

AGAY PHURBA AND THE DANCING CRANES



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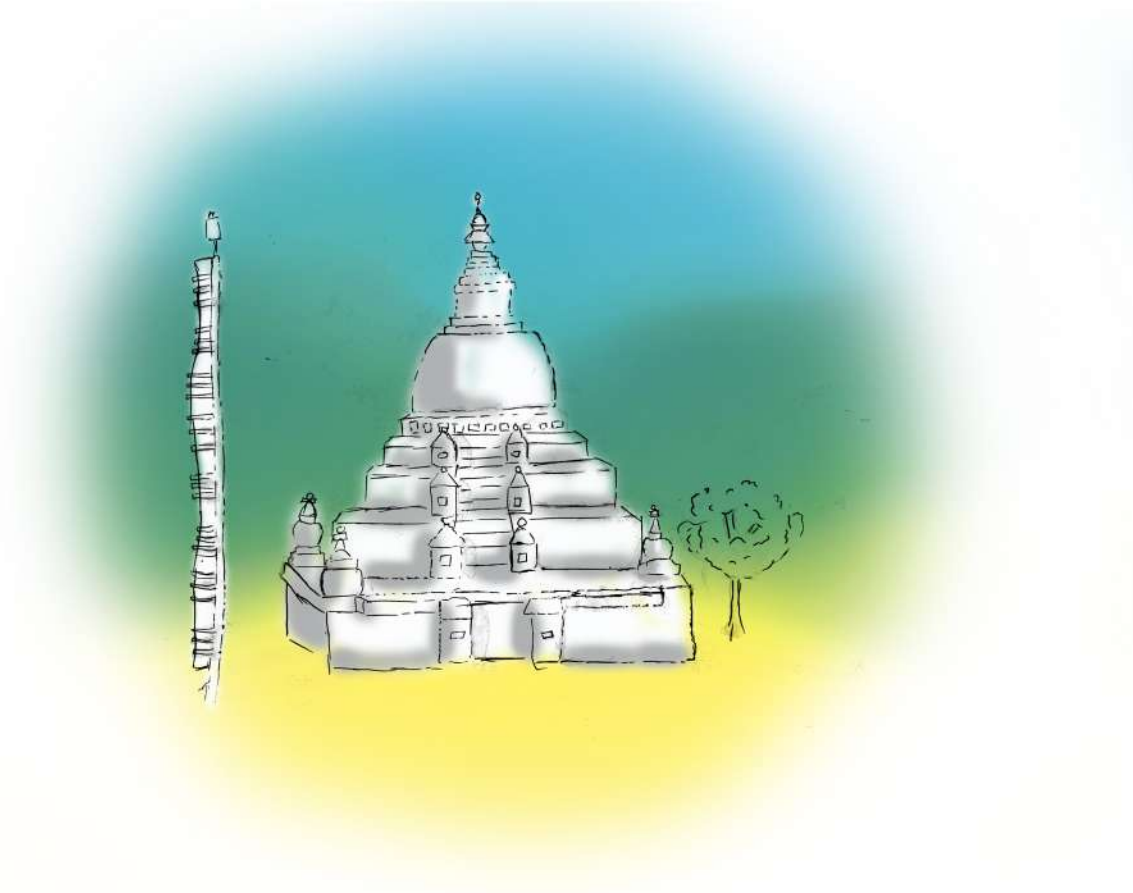
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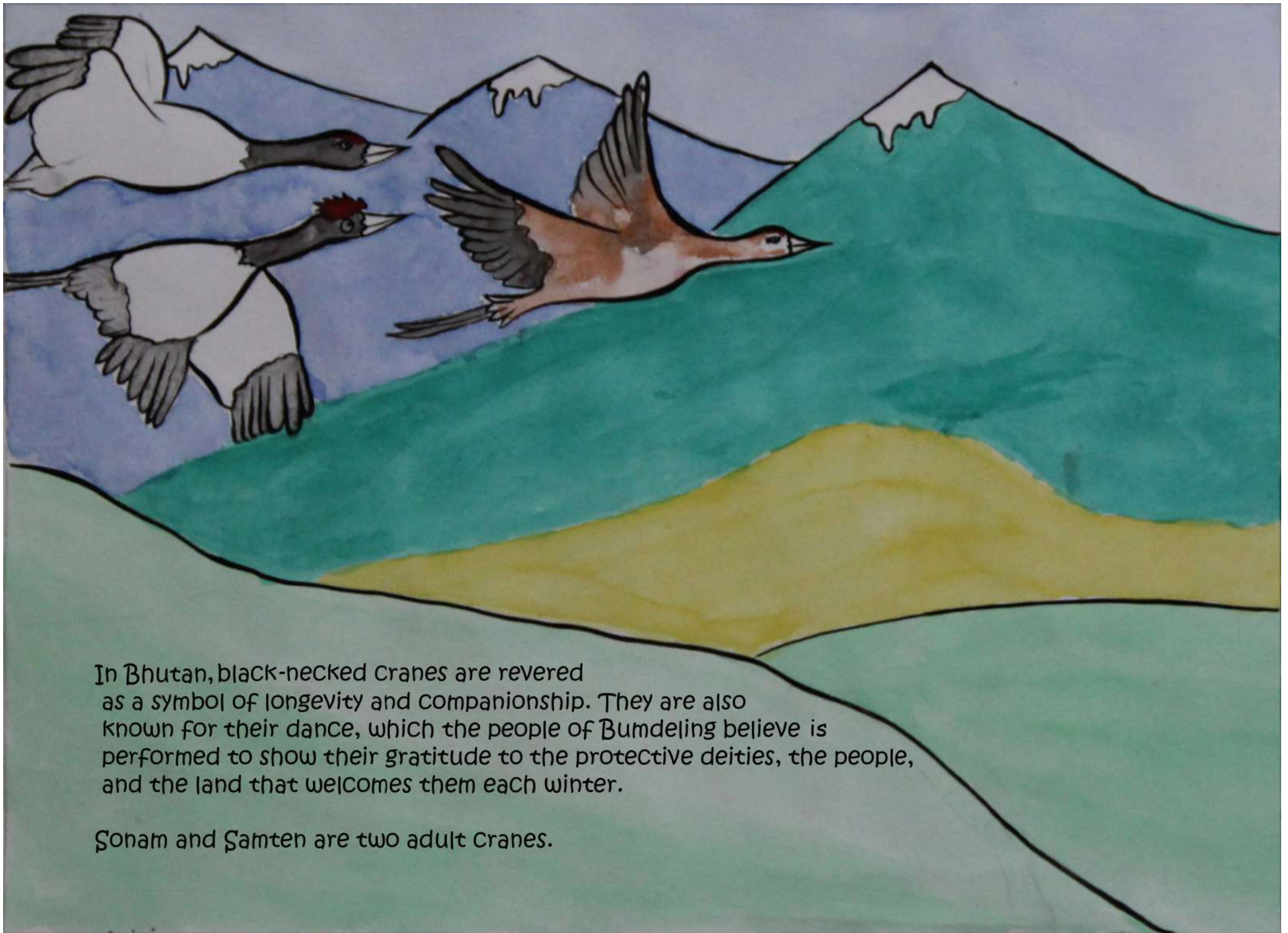


In dedication to Their Royal Highnesses Gyalsey Jigme Namgyel Wangchuck, Gyalsey Ugyen Wangchuck, and the children all over.



AGAY PHURBA

AND THE DANCING CRANES



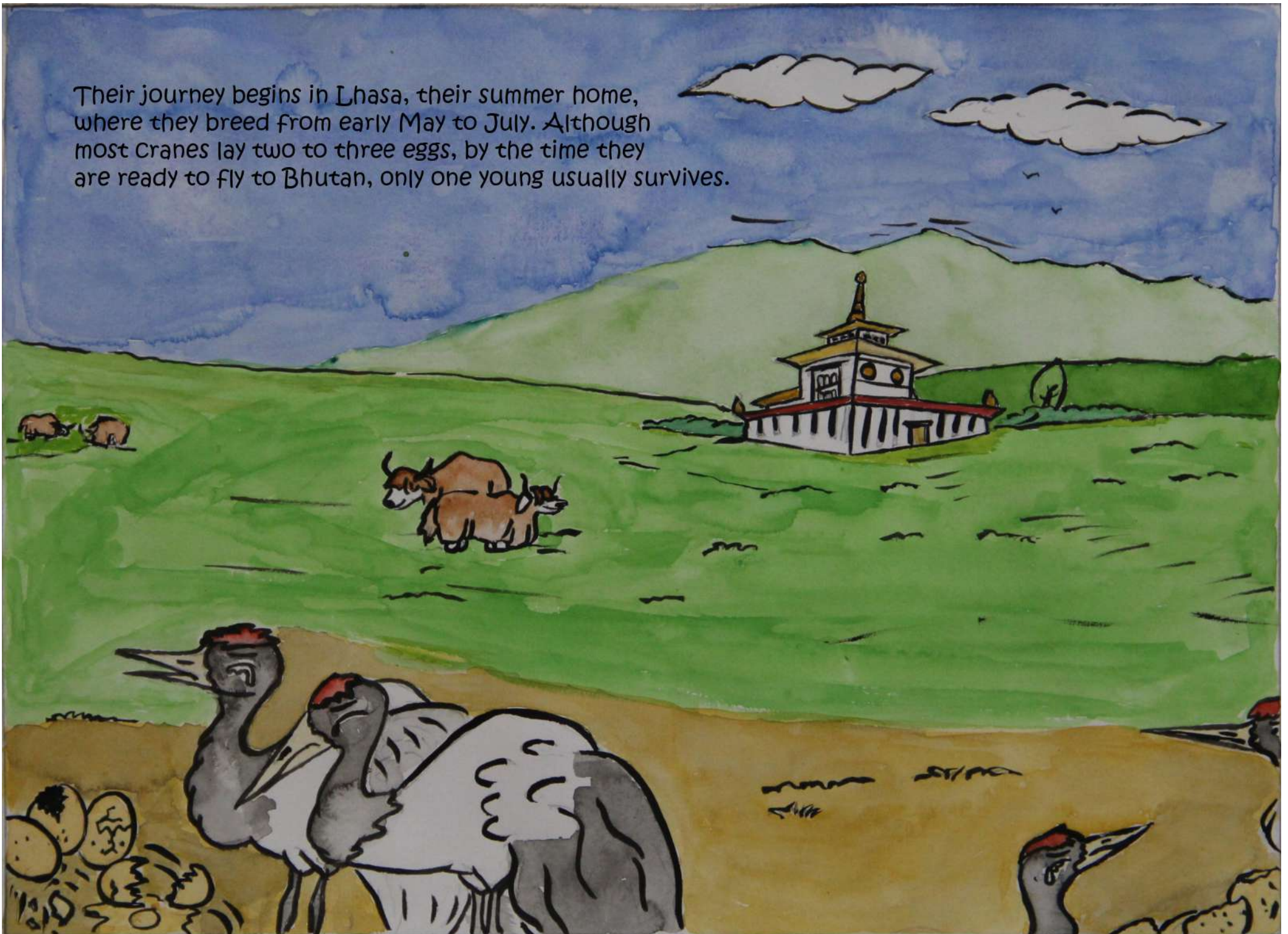
In Bhutan, black-necked cranes are revered as a symbol of longevity and companionship. They are also known for their dance, which the people of Bumdeling believe is performed to show their gratitude to the protective deities, the people, and the land that welcomes them each winter.

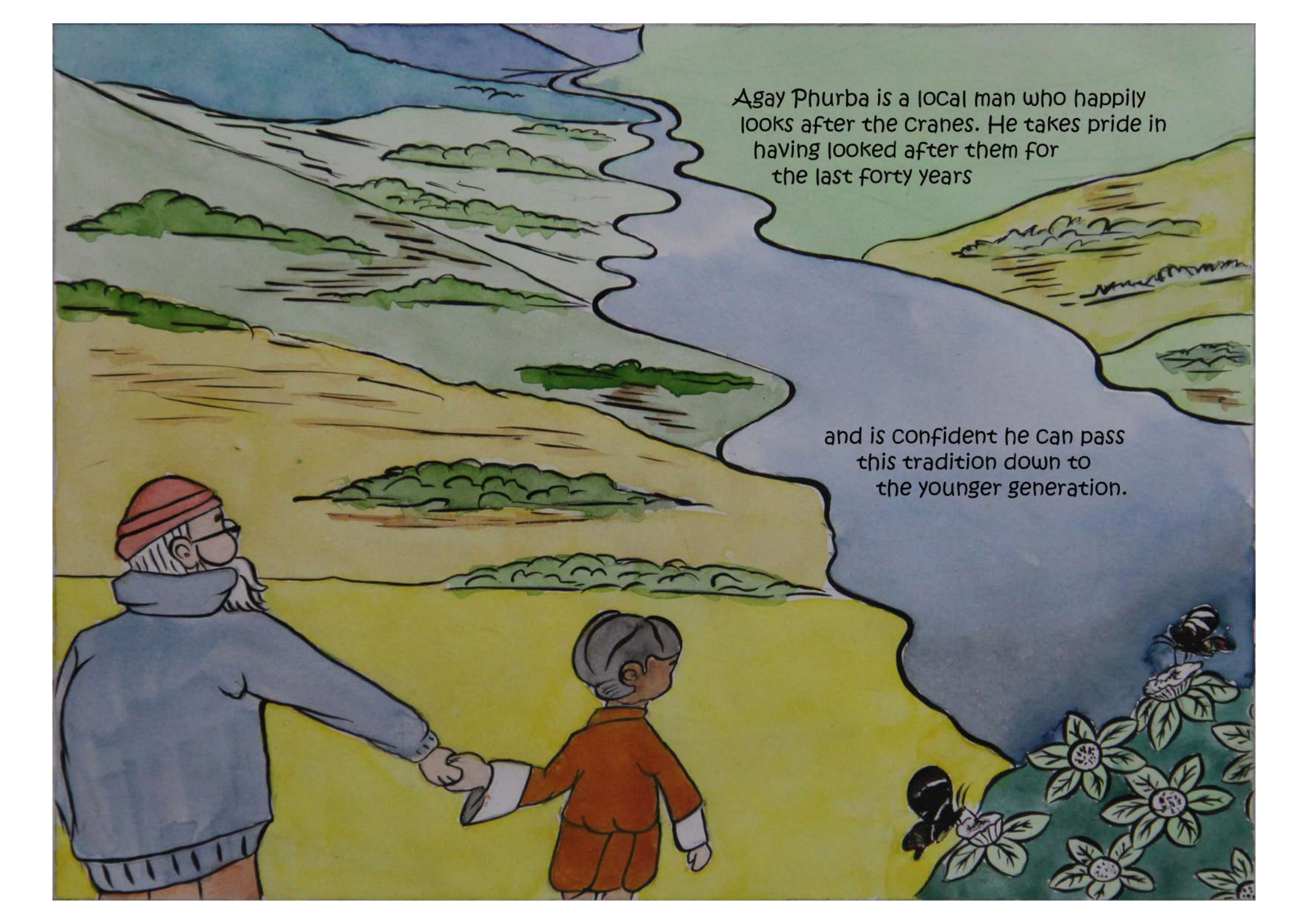
Sonam and Samten are two adult cranes.

Every year, Sonam and Samten, and about one hundred other cranes visit the valley of Bumdeling, making the place their home from November to March. This year, Sonam and Samten are accompanied by their young, Yangden, who is now about four months old.



Their journey begins in Lhasa, their summer home, where they breed from early May to July. Although most cranes lay two to three eggs, by the time they are ready to fly to Bhutan, only one young usually survives.





Agay Phurba is a local man who happily
looks after the cranes. He takes pride in
having looked after them for
the last forty years

and is confident he can pass
this tradition down to
the younger generation.

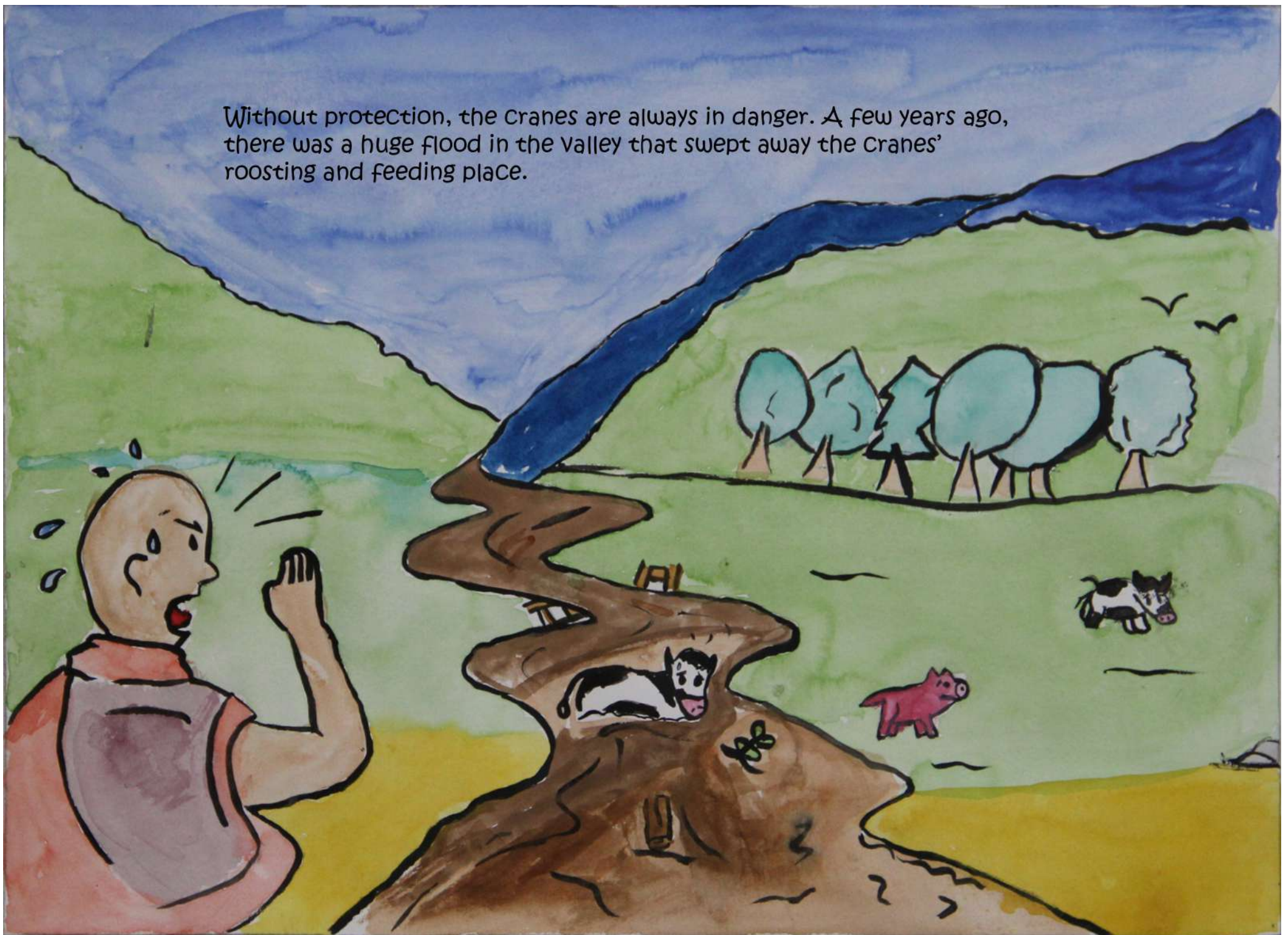
Every year, it has become more challenging for Agay Phurba to look after the cranes. With developmental activities, people are building more houses closer to the valley that the birds call their winter home.



With human activities such as playing archery near their habitat, the cranes are being disturbed and chased away. Agay Phurba, with the support of the government and the villagers, is trying to ensure that the cranes are protected from all harm.



Without protection, the cranes are always in danger. A few years ago, there was a huge flood in the valley that swept away the cranes' roosting and feeding place.






They also must be protected from predators and other animals. In Lhasa, many of Sonam and Samten's friends lost their eggs and chicks to common ravens and domestic dogs.





Some of the eggs were trampled upon by cattle and yaks
as they stomped past their breeding spots.

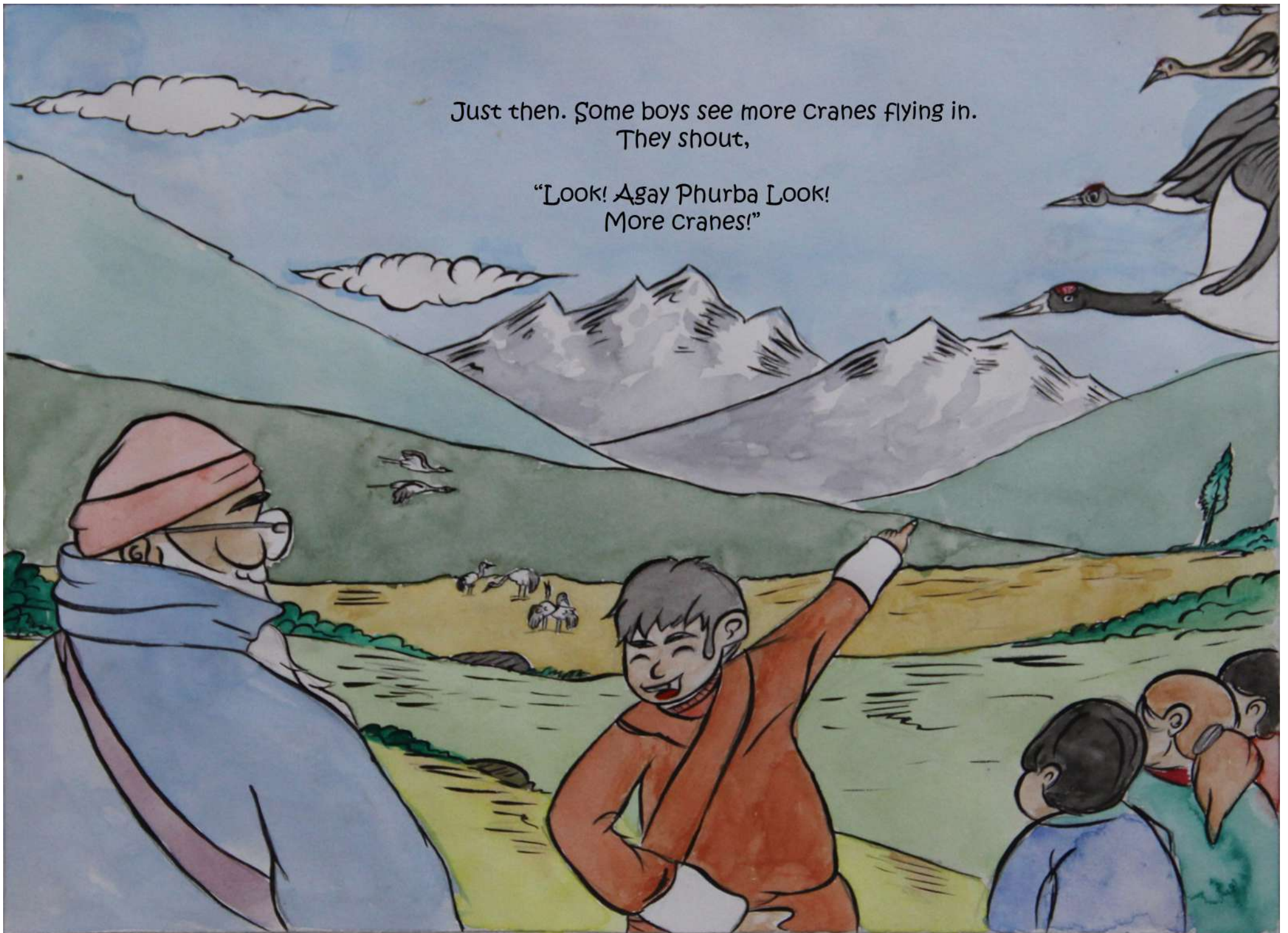
A hand-drawn illustration. On the left, a man with a pink headband and glasses looks out from a window of a brown building. The window has a decorative arched frame. Below the window is a grey wall with a brick-like pattern. In the foreground, there's a grey wall with a wooden fence. To the right, a green field with yellow borders contains two white cranes with long necks. The background is a light grey sky.

Due to the challenges of development,
human intervention and predators,
the number of cranes is reducing every year.

Agay Phurba is worried. He wishes to see
many cranes do the dance of gratitude.

Just then. Some boys see more cranes flying in.
They shout,

“Look! Agay Phurba Look!
More cranes!”





Sonam, Samten and Yangden have flown
hundreds of kilometers to their winter home.

With people like Agay Phurba and the villagers
of Bumdeling protecting them, they are
happy to return every year....

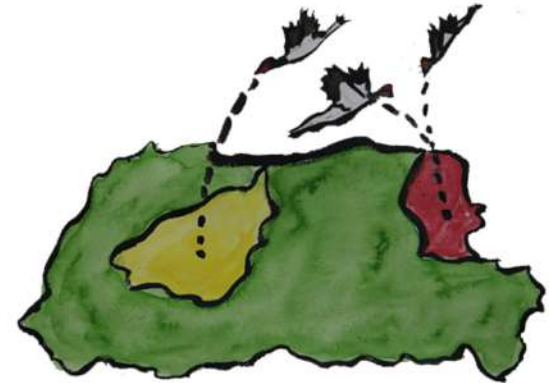
.....and like all of the cranes before them,
they do the dance of gratitude for the humans
who protect them.



FACTS:

a. Black-necked Cranes (*Grus nigricollis*)

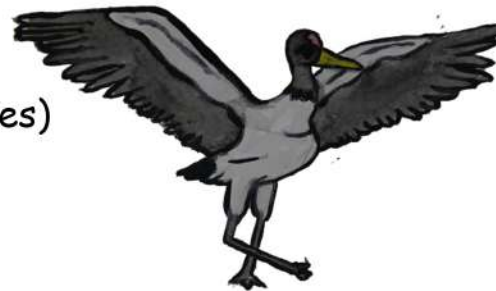
1. In the winter of 2019-2020, 493 Black-necked Cranes visited Phobjikha and 65 Black-necked Cranes visited Bumdeling.
2. There are 15 types of cranes in the world. The black-necked crane is the least known and the last discovered crane species in the world.



3. The Black-necked Crane was discovered in 1876 by a Russian naturalist, Nikolay Prjevalsky in Lake Kokonor in Tibet.



4. Black-necked Cranes are about 139 cm (55 inches) long with a 235 cm (7.8 ft) wingspan.
5. Black-necked Cranes weigh an average 5.5 kg.



6. In Bhutan, the cranes symbolize longevity and fidelity. It is featured as one of the six symbols in traditional Tshering Namdruk painting.
7. The Black-necked Cranes are revered in Bhutan as "Heavenly Birds".



b. Ludlow's Bhutan Swallowtail (*Bhutanitis ludlowi*)

1. Ludlow's Bhutan Swallowtail was first discovered by British plant hunters Frank Ludlow and George Sheriff in 1933-1934 at Tobrang in the upper valley of Bumdeling.



2. It is an extremely rare species and only spotted in a few places like Bumdeling, Bumthang, and the Eagle Nest Wildlife Sanctuary in North-East India.

3. It mostly flies at a height as high as the tree canopy level and is rarely found on the ground.

4. The butterfly was rediscovered in August 2009 by forestry officer Karma Wangdi of Bumdeling Wildlife Sanctuary.

5. It was declared as the national butterfly in 2012.



6. The adult Ludlow's Bhutan Swallowtail mostly feeds on flowers of *Viburnum cylindricum* and the caterpillars feed on *Aristolochia griffithii* plants.

7. The life cycle of Ludlow's Bhutan Swallowtail completes in 367 days.



About READ Bhutan and Bhutan Folktales project:

READ Bhutan is a non-profit organization established in 2008 that builds Community Libraries and Resource Centers as platform for community development initiatives.

The Bhutan Folktale Project was implemented in 2016 to document Bhutanese folktales and legends that were only passed down orally, and to allow transmission of cultural values and indigenous knowledge from the elderly to the younger generation.

With support from the Tourism Council of Bhutan (GEF-7 Ecotourism Project), 'The Documentation and Publication of Tales on Black-necked Cranes in Tashi Yangtse' focuses on the vulnerable black-necked cranes in Tashi Yangtse. The program trained 15 youth in Tashi Yangtse to write, illustrate and publish this book with the aim to build awareness and educate the youth and children on the vulnerable black-necked cranes and their habitat. The project also intends to inspire all readers to learn about the endangered species and the importance of biodiversity and why we need to preserve it.

About the Project:

GEF-7 Ecotourism Project: Mainstreaming Biodiversity Conservation into the Tourism Sector in Bhutan. The Tourism Council of Bhutan launched the GEF-7 Ecotourism Project “Mainstreaming Biodiversity Conservation into the Tourism Sector in Bhutan” on 20th September 2021. Funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) with technical support from UNDP, the project is being implemented as part of the Tourism Flagship Programme. It covers two protected areas of Bumdeling Wildlife Sanctuary and Sakteng Wildlife Sanctuary, and five districts of Lhuentse, Mongar, Trashigang, Trashy Yangtse and Zhemgang.

The project is expected to bring about transformational changes in the rural development landscape. It will help diversify the agriculture dominant rural economy by promoting a wildlife based economy, boosting domestic tourism, creating employment opportunities, and increasing community resilience and connection to nature.

A home to Ludlow's Bhutan Glory, the Bumdeling Wildlife Sanctuary in Trashy Yangtse has high potential for butterfly tourism. Besides serving as a winter home for vulnerable Black-necked Cranes, Trashy Yangtse is also a haven for special birds like Ward's Trogon, Pallas's Fish Eagle, Chestnut-breasted Partridge, Wood Snipe, Gould's Shortwing, Satyr Tragopan, Yellow-rumped Honeyguide, River Lapwing, Ibisbill, and many other water birds.

Contributors

1. Cheoning Lhendrup, 13
2. Dorji Tashi, 15
3. Kezang Wangmo, 13
4. Kinley Yangden Biddha, 12
5. Lhazin Yoezer Yangchen, 12
6. Namgay Yeshe Dema, 12
7. Pema Yutsho Choki, 12
8. Rigden Wangyel, 14
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10. Tandin Bidha, 14
11. Tashi Wangchuk, 15
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13. Thinley Zangmo, 12
14. Tshering Deki, 13
15. Wangchuk Yoezer Dolma, 14

Resource Person(s)-

1. Tandin Wangdi, Creative writing workshop
2. Purba Wangdi, community/local crane expert
4. Illustration Consultant and
Layout Designer - Wang Rana Gurung
4. Writing Consultant and Editor - Tandin Norbu
5. Translator- Karma Choden

