

Mor

Newsletter of World Pheasant Association - India



From the President

First and foremost, I extend very best wishes for the New Year to all the members and well wishers of WPA-India.

It is a matter of considerable satisfaction that this issue of *Mor* is coming out as planned and that such regularity has been maintained over the past year. Now that Dr. AJ Urfi, the new Hon.General Secretary of WPA-India, has agreed to be the Editor of *Mor*, we look forward to further improvements and readers are invited to send their comments, suggestions and contributions to him.

This issue is carrying the highlights of the Annual Report for the past year, which was approved by the General Body in the annual meeting held on 1 October 2005. At this meeting, the new Governing Board and office-bearers of the organization for the next three years were elected. I am very thankful to the General Body for reposing confidence in me and re-electing me in my present position. However, we have many, many miles to go and certainly need all help and support from all concerned in moving forward.

Samar Singh

From the Editor

Having taken over the responsibility of *Mor*, this is the first issue that I have been able to edit and I am grateful to our President Shri Samar Singh for his advice and help in bringing it out well in time. In the issues to follow, I shall endeavor to make the newsletter more informative as well as an effective vehicle for the dissemination of information and ideas about Indian Pheasants and the activities of WPA-India. We hope to have a greater coverage of news and activities of pheasant research, not just in India but also in other parts of Asia. To succeed in my goal, I need the support of all concerned. Please send suggestions and ideas about how to improve *Mor* as well as news on Pheasants and other Galliformes in your region.

A J Urfi

(e-mail: wpaindia@hathway.com)



Annual Review - 2004-05

World Pheasant Association - India

The year started with the Third International Galliformes Symposium held on 5-10 April 2004 at Dehradun and Corbett National Park in Uttaranchal State. Despite various limitations, WPA-India was able to help organize an outstanding event - the best attended and "the most successful the WPA has staged" so far. The other significant developments at the Symposium were the new five-year Affiliation Agreement between the WPA and WPA-India and the agreement for the merger of the WPA South Asia Field Office (SAFO) with the WPA-India. The following months were devoted mainly to implementation and, in May 2004, WPA-India opened its own office in a central location in New Delhi and SAFO ceased to exist.

General Body

The Annual Meeting of the General Body was held in New Delhi on 1 October 2004. Apart from approval of the Annual Report and audited Annual Accounts for the year 2003-04, the General Body approved the appointment of M/S Vijender Gupta & Co. as the Auditors of WPA-India for two more years. The General Body also considered and finalized some changes in the membership structure and fees of the organization. It was also decided to revive the inhouse newsletter titled 'MOR' and to bring out at least two issues per year.

Governing Board

The Governing Board met four times during the year – on 15 May 2004, 5 August 2004, 1 October 2004 and 16 March 2005. In the meeting held on 15 May 2004 the follow up to the International Galliformes Symposium was reviewed. It was decided to bring out a report on the Symposium and to get the accounts finalized urgently. The other items considered related to the operation of bank accounts and Income Tax matters, including FCRA registration. The meeting on 5 August 2004 was devoted again to matters arising from the International Symposium, the merger of SAFO, FCRA registration, Income Tax exemption, status of ongoing and planned new projects, etc. The Board also considered the request of Shri Avenash Datta not to continue as General Secretary of WPA-India and it was decided to make alternative arrangements.

In the meeting held on 1 October 2004, prior to the Annual General Body Meeting later that day, the draft Annual Report for 2003-04 and the audited accounts for the same period were considered and it was decided to place the same before the General Body for adoption. The Board was apprised of the fact that registration under the Income Tax Act and exemption under section 80G of the Income Tax Act had been received for the period upto 31March 2006. A proposal

for concluding a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between WPA-India and the Wildlife Institute of India (WII) was also considered. Matters regarding membership enrolment and revision of the relevant rules were also considered for placing before the General Body.

The meeting on 16 March 2005 was to condole the passing away of Vice President Dr. A.H. Musavi. A condolence resolution was adopted and the Board requested the President to convey the same to the bereaved family.

Networking & Partnerships

A major plank of the strategy for the working of WPA-India is to promote networking and partnerships with the concerned government agencies at the central and state levels as well as with like-minded non-government bodies/organizations in different parts of the country. It is noteworthy that the Wildlife Institute of India (WII), Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS), Centre for Environment and Education (CEE) and Department of Wildlife Sciences at Aligarh Muslim University have been Institutional Members of WPA-India for some years. During the reporting year, the National Zoological Park at Delhi joined this list.

The other notable developments in this regard are the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) concluded with the WII on 1 February 2005 and another MOU with Edutech of the CEE, Ahmedabad, on 22 November 2004. This will help in strengthening the collaboration between these organizations and WPA-India. In addition, efforts to strengthen the collaboration with the concerned government agencies in Himachal Pradesh, Uttaranchal and some other States are continuing and this should help in undertaking project related activities in those States. The collaboration with the Central Zoo Authority is also receiving due attention. More lately, efforts have been made to forge a partnership with the Indian Army, which will surely help in promoting the conservation of Pheasants and other Galliformes in remote and inaccessible areas where the Armed Forces have their presence.

As mentioned above, a new affiliation agreement has been signed between the WPA based in the UK and WPA-India. Earlier, such an agreement was from year to year, but now for the first time the affiliation agreement is for a longer period of five years. WPA-India is also in contact with the concerned Specialist Groups set up by the IUCN and WPA. Furthermore, with a view to take forward the South Asia Strategy adopted at the International Galliformes Symposium, efforts to strengthen the linkages with the other South Asian countries are being continued.



Awareness and Advocacy

Generating awareness and advocacy of relevant matters concerning the Pheasants and other Galliform species in the country is another major plank of WPA-India's strategy to promote its mission. Hence, special efforts have been made to bring out useful resource material, such as a booklet on the Pheasants of India and posters on the Pheasants of certain key States-viz. Himachal Pradesh, Uttaranchal, Jammu & Kashmir, Sikkim, Assam and West Bengal. Posters on the Pheasants of India and on the Pheasants of Arunachal Pradesh and Nagaland were brought out in the previous year, but considering the additional demand for these, more copies of the same were printed during this year. Funding support for the booklet on the Indian Pheasants was provided by the Central Zoo Authority and the publication was completed for release at the International Symposium in April 2004. A CD ROM on the Indian Galliformes, with special focus on the Pheasants, was also released at this time. Work on developing a website on WPA-India was initiated as well. Further, some popular articles on different aspects of pheasant conservation were brought out through India Perspectives (monthly magazine of the Ministry of External Affairs in several languages) and some other journals/ magazines.

At the same time, certain important conservation issues were identified for priority attention and these were taken up with the Ministry of Environment & Forests during the year. These include revision of the Schedules to the Wild Life (Protection) Act for certain pheasant species, increasing mortality of the Indian Peafowl (National Bird) and conservation of the Red Junglefowl. Simultaneously, interactions with the Forest Departments of some key States, such as Himachal Pradesh, Uttaranchal, Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Sikkim and Nagaland, have been stepped up for promoting the conservation of pheasants in those States. To this end, apart from discussions with the concerned senior officials, the President, WPA-India, met the Chief Ministers of Assam and Himachal Pradesh and the Environment & Forest Minister of Uttaranchal during the year. For the northeast, the Regional Representative based in Gauhati is continuing the interactions and promotional efforts.

Field Projects

During the year, the following field projects were undertaken:

* Wildlife and Floristic Studies in Allain- Duhangan Catchments, Himachal Pradesh. The project aims to assess the important biological attributes of the two catchments near Manali where a hydro electric power plant is planned. The project is funded by the ERM India and is to be completed within a year. The Floristic Study is being done in association with the GB Pant Institute of Himalayan Environment and Development. The Wildlife Studies are focussed on mammals, birds and butterflies. Field trips for this purpose are in progress.

- * Survey of animal use extraction pattern in some areas of Indian Himalaya. The project is funded by the British High Commission in Delhi. Field work has been undertaken in Uttaranchal, Sikkim, Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh. The findings will be synthesised in a single consolidated report for submission to the sponsor by July 2005.
- * Effect of pesticide use on Blue Peafowl and Grey Fancolin in Central India. The project is funded by the Ministry of Environment and Forests, Government of India, and is to be carried out over three years. Research Fellows have been recruited and field work has commenced in some parts of Rajasthan.
- * Apart from the above mentioned ongoing projects, action was taken to finalize the Himachal Pheasant Conservation Project, in collaboration with the Wildlife Wing of Himachal Forest Department. The project has a significant role for WPA-India over the next five years and it is expected to be approved by the State Government in the near future.
- * Another project titled "Community based conservation of Galliformes in the Gori Basin, Uttaranchal" has been submitted to the Ministry of Environment and approval is expected soon. Yet another project proposal on the highly endangered Manipur Bush Quail was also prepared during the year and sent to the Chairman of the PQF Specialist Group for endorsement.

Efforts to enrol new members are continuing and it is expected that with the recent changes in the membership structure and fees, there will be improvement in the future.

The Annual Meeting of WPA-India General Body was held on 1 October 2005 in New Delhi. In the meeting, the following were elected to the Governing Board:

Samar Singh, D.K. Chetsingh, Rahul Kaul, Sharad Gaur, Shekhar Singh, S. Sathyakumar, Nita Shah, Raghuvansh Saxena, A.J. Urfi, Himanshu Malhotra, M. Shah Hussain, Joanna Gruissen.

The **new office-bearers** for the next three years will be: President – Samar Singh, General Secretary – A.J. Urfi, Treasurer – D.K. Chetsingh.

The General Body also approved the following changes for renewal of membership:

- (a) For Individual (Ordinary) Members to renew membership for a period of 10 years at a time on payment of lump sum amount of Rs. 1200/- only.
- (b) For Institutional Members to renew membership for a period of 5 years at a time on payment of lump sum amount of Rs. 5000/- only.



Current status of Mrs Hume's Pheasant in India

Mrs Hume's Pheasant Syrmaticus humiae is a relatively poorly studied galliform found in the hill tracts of northeastern (NE) India, northern and western Myanmar, south-western China and northern Thailand. It has been listed as 'vulnerable' (BirdLife 2004). A bird of the hills and mountains, it is threatened by habitat loss and hunting. A survey was carried out in NE India to find out the current distribution, status and threats (Choudhury 2002, 2005). This survey discovered 20 new sites for this species with additional 24 unconfirmed sites, totalling 44 against only eight sites mapped in BirdLife (2001).

In India, Hume's Pheasant occurs in Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Mizoram and Nagaland. The present survey, however, did not cover Arunachal Pradesh and hence, its exact extent of occurrence there is still improperly known. There is only one report from Namdapha National Park. In Manipur, it is found in Ukhrul, Senapati and Churachandpur districts while there were unconfirmed reports from Chandel district. It is very rare in Barail Range and sparsely distributed in the higher hills of Churachandpur, Chandel and Tamenglong districts.

In Mizoram, *humiae* occurs mainly in Champhai and Saiha districts with possibility in Lunglei and Serchhip districts. Except for Murlen and Phawngpui, others were new localities for this species. In Nagaland, recorded mainly from Phek and Tuensang districts. There were reports from Mon district. Might still occur in Kohima district (extreme eastern and southern areas) while there is also possibility of occurrence in Zunheboto district. However, it is absent or very rare in Barail Range while in the Saramati area, sparse due to dense primary forest.

The habitat where the bird occurs is hilly and mountainous. The vegetation ranged from secondary and degraded jungle with scattered trees and grass, tropical evergreen and subtropical broadleaf forests, also coniferous with good grass cover. Recorded from *c*. 1000 to 2700 m elevation. The total potential habitat of *humiae* in Manipur, Mizoram and Nagaland is approximately 1700 km², 1300 km² and 1600 km² respectively.

Estimating the population of a bird such as Hume's Pheasant is extremely difficult. Even a guess is impossible with the existing information. Moreover, due to shooting and snaring, it is generally shy all over. The global population has been estimated at "a few thousand individuals", and the subspecies humiae may number as few as 1,000 (McGowan & Garson 1995). Studies in China gave some idea about possible density, at least in areas where they were 'not uncommon'. Li Xiangtao (1996) had estimated densities that ranged from 10 to 33 individuals per sq km. The minimum was 8.9 birds per sq km estimated by Lu Taichun (1991). Even if we consider only 10% or 460 km² of the potential habitat in NE India as their 'best' areas, then there may be at least 4000 birds (taking the lowest density of the Chinese studies, i.e., 8.9 per sq km) with some more in other areas (Choudhury 2005).

Habitat loss is a major threat although destruction of dense forest may not have significant impact on the status of this species but it indicates the magnitude of overall loss of habitat. The destruction of forest is mainly through felling of trees and *jhum* (slash-and-burn shifting cultivation) and clearance for human settlement, encroachment and developmental activities such as construction of roads. The ultimate cause is, however, the very rapid growth of human population, which doubles in every two decades!

Trapping with crude snares and shooting with guns are major threats to Hume's Pheasant in NE India. In fact, snaring is the most common practice as the trapper need not pursue the birds but only sets the snare / snares in the known habitat.

Mrs Hume's Pheasant has been accorded the highest protection under the Schedule I of Wild Life (Protection) Act 1972 of India (which prohibits its killing or capture dead or alive). Most of the villagers are, however, not aware of this legal status. In the protected areas, the enforcement is inadequate. Hume's Pheasant is the 'state bird' of Manipur and Mizoram.

At present only four protected areas are there in the entire range of Hume's Pheasant in Nagaland (Fakim Sanctuary - very rare) and Mizoram (Murlen



and Phawngpui National Parks, and Lengteng Sanctuary) covering a very insignificant, 6.5% of the total potential habitat.

New protected areas (Saramati-Fakim, 500 km² and Mt Ziphu, 50 km² in Nagaland; Shiroi, 50 km² and Anko Range, 400 km² in Manipur) and small sanctuaries (< 10 km² with support from local communities [e.g., Khonoma Tragopan Sanctuary in Nagaland] should be established near Chizami-Luzaphemi and Reguri-Lephori in Nagaland, near Kamjong and Jessami in Manipur, and near Ngur, North Diltlang and Artlang in Mizoram); extension of existing protected areas; further survey; population estimate and monitoring; control of poaching; adequate protection measures in existing sanctuaries; check of *jhum* and fire; and awareness and motivation of fringe villagers eco-tourism, better infrastructural facilities, research on ecology and behaviour, and massive population (human) control measures in the fringe areas are recommended.

by Anwaruddin Choudhury (WPA-India Regional Representative, North-East India)



Hume's Pheasant (Syrmaticus humiae)
Manipur & Mizoram
State Bird

New Sponsorships

Power Grid Corporation of India Ltd.: Posters for **Save the National Bird Campaign**.

Sarabhai Zydus: Special calendar for 2006 exclusively on the Pheasants of India.

The Nicobar Megapode after the Tsunami

On 26 December 2004, large parts of South-East Asia were struck by a devastating tsunami, causing the death of hundreds of thousands of people and inflicting enormous damage to infrastructure and local economy. Also the Nicobar Islands, were seriously hit by the tsuami. The Nicobars are the home of the endemic Nicobar Megapode Megapodius nicobariensis nicobariensis on the northernmost islands and Megapodius nicobariensis abbotti on Great Nicobar in the south. Because the Nicobar Megapode is a coastal breeder which builds its incubation mounds close to the high tide line, concern was raised about the effects on the various populations. Soon after the tsunami, Nicobar Megapode expert Ravi Shankaran, from the Salim Ali Institute for Ornithology, returned to his former fieldwork sites on the various islands to evaluate the situation. Recently, Ravi returned to the mainland and reported by email (21 June). Here are some of his findings:

"I have both terrible news and good news. First the good news. Both subspecies of the Nicobar megapode are in no immediate threat of extinction. I saw and heard megapodes and/or saw active mounds on virtually every island that I set foot on. The terrible news is that the main breeding habitat of the megapodes, the 100m coastal belt has been damaged beyond belief. Nothing stopped the tsunami other than high ground. All the undergrowth and middle stories have been washed away, and variable numbers of tall old growth trees stand upright. All the vegetation in the affected belt has 'died' due to salt stress. Thus, a band of land starting from the high tide mark and extending upto 500m at places is scorched brown. There are huge gaps with all the vegetation missing, and with bare soil exposed. Compounding this is the loss of coastal land from less than 5 to over 200m and even more of the shore that is now inundated due to the sinking of the island by about 2m.

The net result is that we have physically lost coastal breeding and foraging habitat that will take decades, if not centuries, to come back. The inland habitat is intact and birds will continue to exist there. Also, there was adequate evidence of birds beginning to breed just behind the tsunami line. So, amidst all that destruction there is hope. We have probably lost the population on Megapod island (completely submerged), Treis and Trax. On all others, the Megapodes are there still. Tragically, for the foreseeable future the species will not be seen in the abundance that I was previously familiar with."

Source: WPA Annual Review - 2004/2005



Pheasants of India – a role for the Indian Army

The principal mandate of the Army is to safeguard the territorial integrity of the nation. The Indian Army has achieved the unique distinction of incorporating ecological issues into this mandate over the years. This role has arisen from the conviction that "protecting our forests, rivers, wetlands or wildlife is the protection of our country itself" and that "it is the duty of every citizen to contribute to the conservation of the country's biodiversity".

The Indian Army has had a number of success stories in its previous valuable contributions to nature conservation. Among these are the greening of cantonment areas, the protection of endangered species such as the Black-necked Crane in Ladakh and the Hangul in Kashmir, the work undertaken in important protected areas such as Kaziranga and Manas in Assam, and the ecological restoration work by the Eco Task Forces. It is against this background that it is necessary to draw attention to yet another important matter where possibilities arise for the Army to make a significant contribution to the conservation of India's Wildlife. This relates to the conservation of Indian Pheasants.

The majority of Indian Pheasants are found at high altitude areas, which are often remote and have difficult terrain and are relatively inaccessible. Several of these areas are in dangerous border regions, prone to conflict. It is here that an opportunity arises for the Armed Forces and concerned Para Military Organizations to play an integral role in conservation, observation and research activities. They alone may have the capability to carry out conservation activities in these areas given the dangers, possibilities of insurgencies and the remote access to these regions. There is currently very little known about many of these pheasants species, particularly those found in higher altitudes, and no status surveys have been carried out to date. Some of these species are restricted range species and considered globally endangered or threatened. This makes it even more important to harness the capabilities of the Armed Forces in undertaking task such as status surveys.

Full article by Samar Singh, President, WPA-India in GREEN GOVERNANCE, July-December (7-8), 2005

Indian Pheasants - Where to find them

- Cheer Pheasant (Catreus wallichi)
- •Koklass Pheasant (Pucrasia macrolopha)
- •Western Tragopan (*Tragopan melanocephalus*)
- •Satyr Tragopan (*Tragopan satyra*)
- •Kalij Pheasant (Lophura leucomelana)
- •Himalayan (Impeyan) Monal (*Lophophorus impejanus*)
- •Sclater's (Mishmi) Monal (*Lophophorus sclateri*)
- •Temminck's Tragopan (*Tragopan temmincki*)
- •Elwe's Pheasant (*Crossoptilon harmani*)
- •Blyth's Tragopan (Tragopan blythi)
- •Blood Pheasant (*Ithaginis cruentus*)
- •Hume's Pheasant (Syrmaticus humiae)
- •Grey Peacock Pheasant (Polyplectron bicalcaratum)

- J&K, Himachal, Uttaranchal.
- J&K, Himachal, Uttaranchal.
- J&K, Himachal.
- Uttaranchal, Sikkim, North of West Bengal, Arunachal.
- J&K, Himachal, Uttaranchal, Sikkim, Assam, Arunachal, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Tripura.
 - J&K,Himachal, Uttaranchal, Sikkim, Arunachal.
- Arunachal.
- Arunachal.
- Arunachal.
- Arunachal, Assam, Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland.
- Arunachal, Sikkim, North Bengal.
- Arunachal, Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland.
- Sikkim, North Bengal, Assam, Arunachal, Manipur, Meghalaya.



Over 70,000 Pheasants in Himachal Pradesh

Following a first of its kind census conducted in May this year, the Wildlife Wing of Himachal Pradesh Forest Department has put the number of Pheasants in the State at 71,290. The birds counted include the Red Jungle Fowl, Khaleej, Koklass, Western Tragopan, Himalayan Monal, Indian Peafowl and Cheer.

The Red Jungle Fowl is the most abundant with nearly 28,000 birds, followed by Khaleej (24,831), Koklass (6,533) and Peafowl (6,418). The number of Himalayan Monal, which is the State Bird of Himachal Pradesh, is 3,812, while Cheer around 1,664.

The census only counted 284 Western Tragopan, a majority of which (105) were found in the Chamba Forest Circle, followed by Rampur Forest Circle (50), Shimla Forest Circle (38), Shimla Wildlife Circle (26), Dharamsala Forest Circle (25) and Dharamsala Wildlife Circle (21). Additionally, 10 birds were reported from the Great Himalayan National Park, 7 from Mandi Forest Circle and 2 from Kullu Forest Circle.

The Himalayan Monal was found in large numbers in Chamba Forest Circle, followed by Dharamsala Wildlife Circle (438), Shimla Wildlife Circle (415), Kullu Forest Circle (393), Rampur Forest Circle (358), Shimla Forest Circle (337), Great Himalayan National Park (336), Dharamsala Forest Circle (227) and Mandi (101).

Source: Suresh Khatta - Indian Express - 17 August 2005

Projects Update

The progress of some ongoing projects is briefly given below:

* Wildlife and Floristic Studies in Allain-Duhangan catchments, HP.

The wildlife related studies focussed on Mammals, Birds and Butterflies have been completed. The floristic studies, in association with GB Pant Institute of Himalayan Environment and Development, are nearing completion. Work on preparation of the final report has started.

* Survey of Animal Use Extraction in some areas of Indian Himalaya.

The project has been completed and final report has been submitted to the British High Commission, who funded the project.

* Effect of Pesticide Use on Blue Peafowl and Grey Fancolin in Central India.

Field work is in progress and the first report has been submitted to the Ministry of Environment and Forests, who have funded the project.

* Community based conservation of Galliformes in the Gori Basin, Uttaranchal.

The project has been sanctioned recently by the Ministry of Environment and Forests and release of first instalment is awaited. Meanwhile, some preparatory activities have been undertaken locally through Sarmoli-Jainti Van Panchayat, Munsiari.

* Key Areas Project

Field work in Uttaranchal is in progress. The project is being handled by the Investigator Dr. K. Ramesh, based at the Wildlife Institute of India, Dehradun.

In the context of the **Avian Flu**, India's wonder bird, the wild Red Junglefowl (*Gallus gallus*), has a vital role in feeding humankind in future. For knowing more about Avian Flu visit the following websites:

World Health Organization Birdlife International World Organization for Animal Health

http://www.who.int/en/ www.birdlife.org www.oie.int

Food and Agriculture Organization Wetland International The Poultry Site

www.fao.org www.wetlands.org www.thepoultrysite.com



Resource Material - available on request

Posters

- Pheasants of India
- · Pheasants of Arunachal Pradesh
- Pheasants of Himachal Pradesh
- Pheasants of Uttaranchal
- Pheasants of Assam
- Pheasants of J&K
- Pheasants of Sikkim
- Pheasants of Nagaland
- Pheasants of West Bengal
- National and State Birds
- Save the National Bird
- Himalayan Monal

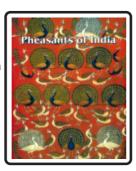






Booklets

- Pheasants of India
- Pheasants of Arunachal Pradesh
- Third International Galliformes
- Symposium Abstracts
- Pheasants of Himachal Pradesh







MOR is the biannual newsletter of WPA-India for private circulation. Contributions to MOR may be sent to address given below.



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