

# Mor



*Newsletter of World Pheasant Association - India*

*WPA-India wishes all its Members and Supporters*

*Very Happy New Year*

**From the President:**

The year that has just passed will be remembered for a long time to come as the year when national leaders met at Copenhagen and frittered away what might prove to have been the last chance to save the world from the more drastic consequences of climate change. What happened in Copenhagen proves once again that climate change and, indeed, the state of our natural environment, are issues too important to be left to governments and politicians.

For the last decade or so we, citizens of the world, have watched helplessly as the global and national environmental discourse got progressively hijacked by the climate change debate. It was as if once the spectre of climate change appeared on our horizon, all other issues, be they biodiversity conservation, environmental hazards, depletion of natural resources, forest conservation, or pollution control, slowly sank into oblivion. Though there was an increase in the overall availability of funds for conservation, there was a steep decline in the funds available for issues other than climate change.

For those working to conserve the environment, there was little option but to adapt to the new reality. It seemed that all was not lost, for the anticipated impact of climate change would affect all aspects of the environment, touch every corner of the earth. Therefore, innovative and imaginative strategies were evolved to reorient work and rhetoric to accommodate the new fashionable concern. As long as attention continued to be focused on the vulnerable and threatened ecosystems and species of the world, perhaps it did not really matter whether we were seeing them through the climate change perspective or the more traditional conservation perspective.

*(contd. on page 2)*

**Annual General Body Meeting**

The Annual General Body Meeting of WPA-India was held on 26 September 2009. In the meeting, the Annual Report and audited Annual Accounts for the year 2008-09 were considered and adopted. Besides, the WPA-India Governing Board was reconstituted for the next three years as given below:-

Shekhar Singh - President

D.K. Chetsingh - Vice President & Hon. Treasurer

Nita Shah - Hon. Gen. Secretary

Samar Singh

Sharad Gaur

M. Shah Hussain

S. Sathyakumar

Himanshu Malhotra

Raghuvansh Saxena

Naim Akhtar

However, this window of hope did not last long. Just as the environmental debate had been hijacked by the climate change debate, the climate change debate got hijacked by politics and economics, at the cost of the environment and of survival imperatives. It quickly deteriorated into a limited and limiting debate about political economy.

The issues were no longer how to prevent further damage to the climate, how to minimize the impact of the damage already inflicted, and how to slowly but surely bring the earth back from the brink of disaster. The issues that started dominating the “environment-debate-that- had -been -hijacked- by- the -climate -change- debate- that -had- been- hijacked -by- the- political -economy -debate” were – who is to blame for the damage, how much can we make them pay, and how can we get out of doing anything even if we are paid for it.

This is not to say that the so called industrialized nations have a very coherent stand in this debate. There is little doubt that they have to a great extent created the problem, especially historically. What can be debated is how much liability attaches to an action when you do not know that it will have disastrous consequences. However, they are now in a totally untenable position of expecting countries like India to curb economic activity and restraint life styles in order to restrict emissions, while their own emissions, especially their per capita emissions, are many times those of India. Therefore, at one level India is quite correct in demanding reparations from the “industrialized” world and demanding that they own responsibility.

However, the main problem with this position is that it reflects an underlying petulance on behalf of the victims (and towards the perpetrators) that “as you have brought about this state of affairs, we will do little or nothing unless you pay for it, even though it is going to be disastrous for our environment and traumatize our society and economy “. This is an unfortunate position which results in our loudly celebrating our diplomatic check mates in the international arena, while doing almost nothing to prepare our villages, districts and states to adapt to the inevitable impacts of climate change. Surely the preferred way forward is for countries like India to take the leadership in mitigation and adaptation and shame the rest of the world by our moral stand, rather than try and guilt it by our petulance.

But some of you might be wondering what all this has to do with pheasants. Unfortunately, our wild species and wilderness areas would bear the brunt of the adverse impacts of climate change, unless something is done urgently. Not only would changes in temperature and rainfall directly threaten the habitat and the very survival of many wild species, including galliforms, but there would also be many indirect impacts. As agricultural activities get disrupted because of erratic climatic conditions, there will be demand for additional land to supplement lowered productivity. Also, failure of agriculture and shortage of water is expected to lead to massive migration of rural populations to urban areas and to higher altitudes and wetter climates. These would all constitute indirect threats to wildlife habitats.

Unfortunately, there does not seem to be any effort yet to understand the implications of all this on the ground. What are required are micro-level assessments and plans outlining the impact of changing climatic conditions and the resultant local and regional migration patterns of animal species. Protected areas would have to be expanded to cover the additional area needed to adapt to the impact of climate change. Also, areas would have to be prioritized, for it might not be possible to equally protect all habitats, and new management protocols developed.

However, in the long run, the protection of the galliforms, and indeed of all wildlife species, would depend on how effectively we as a nation (and as a world) manage to adapt to the imminent changes even while trying to minimize them. And this is too important and too urgent a task to be left to governments and politicians.

*Shekhar Singh*

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## Annual Review 2008-09

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### Year's Highlights:

- Publication of *Galliformes of India* by the Wildlife Institute of India – the first such comprehensive publication on all Galliform species found in India.
- Renewal of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between WPA-India and the Wildlife Institute of India for the next three years.
- New partnerships established with the World Wide Fund for Nature-India (WWF-India) and the Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH). The mandate of INTACH includes the conservation of natural heritage.
- A new Technical Committee of specialists established to aid and advise on technical matters and specially for preparing fresh project proposals.
- Dr. Nita Shah (Bombay Natural History Society) appointed the Hon. General Secretary of WPA-India in place of Dr. A.J. Urfi. Shri Harsh Vardhan, Hon. General Secretary, Tourism and Wildlife Society of India, appointed Hon. Advisor for Rajasthan State.
- Under the ongoing *Save the National Bird Campaign*, further progress was made during the year, especially by the declaration of more Peafowl Reserves in certain States and new field projects in the National Capital, including a field study in the President's Estate.

**General Body & Governing Board:** During the year, the WPA-India Governing Board met regularly and the Annual General Meeting was held on 26 September 2008. This occasion was utilized for the release of the ENVIS publication **Galliformes of India** brought out by the Wildlife Institute of India. The Chief Guest was the Secretary, Ministry of Environment and Forests, Government of India. Others present included the Member Secretary of INTACH, Director, Wildlife Institute of India (WII), and officials of the Ministry of Environment and Forests, Wildlife Institute of India, Central Zoo Authority and INTACH staff members. During the meeting, the appointment of Dr. Nita Shah as Hon. General Secretary was ratified and a Technical Committee was established. The progress of ongoing field projects was also reviewed in the meeting.

**Membership & Newsletter:** There has been a slight increase in the enrolment of new members. At the end of the year, the position is as follows: Life Members (45), Institutional Members (6) and Annual Members (43). With a view of improve communication within the network and also dissemination of information, regularity in bringing out the newsletter *Mor* has been ensured. During the reporting period, issues were brought out in July 2008 and January 2009. The theme of the July 08 issue was Galliformes conservation in Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh. The January 09 issue carried the Annual Review of WPA-India for 2007-08 and the release of *Galliformes of India* publication in collaboration with the Wildlife Institute of India.

**Partnerships & Networking:** Collaboration with other partner institutions, such as the Bombay History Natural Society, Centre for Environment Education, Central Zoo Authority, National Zoological Park and others was continued and further strengthened. During the year, new partnerships were established with WWF-India and the Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH). INTACH provided support for the birding fair at Jaipur in early 2008, whose theme was the conservation of the National Bird (Indian Peafowl). On this occasion, a new initiative was taken in collaboration with the Tourism and Wildlife Society of India, Forest Department of Rajasthan and Rajasthan Patrika to carry out a rapid assessment of the peafowl population in the State, with people's participation. INTACH also provided funding support to bring out 1000 posters for *Save the National Bird Campaign*.

**ENVIS Issue on Galliformes of India:** The much awaited ENVIS issue on the Galliformes of India, compiled at the Wildlife Institute of India, Dehradun, was released by Shri Vijai Sharma, Secretary, Ministry of Environment and Forests, Govt. of India, at a function organised jointly by WPA-India, Wildlife Institute of India and INTACH at the INTACH Head Office in New Delhi on 26 September 2008. The publication has separate sections dealing with species accounts, galliformes of national and global significance, distribution in the biogeographic zones and protected areas network, reports from States, management aspects, research and monitoring techniques, etc. A selected bibliography is also included. The publication is the outcome of collaboration between the Wildlife Institute of India and WPA-India and it is the first such work on the Indian Galliformes.

**Save the National Bird Campaign:** The campaign was continued during the year with further gains. As a result of awareness, cases of peafowl mortality are being reported and getting covered by the media. WPA-India completed a field study on the effect of pesticide use on the Indian Peafowl in central India. The final technical report on the project is under finalization. The State Governments of Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Orissa, Karnataka and Kerala have declared special Peafowl Reserves. In Delhi, the Government approved a field study on the status of the National Bird in selected big parks and another field study in the President's Estate was sanctioned by the President's Secretariat. Support for the campaign has been received from other interested organizations and individuals.

**Field Projects:** The progress in regard to the ongoing field projects is briefly given below:

- \* **Effect of pesticide use on the Blue Peafowl and Grey Francolin in Central India (Funded by the Ministry of Environment and Forests)** – Field work has been completed and the final technical report is under preparation.
- \* **Community based conservation of Galliformes in the Gori Basin, Uttarakhand (Funded by the Ministry of Environment and Forests)** – This was the final year of the project and field work is in the process of winding-up.
- \* **Field Study of Indian Peafowl in selected parks of Delhi (Funded by Delhi Government) & National Bird Study in Rashtrapati Bhawan (Funded by President's Secretariat)** - Both the above-mentioned projects were sanctioned during the year and are in different stages of field implementation.
- \* **Survey of Manipur Bush-Quail in western Assam (Funded by the Ministry of Environment and Forests)** – While this is a new project sanctioned recently, it is expected to take forward the earlier field work on the species, for which a modest contribution was provided earlier by WPA.

The new project proposals being finalized are:

- Conservation of the Pheasants of Western Arunachal Districts.
- Study on the status, distribution, key threats & related conservation aspects of Red-breasted Hill-Partridge (*Arborophila mandellii Hume*) in West Bengal.

**Mr. Mir Inayet Ullah**, WPA-India Life Member and a long term supporter of the organisation, passed away on 13 May 2009. He was also Hon. Advisor for Jammu & Kashmir. His demise was condoled in the WPA-India Annual General Body Meeting held on 26 September 2009.

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## Mobilizing Grassroots Action for the Conservation of Galliformes in the Gori river basin of Pithoragarh District in Uttarakhand

This three year field project taken-up by WPA-India in collaboration with the Sarmoli Jainti Van Panchayat has been completed during the year. The project was funded by the Ministry of Environment and Forests, Government of India. The Final Technical Report will be submitted soon. Some significant results are given below:

In the past three years, the **research component** of the project has built up base line data on the status of galliformes and their habitats in the project area; the **livelihoods component** has effectively catalyzed and involved the community in evolving a conservation agenda and sound management strategy to protect and conserve the rich diversity of Galliformes in the project area; and the **conservation action component** has been implemented by the various interests in the community, in concert with the WPA-India and the District Forest Department.

Within the Van Panchayat area, the villager have been successful in stopping hunting and trapping altogether during these three years. Kaleej pheasants have increased dramatically and they are now a common sight. The number of hill partridges encountered and heard calling all through the year is also on the increase. Sustainable, non-extractive alternative livelihoods, habitat protection and regeneration and the active involvement of the community has played a critical role in this positive outcome, which should continue beyond the present project time frame.

In the sub-alpine parts of the project area, the data generated through research and the breeding - birds pre-dawn call-counts over three years reveal that populations of the Satyr Tragopan as well as the Koklass pheasant have remained constant in the project area.

While hunting and trapping of pheasants has been greatly stemmed by means of local regulation, particularly within the Van Panchayat forest area, there is no check on the number and seasonality of livestock grazing in the Khalia Reserve Forest areas that also fall within the conservation area of the project. Unless this intensive pressure abates, the threshold is likely to be crossed, and the pheasants are likely to disappear from this area. Also, in two of the three project period years, the collection of lichens by distant villages, even from across the river, has been permitted by the Forest Department. The collection is done by chopping off the lichen-laden branches in significant volumes, leading to intrusion, noise disturbance and the destruction of many roosting sites. The loss of lichens as critical winter feed for musk-deer could lead to their not surviving a stressful winter. It is therefore critical that there be some clear agreement on the strategy between the Forest Department which allows such use and the village community engaged in making conservation happen on the ground.

The nature of such conservation work, however, is long-term and ongoing. The Forest Department and the village community need to keep their partnership alive and active. The strategy to build an incentive to conserve the forest habitats and forest-dwelling pheasants and partridges through added income from nature-based tourism seems to have been effective even within the short project time-frame of three years. The income to the community from home-stays, trekking related income and guiding coordinated by the Van Panchayat was Rupees 7.2 lakhs till the end of the project period, and is picking up substantially. Galliformes as a bird species has become recognizable locally as an iconic attraction for bird watchers, researchers and the casual tourist alike. The effort requires to be stable and sustained for the coming few years.

The future direction of work beyond the project period is to conjoin the neighbouring village communities as well as the transhumant population in the conservation effort within the present conservation area. This effort would necessarily need to be better informed with indepth habitat studies of anthropogenic pressures. It would need to involve all the actors in building consensus over future conservation strategies. The nature based tourism programme is being extended to include alpine village communities in the upper reaches of the Gori valley like Martoli, Tola and Ralam, as well as in cold temperate villages of Kulthum and Golfa that have a rich galliformes diversity. However, the challenge of large hydro electric dams currently being built in these very areas are proving to be a threat to these bird species. This is well beyond the scope and power of communities to be effective in their conservation and requires the a closer scrutiny of the impact of such development in biodiversity rich and sensitive areas by the Ministry of Environment and Forests.

*by Malika Virdi, Principal Investigator*

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### **New Publications on Galliformes**

#### **Conservation of Red Junglefowl *Gallus gallus* in India**

MERWYN FERNANDES, MUKESH, S. SATHYAKUMAR, RAHUL KAUL, RAJIV S. KALSI and DEEPAK SHARMA

**Abstract:** The Red Junglefowl (RJF) is one of the most important species for mankind, due to economic and cultural reasons. Recently, fears have been expressed that the wild RJF may be genetically contaminated, leading to an inference that there may not be any pure RJF left in the wild. In order to assess the distribution of RJF in India, field surveys were carried out and secondary information was collated. Historically, RJF occurred in 270 districts in 21 states across India, but now it is found in 205 districts in the 21 states. Of the 255 Protected Areas (PAs) that occur within the RJF's distributional range in India, 190 PAs (31 National Parks [NPs] and 159 Wildlife Sanctuaries [WSs]) have reported its presence. A composite set of trait characters that are presumed to be indicators of wild RJF was used for characterising RJF in the field. A total of 563 (293 males and 270 females) RJF were characterized of which 7% of birds in the central region had reports of white ear patch. Eclipse plumage was observed in wild and captive birds. Ninety-two RJF samples and twenty five domestic chicken samples were collected and processed for DNA extraction. Thirty highly polymorphic microsatellite markers were utilised for RJF and domestic chicken genotyping. Preliminary studies showed polymorphism within RJF at these microsatellite loci.

#### **Distribution and abundance of Galliformes in response to anthropogenic pressures in the buffer zone of Nanda Devi Biosphere Reserve**

TAPAJIT BHATTACHARYA, S. SATHYAKUMAR and G.S. RAWAT

**Abstract:** Prior to this study, information on the status of Galliformes and habitat availability in the buffer zones of Nanda Devi Biosphere Reserve (NDBR) was lacking. An assessment of distribution patterns and abundance of Galliformes in response to anthropogenic pressures was carried out during 2005 – 2006 by surveying transects and point call count locations. A variety of measures were taken to estimate anthropogenic pressure. Himalayan monal was the most encountered pheasant (n = 299), then koklass (n = 53). Abundance estimates of monal and koklass were highest during spring and lowest during summer when anthropogenic activities were highest. Density of monal varied due to disturbance and season whereas koklass varied with season but not disturbance. Himalayan monal and koklass use habitats with herded livestock during spring and autumn, and grass cover and livestock presence were negatively related to pheasant occurrence during spring and autumn. Uncontrolled medicinal plant extraction, human disturbance, livestock and associated shepherd dogs are thought to all have an adverse impact on Galliformes and their habitats.

*Papers presented at the 4th International Galliformes Symposium, 2007, Chengdu, China.*

## Study on the status, distribution, key threats & related conservation aspects of Red-breasted Hill-Partridge (*Arborophila mandellii* Hume) in Singalila National Park and Buxa Tiger Reserve, West Bengal

The study was sanctioned recently by 'Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF)' and 'Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and the Environment (ATREE)'. Field work commenced in October 2009. The first reconnaissance-cum-survey trip has been conducted by the WPA-India team around the Singalila National Park during the third week of November. Despite socio-political disturbances in the region, the team successfully managed to keep as per schedule and recorded a single instance of sighting of the target species in the wild. Further intensive survey around certain selected localities has been planned to be conducted during the period late March to middle of May, 2010. First reconnaissance trip to the upper reaches of Buxa Tiger Reserve is awaiting West Bengal Forest Department's approval and is expected to commence in the month of January, 2010.

According to the Birdlife International Red Data Book (Threatened Birds of Asia), "the Red-breasted Hill-Partridge has a small population which is declining and becoming increasingly fragmented. It is therefore classified as Vulnerable". In India, the species is reported from West Bengal east to Arunachal Pradesh and Assam between 350 to 2500 m and possibly higher. Inhabits dense undergrowth in broadleaved evergreen forest.

*by Heerak Nandy, Co-Principal Investigator*

'कवभारत टाइम्स' । नई दिल्ली । गुरुवार 10 दिसंबर 2009

### कुछ मेहमान आएंगे लोदी गार्डन

#### जल्द ही वॉक करते नजर आएंगे मोरनी के तीन बच्चे

Vignesh Kumar

**सही बसीच । टिप्पण**

लोदी गार्डन के फॉरेस्ट रॉड लोदी गार्डन में वॉक करने वालों के अनुभव में कुछ बदलाव आने वाला है। उन्हें साथ देने के लिए जल्द ही यहाँ कुछ नए मेहमान आने वाले हैं। गार्डन में मोरनी के तीन बच्चों के बच्चों को खाने की तैयारी पूरी हो चुकी है। गार्डन को और अधिक 'बर्ड फ्रेंडली' बनाने के लिए एनडीएससी मोरनी के पांच बच्चों का वॉक करते वहाँ की हरियाली में शामिल करने की तैयारी में है। यह पहल वर्ल्ड पेजेंट असोसिएशन-इंडिया और नेशनल जिमनॉलॉजिकल पार्क द्वारा संयुक्त रूप से की जा रही है।

वर्ल्ड पेजेंट असोसिएशन-इंडिया के अध्यक्ष ममरा सिंह के मुताबिक, दिल्ली में मोरनी को आबादी बढ़ाने के लिए और अधिक प्रयास करने की जरूरत है। उन्होंने कहा कि राजधानी में मोरनी की संख्या में गिरावट दर्ज की गई है। ऐसा इसलिए हुआ है, क्योंकि अनुकूल वातावरण न मिलने की वजह से मोरनी के बच्चे जित नहीं पाते। एनडीएससी के एक अधिकारी ने बताया कि आखिर कुर्छों और थिलियों के दर से मोरनी गार्डन हरिया में आने लगीं देरी। साथ ही, बीछता बनाने के लिए मोरनी को एकल जगह पर दफन हो रही है, जो कि भौदबाहु की वजह से लोदी गार्डन में नहीं मिल पाती। साल 2007 से इस राष्ट्रीय पक्षी को उनके अनुकूल प्राकृतिक वातावरण देने की प्रक्रिया शुरू की गई है। 'मोरा' नाम की एक मोरनी इंडिया इंटरनैशनल सेंटर स्कोक के अंदर एक खास जगह पर रखी जा अंदे दे रही है।

सिंह ने बताया कि यहाँ पूरी तरह खराबी पर खाने वाला पक्षी है और खाने पर ही मोरनी अंदे देती है। लेकिन 2004 में मीने यह अनेक दुर्घटना, जब इंडिया इंटरनैशनल सेंटर (आईआईसी) के अंदर एक शिशुको के ऊपर 'मोरा' ने अंडा दिया और सफलतापूर्वक उधम से बच्चा भी निकल। यह जगह लोदी गार्डन के ऊपर स्थित है। मोरनी ने वह जगह इसलिए चुनी, क्योंकि गार्डन में उले एकल नहीं मिल रहा था। बावजूब 'मोरा' भी 'मोरा' के साथ आ गई और आईआईसी के सदस्यों ने इस बात का पूरा ध्यान रखा कि माँ और उनके अंडे सुरक्षित रहें।

एनडीएससी के एक अधिकारी के मुताबिक, मोरनी के बच्चों को लोदी गार्डन के रैट नंबर 1 के पास तक एक बड़े में रखा जा रहा है, जब तक उनके पांच बच्चे लह दिखलप न हो जायें और वे अपना बचाव करने के वाकिल न हो जायें। इस दौरान उन्हें वैक्सीन के टीके लगाए जाते हैं और खास नगरह दिया जाता है। हमारी कोशिश रही रहती है कि मोर-मोरनी को खाने के लिए यहाँ सफल वातावरण मिल सके।



**'बर्ड फ्रेंडली'**

एनडीएससी मोरनी के पांच बच्चों को यहाँ की हरियाली में शामिल करने की तैयारी में है

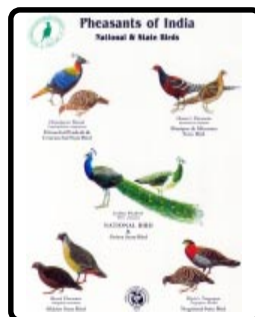
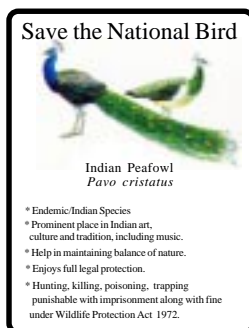
वर्ल्ड पेजेंट असोसिएशन-इंडिया और नेशनल जिमनॉलॉजिकल पार्क की संयुक्त पहल



## Resource Material - available on request

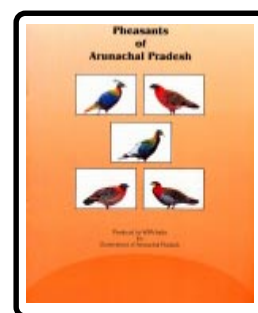
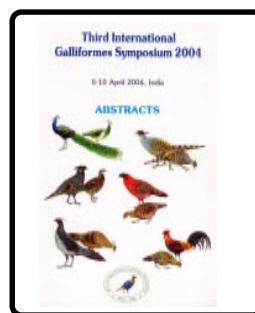
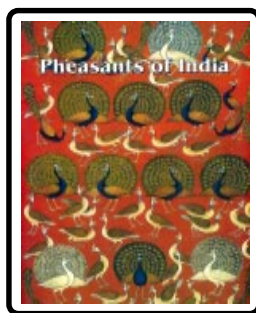
### Posters

- 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
- Symposium Abstracts
- Pheasants of Himachal Pradesh



*Mor is the biannual newsletter of WPA-India for private circulation.  
Contributions to MOR may be sent to WPA-India.*



### Join WPA-India --

--only national organization wholly devoted to the cause of galliformes conservation in India. Contribute to the cause by joining in our efforts. Membership involves a nominal fee. Application form is available from the WPA-India Office at:

143-B (First Floor), Shahpurjat, New Delhi - 110049.  
Telefax No.: 011 - 41752143  
e-mail: wpaindia@gmail.com