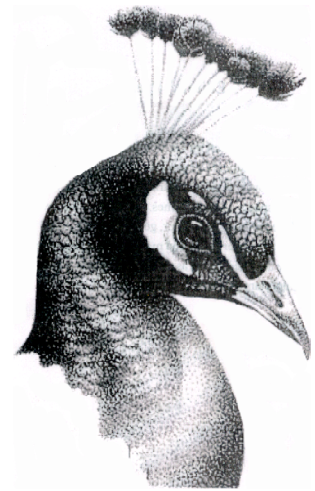


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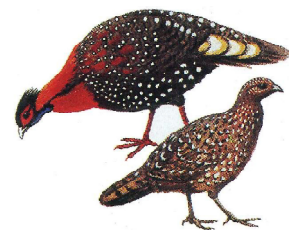
Newsletter of World Pheasant Association - India



Indian Peafowl
Pavo cristatus
National Bird
&
Odisha State Bird



Himalayan Monal
Lophophorus impejanus
Uttarakhand State Bird



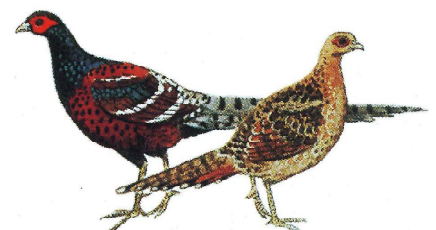
Western Tragopan
Tragopan melanocephalus
Himachal Pradesh State Bird



Blood Pheasant
Ithaginis cruentus
Sikkim State Bird



Blyth's Tragopan
Tragopan blythii
Nagaland State Bird



Hume's Pheasant
Syrmaticus humiae
Manipur and Mizoram
State Bird

***Pheasants as
National & State Birds***

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Editorial

Dear Readers,

A very Happy New Year to you all.

A new year is starting with a signal of climate change and it is upon us with old ecological problems still pressing and new ones rising. This year we learned that cities are getting hotter, and planting trees to save the planet isn't easy. Scientists and environmentalists also warned for plastic pollution everywhere. Many things are away from our individual control, but there are things we can do to minimise the damaging effects by humans on environment. Many species have been adversely affected by global warming, and human's unwillingness to move fast enough to protect the planet. The adverse impact is never abruptly disastrous; it's almost always gradual, and virtually invisible in real time.

In this issue we are covering articles on Grey Francolin, a bird which can be found in forest as well as urban greens also. It is also facing threat because of habitat loss and free ranging dogs especially in urban greens. This issue covers three stories of peacock's death at Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and Tamil Nadu. Every where the reports suggested of poisoning, which is undoubtedly a result of use of pesticides sprayed by the farmers in the crop fields.

Accidental news....Cheer Pheasant was sighted in newly declared Nandhaur Sanctuary in Naini Tal district, Uttarakhand. This vulnerable species was sighted first time on such a low altitude (583 m). Shifting in habitat can be due to lack of habitat and human interference. This situation is alarming as Cheer is left in only few pockets in Kumaun Himalayas.

Enjoy reading and once more I am requesting to you to contribute your articles, experiences etc. in MOR. Many Thanks!

Dr. M. Shah Hussain, Hon. General Secretary

Down in Jungland: Wing Games

Besides being game birds, grey francolins are also great fighters.



In fine feather: While grey francolins are smart, black francolins are a knockout — jet black and stippled with gold. (Photo: Ranjit Lal)

Ever since Kapil Dev brought home the World Cup in 1983, I've always heard the call of the Grey Francolin (nee Partridge) as an exultant, "Kap-il Dev! Kap-il Dev! Kap-il Dev!" and, happily, this sprightly game bird is still hailing that historic victory. Officially, of course, they tell you that the males call, "Kateetar, kateetar, kateetar," in a high-pitched tone; the hens start off with a repeated, "tee-tee-tee", followed by a musical, "kila-kila-kila", and then the pair may duet, "Kateela-kateela-kateela". In most cases, you will hear the bird before seeing it — if you actually do.

If you do, it may give you the fright of your life. I've been spooked by them a number of times; there you are in a dry, spiky field, or even a rambling park, and you hear the bird calling. Somewhere ahead, it's standing on tiptoe and cheerily greeting the morning. You sneak closer, trying to be as quiet as you can. You can't see it. Obviously, it has ducked and covered — it's, after all, a game bird. You creep on. Suddenly, the ground beneath your feet seems to explode. With a heart-stopping "Bhhrrrrr!" something rufous brown blows up in your face and then is away at top speed in a blurred flurry of feathers. If you have your wits still about you, you might spot the bird whirring off and then gliding into a thicket on short, cambered wings. Aha! So, now you know where it is. You sneak up and peer into the thicket. Nothing! And then, spot the fellow scampering off a good distance away, head down as if under fire.

Usually, of course, partridges prefer running to flying and they run swiftly and smoothly. If flushed several times by dogs or beaters, they might just stay stubbornly put on the ground — not a good thing for them.

But there's a reason for this mulish behaviour: Game birds like the partridge have white flight muscles (hence the white meat) which are fuelled by the carbohydrate glycogen, which gives them the instant high-

energy burst required for an instantaneous top-speed getaway. These muscles operate anaerobically — without the use of oxygen — and the waste products accumulate quickly, leading to fatigue. The birds just can't fly. Long distance flyers, like geese and pigeons, burn fat while flying, which requires a good supply of oxygen in order to burn; this is provided by blood through a network of capillaries, which makes their meat dark.

Usually, francolin behave like fugitives on the run, probably because they're so used to being shot at or chased by dogs and beaters. But, in some places where they are protected, they might just saunter jauntily up to you or cross the road just in front of you, knowing they are safe and you can get a good look at them. Usually, they wander around in pairs or small parties (called coveys), in their sprightly upright manner. Overall, about the size of a small hen, they are rufous brown, with a lighter pale biscuit basket weave pattern across their bodies and have a yellow throat patch and broken black collar called a gular loop. The males are armed with a sharp spur (sometimes two) on their legs, which is used for fighting.

These birds are great fighters — another reason which has made them dear to us. Partridge fights are organised all over the country, with much betting. These specially bred fighters may be double the weight of a normal country-bumpkin francolin.

Grey francolin are found all over the country, from the Himalayan foothills to down south. They like dry, scrubby areas, crop fields, large parks, etc . They're omnivorous and eat seeds, shoots, berries, drupes, insects, small mammals, and even human excreta. They nest on the ground usually in summer (between March and September) and while only the mom incubates the eggs (four-nine), both parents take the chicks out on exploratory walks.

Our treatment of these cheerful birds has been abominable: we trap them en masse in low nets, by using decoys to call them. When raised by us, they are easily tamed and are trusting birds. They've been exported to the US as "exotic game birds", which basically means to be shot.

While grey francolins are smart, they have a knockout cousin, the black francolin, which saunters around the fields, hills and countryside in northern India. He's jet black, stippled with gold, with vivid white cheek patches and wears a copper coloured collar. He will stand on tiptoe and cheerfully call: "Chik-chik-cheek-keeyak", which some hungry people have written down as "lehsun-pyaaz-adrak" (garlic-onion-ginger). He saunters around the edges of fields and, like his more plebian cousin, is omnivorous.

As I wrap up this piece, India have thumped Pakistan yet again in one of the World Cup matches. Somewhere in the parks, you can be sure that the grey partridge will be standing on a rock, cheering, "Ka-pil Dev, Ka-pil Dev, Ka-pil Dev!" so that we never forget.

by: Ranjit Lal, an author, environmentalist and bird watcher (Source: The Indian Express, 23 June 2019.

Cheer Pheasant sighted in Nandhaur Sanctuary



Photo: Dr. John Corder

Dehradun: Cheer Pheasant, a bird endemic to the mid-Himalayas, has recently been sighted for the first time at an altitude of 583m, the lowest ever, at Nandhaur Wildlife Sanctuary in Kumaon, raising the curiosity of foresters and scientists alike about what it is doing at such a low altitude.

The pheasant is mostly seen in its natural habitat, anywhere between 1,500 to 3,000m. Cheer Pheasant is also known as Wallich's Pheasant and marked as a 'vulnerable' species by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

A rare and first-ever documentation of the Cheer Pheasant was done by Prajakta Husahngabadkar, project officer and Meraj Anwar, associate coordinator of WWF. It was posted on Twitter by Parag Madhukar Dhakate, conservator of forests (Western Circle), Nainital, and caused excitement among bird-watchers and wildlife enthusiasts.

Concerned about change in habitat, the Uttarakhand forest department decided to launch a study to decipher the reason behind the shift in its habitat. Experts feel it may have been due to excessive human interference or land use change in its natural habitat. There's a small chance that it could also have been because the lower altitude regions offered them a better habitat.

“This would indicate their natural habitat in the higher reaches has been disturbed. These birds are adaptive and hence, any possible good breeding and nesting forest site can turn into their habitat. This is certainly a change in behaviour of the birds, which requires intensive study before a conclusion can be drawn,” said Kalyan Singh Sajwan, bird expert and conservator of south Kumaon forest circle, Uttarakhand.

Meanwhile, Dhakate told TOI; “It is a vulnerable species and found only in cold weather. A shift in its habitat would indicate either stress in behaviour or lack of availability of suitable habitat. The bird is mostly found in the Himalayas in India, Nepal, Kashmir and Pakistan.”

Source: Times of India, 19 October 2019, Dehradun.

UP: Eight Peacocks Found Dead, Many Unconscious, Due To Possible Pesticide Poisoning



As many as eight peacocks were found dead in Uttar Pradesh's Bijnor district on Monday, 18th November, in the Shadipur village of the district. Many were also found unconscious in the village field.

Police and the forest officials took over the case. Poisoning was suspected to be the reason behind the death of the peacocks. The post mortem report revealed that the birds had digested a red-colored fruit which is often found in wild bushes and wheat grains.

The excessive use of pesticides that are sprayed by farmers in the fields may have been the reason behind the death of the birds.

However, the autopsy report did not specify the exact cause of their deaths.

"We have collected the samples and will send them to the IVRI laboratory for testing to find the exact cause of the birds' death. All the birds were found in the same field," India TV quoted Divisional forest officer (DFO) M Semmaran as saying.

Last year, six peacocks were found dead in Amroha district. While the exact cause of death could not be ascertained, sub-divisional forest officer AK Singh had said that the incessant spraying of pesticides and insecticides in the mango orchards could have been the possible cause.

Source: The Logical Indian Crew, 19 November, 2019.

After Uttar Pradesh, now 9 peacocks found dead in Rajasthan

On the death of peacocks, Environmentalist Harshvardhan confirmed that the pesticides being sprayed in the fields are deadly for peacocks. If the use of pesticides is not checked, more peacocks will die, he added.



Image Source : PTI PHOTO

Days after eight peacocks were found dead in a sugarcane field in Uttar Pradesh's Bijnor, nine peacocks have been found dead in Rajasthan's Alwar district on Thursday. According to officials, five more were found unconscious and the birds were being treated at a local veterinary hospital. Investigations to find the cause are currently underway.

Authorities are trying to investigate if the peacocks had eaten anything poisonous or if they died due to some unknown disease.

Meanwhile, environmentalists said that the peacocks died because of the pesticides which were sprayed on the fields.

Environmentalist Harshvardhan confirmed that the pesticides being sprayed in the fields were deadly for peacocks. If the use of the pesticides is not checked, more peacocks will die, he added. The deaths have come at a time when thousands of migratory birds were recently found dead in and around Sambhar Lake in Rajasthan's Jaipur district.

Source: India TV News Desk, 21 November 2019.

43 peafowl found dead in Madurai



Peafowl found dead near the Mangalakkudi channel in Madurai on Saturday.

Tamil Nadu Forest Department begins probe.

A total of 43 Peafowl lay dead over a 1 km area of a dry channel at Mangalakudi near Kadachanendal on the outskirts of Madurai on Saturday morning. Officials from the City Police and Forest Department, who rushed to the spot, suspect poisoning to be the cause of the deaths of 34 female and 9 male birds.

S. Arumugam, Range Officer, Madurai Wildlife Range, said that the peafowl may have consumed paddy grains laced with poison on Friday night. A senior veterinarian who performed the post mortem said that there is a definite correlation between the grains and the death.

“After interacting with locals, we found that the birds usually go for grazing around this area in the morning and return to their nests among coconut trees by about 6.30 p.m. every day. It is likely that some anti-social elements scattered the food on Friday evening. Preliminary reports suggest that the birds died on Friday night,” he said.

He added that many birds had fallen to their death from a tall tree, causing brain haemorrhage.

The source said that the suspected grains laced with poison were found in the gut, and digestive tract (an expanded portion of the alimentary tract of birds used for the storage of food prior to digestion) of 80% of the birds. “We have taken 30 samples and will be sending to the Forensics Department, Madras Veterinary College, and other units for detailed investigation,” he said.

Mr. Arumugam said that the Forest Department conducted further investigations on Saturday afternoon and a few persons are suspected to be behind the incident. “Action will be taken only after the forensic reports are back in about 10 days,” he said.

He adds that Peacock, the national bird, is protected under Schedule I of the Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 and killing the bird is punishable under section 51(1-A) with imprisonment that may extend to seven years, and financial penalty. "Some people kill the birds intentionally. Others do it because they want to protect their insects and use heavy doses of insecticides. This does not look like an accident to me," he said.

S. Pandiammal who has lived close to the habitat of the birds for five years now, says that they would feed and water the birds every morning between 6:30 and 7 a.m. "The death is a huge loss for us because we would daily give them grains. We even constructed a cement tank for them so that they could drink water through the day. If we do not feed the birds at the same time everyday, several of them would gather in front of my house. The sight of the peacocks strutting around through the day was unadulterated beauty. The incident has deeply affected me," she said.

Source: The Hindu, Madurai, August 04, 2018.

QUAIL SURVEY: ELABORATIVE INFORMATION AND ITS PROSPECTS

Khushboo Aryal¹, Roshani Gupta², Vijay Laxmi Saxena^{1} 1.BIF Centre of D.B.T, Department of Zoology D.G.P.G College Kanpur, India. 2.MRD Life Sciences Pvt. Ltd. Lucknow under Biotech Consortium India Limited BITP, DBT New Delhi.*

ABSTRACT: The paper reviewed the primary literature and its geographical distribution of Coturnix quail species, and we have put our emphasis on the elaborative description and thus compiled the data of characterization related to its ecology, morphology, physiology for comparative purpose useful for economic and research purposes globally. Further sections deal with quail farming and its major diseases to understand overall scenario due to some knowledgeable gap in the control and maintenance of quail species population. For concluded factors, future observations and perspectives have been pumped out starting from its early detection, diagnosis and proper vaccination in aviary market causing the death of quails all over the world and thus must be recommended for safe and healthy global society with its sustainable development.

INTRODUCTION: The bird originated from a wild environment just as any other domesticated animal and was first domesticated in Japan in 1595. There are 45 species of quail worldwide. However, only two species of quail are widespread in India out of which the black-breasted jungle or rain quail (*Coturnix coromandelica*) found in the jungle and the brown-coloured Japanese quail (*Coturnix coturnix japonica*) which is bred for meat and used for commercial purposes. In India, quail keeping started in 1974 at Ijatnagar, when Central Avian Research Institute, introduced improved germplasm of domesticated quail varieties from Japan[1] and then in 1983 at Tamil Nadu. Thereafter, Agricultural Universities of Andhra Pradesh, West Bengal, Mizoram in Northeast India[2] veterinary colleges as well as animal husbandry department played a vital role in the promotion of quail breeding as a farm enterprise.

Full article: <http://www.rjlbpes.com/article-pdf-downloads/2018/20/290.pdf>

For the first time, Delhi govt plans to start bird hospitals

The proposal is part of the Animal Health and Welfare Policy 2018, recently discussed in a government meeting



In a first, the government of Delhi has proposed a specialised treatment facility for birds in the National Capital Territory, as part of its Animal Health and Welfare Policy 2018.

“There is a need for a specialised facility that caters to the needs of birds. At present, there is no government-run facility in Delhi,” a proposal in the policy read.

“The rise in population of birds in recent years makes it all the more important that welfare of birds and their health be taken up as urgent need by the government by stating specialised aviary health facilities. This setup would be developed in all the districts of Delhi in order to provide high-end specialized referral clinical support and treatment to the birds. These centres would have both, Out Patient Department and In Patient Department facilities for birds,” it continued.

The Animal Health and Welfare Policy 2018 was discussed on January 9, in a meeting attended by Delhi’s Minister of Development, Gopal Rai.

It aims to strengthen overall animal health cover through prevention, control and eradication of various disease conditions, disease monitoring, surveillance and extension of veterinary services.

It also aims to animal welfare through sensitization of public, rehabilitation of animals, crisis/disaster management for animals, infirmary for sick or injured, hostel facility for farm, stray or abandoned animals.

According to this portal, a total of 444 species of birds are found in Delhi, including 29 globally threatened species. Prominent birders had mixed feelings about the proposal.

“I don’t see this materialising anytime soon. For all we know, this could just be empty talk and nothing else. Even if such hospitals are established, will they too discriminate between the birds like the Jain Bird

Hospital in Chandani Chowk that treats only so-called vegetarian birds and not raptors?” asked well-known birder, Bikram Grewal.

Nikhil Devasar, who has just written a book about the birds of Delhi, however, welcomed the proposal. “We only have 2-3 bird hospitals in Delhi. And all of them are run by private parties. This is ideally a job for the government. It is an idea whose time has come,” he said.

He also said the government hospitals for birds would not discriminate between birds. “The Jain Hospital is run by Jains, for whom vegetarianism is a matter of faith. However, it is not one for government hospitals, if they materialise,” he said.

Senior ornithologist, Rajat Bhargava also welcomed the move but had a request. “I feel it is a good, smart move and the Delhi government’s intentions are also good. In fact, other Indian states should also follow it. The only point I wish to make or highlight as an ornithologist is that the Delhi government (and others) should organise proper training of their hospital and handling staff for bird identification with regards to various bird families, feeds in captivity during treatment and bird-related husbandry,” he told Down To Earth. Bhargava also called upon the Delhi government to involve expert personnel and experienced non-profits as consultants in the move to build bird hospitals.

He rejected the government’s claim that the population of birds in Delhi had increased in the last few years. “Except for Blue Rock Pigeons due to religious and moral feeding, House Crows because of simultaneous increase in human habitation and human garbage and Black Kites, most other bird populations are going down due to habitat shrinkage and several disturbances as well as related development pressure due to decreasing green cover.”

by Rajat Ghai, Friday 11 January 2019, Down to Earth.

Himachal CM to release Cheer Pheasant, an endangered species into the wild

Himachal Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur would release into the wild, Cheer Pheasant, an endangered Himalayan Pheasant into the wild on Thursday, a government spokesperson said here. Thakur will attend a ceremony organised by Wild Life Wing of Forest Department of Himachal Pradesh at Seri Village District Shimla. “This will be a reintroduction of Cheer Pheasant in Himachal Pradesh, as captive-bred birds and animals have high mortality rate upon release into the wild,” he said. Cheer Pheasant is an endangered Himalayan pheasant red-listed by International Union for Conservation for Nature (IUCN). The Central Zoo Authority identified the Cheer Pheasant as a candidate species for Conservation Breeding with an objective to establish viable and self sustainable population.

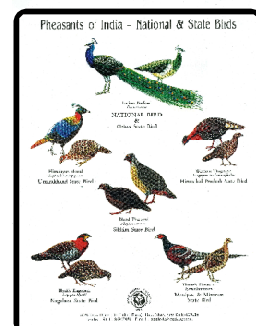
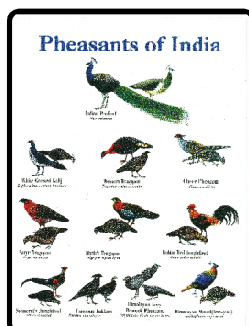
Khadiyun Pheasantry in Chail was identified as a ‘coordinating zoo’ for carrying out the Conservation Breeding of Cheer Pheasant to which the next step is to release this species into the wild.

Source: The Pioneer, 3 October 2019, Shimla.

Resource Material - available on request

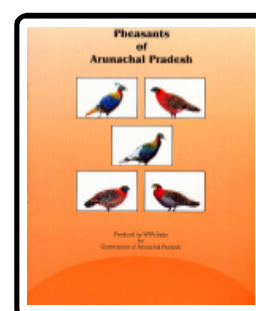
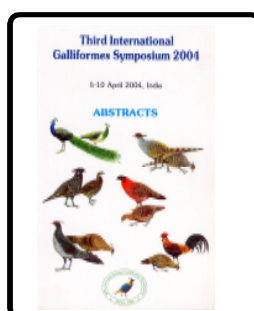
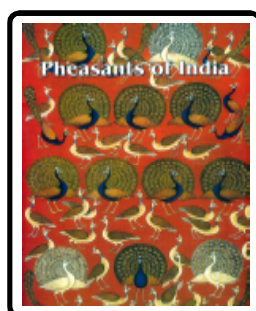
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