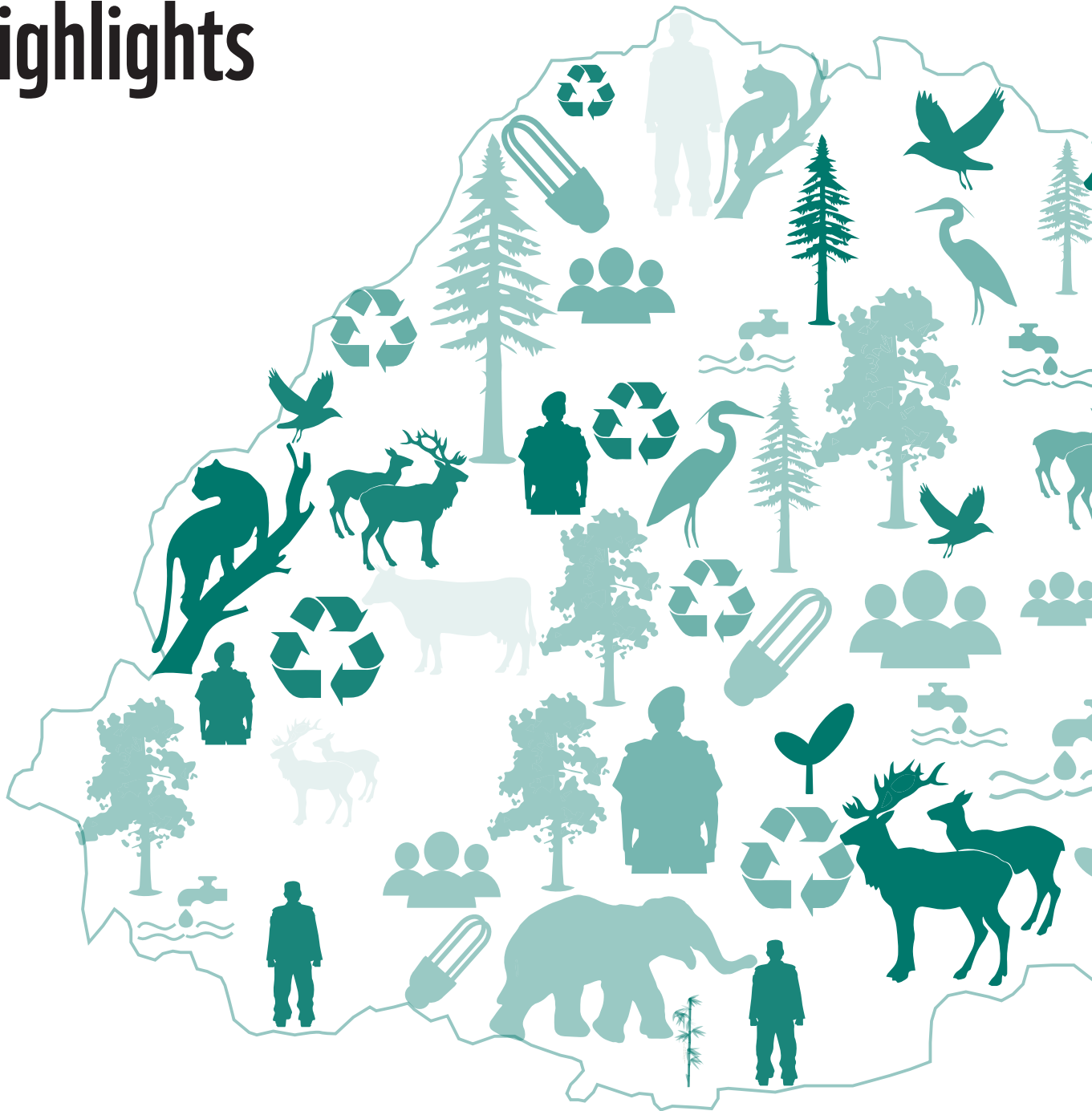
The first section, Integrated Conservation, outlines our efforts to safeguard Bhutan's vital ecosystems which includes forests, freshwater systems, and biodiversity by addressing key drivers of degradation, including climate change. These efforts are grounded in inclusive conservation planning that empowers local communities to participate in decision-making processes, ensuring long-

term ecological resilience.

The second section, Conservation Stewardship and Education, highlights our initiatives to foster a deeper sense of environmental responsibility across all levels of society. Through strategic engagement with faith leaders, educational institutions, and youth networks, WWF-Bhutan is nurturing a culture of stewardship that reinforces and sustains conservation outcomes.

The final section, Nature-based Economy and Livelihoods, focuses on our work to catalyze a green and inclusive economy. By promoting nature-based solutions and supporting sustainable livelihoods, we aim to contribute to Bhutan's development aspirations while delivering measurable environmental and social benefits.

# Highlights



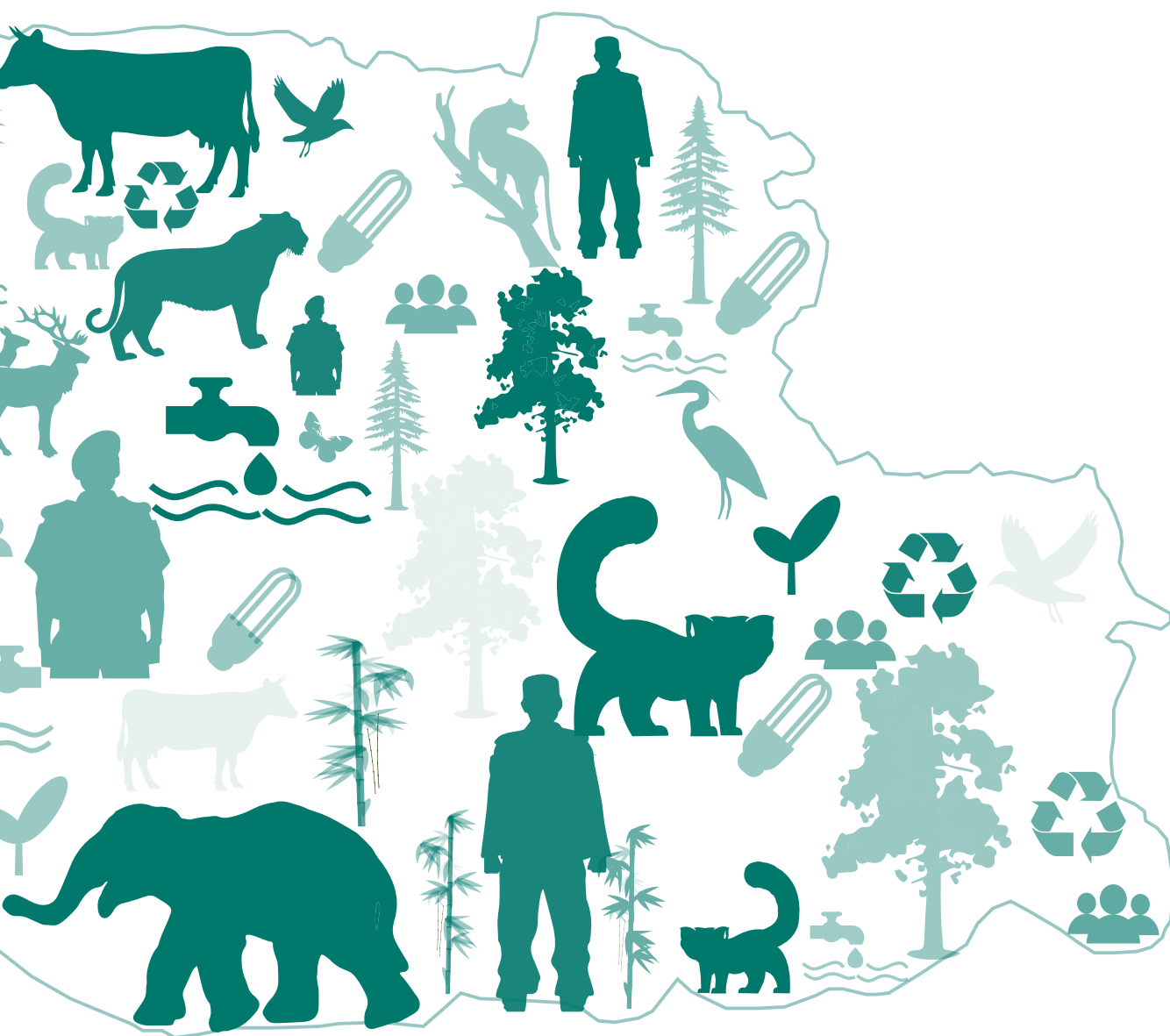
## CAJTS accreditation of two more tiger sites

- Zhemgang Divisional Forest Office
- Jigme Dorji National Park

## Wildlife-friendly infrastructure

- Stakeholder consultation

## Conflict to Coexistence pilot in Trong, Zhemgang



## Launch of faith long-term partnership with Central Monastic Body

- ## Climate Crowd Initiative

- **Launched in Jomotsangkha Wildlife Sanctuary and Jigme Dorji National Park**
- **Community-driven solutions to help people and nature in a changing climate**

## Wildlife Tourism

- High-level task force formed
- Potential sites identified

## Countering illegal wildlife trade

- **National Zero Poaching Strategy revised**
- **Strengthening capacity of frontline conservation law enforcement agencies**





## CHAPTER 1

# INTEGRATED CONSERVATION

Securing natural ecosystems such as forests and freshwater sources, and the diverse wildlife by addressing drivers and threats, including climate change, through engagement of local communities in conservation planning and decision-making





©DoFPS

# FOR TIGERS OUTSIDE THE PROTECTED AREAS

Bhutan has four CA|TS accredited sites

Marking a significant milestone in Bhutan's tiger conservation efforts, Zhemgang Forests Division became the first site outside of the protected areas to receive Conservation Assured | Tiger Standards (CA|TS) accreditation in 2025.

The accreditation will promote and strengthen effective management of critical habitats, a crucial move towards enhancing tiger conservation efforts in the country. This landscape outside the protected areas is essential for tiger

movement, habitat connectivity, and survival of the species, among others.

The CA|TS accreditation is expected to bring increased focus of different stakeholders to the sites and strengthen conservation practices including promotion of community engagement, reducing human-wildlife conflict and expanding safe landscapes for tigers in the country.

Tiger conservation requires an integrated approach that includes monitoring populations, law enforcement and protection,

mitigating human-tiger conflict, habitat management, and empowering local communities.

Any changes in these interconnected elements can impact the overall conservation efforts. Thus, it is crucial for managers to monitor the dynamics between these factors and any changes in the conservation landscape.

Zhemgang district has one of the highest tiger populations in Bhutan, according to the National Tiger Survey 2022. With





**“CA|TS ENSURES THERE IS ADEQUATE INFRASTRUCTURE AND RESOURCES. WE ARE APPLYING FOR CA|TS ACCREDITATION FOR THE FIRST TIME, AND WE HOPE TO LEARN MORE ABOUT IT AS WE MOVE FORWARD WITH THE PROCESS”**

**Pema Yongdrup**  
Forester, Bumthang



#### **Importance of CA|TS Accreditation**

- Increases focus of stakeholders and strengthens conservation practices
- Community engagement
- Reduces human-wildlife conflict
- Expand safe landscapes for tigers

## **ZHEMGANG FORESTS DIVISION GAINS CA|TS ACCREDITATION IN 2025**



First CA|TS accreditation outside protected areas granted to Zhemgang Forests Division



#### **Home to one of Bhutan's highest tiger populations**

- Zhemgang district has over 80% forest cover and abundant wildlife presence

over 80 percent of the district under forests cover and a high biodiversity presence, Zhemgang is gradually turning into Bhutan's eco-tourism capital.

The National CA|TS Committee responsible for vetting and assessment of tiger sites also completed the approval of Jigme Dorji National Park in 2025.

The four CA|TS approved sites are Zhemgang Forests Division, Jigme Dorji National Park, Royal Manas National Park and Jigme Singye Wangchuck National Park.

Bhutan's network of protected areas is vast, encompassing 52 percent of the country's total geographical area. The potential for tiger recovery in these landscapes is significant. However, it relies heavily on effective management

to ensure habitats are preserved for tigers, their prey, and other species.

While processing for CA|TS assessment and accreditation, WWF-Bhutan and the Department of Forests and Park Services carried out the following important task in the past year:

- Organized Bhutan National CA|TS Committee meetings
- Provided refresher training for site managers and independent reviewers
- Self-assessment of site using CA|TS log and paper-based forms conducted
- Independent review of the sites completed

- Full vetting of the sites by National CA|TS Committee completed

CA|TS was conceptualized in 2011 and launched in 2013 during the Asia Park Conference to contribute to the 2010 global pledge to double wild tiger population by 2022. CA|TS aims to secure safe havens for wild tigers, where the cats can live and breed safely. For that to happen, tiger habitats are required to be effectively conserved, well managed, and connected.

While CA|TS has significantly contributed to achieving the Tiger Goal for 2022, it is now focusing on leveraging its sites to establish best management practices, offering a progressive vision for tiger conservation moving forward.

# FROM CONFLICT TO COEXISTENCE

## In the tiger landscape of central Bhutan

In Trong, Zhemgang, southwestern part of Bhutan, hunters and farmers are increasingly embracing the presence of wildlife, moving from a conflict to coexistence approach.

Trong *gewog* (block) was selected as a pilot site to develop and implement Conflict to Coexistence (C2C) strategy in 2024. WWF's new framework and method to manage human-wildlife conflict takes into consideration local context-culture, social, and ecological concerns.

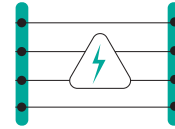
The C2C strategy works towards providing clear, stepwise guidance for effective management of human wildlife conflict- facilitating integrated and holistic approaches by encouraging both long-term and short-term solutions to manage conflicts.

A total of 21 short-term interventions, worth Nu 8.52 million, were implemented with strong collaboration from the community and sectoral stakeholders

under Trong *gewog*. For generations, this small farming community in Zhemgang has shared space with species such as the Bengal tiger, Himalayan bear, leopard, and ungulates among others. The district is one of the most forested areas in Bhutan with abundant wildlife presence. The *gewog* was also frequented by elephants migrating from Sarpang, last year.

The strategy can be adopted, scaled up, and implemented in different contexts and regions as it also provides a template for managing human-wildlife conflict effectively.

WWF-Bhutan piloted the C2C strategy in collaboration with the Department of Forests and Park Services, and Zhemgang district. Five different project supports aimed at safeguarding the people and their livelihoods and protection of wildlife and its habitat were implemented in the past year.



# 4.6KM

OF ELECTRIC  
FENCING  
INSTALLED IN  
ZURPHEL,  
TSHANGLAJONG,  
KAMPONG AND  
GOMPHU



# 21

SHORT-TERM  
INTERVENTIONS,  
WORTH NU 8.52  
MILLION, WERE  
IMPLEMENTED IN  
TRONG GEWOG

## PROJECT INTERVENTIONS

- Installed 4.67 km of electric fencing in Zurphel, Tshanglajong, Kampong and Gomphu. The electric fence protected close to 50 acres of crops, benefiting more than 20 households. Environment-friendly posts were installed to help reduce plastic waste.
- Supported a three-kilometer water supply system for 13 households in Gomphu village.
- Trained 28 forestry, agriculture and livestock officials in wildlife handling, rescue, and treatment capacity and provided exposure trips to conflict areas.
- Supported three poultry farming units in Berti, Zurphel and Goling camp.
- A Rapid Response Team with standard operating procedures endorsed by the local government and partners formed. Team members include local government officials, sector heads, and conservation law enforcement officials.
- Community awareness program on livestock disease, conservation rules and regulations and human-wildlife conflicts engaged more than 460 project participants.
- Procured safety equipment worth Nu 0.8 million for rangers.
- Conducted a grid-based camera trap exercise to monitor tiger-cattle interactions in Wangdigang area.
- More than 20 participants from Trong *gewog* visited conflict sites in Wangdue, Paro, Thimphu and Punakha for a knowledge sharing exposure trip.



The strategy was launched in Trong gewog in the presence of community members and dzongkhag officials  
©Nima/WWF-Bhutan



## SECURING WILDLIFE AND ITS CRITICAL HABITATS

With the aim to secure wildlife and its habitats, the project carried out following important interventions in the past year.

- Improved seven different waterholes in Wangdigang Forest Management Unit, Gomphu Range under the Royal Manas National Park and Jigme Singye Wangchuck National Park. This benefited a total area of 22.5 acres.
- Supported facelift work at Bermoo Forest Nursery by upgrading irrigation systems and transplantation efforts.
- Conducted long-range patrols to monitor poaching, fishing, and encroachment incidences.
- Engaged close to 300 participants from enforcement agencies, schools, corporations and business communities.

## SCALING-UP THE IMPACT

Following the successful intervention in Trong, the C2C strategy is implemented and adopted in nine south western districts with support from IKI Living Landscape: Securing High Conservation

Values in Southwestern Bhutan project.

The project supported Gedu and Dagana Divisional Forest Offices with equipment worth Nu 2.8 million with the aim to safeguard livelihoods and assets of the people living in the project landscape that are affected by increased risk of human wildlife conflicts.

In Gedu, the most prevalent conflicts included frequent cases of crop damage and livestock predation by wild animals such as wild boars, bears, tigers, and monkeys. Two *gewogs* were identified as hotspots for human-wildlife conflicts.

As conflict incidences increased over the years, the traditional methods of guarding, fencing and building temporary shelters were found ineffective. The project supported innovative and lasting solutions to rising conflicts.

A module on Human-Wildlife Conflict Management for the Gyalsung (national service) training was developed by the Department of Forests and Park Services (DoFPS) with support from WWF-Bhutan through the IKI Living Landscape project.

The Gyalsung program is a one-year integrated training envisioned by His Majesty The King with a long-term vision to empower all Bhutanese youth to participate in nation-building. The national service program was launched in 2024.

**“WHEN FUNDING MATCHES WHAT COMMUNITIES NEED, THE IMPACT IS TANGIBLE. IF THIS CAN BE DONE HERE, AMONG THE FORESTS AND FARMLANDS OF ZHEMGANG, IT CAN BE DONE ANYWHERE”**

**Tashi Wangchuk,  
Zhemgang DFO**

## PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS



C2C strategy implemented in Trong, Zhemgang and scaled up to eight other districts in southwestern Bhutan.



A Rapid Response Team formed in Trong.



Equipment support worth Nu 2.8 m provided to Gedu and Dagana DFO



Improved seven waterholes.



Supported a three-kilometer-long water supply system for 13 households in Gomphu village.



Conducted long-range patrols to monitor poaching, fishing, and encroachment incidences.



Trained 28 forestry, agriculture and livestock officials in wildlife handling, rescue, and treatment capacity.



Engaged close to 300 participants from enforcement agencies, schools, corporations and business communities.





Bumthang Forest Division has the highest tiger population outside protected areas ©DoFPS

# STRENGTHENING TIGER CONSERVATION EFFORTS IN BUMTHANG

## A Zero Poaching Strategy

In the past two years, Bumthang Forest Division lost two tigers to poaching, which called for a comprehensive zero poaching strategy to address the root cause and to combat wildlife poaching, particularly that of the majestic tigers in central Bhutan.

The incident occurred amid concerted efforts from the division and conservation partners using advanced monitoring tools, active awareness and advocacy programs and other effective preventive measures to ensure that the wildlife thrives.

Due to the high density of wildlife species, particularly the presence of tigers within its small territorial range, protecting and conserving the species has become a challenging task for forestry staff at Bumthang Forest Division.

The division is challenged by the lack of adequate capacity, resources, and coordination, especially with key stakeholders on the ground.

Bumthang is known for its high timber producing capacity in the country. This

poses pressure on forests resources and causes disturbance to the critical tiger habitat. Coupled with this, limited capacity for wildlife crime management and law enforcement knowledge has hindered effective protection.

Bumthang Forest Division which includes tiger hotspots areas of Nubi and Langthel gewogs in central Bhutan has the highest tiger population outside the protected areas. There are 21 tiger individuals recorded by the division, according to the National Tiger Survey Report 2022.





# 131

POPULATION OF  
TIGERS IN THE  
COUNTRY

## A ZERO POACHING FUTURE FOR CENTRAL BHUTAN

The situation is improving on the ground. With support from WWF-Bhutan's zero poaching project, the division's biodiversity conservation and law enforcement capacity in Bumthang and Trongsa districts are strengthened. More than 50 staff, including 30 frontline rangers, were equipped with skills in evidence-based patrolling, data collection, and wildlife monitoring, leading to more informed conservation actions.

Regular SMART (Spatial Monitoring and Reporting Tool) patrols in poaching-prone areas have improved surveillance and enabled detection of illegal activities, including logging and forest fires. These efforts also confirmed the presence of key species like tiger, red panda, and Asiatic black bear, highlighting the ecological value of the patrol zones.

Legal enforcement capacity was boosted through targeted training in investigation and documentation, including the use of digital tools. This has enhanced the staff's ability to process forest and wildlife offenses effectively and work closely with legal authorities.

Community awareness programs reached over 200 residents, increasing public understanding of conservation laws and encouraging participation from the communities in conservation efforts, especially in tiger-inhabited areas.

The division also celebrated Global Tiger Day, which motivated the rangers and fostered teamwork.

In the past year, the zero poaching project in Bumthang improved law enforcement,



Patrols in poaching-prone areas have improved over the years ©Kunga Zangpo / DoFPS

empowered communities, and promoted collaboration across forestry offices—laying a strong foundation for long-term conservation impact beyond protected areas.



## PROJECT INTERVENTIONS

- Institutionalized SMART-based conservation monitoring- SMART patrolling institutionalized in Bumthang and Trongsa districts, including both high-risk poaching zones and critical corridors. Provided training on SMART tools for the first time.
- Strengthened field-based enforcement and surveillance. Quarterly SMART patrols were conducted, covering hundreds of kilometers with both direct and indirect wildlife observations (e.g., tiger pugmarks, scat, and red panda signs). Detection of illegal logging and identification of high-risk areas led to increased vigilance and targeted enforcement.
- Improved legal capacity among field staff. Comprehensive Investigation & Legal Documentation Training conducted. Improved coordination with legal authorities to strengthen prosecution and deterrence of illegal activities.
- Engaged communities in conservation efforts and raised legal awareness. Enhanced community ownership and involvement in biodiversity conservation.
- All staff under Bumthang Forest Division are provided essential patrol gear which will help foresters conduct field work safely and boost the morale of the staff against harsh weather conditions.

**“WILDLIFE CONSERVATION, ESPECIALLY TIGER CONSERVATION, WAS A CHALLENGE IN BUMTHANG BECAUSE OF INCREASED WILDLIFE DEPREDATION. WITH SUPPORT FROM THE PROJECT, WE WORKED WITH THE COMMUNITIES AND DEVELOPED INTERVENTIONS THAT SUPPORTED THEIR LIVELIHOOD. IN 2020, THEY WERE AGAINST CONSERVATION BUT NOW THEY HAVE REALIZED THE IMPORTANCE OF CONSERVATION AND THE COMMUNITIES SUPPORT CONSERVATION ACTIONS TODAY”**

**Pangkey Drukpa,  
Chief, Bumthang FD**







# HARMONY IN THE HIGHLANDS

Nubri herders embrace coexistence with snow leopards









Before the first light spills over the jagged ridges of Nubri, Paro, the village is already stirring. Farmers, wrapped in thick wool and quiet determination, move through the misty dark, feeding calves, milking yaks, and whispering morning prayers. Soon, they'll guide their herds into the high pastures where alpine grasses grow thick and where, just beyond, the snow leopard waits, elusive and ever-present.

Yak rearing is the main source of livelihood for the highland community in Nubri, a village of 17 households. Each household farm has at least 60 yaks.

Snow leopards are referred to as Sagay in Nubri. This reverence and respect for wildlife as their own extension and an icon of refuge and faith has prevented people from harming the guardians of the mountain.

However, only a few elderly people in the community are familiar with this belief and practice today.

Nubri has the highest number of snow leopards outside the protected areas in the country. With increased numbers the small highland village has become a hunting ground for snow leopards, with the cats preying on yak calves increasingly.

The herders and the elusive cats walk the same rugged trail often. While the former moves in search of a missing calf, the latter walks the same path in search of easy prey.

"We feel frustrated, angry, and are tempted to poison the cat. But we hold back knowing it could harm other animals in the village," said Tandin, a herder from Nubri. "We are helpless."

The situation is expected to change within the year. The Department of Forests and Park Services (DoFPS) in partnership with WWF-Bhutan is supporting the herders to keep their yaks safe. Mobile solar fences were provided to households in Nubri through the Edge Species Project.

"This innovative coral fencing method will help protect our young calves, even during our seasonal migration," said Tandin.

Livestock are prone to snow leopard attacks during seasonal migration. There are no corals to protect calves, and the practice of tying calves with a rope, in a queue, makes them more vulnerable.

DoFPS and WWF-Bhutan officials worked with the herders and the local government officials to develop a solution to reduce the incidence of snow leopards preying on yaks, while educating the herders on the importance of wildlife presence and the possible cause of livestock depredation in the community.

A social media group comprising community members, local government and DoFPS officials, was created so wildlife sighting and livestock depredation incidents can be reported. The information gathered from the ground is expected to help develop better interventions in the future.

## "THE INNOVATIVE CORAL FENCING METHOD WILL HELP PROTECT OUR YOUNG CALVES EVEN DURING OUR SEASONAL MIGRATION"

**Tandin,  
Herder, Nubri**

So far, snow leopard, takin, rare birds sighting have been reported by the herders in the group besides livestock kills. This has helped foresters determine the types of kills.

The group chat has also sparked interest among community members in wildlife. One of the herders, Ugyen, went on to record the birth cycle of the bird-river lapwing. Starting from the day she found the nest; she captured the moment when the egg was hatched and recorded the newborn making a loud call on the riverbed.

# 17

- HOUSEHOLDS RECEIVE CORAL FENCING SUPPORT
- NUBRI SNOW LEOPARD GROUP FORMED



©Nima / WWF-Bhutan





©DoFPS



## The Edge Species Project

The Edge Species Project, launched in 2024, aims to support protection of snow leopard and red panda by fostering positive relations with the community and through habitat improvement.

Implemented by the Nature Conservation Division under DoFPS, the project will help secure conservation of the two edge species beyond protected areas under Paro and Trashigang Divisional Forest Offices.

Paro Divisional Forest Office range has the highest record of 11 adult snow leopards. In Paro, snow leopards are found in high-alpine areas like Nubri under Tsentogewog (block). Trashigang Divisional Forest Office, which covers parts of Tashiyangtse district has 26 of the 308 red pandas in the country, one of the highest populations outside the protected areas network.

Some of the threats faced by these two species are human-wildlife conflict, degradation of habitat, and illegal wildlife trade.

The project aims to foster conservation stewardship through active engagement of the community by addressing their needs, understanding knowledge, attitude, and perception, and improving habitat conditions, and education programs.

Through the project, community Knowledge, Attitude and Perception (KAP) surveys were conducted to understand the ground realities and challenges facing conservation works.



Yak rearing is a family tradition passed on from one generation to another in Nubri, Paro ©Nima / WWF-Bhutan











Habitat degradation is one of the biggest threats facing red pandas in Bhutan ©DoFPS

# RESTORING RED PANDA HABITAT IN TRASHIGANG

Known for its charismatic looks with fiery red fur and playful demeanor, the red panda is a symbol of national pride and healthy ecosystem. However, their future remains uncertain and threatened.

Through the Edge Species project, the foresters in Trashigang Divisional Forest Office (DFO) have joined hands with the community of Bartsham to restore a degraded red panda habitat at Wangsingla. Once a prime habitat for red pandas, Wangsingla presents a picture of the

fast-disappearing red panda habitats in the country. The last clump of bamboo shoots and leaves, the main diet for red pandas, remain thinly spread amid the fast-spreading broadleaf forests.

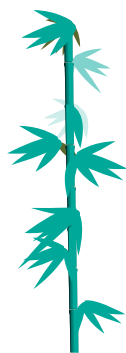
Trashigang DFO is one of the largest divisional forest offices in the country. Established in 1997, the division spreads over Trashigang and Tashiyangtse districts in eastern Bhutan. It also recorded the fourth highest number of red pandas during the National Red Panda Survey in



# 302

RED PANDAS IN  
THE COUNTRY





2

HECTARES OF  
BAMBOO FORESTS  
MAINTAINED IN  
BARTSHAM

80

HOUSEHOLDS  
EDUCATED ON  
ECOLOGICAL  
IMPORTANCE  
OF RED PANDA  
CONSERVATION

2023. From the 302 red pandas recorded during the survey 26 were recorded under the DFO.

The major threats concerning the survival of red pandas in Bhutan are free-roaming dogs kept by herders for livestock protection, and habitat degradation driven by climate change.

Lack of awareness about the red panda's ecological importance among local communities, including farmers, students, and monks, hinders effective conservation efforts on the ground.

With the support from Edge Species project, Trashigang DFO in partnership with WWF-Bhutan maintained two hectares of bamboo forests in Bartsham. To ramp up community support advocacy and education works were carried out.

Check dams were built in Rangshikhar to protect critical Red Panda habitat.



©DoFPS



# THE CRITICAL ROLE OF RANGERS

## Two rangers from Bhutan participate at the World Ranger Congress

Last year in Hyeres, France 450 rangers from 88 countries called upon the government, conservation organizations, partners and stakeholders to recognize critical roles rangers play in addressing global crisis of biodiversity loss, climate change and increased risk of zoonotic diseases.

The World Ranger Congress also highlighted the role rangers play in delivering international targets and goals, especially the Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) goal: To protect at least 30 percent of the world's terrestrial, inland, coastal and marine areas by 2030. The forum advocated for better funding, training, and support for rangers.

One of the key outcomes of the forum was the Hyeres Ranger Declaration 2024, which emphasized the need for recognition of ranger professions. It highlighted rangers' vital role in protecting ecosystems and providing essential services for human wellbeing and pushed for the need to acknowledge rangers as first responders in emergencies related to Protected and Conserved Areas (PCAs) and called for equipping them with the necessary skills and tools for effective and safe duty performance, among others.

Two rangers from Bhutan participated in the forum with support from WWF-Bhutan. The World Ranger Congress discussed in length the challenges and current situation of the rangers while working at the frontline of biodiversity loss and climate change.

Ranger Sonam Dhendup and Khandu Tshomo shared stories and experiences of Bhutan's active contribution on the global stage by sharing lessons on Ranger Code of Conduct in the Bhutanese context, and the use of SMART (Spatial Monitoring and Reporting Tool) technology which showcased innovative national practices used in Bhutan.

**“THROUGH THE EXPERIENCE AND LEARNINGS FROM THE WORLD RANGER CONGRESS, ACTIONS SUCH AS ADOPTION OF NEW TECHNOLOGIES LIKE DRONES AND SMART, IMPROVED RANGER TRAINING, AND JOINT PATROLLING FOR ANTI-POACHING WORKS CAN BE IMPLEMENTED. COMMUNITY AWARENESS AND ENGAGEMENT CAN BE INCREASED, WHILE ENCOURAGING SUSTAINABLE PRACTICES”**

**Khandu Tshomo, Ranger, PWS**

The forum also served as an opportunity to learn about rangers' role in delivering global commitment to the 30x30 Biodiversity Goal, listen to different stories rangers face around world, their capacity and experiences of working with different communities.

Countering Wildlife Trafficking in South Asia through the Wildlife Crime Prevention Framework project supported the rangers participating at the World Ranger Congress which concluded on 11 October 2025. The project works towards enhancing the capacity of conservation law enforcement officials.







Khandu Tshomo

Sonam Dhendup



©World Ranger Congress



# WILDLIFE-FRIENDLY INFRASTRUCTURE

More than 40 representatives from government agencies, conservation organizations, development partners and experts from different sectors came together in March this year to discuss the need for wildlife-friendly infrastructure in Bhutan.

The three-day workshop discussed the importance of integrating wildlife friendly designs and features into the country's infrastructure development projects, the challenges and the current state of infrastructure designs and planning in the country.

Bhutan launched its economic roadmap 2030 that paves a clear path towards becoming a high-income nation by 2030. The experts and officials penned the need to consider ecological factors in infrastructure development projects to achieve lasting impacts.

Over three days, the wildlife-friendly infrastructure workshop identified seven priority areas to mainstream wildlife-friendly infrastructure in Bhutan.

These included strengthening policy and regulatory frameworks, enhancing institutional capacity, fostering multisectoral and transboundary collaboration, promoting research and innovation, establishing robust data systems and monitoring mechanisms, securing sustainable financing, and raising awareness and advocacy.

The workshop served as a critical platform for knowledge exchange and strategic planning, which reassured Bhutan's commitment to integrating conservation principles into national development and aligning with the global diversity goals.

The workshop also highlighted the risks of poorly designed infrastructure and the impacts on wildlife and natural environments. The risk of disturbing critical wildlife habitats, danger of blocking wildlife corridors which would lead to wildlife kills, and increased human-wild-

## Wildlife-Friendly Infrastructure in Bhutan

Workshop on Sustainable Development and Conservation



### Participants

- Over 40 representatives from government agencies
- Conservation groups
- Development partners
- Sectoral experts



### Why it matters

- Wildlife-friendly design integration
- Challenges in current planning
- Ecological sustainability in national growth
- Build data and monitoring
- Secure sustainable financing
- Drive awareness and advocacy



### What to focus on

- Integrating wildlife-friendly design integration
- Challenges in current planning
- Ecological sustainability in national growth



### 7 Priority action areas

1. Strengthen policy and regulation
2. Enhance institutional capacity
3. Boost multi-sector and cross-border collaboration
4. Promote research and innovation
5. Build data and monitoring systems
6. Secure sustainable financing
7. Drive awareness and advocacy



### Bhutan's mitigation steps

- Wildlife underpasses in key corridors
- Conservation-informed planning
- Commitment to biodiversity goals



### A Path Forward

Strategic planning today  
= A thriving, biodiverse Bhutan tomorrow

life conflicts due to poor infrastructure designs were also discussed.

Considering a similar impact caused by poorly planned infrastructure designs in the region, Bhutan's commitment to incorporate mitigation measures such as construction of highway underpasses in known wildlife corridors in southern Bhutan, provide a strong foundation for future initiatives.

**40+**  
OFFICIALS ATTEND  
WILDLIFE-FRIENDLY  
INFRASTRUCTURE  
WORKSHOP



**“POORLY PLANNED INFRASTRUCTURE CAN RESULT IN HABITAT FRAGMENTATION, INCREASED WILDLIFE MORTALITY, AND ESCALATING HUMAN-WILDLIFE CONFLICTS. BHUTAN, LONG CELEBRATED FOR ITS ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP, NOW FACES A CRITICAL TEST AS IT STRIVES TO UPHOLD CONSERVATION WHILE PURSUING ECONOMIC GROWTH”**

Chimi Rinzin, Country Director, WWF-Bhutan



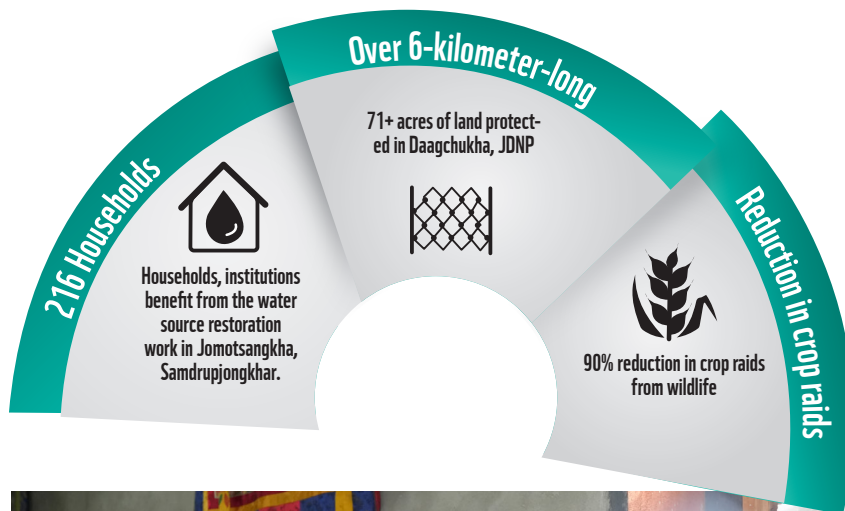




# BUILDING RESILIENCE OF COMMUNITIES MOST AFFECTED BY CLIMATE CHANGE

Climate Crowd initiative revives critical water source in  
Jomotsangkha Wildlife Sanctuary and enhances livelihoods in  
Jigme Dorji National Park





Communities hope for improved crop yields ©Nima / WWF-Bhutan

## RESTORING WATER ACCESS IN LANGCHENPHU

A network of canals, brimming with water, feed into a vast array of terraces in Langchenphu, Samdrupjongkhar. This network of canals and tanks and the source of the water, Chukar Po, is the community's lifeline.

Chukar Po is their only source of water and for ages, people in Langchenphu have depended on it for household use, and livestock farming and agriculture - their main source of income. The community has over 200 farmers.

To make the infrastructure more resilient

to climate change, especially flooding and debris collection, WWF-Bhutan in partnership with Jomotsangkha Wildlife Sanctuary and the local government office initiated the Climate Crowd project in the community. The restoration works of the infrastructure, according to Loknath Subedi, Langchenphu tshogpa (elected village coordinator) was a priority for the community and would immensely benefit the farmers.

"We can plant paddy on time, work in the kitchen garden, and live a clean and healthy life at home today," he said adding that, because of debris collection blocking pipelines and tanks, often the community faced acute water shortages in the past. "We are looking forward to an

increased production this year," he said.

Langchenphu is one of the two *gewogs* supported by the Climate Crowd project inside Jomotsangkha Wildlife Sanctuary - the smallest national park with a huge presence of wildlife and other plant species.

## SECURING LIVELIHOOD FROM WILDLIFE

Fifty-year-old Tshering Gyeltshen and his wife in Daagchukha, Punakha spent sleepless nights guarding their crops against wild boars, barking deer and monkeys. That is not the end of the concerns. Tigers often attack their cattle.





Live chain-link fence in Daagchukha ©Nima/WWF-Bhutan

Located within Jigme Dorji National Park (JDNP), the community is challenged by increasing incidents of wildlife preying on their cattle and destroying their crops. Securing their livelihood from wildlife is one of the top agendas for the community.

However, Tshering and wife will not have to worry much about the wildlife raiding paddy fields this year. WWF-Bhutan partnered with the Department of Forests and Park Services, and local government office to support farmers in Daagchukha build a live chain link fence.

Considered as a climate resilient natural solution, the chainlink fence uses locally available poles from Erythrina tree branches. In addition to serving as a reliable and strong poles for the chain-link fence, it also serves as native tree

plantation strategy to prevent soil erosion and flashfloods.

With support from the Climate Crowd initiative project, a six-kilometer long live-chainlink fence was built to reduce wild animals' raiding crops. It is also expected to protect cattle from wildlife depredation.

In Soe and Yaksa, the project supported highland communities setting up incense processing units (one each for the two communities) to add value to the raw materials that they have been collecting with minimal income generation.

With climate change threatening the survival of native species, the incense process unit would build the capacity of the herders to package the limited local resources and sell them at better prices, helping them earn extra income.



**“WE WILL NOT BE BOTHERED BY THE PRESENCE OF WILDLIFE ANYMORE. THE SUPPORT PROVIDED WOULD HELP US SHARE SPACE WITH WILDLIFE PEACEFULLY. WE ARE MORE ENCOURAGED TO SUPPORT SUCH CONSERVATION EFFORTS ON THE GROUND”**

**Tshering Zangmo,  
Tshogpa, Daagchukha**

## PROJECT INTERVENTIONS

- Climate Crowd initiative was introduced in Bhutan in May 2024 by WWF-Bhutan in collaboration with the Department of Forest and Park Services at JWS and Jigme Dorji National Park.
- Climate Crowd Initiative is a bottom-up community driven initiative that takes into consideration the perspective of the communities on the ground and works together with the communities while developing effective solutions to address climate change impacts.
- Key informant interviews covering over 100 residents in the two protected areas were conducted in May 2024.
- The analysis report of the key informant interviews was then presented to the respective community members in October 2024. Consultations with the community were conducted to identify and co-develop on-ground projects to help people and nature adapt to adverse impacts of climate change.







# RESTORING FORESTS DEGRADED BY WILDFIRES

Wildfires pose a significant threat to forests, biodiversity, public safety, and climate resilience. Over the past five years, Bhutan has lost 28,609 hectares of forest to 261 wildfire incidents. In Thimphu district alone, 247 hectares of forest have been lost to fires between 2001 and 2023. Many of these fire-affected sites remain barren and degraded, increasing vulnerability to invasive species and raising the risk of recurrent, more severe fires.

To address this, WWF Bhutan partnered with the Thimphu Divisional Forest Office (DFO) under the Department of Forests and Park Services (DoFPS) and Desi High School (DHS) to restore fire-burnt areas at Depsi and promote public awareness on forest fire prevention and restoration.

An awareness campaign was organized

at DHS on Social Forestry Day, 2 June 2025. The event was attended by the Ministers of Ministry Energy and Natural Resources and Agriculture and Livestock, Lyonpo Gem Tshering and Lyonpo Younten Phuntsho. Over 300 participants, including officials from various ministries and departments, and Desi High School teachers and students attended the event.

A partnership agreement was signed between Desi High School and Thimphu DFO for the plantation and maintenance of two hectares of degraded land. This was followed by a plantation drive at Depsi, using fire-resistant and low-fire-risk species. Concurrently, the remaining 23 field offices of the DoFPS conducted plantation drives in two hectares of degraded areas each, nationwide.



Tree plantation above Desi High School ©Kinley Wangmo / WWF-Bhutan







# A TINY KINGDOM'S BIG BATTLE AGAINST WILDLIFE CRIMES

## Building capacity to counter illegal wildlife trade in Bhutan and beyond

Bhutan is used as a transit country for wildlife trade due to its porous borders, remote landscapes, and increasing cross-border connectivity.

This endangers Bhutan's rich biodiversity. Limited capacity, inadequate tools and coordination are the biggest challenges facing the conservation law enforcement agencies in the country. Countering Wildlife Trafficking in South Asia through the Wildlife Crime Prevention Framework.

To address these growing threats, the "Countering Wildlife Trafficking in South Asia through the Wildlife Crime Prevention Framework" project aims to strengthen Bhutan's role in regional efforts to combat wildlife crime.

The project supported the establishment of National Wildlife Crime Control Committee (NWCCC) for a coordinated effort to combat poaching and illegal wildlife trade. The project also enhanced multi-faceted approaches to handle poaching cases and prosecution through development of Forest Offense Investigation and Legal Documentation Manual (ILDM). Officials from 24 field offices were made familiar on the manual.

Capacity of officials from frontline conservation law enforcement agencies were enhanced through integration of advance technologies such as X-ray scanners, Spatial Monitoring and Reporting Tool (SMART), forensic science applications, and drone-based surveillance.

Through the project, WWF also partnered with South Asian Wildlife Enforcement

Network (SAWEN) to enhance coordination and knowledge exchange among the key conservation law enforcement agencies in the region.

### BRINGING A NEW LOCAL PARTNER ONBOARD

To strengthen Royal Bhutan Police's effort to combat illegal wildlife trade, WWF-Bhutan in collaboration with Department of Forests and Park Services supported the frontline agency with three X-ray machines worth Nu 7 million.

The versatile technology has high quality imaging capability and features.

Forty-six RBP officials were trained in operating the X-ray machine. Officials were also familiarized on Forest and Nature Conservation Act (FNCA) 2023, Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) and trained in detection of IWT.

The X-ray is supported by the project "Countering Wildlife Trafficking (CWT) through the wildlife crime prevention framework" with the support from WWF and US INL (Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs).

Zero Poaching Framework was reviewed by the SAWEN member nation for amendments; encouraging community inclusion and improved safeguards measures among the conservation law enforcement agencies.

**"IN SOUTHEAST ASIA ALONE, WHERE THE ILLEGAL TRADE IN WILDLIFE IS ESTIMATED TO BE WORTH US\$8 - US\$10 BILLION PER YEAR, WILDLIFE IS HARVESTED AT MANY TIMES THE SUSTAINABLE LEVEL, DECIMATING ECOSYSTEMS AND DRIVING SPECIES TO EXTINCTION. WITH ITS LINKAGE IN A LARGER MARKET WHICH INCLUDES CHINA, INDONESIA AND INDIA, SOUTH ASIA IS NOT ONLY ONE OF THE WORLD'S GLOBE."**

**Chimi Rinzin, Country Director, WWF-Bhutan**



## COMING TOGETHER

Over 30 officials from Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal and Sri Lanka came together in Paro last year to share their experiences and lessons working as frontliners combating wildlife crimes in South Asia.

In a series of webinars and discussions, the frontline officials highlighted ways to protect South Asia's iconic and endangered species - Tigers, other Asian big cats, rhino, marine, pangolins, Asian elephants and freshwater turtles, among others.

However, the future of these iconic species is fast becoming unpredictable. Illegal wildlife trade and unsustainable wildlife trade is threatening their survival. And the region's easy access to larger illegal wildlife trade market in Asia and Southeast Asia is worsening the situation.

The week-long training program served as an important platform to share ideas, knowledge and skills, build a robust network and efficient information sharing channels. The collective efforts is expected to protect South Asia's wildlife and ensure a sustainable future.

The training program came as a timely intervention for the frontline officials in Bhutan as the team worked towards building a robust capacity development framework, strengthen partnerships, and facilitate the exchange of best practices.

Sarpang DFO Chief Phub Dhendup with seized snares and traps  
©Aaron Gekoski / WWF US



# TOWARDS SECURE AND DIVERSIFIED ENERGY SOURCES IN BHUTAN

To strengthen capacity and diversify energy sources, a training on solar electric design and installation was organized in February 2025.

The training was organized by WWF-Bhutan in partnership with Department of Energy and DeSuung as part of the Cool and Solar project. Among the participants were professionals and technicians from Jigme Wangchuck Power Training Institute, DeSuung, government and corporate offices, academia and private firms dealing in solar energy.

The training was organized to provide the key professionals with additional knowledge on solar electric systems following installation of the state-of-art rooftop solar electric system at Pangbisa, Paro to demonstrate hybrid (grid connected with battery storage) solar electric system in 2024.

WWF-Bhutan works with government and private partners through the Cool and Solar project to promote renewable energy, enhance energy security and contribute towards carbon neutral developments, which will be achieved through enhanced technical capacities.

Bhutan has achieved high electrification rate with 99.5 percent of households connected to the national grid to date. However, there are off-grid remote com-

munities without reliable power supply. Solar PV technology holds huge potential for providing these communities with sustainable energy supplies.

Since 2023, WWF-Bhutan has trained over 60 technicians, academic officials and professionals working in solar sector. The training is aimed at building adequate technical capacity in solar installations and increased uptake of renewable energy technology in the country.

Cool and solar initiative of WWF is aimed at promoting solar and efficient cooling to tackle the rising energy consumption and climate crisis. The cool and solar project in Bhutan was implemented by WWF-Bhutan in collaboration with the Department of Energy, MoENR.

While Bhutan has huge potential for hydropower generation, as per the Energy Data Directory, 2022, over 60 percent of the energy needs in the country is met from thermal sources. The government has placed high priority on tapping solar energy to meet the increasing consumption of energy.

However, lack of adequate technical capacity remains a major challenge. Therefore, the project focused on building technical capacity for solar electric design and installation and energy auditing.

**“RENEWABLE ENERGY IS RECEIVING A LOT OF IMPORTANCE TODAY. THE TRAINING WAS TIMELY AND OFFERED NEW LESSONS AND KNOWLEDGE OF NEW TECHNOLOGY. THE EXPERIENCE AND SKILLS GAINED COULD BE USED AT THE HOUSEHOLD LEVEL, FOR EXAMPLE, OUR FARMERS COULD BE TRAINED IN SOLAR FENCING.”**

**Karma Wangzom**  
Instructor, Jigme Wangchuck Power Training Institute



## EMPOWERING BHUTAN WITH SOLAR ENERGY



### 60 TRAINED IN SOLAR DESIGN & INSTALLATION

for both grid connected and  
battery-based systems



### 20 ENGINEERS TRAINED IN ENERGY AUDITING

first ever national program



### SKILLED WORKFORCE IN ACTION

Professionals and technicians trained through  
the project are engaged in solar installations  
across the country. They are also providing  
solar electric design and installation training  
in the country today



The cool and solar project aims to promote solar and efficient cooling to address rising energy needs in the country ©Nima / WWF-Bhutan







# ONE YEAR SINCE PARO STATEMENT

**Journey towards US\$1 billion for tiger conservation**

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- **Tiger Landscapes Investment Fund secures almost US\$13.5 million through the German Government**
  - **The Tiger Conservation Coalition secured its first operations funding of US\$1 million**
  - **A sustainable Finance Lead hired and TCC Secretariat established**
  - **Designing of an innovative financial tool, 'tiger impact certificates'**
  - **Project Finance for Permanence feasibility Assessment initiated for Thailand's Tiger landscape (DTL)**
-







## CHAPTER 2

# CONSERVATION STEWARDSHIP AND EDUCATION

Fostering greater sense of ownership and responsibility towards nature to sustain conservation gains and consolidate further through engagement of faith leaders, institutions and youth groups.





# FAITH IN CONSERVATION

## A long-term partnership to address emerging conservation challenges

Marking a significant milestone towards addressing emerging conservation challenges and to sustain Bhutan's conservation legacy, WWF-Bhutan and the Zhung Dratshang (Central Monastic Body) launched Enlightened Stewardship: Bhutan Faith Long-term Environmental Plan in January 2025.

The launching of faith long-term environmental plan cemented the partnership between WWF-Bhutan and the Zhung Dratshang and paved a clear path to engage faith bodies, communities and youth to raise awareness on environmental conservation.

The plan recognizes the value of faith as powerful catalyst for conservation. Through stewardship, reverence, interconnectedness, and sacred traditions, the

plan aims to drive meaningful action towards maintaining Bhutan's conservation achievements and promoting nature-positive behaviors.

Faith long-term environmental plan has been developed to initiate a transformative and all-engaging approach to conservation inspired by Bhutan's guiding development philosophy of Gross National Happiness and the very profound Buddhist value of "environment consciousness."

The plan is built on four key areas: capacity building, development of innovative eco-friendly alternatives, development of Buddhist value-based education model for both secular and monastic schools, and awareness and advocacy campaigns.

### PROJECT IMPACTS



#### STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

Faith long-term environmental plan launched



#### COLLABORATIVE ENGAGEMENT

Co-designing workshop to develop awareness and advocacy campaigns on poaching and illegal wildlife trade completed



#### CAMPAIGN ROLLOUT

Awareness and advocacy campaign on poaching and illegal wildlife trade  
Production and launch of panel discussion/podcast/webinar series on poaching and illegal wildlife trade  
Design and production of audio-visuals for faith and illegal wildlife trade campaign



#### OUTREACH MATERIALS

Publication of posters and campaign materials for faith and illegal wildlife trade campaign





©Aaron Gekoski / WWF US

**“THE FAITH-LONG TERM ENVIRONMENTAL PLAN, DEVELOPED IN PARTNERSHIP WITH WWF, WOULD BE OF IMMENSE BENEFIT TO ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT AND NATURE CONSERVATION EFFORTS. THE PLAN NOT ONLY BENEFITS BHUTAN BUT ALSO THE GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT AND NATURE CONSERVATION EFFORTS.”**

**His Eminence Leytshog Lopen Sangay Dorji**



From left Chimi Rinzin, Country Director, WWF-Bhutan, Ms. Loren Mayor, Chief Operating Officer of WWF US, The Minister for Energy and Natural Resources, Lyonpo Gem Tshering, Roberto Troya, Senior Vice President of WWF US and Venerable Choten Dorji, the Secretary for Monastic Council for Administration and Development Affairs ©Kinley Wangmo /WWF-Bhutan



# 7,000 HOURS OF NATURE-POSITIVE ACTIONS FOR MOTHER EARTH

WWF-Bhutan in partnership with RTC Education for Nature Society Club, Tashiyangtse Nature Club, Samtse Lower Secondary School, Bhutan Football Federation, and M-Studio contributed close to 7,000 Hours for Earth as part of the Earth Hour 2025 campaign.

The campaign included a month-long build-up event comprising a review writing competition, social media challenge and physical events involving youth groups, local artists, local conservation organizations and schools to inspire nature-positive actions.

The Earth Hour activities were divided into different themes of arts and creativity, fitness and wellness, sustainability, and conservation education, encouraging partners and supporters to “Give an hour for Earth.”

Together with our partners, the Earth Hour campaign 2025 engaged over 1,550 youth and officials from over 10 different districts in Bhutan. Through various events, the campaign engaged 10 different partners throughout the campaign period.

Globally, the Earth Hour 2025 campaign contributed close to 3 million hours to Earth. WWF-Bhutan in partnership youth groups and interested partners contributed close to 7,000 hours, placing it at the top 19 countries among the 118 countries.

Different events with different youth groups were organized in the March month. The campaign involved and engaged active youth from colleges, sports, schools and government institutions with the aim to inspire environmental stewardship, involving them in conservation education and awareness programs.

**The following events were conducted as part of the Earth Hour 2025 campaign**

## TIKTOK CHALLENGE

With the aim to create awareness on Earth Hour and to improve WWF-Bhutan’s engagement with youth on TikTok platform, a challenge was organized as part of the campaign.

Over 300 users participated in the challenge. More than 1,000 viewers joined the live session hosted during Earth Hour.

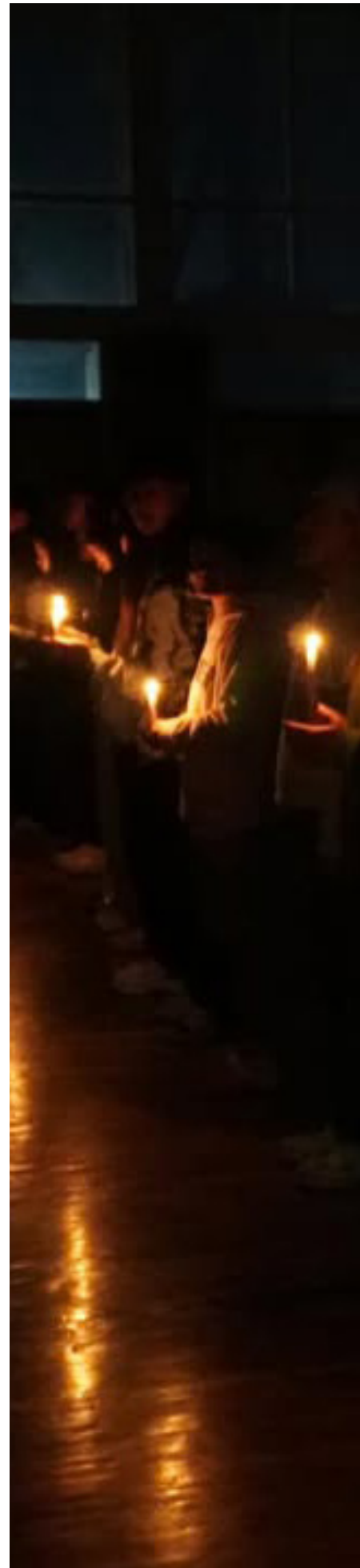
## REVIEW WRITING COMPETITION

An online review writing competition was organized on Facebook to promote faith and stewardship work done by WWF-Bhutan. The review competition also helped participants understand the crucial role faith plays in nature conservation.

Close to 40 reviews were submitted as part of the campaign. Teachers, writers, reporters, and conservationists participated in the review writing competition.

## ENVIRONMENTAL CONSCIOUS WALK FOR MINDFUL LIVING

40 students from four colleges in Thimphu participated in the Environmental Conscious Power Walk organized as part of the campaign. The self-awareness exercise helped the youth recognize how daily actions impact the environment. It also helped the youth find solutions on their own.







RTC-EFN Society Club organized Eco-Hackathon and Environmental Conscious-Walk to celebrate Earth Hour 2025 ©RTC-EFN Society Club





Trashiyangtse Nature Club engage in bird watching event as part of Earth Hour campaign ©Tandin Wangdi / Trashiyangtse Nature Club







Six teams were named after six HCV categories for the football championship ©BFF / WWF-Bhutan

Students from the Royal Thimphu College, Gedu College of Information Technology, Royal Institute of Tourism and Hospitality, and College for Astrology, Pangrizampa participated in the event.

## ECO-HACKATHON

Four different solutions to address the problem of illegal waste dumping and littering were pitched at the Eco-Hackathon organized as part of the campaign. The day-long event engaged 50 students from Thimphu, Wangduephodrang, and Paro.

Each team worked with a teacher to develop the idea and were pitched to the officials from Thimphu Thromde, Royal Society for the Protection of Nature and WWF-Bhutan.

## HIGH CONSERVATION VALUES FOOTBALL CHAMPIONSHIP

WWF-Bhutan partnered with Bhutan Football Federation (BFF) for the first time to organize a day-long football championship on 22 March 2025.

The football championship was organized to create awareness on High Conservation Values (HCV) and to promote nature stewardship and education among young football enthusiasts.

Over 70 students and officials from WWF-Bhutan, BFF and Tarayana Foundation participated in the event. The Minister of Energy and Natural Resources Tshering attended the event. A total of 30 students

divided into six different teams, named after six HCV categories, participated in the football championship.

HCV 3 team - Ecosystem and Habitat won the championship. HCV 2- Landscape Level Ecosystems and Ecosystem Mosaics was the runner up.

## BIRD WATCHING

The Trashiyangtse Nature Club organized a day-long birding trip to encourage bird watching and hiking among the young children. The children recorded 30 different bird species during the trip and were excited to spot the “Ferruginous duck”, a near threatened species, for the first time.

The nature club is one of the Young Bhutanese Birders (YBB) club in Bhutan. YBB is a youth bird-watching program initiated by WWF-Bhutan in 2016 to encourage children to connect with nature.

The Nature Club also organized art and essay competitions among students as part of the Earth Hour event.

## DEBATE COMPETITION BASED ON LIVING PLANET REPORT (2024)

Over 600 students and teachers from Samtse Lower Secondary School were engaged in the debate organized based on the findings from Living Planet Report 2024. The debate was aimed at socializing the LPR report and to educate and showcase

the youth on biodiversity conservation.

Ten students, who were divided into two groups, discussed climate change as the biggest threat to bird populations. A group of four-member teams supported climate change as the biggest threat to bird population while the other group debated that there are other bigger threats.

The event also helped revive the YBB club in the school.

## SWITCH-OFF LANDMARK

After a month of activities, events and online campaigns, the main Earth Hour was observed at the Memorial Chorten, in a contemplative and tranquil setting by lighting butter lamps to offer prayers for world peace. This was followed by a symbolic 20-minute light off.

The event was organized by WWF-Bhutan in partnership with the Central Monastic Body.

Through various events and activities, the Earth Hour Activities in Bhutan reached to over 10 districts.





Ruddy shelducks at Babesa, Thimphu ©Chening Dorji / WWF-Bhutan



# BHUTAN'S CAPITAL CITY JOINS OPCC

Thimphu Thromde, Bhutan's capital and largest city with a population of over 100,000, joined WWF's One Planet City Challenge (OPCC) last year, alongside the existing participant Samdrupjongkhar Thromde. With this, Thimphu became part of a global network of over 900 cities from 70 countries committed to sustainability, positioning itself to benefit from this international platform.

The OPCC provides a platform for the thromdes to evaluate the ambition and feasibility of existing climate targets, strengthen the city's climate action plan, identify priority sectors for mitigation and adaptation, and explored means to build resilience in urban systems against climate risks.

The OPCC challenge assists the cities gain experiences and lessons on following important measures shared as part of the global campaign:

- Evaluate the ambition and feasibility of existing climate targets.
- Strengthen the city's climate action plan through science-based benchmarks.

- Identify priority sectors for mitigation and adaptation.
- Build resilience in urban systems against climate risks.

The One Planet City Challenge (OPCC) is a global program designed by WWF to guide cities towards effective climate action, while publicly recognizing the most ambitious cities as leaders in the field.

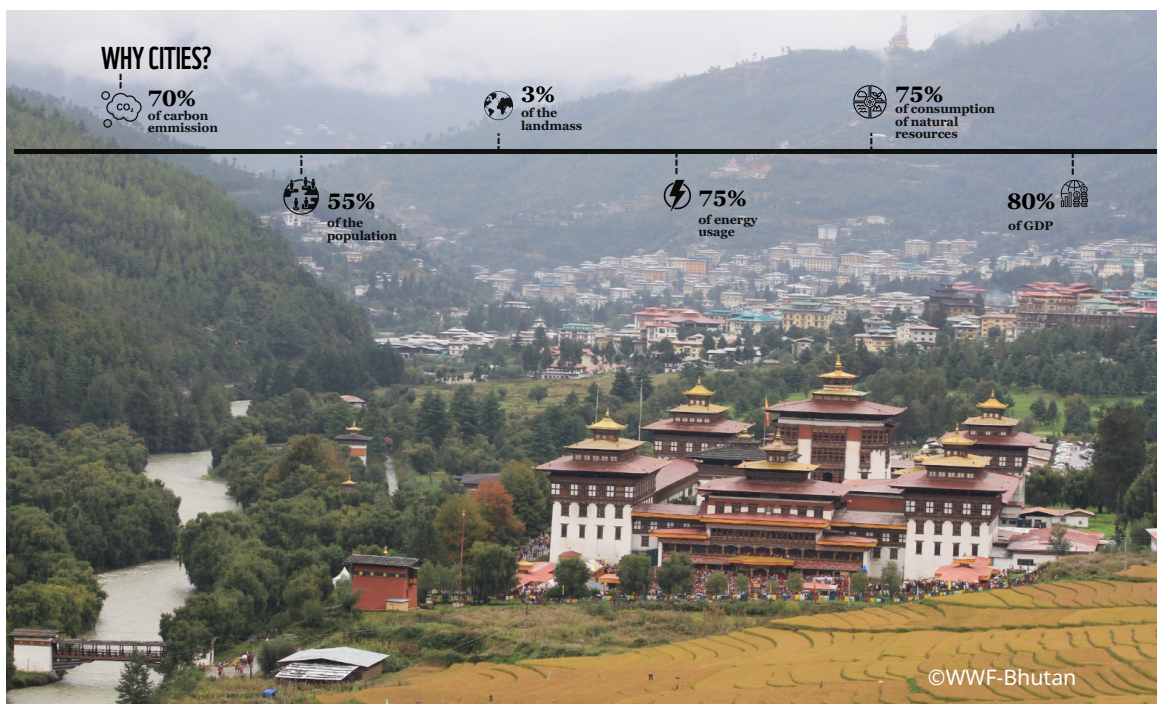
The OPCC aims to help cities develop the most effective climate action practices and to disseminate this practice globally. As part of the challenge, cities review how their efforts align with the Paris Agreement goal of limiting global warming to a maximum of 1.5 °C.

The OPCC has grown steadily since its inception in 2011.

Over 900 cities from 70 countries have participated at least once in the OPCC to date. In Bhutan Samdrupjongkhar Thromde, Wangdue district, Gasa town and Thimphu are participating in the challenge for the 2025-2026 cycle.

## FACTS ON THIMPHU CITY

- The capital city Thimphu is the largest city in Bhutan
- Over 100,000 residents
- Over 70,000 vehicles, highest in the country



# DISCOVER, GROW, EMPOWER

With a partnership dating back to 1977, WWF is Bhutan's oldest conservation partner. We take pride in calling ourselves a trusted partner and celebrate the conservation wins of the Royal Government of Bhutan.

The partnership has flourished for almost 50 years and we continue supporting the Royal Government sustain its achievements and meet its ambitious targets. Our vision for a sustainable and just Bhutan for nature and people is in cognizance of Bhutan's vision where coexistence is at the center of building a sanctuary for wildlife.

At Panda Explore, we provide an insight into when the seeds of this remarkable partnership was sown, and how it sprouted, just like the 10 protected areas and nine biological corridors, into numerous conservation wins.

From supporting the first lot of conservationists and those who followed to strengthening capacity of rangers by equipping them with knowledge and technology for research and field works - these are only few of the significant collaborations. The establishment of Royal Society for Protection of Nature, Bhutan Trust Fund for Environmental Conservation, and Bhutan For Life is testament to this partnership and our purpose.

Panda Explore also has an exhibition and event center, where current projects implemented with our growing number of partners are displayed. For youth and children, it is a space where they can learn about the beauty and importance of nature, and how human lives are interconnected with and interdependent on nature and wildlife.









## CHAPTER 3

# NATURE-BASED ECONOMY AND LIVELIHOOD

Catalyzing a green and nature-based economy  
that contributes to development while generating  
environmental and social benefits



# WILDLIFE AND NATURE-BASED TOURISM FOR CONSERVATION

The planned sustainable financing model is expected to support Bhutan's long-term conservation goal and new economic vision

WWF-Bhutan, in partnership with the Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources, is advancing wildlife and nature-based tourism as a sustainable financing mechanism for Bhutan's critical wildlife habitats, including its protected area network.

With its rich biodiversity and strong conservation ethos, Bhutan is uniquely positioned to leverage nature-based tourism to generate resources for conservation. This ongoing initiative for wildlife and nature-based tourism recognizes that while Bhutan's conservation success is globally celebrated and benefits the tourism, the current model does not equitably benefit local communities nor contribute directly to conservation financing. Through the wildlife and nature-based tourism, WWF-Bhutan is exploring the opportunity for a conservation business model that integrates sustainable financing, community income generation, and authentic, high-quality tourism experiences.

Under the guidance of a multisectoral National Task Force led by the Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources, and supported by experts from WWF US and Solimar International, WWF-Bhutan in partnership with the Department of Forests and Park Services has identified six potential sites for a flagship wildlife and

nature-based tourism initiative. Site selection was based on species occurrence, conservation opportunities and challenges, and tourism potential, informed by national stakeholder consultations and feasibility assessments through private sector engagement.

Close to 40 officials from government agencies, conservation organizations, corporate and private sector attended the national consultation workshop held in April 2025. Sixty-nine respondents, mainly from the private sectors in tourism industry participated in the feasibility assessment conducted through (desk research, interviews and a nationwide business survey.

Establishing wildlife and nature-based tourism would mark a significant milestone in Bhutan's conservation financing journey, following the creation of the Bhutan Trust Fund for Environmental Conservation, the world's first environmental trust fund, and Bhutan for Life, Asia's first Project Finance for Permanence (PFP) initiative to secure sustainable conservation financing. Wildlife and nature-based tourism presents the opportunity to align conservation efforts with sustainable development and contribute to Bhutan's 10X economic vision without compromising the conservation gains.

**"WITH SUPPORT FROM WWF AND OUR PARTNERS, WE CAN REDEFINE CONSERVATION FINANCING. 'BANKING ON PROTECTED AREAS' IS A MODEL THAT LINKS TOURISM REVENUE DIRECTLY TO CONSERVATION OUTCOMES, ENSURING INCOME FOR COMMUNITIES AND PRESERVING BHUTAN'S NATURAL LEGACY."**

**Damcho Rinzin, Director of the Department of Tourism**

## PROJECT INTERVENTIONS

- A multi-sectoral a high-level national task force for wildlife and nature-based tourism established and supported
- 6 potential sites for wildlife and nature-based tourism were identified and prioritized: 3 potential sites within protected areas and three outside the protected areas were prioritized as pilot sites for the implementation of the project.
- Conducted the feasibility assessment for wildlife and nature-based tourism through private sector engagement, recognizing private sector's role in such venture.
- Over 130 participants engaged through community consultations, national consultations.





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©Bhutan Birdlife Society

Four potential sites within protected areas and three outside the protected areas were prioritized as pilot sites for wildlife and nature-based tourism

# PAYMENT FOR PROTECTING NATURE

## Works underway to incentivize communities living near Dotikhola watershed areas

To establish payment for ecosystem services (PES) for villages under Phuentsholing *gewog* (block), initial consultations and field studies were carried out in the past year.

PES is an innovative conservation financing model through which communities in the critical conservation areas are provided incentives for sustainable environmental and conservation services.

Dotikhola watershed is an important water catchment area, essential for livelihood of communities downstream, including Phuentsholing Thromde. Through PES, the communities upstream will be paid to protect and restore the ecosystem that regulate water flow, such as forests, springs, and catchment areas.

A field study was carried out in Dotikhola watershed in November 2024, followed by consultations with the communities and Phuentsholing Thromde (municipality). A stakeholder consultation with property owners, business community, government offices, and other organizations with the thromde was also carried out.

The PES initiative is implemented out by Tarayana Foundation and Department of Forests and Park Services with support from WWF-Bhutan.

During the field study, officials visited five villages to assess water quality, discharge level, forest types and the understand the challenges faced by local communities. The consultations focused on identifying type of services that the communities would be able to provide under the PES initiative.

A partnership between Phuentsholing Thromde and the Dotikhola Watershed Community will be established to ensure the vital landscape's conservation and sustainable management.

## THE LONG-TERM GOAL

The long-term conservation initiative such as PES aligns with Bhutan's aim to achieve 10X economic growth as sustainable financing mechanisms have potential to safeguard natural heritage with direct financial supports.

When sustainable financing measures are put in place, the risk of important conservation areas and protected areas facing resource gap will be addressed, making conservation programs more sustainable.

When more innovative and sustainable financing mechanisms come into effect in conservation space, conservation becomes part of the development.

## PROPOSED PES ACTIVITIES



Identification of recharge areas and implementation of recharge measures



Soil conservation work along landslide prone area



Training and awareness program on springshed management



Adoption of rainwater harvesting technologies



Rehabilitation of landslide areas



Improvement of roadside drainage through bioengineering



Restricting use of forest resources





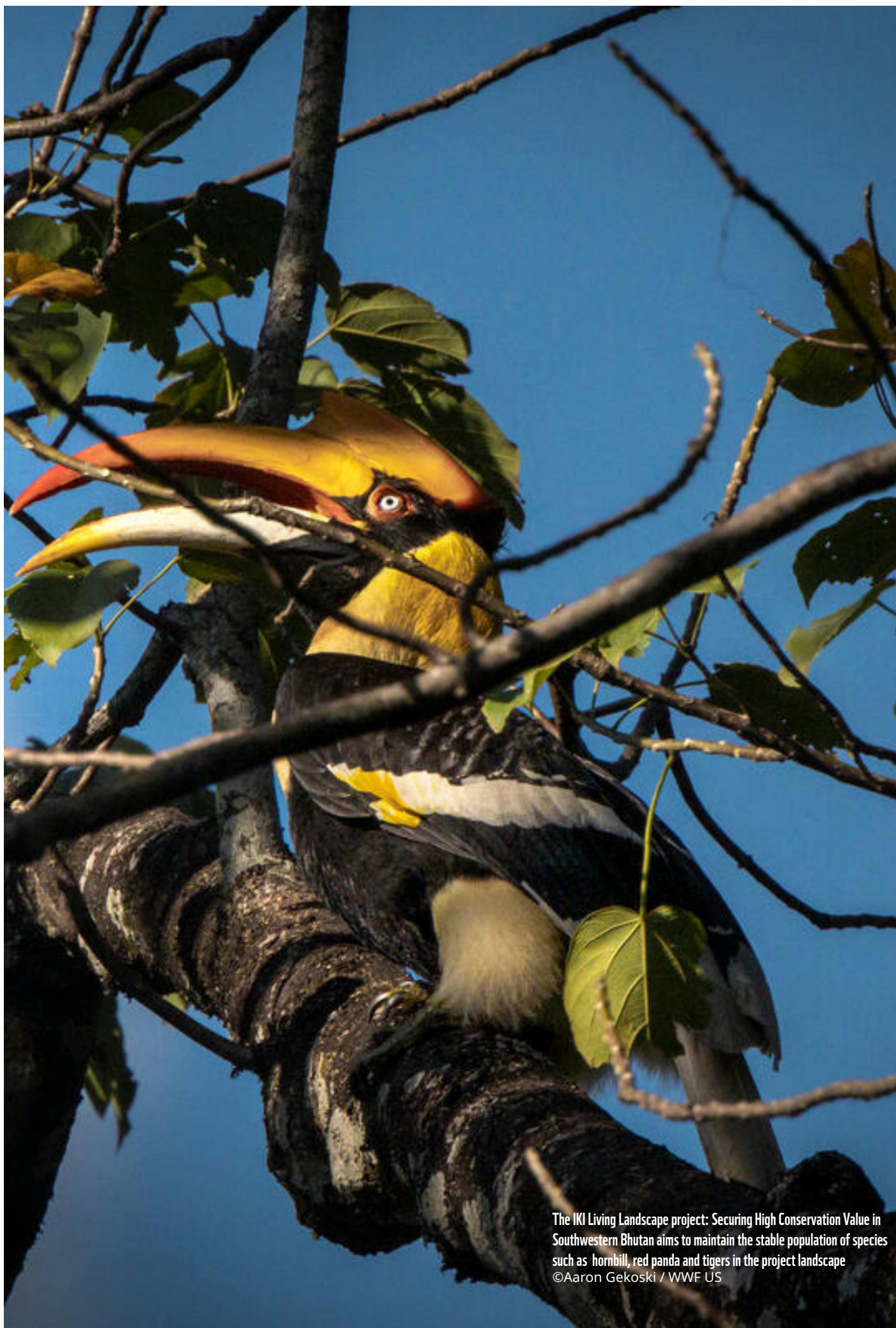
©Tarayana Foundation

**“THE GEWOG WILL WORK TO RAISE AWARENESS AND INVOLVE VILLAGERS IN STEWARDSHIP ACTIVITIES. WE HAVE TO PROTECT WHAT PROTECTS US. AND IT BEGINS WITH OUR FORESTS AND SPRINGS”**

**Gup Birkha Bdr Rai,  
Phuentsholing Gewog**







The IKI Living Landscape project: Securing High Conservation Value in Southwestern Bhutan aims to maintain the stable population of species such as hornbill, red panda and tigers in the project landscape  
©Aaron Gekoski / WWF US



# MANAGEMENT PLAN DEVELOPED FOR NINE DIVISIONAL FORESTS OFFICES

Providing a clear pathway to address climate change impacts and human-wildlife conflicts in nine southwestern districts

In March 2025, Samtse Divisional Forests Office (DFO) recorded Indian grey hornbill for the first time, a new addition to the division's rich list of flora and fauna. Listed as Least Concern by the IUCN, Indian grey hornbill is seen widely in Indian subcontinent but rarely spotted in higher Himalayas region.

For the conservationists, locals and bird enthusiasts who rejoiced at the discovery of the new species in Samtse, the moment also highlighted the importance of improved conservation efforts and active monitoring on the ground.

This species was earlier spotted in Gelephu in 2023 and confirmed the presence of five hornbill species in Bhutan. Great hornbill, Rufous-necked hornbill, oriental pied hornbill, wreathed hornbill, and Indian grey hornbill are the five hornbill species recorded in Bhutan to date.

Located in southwestern part of Bhutan, Samtse forms a part of an important Asian elephant landscape.

The district is home to iconic species such as tigers, common leopards, guars, Asiatic black bear and a haven to over 400 bird species. It is also one of the regions most affected by human-wildlife conflicts with elephants, common leopard, Asian black bear, guar, macaque, and wild boar, which is identified as a conflict species.

The Divisional Forests Office, such as the one in Samtse, plays a crucial role in the conservation and protection of our natural forest resources while providing essential forestry services to the community. DFOs are key contributors to the implementation of environmental con-

servation policies, ensuring the country's commitment to remain carbon neutral and maintain 60 percent forest cover for all time to come.

With support from the project Living Landscape: Securing High Conservation Values in Southwestern Bhutan, WWF-Bhutan in partnership with DoFPS developed management plan for nine DFOs in southwestern Bhutan.

The management plan is expected to bring together all the existing management regimes at the DFOs under one plan for sustainable management of natural resources in the area. The development of management plan is a timely intervention as it complements sustainability principles of the existing forest resource management practices with scientific concepts.

The management plan provides a comprehensive framework to ensure sustainable forest management while reinforcing Bhutan's national conservation and climate goals. It places strong emphasis on the identification, protection, and monitoring of High Conservation Value (HCV) areas, which include ecologically sensitive habitats, culturally significant sites, and zones critical for maintaining ecosystem services.

It also provides a clear screening process for HCVA identification, document ecological and social values, and help develop site-specific management prescriptions to ensure long-term protection and ecological functions of the areas to support both conservation and economic growth.



## A CLIMATE-SMART MANAGEMENT PLAN

One of the key components of the DFO management plan is the focus on addressing climate change impacts such as increasing forest fires, pest outbreaks, invasive species, erratic rainfall, landslides, and the drying of water sources.

With the management plan in place, the DFOs have assessed climate vulnerabilities through local data and community perceptions and developed targeted adaptation and mitigation strategies. This would help build resilience, safeguard livelihoods, and contribute to the country's constitutional mandate and carbon-neutral commitment.

The findings from the Climate Change Vulnerability Assessment (CCVA) and socioeconomic data collection were incorporated into the DFO management plan. The management plan provides clear details on the carbon sequestration rates of the DFOs.

## STRENGTHENING CAPACITY

As part of the management plan development process, 17 officials from DoFPS and nine DFOs in southwestern Bhutan were trained in development of DFO Management Plan.

The training helped the participants gain the skills required to develop comprehensive and climate-smart management plans for their respective DFOs. The

training emphasized forest function mapping and threat analysis, guided by the DFO Management Plan Development Guideline.

A session on gender mainstreaming, environmental and social safeguards was also organized during the workshop.

### PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS

- Officials from the Department of Forests and Park Services were trained in the development of the first climate smart DFO management plan for nine DFOs of Tsirang, Samtse, Dagana, Thimphu, Paro, Jigme Khesar Strict Nature Reserve, Sarpang, Zhemgang and Gedu
- The training included forest function mapping, threat analysis, and hands-on exercises
- After the training, the DFOs were able to analyze the data collected for the management plan and came up with the draft management Plan for each DFO



Officials from DoFPS were trained on the development of DFO Management Plan in Paro  
@Nima / WWF-Bhutan



# Mid-term evaluation for IKI Living Landscape

The mid-term evaluation for the IKI Living Landscape project: Securing High Conservation Values in Southwestern Bhutan was carried out in 2025. The project hired an external consultant for the evaluation.

The consultant visited project sites in Tsirang, Haa and Paro, met with the project team at WWF-Bhutan, Department of Forests and Park Services (DoFPS), National Land Commission Secretariat and Tarayana Foundation.

The mid-term evaluations are standard instrument of IKI's Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) system and are applied to all large IKI funded projects approximately halfway through the project.

The purpose of mid-term evaluation was to facilitate learning, increase accountability and contribute to better decision-making among all stakeholders involved.

The evaluation team provided all relevant stakeholders with relevant information about the status of implementation, the achievement of objectives and possible challenges. It is also an important process that allows the funding and executing agencies.

The mid-term evaluation highlighted that the project was relevant for Bhutan and the HCV approach pivotal, potentially serving as a framework for integrated planning and decision-making.



A session on integrating gender mainstreaming, and environmental and social safeguards into DFO management was also organized during the workshop ©Nima / WWF-Bhutan

# STRENGTHENING LAND USE SYSTEM AND GOVERNANCE IN BHUTAN

High conservation Value Areas included as one of the land use categories in National Land Use Zoning Baseline Report

The National Land Commission Secretariat (NLCS) conducted land use coordination and data reconciliation workshops in September 2024 to resolve land use conflicts and refine the National Land Use Zoning (NLUZ) baseline report.

The workshop brought together 21 officials from different sectors, which also saw officials bringing unique perspectives, expertise, and experiences on land use planning, zoning, and land use management.

The land use coordination and data reconciliation workshop helped harmonize and validate existing geospatial data on different land use patterns, resolve land use conflicts, and strengthen interagency collaboration.

The workshop was also aimed at integrating and mainstreaming High Conservation Values areas in the National Land Use Zoning system and reducing conflicts as the country plans to implement the ambitious 13th Five Year Plan.

According to reports, effective land use planning could save up to 9% of a country's economic growth by enhancing better resource allocation and by mitigating negative impacts of unplanned developments.

Living Landscape project: Securing High Conservation Values in Southwestern Bhutan supported the workshop. The project also supported the development of NLUZ baseline report in 2023, an important step taken by NLCS towards strengthening land use governance in the country.

## STRENGTHENING LAND USE GOVERNANCE

While working on the NLUZ baseline report, NLCS identified over 400,000 acres of land use conflicts for the first time in the country. This was considered an important initial step towards a national land use zoning system.

The NLUZ system aims to ensure efficient use of a country's limited land resources by establishing a nationwide spatial framework. This standard framework will support the creation of coherent land use ordinances, facilitate climate-resilient growth, and promote sustainable spatial planning in times to come.

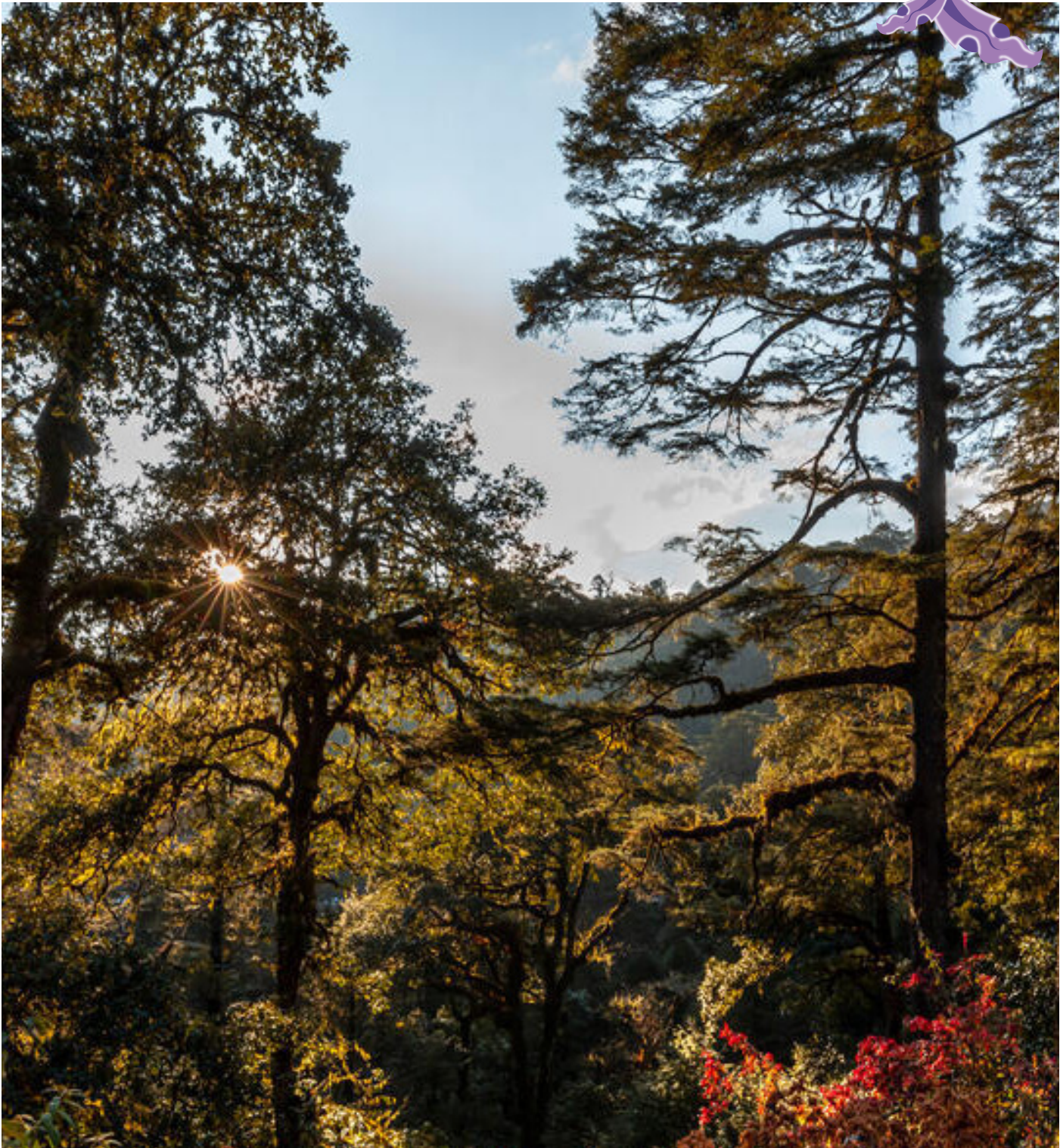
The initiative categorizes the country into nine macro zones, subdivided further into 23 micro and 23 nano zones. High Conservation Value Areas fall under nano zones. Each zone is designated for specific land uses such as agriculture, urban development, nature conservation, industrial activities, settlement areas, and overlaying disasters and risk areas to assess climate resilience and responsiveness.

In collaboration with other conservation and development partners, the project also supported NLCS with advanced geo-spatial tools and technology over the last three years. This helped NLCS develop a robust database to manage diverse geospatial data, facilitate accurate zoning, and conflict resolution, leading to improved land use management in the country.

**“NLUZ SYSTEM PLAYS A CRUCIAL ROLE IN MANAGING URBAN GROWTH, SAFEGUARDING THE ENVIRONMENT, ENSURING PUBLIC SAFETY, AND FOSTERING THE OVERALL WELL-BEING OF CITIZENS”**

**Geley Norbu, Director, Department of Land Administration and Management, NLCS**





## Project impacts

- Over 400,000 acres of conflicts were identified for the first time
- The NLUZ baseline report categorized land uses into nine macro zones, subdivided further into 23 micro and 23 nano zones, which included High Conservation Value Areas as one of the nano zones
- Risk and disaster areas zoned or mapped to assess climate responsiveness
- 21 officials from government and relevant sectors attended land use coordination and data reconciliation workshop
- Enhanced inter-agency collaboration through national workshops

©Aaron Gekoski / WWF US



# NINE HIGH CONSERVATION VALUE AREAS IDENTIFIED

On a hilltop overlooking the fertile valley of Tsirang and bustling Damphu town, a wide canvas of clouds and sparsely spread mist fills the sky above Darachu-Norjangsa cloud forests landscape.

The weather remains the same for almost eight months of the year.

Inside the forests, trees draped with mosses and gradually shifting fog filled with a tiny droplet of water display a unique characteristic of the cloud forest - their capacity to extract water from the air above and channel it into the soil. This remarkable feature makes cloud forest a key source of water for downstream areas.

Darachu-Norjangsa cloud forests landscape provides water sources for the communities of eight *gewogs*, more than 60 percent of *gewogs* in Tsirang. The landscape is the only water source for Damphu town, the district's commercial hub.

Some parts of the landscape connects with Biological Corridor – 3 (BC-3), an important highway for wildlife moving between Phibsoo Wildlife Sanctuary,

Royal Manas National Park and Jigme Singye Wangchuck National Park.

It also provides critical habitats for Royal Bengal tiger, golden langur, Himalaya black bear, clouded leopard, gaur, common leopard, Asian elephant, serow, barking deer and sambar.

However, this important landscape for the people and wildlife faces increasing threats from climate change and development works in the areas.

With support from the Living Landscape: Securing High Conservation Values (HCV) in Southwestern Bhutan project, Tsirang Divisional Forests Office (DFO) identified the area as the High Conservation Value Areas.

Darachu-Norjangsa cloud forests landscape falls is categorized as HCV-3: Ecosystem and Habitats because of the essential role it plays in providing water sources for the communities in Tsirang and Damphu town.

It was also because the area is being exposed to existing, emerging, and potential threats that called for specific mitigation measures.

**“WE IDENTIFY AREAS BASED ON HCV IDENTIFICATION AND SCREENING PROCESS. THE AREAS WITH GREAT SIGNIFICANCE IN ECOLOGICAL, CULTURAL AND COMMUNITY NEEDS CAN BE PRESERVED AND IT WILL BENEFIT THE FUTURE GENERATION. THAT IS WHY HCV IS REALLY IMPORTANT”**

**Kinga Norbu,  
Deputy Chief Forestry Officer,  
DoFPS**







Darachu-Norjanga cloud forests landscape provides water to eight gewogs in Tsirang ©Discovery Himalayas / WWF-Bhutan

## THE NINE HCV AREAS

WWF-Bhutan in partnership with the Department of Forests and Park Services (DoFPS) and DFOs identified nine HCV areas in Bhutan with support from the project. The HCV areas are spread across nine southwestern districts of Tsirang, Zhemgang, Haa, Dagana, Sarpang, Paro, Samtse, Chhukha, and Thimphu.

The HCV approach includes six different categories of conservation values that consider environmental, social, and cultural values of the areas with high values essential for both people and nature to thrive.

This approach provides a standard framework to treat all conservation values in a holistic way. These values are often treated separately in silos, leading to unsustainable planning and uninformed decision making, leading to resource waste.

### BULI TSHO IN ZHEMGANG

Buli Tsho HCV area in Zhemgang covers close to 40 acres of land. Categorized as HCV-6: Cultural values, Buli Tsho

is deeply revered by the locals in Buli, Nangkhar *Gewog* as an abode of their local deity- Buli Menmo (the mermaid of the lake).

The lake also attracts visitors and pilgrims from other parts of the country, providing a huge economic opportunity for the locals in Buli, Zhemgang.

The lake area is also home to a wide range of wildlife species such as tiger, barking deer, sambar, Himalayan black bear, monkey, porcupines and wild pigs and many other bird species.

### TERGOLA RED PANDA CONSERVATION AREA IN HAA

Jigme Khesar Strict Nature Reserve identified red panda habitat at Tergola with an area of 27.23 sq.km as HCV site. The HCV site falls under HCV-1: Species diversity, known for high concentrations of biological diversity including endemic species, and rare, threatened or endangered species with huge significance.

The identified area has a potential for promoting as a wildlife and nature-based

tourism destinations, which would support local economic growth and provide opportunities for the local communities engage in tourism ventures and in managing the landscape for long-term conservation.

### NAMCHELLA CATCHMENT AREA IN DAGANA

The DFO in Dagana has designated the Namchella Catchment Area in Trashiding *gewog* as a high-value conservation area spanning 109 acres. This area is crucial for local communities, providing primary source of drinking and irrigation water for four *chiwogs*—Trashiding, Norbuling, Namchella, and Shamdoley.

With no alternative water sources available, the catchment's significance for biodiversity, ecosystem services, and community well-being is emphasized. Its designation aligns with broader conservation strategies focused on sustainable resource management and environmental protection.

The HCV area is categorized as HCV-5: Community Needs.

## CHUDZOM INTACT FORESTS LANDSCAPE IN SARPANG

Sarpang DFO identified intact forest landscapes and cloud forests in Chudzom as the HCV area in the district. The identified area covers a total area of 45 sq. km. The HCV area has huge potential for the conservation of the iconic and threatened species of tigers, red pandas, and black bears. It also serves as a source of water for downstream communities in Sarpang.

## TAKTSHANG-DRAGAY PANGTSHO-CHHUMPHU AREA IN PARO

The Taktshang-Dragay Pangtsho-Chhumphu areas play a vital role in safeguarding unique ecosystems, rare species, and indigenous heritage, contributing to the overall health of our planet's biodiversity.

Paro Forest Division identified Taktshang-Dragay Pangtsho-Chhumphu area as HCV area with approximately 18,000 acres.

The area covers culturally sacred sites such as 10 monasteries, four lakes, two ancient trails, and three burial grounds. They are important pilgrimage sites for national and international visitors. The area is also rich in biodiversity and beautiful landscapes, making it one of the most visited tourist and pilgrimage sites in the country.

## NUB DALEMKHA LANDSCAPE IN SAMTSE

Samtse DFO identified Nub Dalemkha Landscape as HCV site. The area falls under Norgaygang and Tendruk *Gewogs* covering an area of 8,256 Ha. Nub Dalemkha area is a home for species such as tiger, musk deer, Rufous necked hornbill, guar, red panda, among others.

The identified site has potential for promoting ecotourism by reviving ancient trade routes and trails. This offers a unique opportunity for the communities in Norgaygang and Tendruk *gewog* to earn extra income from tourism activities.

## TUMDRA NEY IN CHHUKHA

Known for its deep spiritual connection, Tumdra Ney is one of the most visited

pilgrimage sites in Chhukha. The Ney is enriched by the contributions of many holy saints, such as Jetsen Drelma, Guru Rinpochoe, and Thang Thong Gyalpo. Among its many aspects, the Ney of Aum A KA ZA TI, or Aum Kangchim, stands out. Aum Kangchim's full body print can be found on a rock, and historical accounts indicate that Tertön Drukdra Dorji discovered and unveiled a relic—a statue of Aum Kangchim—currently housed at Dokhachu Goenpa in Chapcha *gewog*. Bordering the Indian State of Assam, the sacred site is also worshipped by Hindu, considered as the site linked with goddess Saraswati, Chumo Ganha and Tshodha Langpo. Thousands of worshippers from across the country flock the sacred site every year.

However, rapid urbanization, modernization, and commercialization are posing threats to the sanctity of Tumdra Ney, undermining its cultural and spiritual significance. This calls for an enhanced management plan. The HCV sites spans over 500 acres in Chhukha district.

## DAGALA WATER CATCHMENT AREA

Thimphu Divisional Forest Office has identified Dagala water catchment area as the high conservation value areas. The catchment area serve as a water source for Thimphu district and nearby Dagala *gewog*.

Thimphu DFO conducted screening process following standard process as per the operational guidelines for HCV management and monitoring.

These areas are rich in unique biodiversity and vital ecosystem services in southwestern Bhutan.

With the DFO management plan in place, management and mitigation measures are planned for the long-term conservation of these areas in their respective areas. HCV areas are also included as nano zones in the National Land Use Zoning system to ensure effective management of the areas.











©Kinley Wangmo / WWF-Bhutan







Community members are trained in vermicomposting using earthworms and biodegradable waste ©Kinley Wangmo / WWF-Bhutan

# SECURING LIVELIHOOD

Balakhop village, a community of about 40 households in Tsirang, sits on steep slopes. Agricultural productivity is limited because of the terrain and with increasingly limited water because of the drying water sources, the community has been facing livelihood challenges.

About 14 kilometers away from the community is Devithang spring which needs protection as climate change and land degradation poses threat to the survival of the springshed.

Tying the needs of the springshed area and that of the community, the IKI Living Landscape project initiated several nature-based interventions to create a win-win situation for both the community and the springshed area.

Today, the community has access to clean water, with incorporation of a low-cost nature-based filtration system using charcoal, gravel and bamboo. The springshed area is protected and managed by the community trained in water management. A water user group was also created.

To support local livelihoods and sustain-

able land use, about 36 households were supported with Agricultural Land Development (ALD). The initiative involved development of 20 acres of land, which included land leveling and soil enhancement to minimize erosion and to enhance agricultural productivity. About 15 acres of land which were left fallow because is now used for agriculture. Napier grasses were also planted as natural fences and for soil support.

The community also has a vermicomposting site, and farmers were trained in vermicomposting- a method using biodegradable waste and earthworms to create organic composts for their farms.

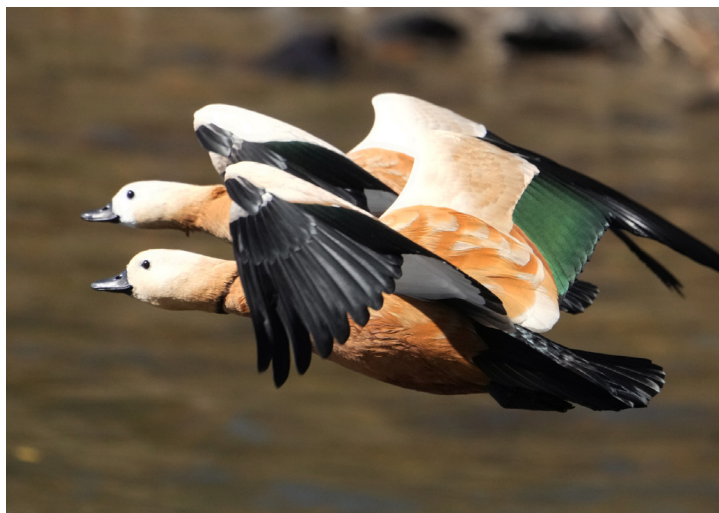
According to Gup (elected local government head) Topnath Acharja, because of the terrain the fertile topsoil was usually washed away, and production was not good. "With the terraces, topsoil is retained, and production is improving," he said.

The community according to Bhim Bdr Mafchen, was dependent on a small spring water, but over the years it was drying up. "The new water source and tank has been beneficial to us," he said.



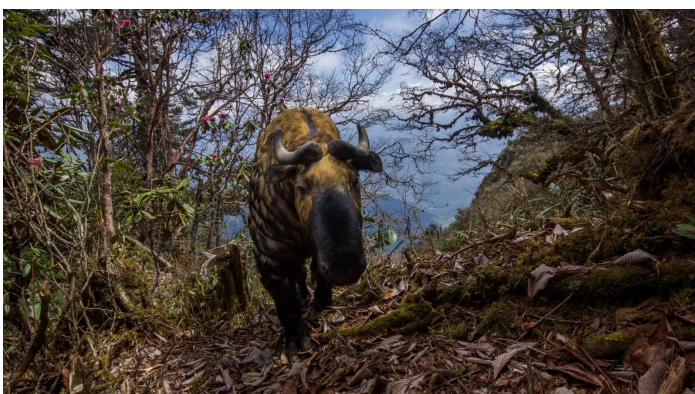
# FLAGSHIP SPECIES

The 10 species, of ecological and cultural significance, are key to sustaining a healthy and resilient natural ecosystem in Bhutan.



Clockwise: Red panda ©DoFPS, Snow leopard ©DoFPS, Ruddy shelduck ©Chening Dorji/WWF-Bhutan, White-bellied heron ©WWF-Bhutan





Clockwise: Black-necked crane ©Chening Dorji/ WWF-Bhutan, Bengal tiger ©DoFPS, Asian elephant ©DoFPS, Takin ©Emmanuel / WWF UK, Musk deer ©DoFPS, Golden mahseer ©WWF-Bhutan



# OUR JOURNEY

1977 - 2025

1977

WWF began conservation works in Bhutan focusing on training a team of conservationists



1987

Supported establishment of RSPN (Royal Society for the Protection of Nature), Bhutan's first environmental NGO



1991

Bhutan Trust Fund for Environmental Conservation established



1992

Evolved into a Country Program with eight core staff



1995

WWF's first strategic planning for Bhutan began, including the revision of Bhutan's Protected Areas System



1998

Tiger and Snow Leopard National Program launched





2004

The Bhutan Biological Conservation Complex (B2C2) landscape established



2008

The 4,914 km Wangchuck Centennial National Park created



2018

Bhutan for Life (BFL) - A Project Finance for Permanence initiative to make protected areas financially sustainable begins



2020

The Living Landscape project commenced, focusing on high conservation value areas outside the protected areas



2024

- US\$1 billion commitment secured through the Sustainable Tiger Landscape Conference
- WWF-Bhutan Strategic Plan (2025-2029) launched



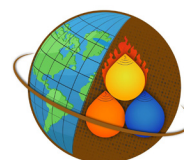
2025

- Launch of Faith Long-term Partnership with Central Monastic Body
- Conflict to Coexistence pilot in Trong, Zhemgang
- Climate Crowd Initiative launched in Jomotsangkha Wildlife Sanctuary and Jigme Dorji National Park
- CAJTS accreditation of two more sites



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Tigers Alive Initiative

Germany  
Nepal  
Cool and Solar Program

Hongkong  
Sweden  
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**OUR MISSION IS TO STOP  
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