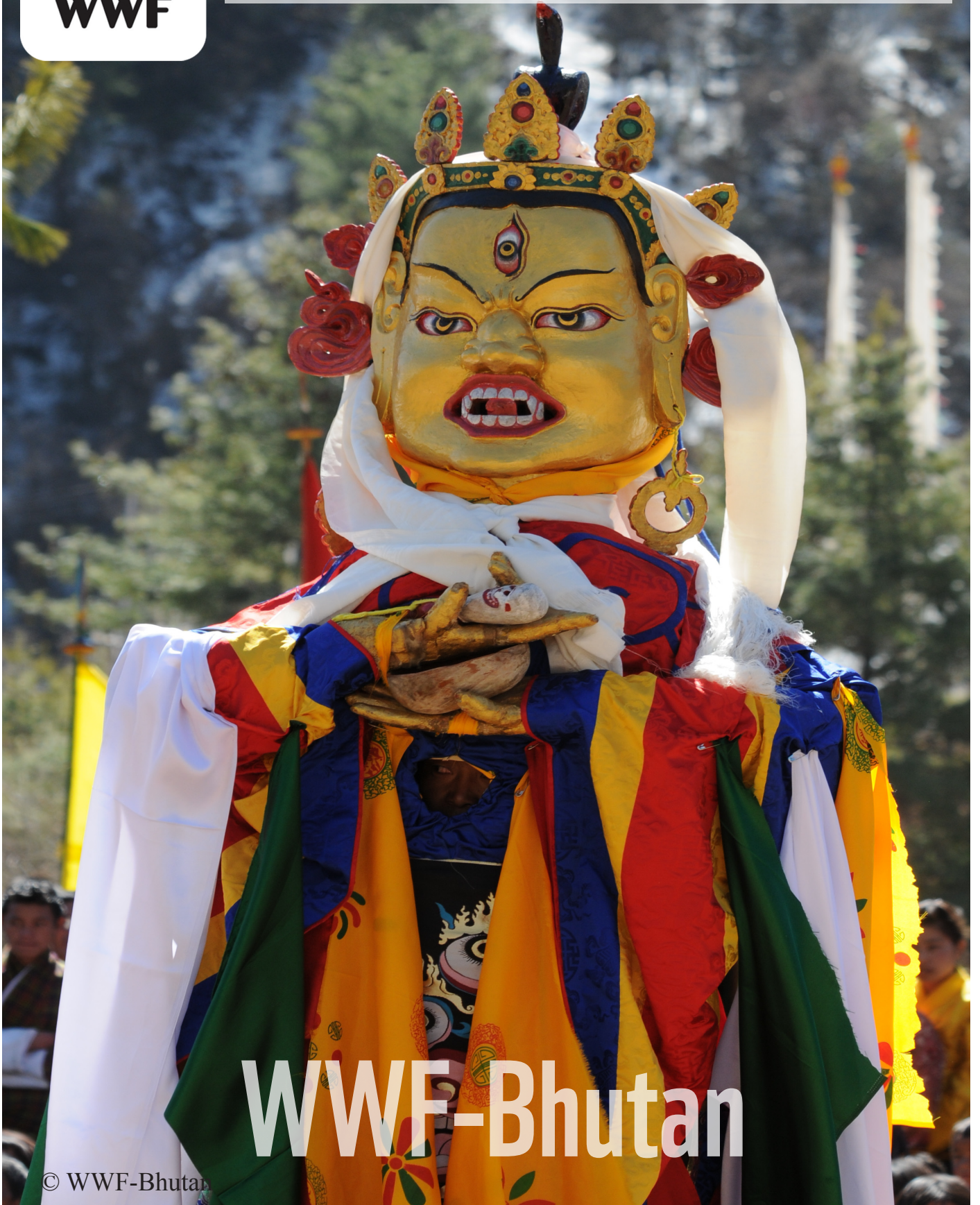


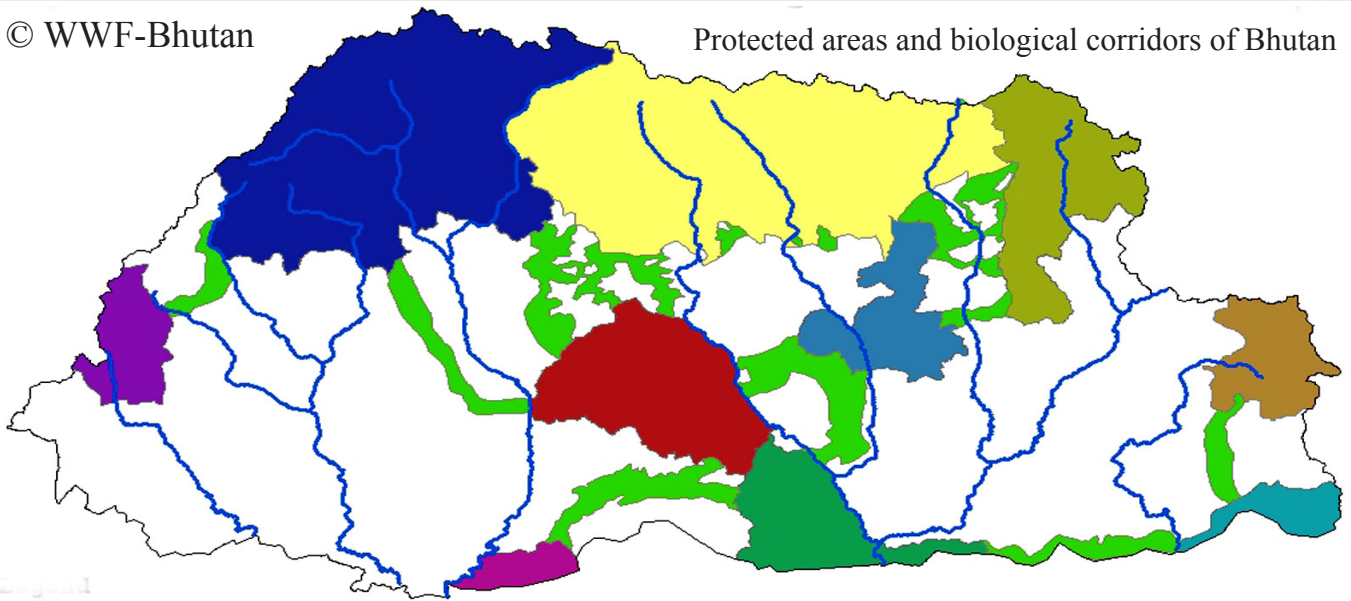


Spring Panda Quarterly



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Protected areas and biological corridors of Bhutan



Legend:-

Phibsoo Wildlife Sanctuary

Jigme Dorji National Park

Wangchuck Centennial Park

Sakteng Wildlife Sanctuary

Bumdeling Wildlife Sanctuary

Khaling Wildlife Sanctuary

Biological corridors

Thrumshingla National Park

Royal Manas National Park

Jigme Singye Wangchuck National Park

Project Finance for Permanence

Ensuring sustainable finance for protected areas in Bhutan

In order to manage Bhutan's protected areas (PAs) sustainably, WWF-Bhutan, along with the Department of Forests and Park Services of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forests completed the inception workshop on Project Finance for Permanence (PFP) on 27th February, this year.

The project looks into financing protected area systems in the country by introducing alternative funding mechanisms that engage conservationists, funders, and the government on a single financial deal to permanently protect millions of hectares of

sensitive terrestrial and freshwater habitats of Bhutan's conservation landscape.

According to initial estimates, in order to operate the protected areas in Bhutan at the highest standards from 2012 to 2018, the total budget proposed is USD 40.01 million by which time financial sustainability for PA systems in Bhutan would have been achieved.

The PFP conservation proposal suggests the government to commitment USD 20.99 million whereby external donors fund USD 19.02 million.



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Participants at the stakeholder consultation on Project Finance for Permanence.

The proposal estimates that the annual average cost of managing protected areas in the country will amount to USD 6.67 million.

Biological corridors connecting the protected areas, according to the report, need the highest financial support amounting to USD 2.44 million from 2012-18.

The report also includes other costs such as zoning parks and developing national forestry and biodiversity inventory in order to understand the space and time dynamics of ecosystems and forest for sustainable forest resource management within and outside protected areas.

Because of the human population living within the protected area system in the country, there are also pressures on

natural resource demands, human-wildlife conflict, demand for construction timber and sustainable water flow for hydropower projects.

According to the population and housing census of Bhutan, 2005, there are 7154 households or 420,824 people living within the protected areas.

Hence, there are challenges of balancing utilization and conservation of natural resources for long-term ecological and societal benefits.

Currently, there are five national parks, four wildlife sanctuaries, one strict nature reserve and 12 biological corridors in the country covering more than 19,700 sq km corresponding to more than 51 percent of the country's total land area.



A Black-necked Crane roosting area along the Kulong Chhu basin in Bumdeling Wildlife Sanctuary.

Kulong Chhu river basin management

Sustainably managing water resources in face of climate change

To sustainably manage water and other natural resources linked to it, WWF-Bhutan and Watershed Management Division (WMD) of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forests have started developing an Integrated River Basin Management plan for the Kulong Chhu river basin in Trashiyangtse.

The project is considered as one of the most holistic approaches to sustainably manage water and other natural resources linked to the catchments and basins.

According to the proposal, “This is particularly important because of the potential impacts of

climate change and the need to build resilience against climate change by securing ecosystem services for conservation and economic development.”

Experts say that since Kulong Chu is one of the three main sub basins of Drangme Chu, the conservation management activities on this sub basin will greatly contribute to the biodiversity conservation in Drangme Chu basin.

Besides, the project also complements the 10th Five year plan which proposes a number of activities in Bumdeling geog such as improvement of the irrigation infrastructure,

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soil conservation and plantation.

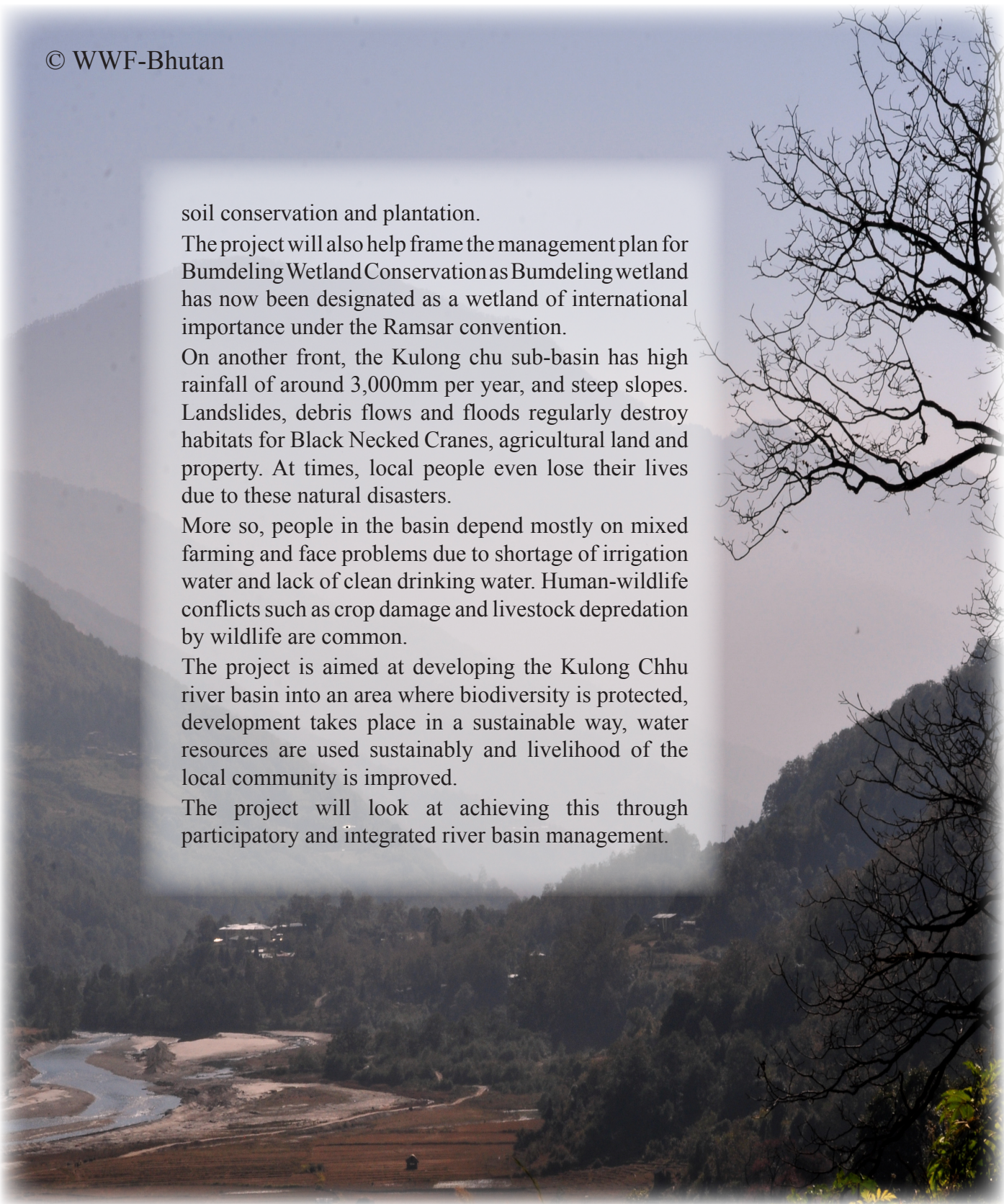
The project will also help frame the management plan for Bumdeling Wetland Conservation as Bumdeling wetland has now been designated as a wetland of international importance under the Ramsar convention.

On another front, the Kulong chu sub-basin has high rainfall of around 3,000mm per year, and steep slopes. Landslides, debris flows and floods regularly destroy habitats for Black Necked Cranes, agricultural land and property. At times, local people even lose their lives due to these natural disasters.

More so, people in the basin depend mostly on mixed farming and face problems due to shortage of irrigation water and lack of clean drinking water. Human-wildlife conflicts such as crop damage and livestock depredation by wildlife are common.

The project is aimed at developing the Kulong Chhu river basin into an area where biodiversity is protected, development takes place in a sustainable way, water resources are used sustainably and livelihood of the local community is improved.

The project will look at achieving this through participatory and integrated river basin management.



The Kulong Chhu river basin, Trashiyangtse.



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Minutes before the Nomad Festival kicked off in Choekhortoe, Bumthang.

4th annual Nomad Festival

Conserving highlands
through cultural emphasis

Shy and innocent, 16-year-old Dorji Om always thought that life in the urban areas was utopian unlike in her community in the high, cold mountains of Laya. As she heard of new developments in the country on Bhutan Broadcasting Service (BBS) radio, she felt that life was a celebration in the urban areas in the country.

Had it not been for the nomad festival, she would have never known how nomad culture is celebrated and revered in the country. “I never thought that people love our culture so much and celebrate it in such a way,” said Dorji Om.

She said, “I am really excited to be here and it gives so much pride to be representing my community here at the festival.”

For the last four years, the Nomad festival in Choekhor, Bumthang has been bringing together people from different nomadic communities in the country. The festival has not helped preserve the nomad culture but has also sensitize people on biodiversity conservation and open new doors of opportunity for the highlanders.

Supported by WWF and the Tourism Council of Bhutan, this year, the festival saw some 400

visitors along with 105 nomads from eight dzongkhags (districts) in the country.

Dr. Samdru Chhetri, one of the visitors at the festival said, “It is amazing how people from east and west are here. I am amazed by the sheer magnitude of the event.”

Choekhor Gup Sangla, the Dzongkhag Tshogdu Chairperson said that the celebration of the nomad culture helps sensitize and encourage nomads in conserving the highlands.

“All our major water sources are located in the highlands and it becomes all the more important to conserve them now as hydropower is the backbone of the Bhutanese economy”, he said.

Lobsang Norbu, 51 from Merak attended the festival in 2011 and was there at the festival for the second time. He said that the festival provides the highlanders an opportunity to learn a lot about conserving the environment, climate change and cultural preservation.

Netra Binod Sharma, the WWF co-manager of Wangchuck Centennial Park said that although the festival has not had immediate impacts, it is gradually attracting people from important corners that will help yield positive results for the nomad communities in the long run.

He said that the festival is already helping some nomads in earning cash income which reduces their dependence on natural resources.

Bradley Mayhew, a travel writer working for Lonely Planet, one of the largest travel guide publishers in the world, was one of the visitors at the festival.

He said that the company had been writing many travel guides on Bhutan and that, “It would be great to have one that focuses on such festivals.”

Mayhew said that the festival could help improve tour packages and enhance tourism in the region.



Students perform and exhibit nomad culture during the festival.



Tiger captured through camera traps laid by Wangchuck Centennial Park officials at Shakchema area of Jongthang under Nubi gewog, Trongsa.

Livestock depredation by tiger confirmed

Recent camera trap pictures have confirmed increasing livestock depredation by tigers in Nubi gewog in Trongsa.

This was confirmed when officials from Wangchuck Centennial Park (WCP), on request from Nubi gewog and the Zhemgang Forestry Division, set up nine camera traps in strategic locations along the Jongthang area between October and November last year.

According to WCP officials, having received repeated reports from local authorities in Nubi gewog on increasing instances of livestock depredation by tigers, officials started setting camera

Camera traps have also confirmed presence of other important species

traps in prime locations.

Although park officials had laid 10 camera traps along trails and routes frequented by the predator in Karshong and Gagar area before, no evidence of tigers were found.

The recent camera traps have also helped capture other species such as common Leopard (*Panthera pardus*), Sambar (*Cervus unicolor*), Red Panda (*Ailurus fulgens*), Wild Dog (*Cuon alpinus*) assorted avian fauna and two wild cat species.

One of the wildcats is supposedly, the Golden Asiatic Cat (*Catopuma temmincki*) which is yet to be confirmed.



Participants light butter lamps at the memorial chorten after the lights were put out during the earth hour.

Bhutan observes the second Earth Hour

National Environment Commission helps observe the eve all across the country

WWF-Bhutan, in collaboration with the National Environment Commission, observed the second earth hour on 23rd March.

Taking the event to the next level, the National Environment Commission, with support from WWF-Bhutan Program, helped take the event to the grassroots by having all the dzongkhags environment officials to observe this important global event in their respective dzongkhags.

In Thimphu, members of other Civil Society Organizations, government officials and students offered butter lamps as the lights were put off at the Memorial Chorten. In

other dzongkhags as well, students, residents and business communities came together to make a difference by switching off lights and engaging on other green activities.

Gracing the eve, DASHO Paljor. J. Dorji, the Special Advisor to the National Environment Commission said that the celebration was a symbolic gesture to protect the planet from climate change. "One billion people saving energy for an hour makes a lot of difference," he said.

He added that the event was important, especially to sensitize youth on a better future for the planet earth.