

Mor

Newsletter of World Pheasant Association - India



Indian Peafowl
Pavo cristatus
National Bird
&
Odisha State Bird



Himalayan Monal
Lophophorus impejanus
Uttarakhand State Bird



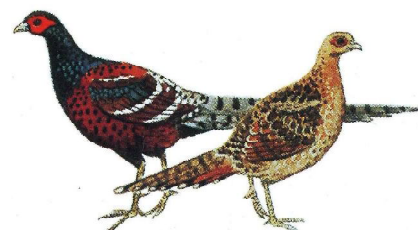
Western Tragopan
Tragopan melanocephalus
Himachal Pradesh State Bird



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,

Greetings from WPA family,

The WPA is dedicated in protecting the natural world through the conservation of Galliformes and their habitats. While the coronavirus pandemic reduced in-person interactions over the past year and this year, we were fortunate to interact with our readers without any break. The threats we face are ever present- climate change, biodiversity loss, pandemic etc. All of these problems put the diversity of life on Earth, both human and nonhuman, at risk. We have to think about solutions which allow us to focus on what we can do best in protecting, restoring and managing habitats for Galliformes now and long into the future.

Sign of hope for King Quail or Blue-breasted Quail in Baruipur, West Bengal? These birds have been sighted by the bird watchers accidentally. Although it is considered as Least Concern by IUCN but the habitat is under threat. It is a grassland bird and many developmental projects are coming up in this area which will directly destroy whole habitat of this bird.

While on other hand the Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Combating Climate Change (MGICCC) in Delhi has taken a step to conserve our National Bird in an urban city. A garden will be developed for peafowl for the conservation and awareness. Congratulations to the Institute.....

Enjoy reading

Dr. M. Shah Hussain, Hon. General Secretary



The King Family Reappears



The pandemic took away almost nine months from us of the year 2020. As the situation after September was creeping back to normal the birdwatchers and photographers slowly began their quest for birds again. As winter approached the birding spot near Baruipur became a regular visit for many of the bird watchers for various raptors and raptors. The lowland was also getting drier and more terrestrial birds like pipits and larks were getting more visible. Two waterbodies became main attraction for the birders as a number of interesting birds got spotted there. By end of January a group of birdwatchers were delighted to see three King Quails (*Excalfactoria chinensis*) foraging among drying grass on the ground while searching for Blyth's pipit (*Anthus godlewskii*) .



King Quails (*Excalfactoria chinensis*)

Two males and a female quail was in the group. This was the first sighting for King Quail after August of 2019 in this area. The previous sighting took place about a kilometre away from this spot. Within a week or so two more spots were discovered by the birdwatchers where King Quails could be seen. The early morning was best for sighting as the birds used to forage among the short grasses. The Quails took shelter in longer grasses during the middle of the day and could be seen again in the evening on same place. Both males and females were in the flocks. The flocks I saw were of 5 females, 1 juvenile male and 1 adult male. Though mostly flocks of 3 females and 2 males. By the end of February the flock size got smaller. Mostly one female with two adult males could be seen. Sightings became rarer by early March and could only be seen in the morning.

King Quails in this particular habitat showed good tolerance with human. At times more than forty birdwatchers/photographers used to kind of barricade them but they never showed fear. Feeding, preening and dust bathing were common behaviour. Whenever scared the whole flock used to rush towards the thicker and taller grasses and vanish into them. The habitat is more or less 5-6 square kilometre of lowland. Stays under water for almost 4 months of the year with grass reaching 3-4 feet tall. As winter progresses the grasses die and land comes out providing feeding ground for various terrestrial birds. Nesting of King Quail had been recorded in 2019 in this grassland. There are no reports of hunting of this quail from this spot. Burning grass for new sprouts to feed cattle may become a serious threat for the quails. A good number of development projects are in progress in this area and the habitat is shrinking rapidly. The king Quail is a poorly known and studied galliform in West Bengal. As per Mr. Shantanu Manna, an avid birdwatcher from Kolkata, the first ever confirmed reported of King Quail from Bengal was back in 1843, from Kolkata. Then in 1966 from the east Kolkata wetlands. Again it was reported from Buxa, North Bengal in 1992. Another recent report is from Ghatal, Midnapore in 2020. But no where the quails could be seen for so long. This place near Baruipur can be an excellent place to study the King Quail which may help gathering information for their conservation in future.



by: Ayan Banerjee, Life Member, WPA-India

What is the evidence available to support our knowledge about threats to the conservation of Galliformes in the Greater Himalaya?

by: Garima Gupta, Matthew Grainger, Jonathon C. Dunn, Roy Sanderson, Philip J.K. McGowan

Abstract: Biodiversity is at a heightened risk of extinction and we are losing species faster than any other time. It is important to understand the threats that drive a species towards extinction in order to address those drivers. In this paper, we assess our knowledge of the threats faced by 24 Himalayan Galliformes species by undertaking a review to identify threats reported in the published literature and the supporting evidence that the threat is having an impact on the species population. Only 24 papers were deemed suitable to be included in the study. We found that biological resource use, agriculture and aquaculture are the predominant threats to the Galliformes in the Greater Himalaya but the evidence available in the studies is quite poor as only one paper quantified the impact on species. This study shows that major gaps exist in our understanding of threats to species and it is imperative to fill those gaps if we want to prevent species from going extinct.

Introduction: There is increased political realisation of the societal impacts of deteriorating biodiversity (Griggs et al., 2013; IPBES 2019). This is encapsulated in a variety of multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs), most notably the Convention of Biological Diversity (CBD), and in the UN Sustainable Development Goals, and national policies and strategies. The two main factors behind species extinction are continual growth in both human population and increase in per capita consumption (Pimm et al., 2014; Guerry et al., 2015). These give rise to a variety of pressures that have direct consequences for species and the scale of these pressures is increasingly understood.

General patterns in the intensity and distribution of these pressures can be drawn from the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species. One of the most significant anthropogenic pressures is agricultural activity, with 62% (5407) of those species that have been assessed as threatened or near threatened affected by crop farming, livestock farming, timber plantation, and/or aquaculture (Maxwell et al., 2016). Overexploitation of species for consumption by humans has been long considered to be a significant threat to many species (Fa et al., 2003; Milner-Gulland & Bennett, 2003; Vié et al., 2009; Wittemyer et al., 2014). Some species may also be overexploited for non-subsistence purposes, such as trade or recreation and there are many high profile cases, for example tigers (*Panthera tigris*), which are classified as Endangered, and are hunted illegally because of the high commercial demand for its skin and bones. Often species are threatened by multiple threats, with the combined effects of overexploitation and agricultural activity having the greatest impacts on biodiversity (Mace et al., 2000; Peres, 2001). Together they have contributed to 75% of extinctions since AD 1500 (Maxwell et al., 2016).

Pressures on biodiversity may increase or decrease over time, and this may be over the short or long-term, and new pressures may emerge. As pressures change, the specific threats that they produce and

negative impacts that they have on species, and indeed other elements of biodiversity, will also change. Therefore, to identify the most appropriate conservation measures in a given place and time, whether policy, legislation, management, or some other intervention, we do need to know that the conservation action will have a beneficial impact on species.

Aichi Biodiversity Target 12 stated that ‘by 2020, the extinction of known threatened species has been prevented and their conservation status, particularly of those most in decline, has been improved and sustained’ (CBD, 2010). To halt extinctions and improve the conservation status of species we need to go beyond simply understanding species extinction risks, and knowledge of pressures and their scale, and move towards detailed understanding of how to mitigate threats so that species can recover. In other words, we need to deepen our assessments of pressure and the conservation status of species so that we know which threats have a documented impact on species’ populations and where, so that, when they are reduced, they can result in population increases. In this paper, we explore what we know about threats to a group of 24 bird species, the Galliformes of the Himalaya.

Galliformes are important ecologically, economically, and culturally in the Himalaya and are one of the most threatened bird orders (McGowan & Fuller, 2006; Sathyakumar & Sivakumar, 2007) and yet, no study specifically examines all threats facing an entire taxonomic group within the Himalaya. Most studies to date have focussed on only a few species, and we need to be clear about the impact of a reported threat on the population of a species. To make optimal use of limited conservation resources, we need to know with as much certainty as possible what the threats are, where they occur, and whether there are any patterns in the type and spatio-temporal distribution of threats for Himalayan Galliformes. This should then form the basis of targeted responses.

There is a need to understand what is really known, rather than assumed, about the impacts of threats on species for which there is little extant information on their ecology, behaviour, or life-history. Where there is no firm information on how threats are affecting species and what is needed to address these threats, we need to structure our predictions logically and transparently (e.g. Grainger et al. 2018). An objective approach must be taken to increase our understanding of threats to Galliformes where the quality of published evidence that a threat results in population decline is variable. One approach is to review the habitats of species that have been assessed (i.e. their IUCN Red List status) and determine whether there are patterns in changes to these habitats, and their associated species, which could guide conservation interventions to maximise their benefits. This would help make conservation responses logical and transparent, as it would be clear when the impacts of threats are being inferred from other information.

In this paper, we seek to understand our knowledge of the threats facing Himalayan Galliformes. We do this by undertaking a literature search to identify the threats reported in the literature and the evidence supporting them.

Full article on: <https://doi.org/10.1101/2021.02.23.432604>.

This peacock garden will add another feather to Delhi's cap



New Delhi: The capital will soon get its first peacock garden at Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Combating Climate Change (MGICCC) in north Delhi for the conservation of the national bird.

MGICCC will develop the garden in collaboration with the forest and wildlife department. Forest officials will develop artificial ponds and other facilities to lure peafowls into the garden, where they will not be kept in captivity.

A large number of peacocks move freely in the MGICCC campus and neighbouring farmhouses in the area. A five-acre green area on the campus will be developed as the garden. “The garden will not be like a zoo, but birds will not remain in captivity. We will create a perfect habitat for them,” said a forest official.

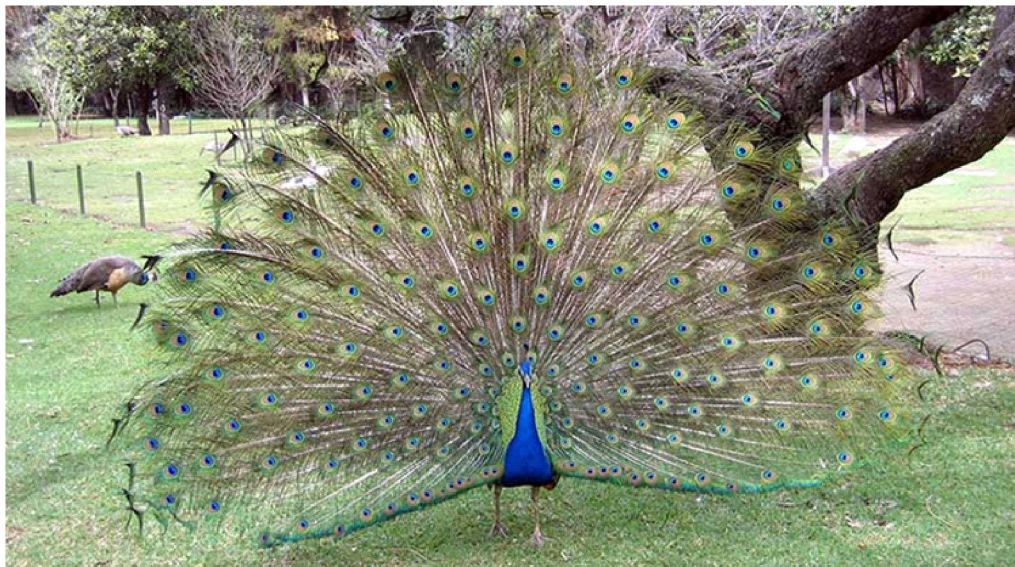
Saplings of plants consumed by peacocks will also be planted in the garden. Vipul Pandey, director, MGICCC, said, “The garden will be developed on the lines of the one in Chandigarh. The idea is to educate visitors about the national bird of India and ensure conservation of the avian species. We are aiming to create a nature walk for visitors.”

Pandey said there will be no direct feeding of peafowls. “We will create a perfect shelter with food and water that will lure the birds into the garden. Breeding of the birds may also happen,” he said.

Source: The Times of India, New Delhi, 26 July 2021.

Report shows dramatic rise in India's peacock count in last 25 years; 50% of other birds record decline

The State of India's Bird 2020 report assesses the status of 867 Indian birds using a massive database of information contributed by at least 15,500 birdwatchers from across the country.



In contrast to the Peafowl, 50% of other Indian species of birds have declined over this time period. (File Photo)

The numbers of India's national bird, the Indian Peafowl/Peacock, has increased dramatically over the past few decades, while the numbers of vultures and eagles have decreased in the country, says the State of India's Bird 2020 released at the 13th Conference of Parties of the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (under the UN) taking place in Gandhinagar.

In contrast to the Peafowl, 50% of other Indian species of birds have declined over this time period. The State of India's Bird 2020 report assesses the status of 867 Indian birds using a massive database of information contributed by at least 15,500 birdwatchers from across the country and has used 'citizen science data' to assess the distribution and trends in abundance of birds that regularly occur in the country.

The report identifies species that are high in conservation concern, and those that are doing relatively well. The analysis indicates 48% of species have remained stable or increasing in the long term, while 79% show declines in the last five years.

In all, 101 species have been classified as of high conservation concern. "The report highlights common species that are declining sharply; these need conservation attention before their numbers reduce further," says Dr R Jayapal (SACON). The groups that show the greatest decline are raptors, migratory shorebirds, and habitat specialists, including White-rumped Vulture, Richard's Pipit, Indian Vulture, Large-billed Leaf Warbler, Pacific Golden Plover and Curlew Sandpiper.

The species that have shown an increase in numbers over the past 25 years include Rosy Starling, Feral Pigeon, Glossy Ibis, Plain Prinia and the Ashy Prinia.

Of the 261 species for which long-term trends could be determined, 52% have declined since the year 2000, with 22% declining strongly. In all, 43% of species showed a long-term trend that was stable and 5% showed an increasing trend. Current annual trends could be estimated for 146 species and of these, nearly 80% are declining, with almost 50% declining strongly. Just over 6% are stable and 14% increasing.

For instance, the House Sparrow has been found to be roughly stable across the country as a whole, although declining in the major cities. “Reasons for the suspected decline of this species are a matter of much speculation and are believed to include decreasing insect populations (a key part of the diet of sparrow chicks) and paucity of suitable nesting sites. The popular theory that radiation from mobile phone towers is a factor is not supported by current evidence. Despite the widespread notion that the House Sparrow is declining in India, the analysis presented in this report suggests that the species has been fairly stable overall during the past 25 years. Data from the six largest metro cities (Bengaluru, Chennai, Delhi, Hyderabad, Kolkata and Mumbai) do indicate a gradual decline in their abundance in urban centres,” says the report.

The Peafowl are spread across the plains and hills of India, except in extremely dry or wet regions. The increase in numbers of the species has been attributed to a combination of the bird expanding its range, for instance in to Kerala where it was formerly absent, and conservation efforts and associated penalties for poaching and poisoning under Schedule I of the Wildlife Act. Its expansion into Kerala has been attributed to the state’s “overall drying trend”.

The report points out that the Indian vultures have experienced catastrophic population declines starting in the early 1990s. The declines are almost entirely attributable to inadvertent poisoning by the livestock anti-inflammatory drug diclofenac. Surveys conducted by the Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS) and Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) has shown that White-rumped Vulture has suffered the most severe declines, followed by Indian Vulture and Egyptian Vulture.

The four species of bustards in India – the Great Indian Bustard, Macqueen’s Bustard, Lesser Florican and Bengal Florican, have all suffered continuous population declines because of historical hunting and widespread habitat loss, compounded with their slow growth and reproduction. The largest of them, the Great Indian Bustard, is classified as Critically Endangered in the IUCN Red List 2019 and has been included in the CMS list in the 13th COP, as announced by Environment Minister Prakash Javadekar earlier last week. Surveys carried out by different ornithologists, although not strictly comparable in methods, suggest a 90% decline in population size and distribution range over the past five decades.

Like most other groups, waterbirds show overall long-term declines, amongst which migratory shorebirds and gulls and terns appear to have declined the most, although waterfowl (ducks & geese)

and other resident waterbirds (like swampheens, coots and storks) also show clearly discernible declines. Resident waterbirds have been showing particularly severe declines in the past 5 years. Overall, migratory species (both long-distance and within-subcontinent) show steeper declines than residents.

“The 12 Western Ghats endemics included in this analysis are almost 75% lower in their abundance index today than before 2000, indicating a steep long-term decline. This is worrying, because these long-term declines are shown even by many common species like Crimson-backed Sunbird and Yellow-browed Bulbul,” says the report.

Apart from citizen data from birdwatchers, Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and the Environment (ATREE), Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS), Foundation for Ecological Security (FES), National Biodiversity Authority (NBA), National Centre for Biological Sciences (NCBS), Nature Conservation Foundation (NCF), Sálím Ali Centre for Ornithology and Natural History (SACON), Wetlands International South Asia (WI-SA), Wildlife Institute of India (WII) and World Wide Fund for Nature India (WWF-India) have worked on this report.

by: Esha Roy, The Indian Express, New Delhi, February 17, 2020.



The pheasant species is one of the critically endangered species and is mentioned in Red list category of IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature) as “most vulnerable species”.

Critically endangered pheasant rescued in J&K's Bhaderwah.

by: Tahir Nadeem, [Greater Kashmir](#), 01 March, 2021.

Greater Kashmir: A critically endangered species of pheasants named 'Cheer' rescued in injured condition by a Range Officer two days ago from Thanthera forest area of Neeru Range of Bhaderwah in Jammu and Kashmir's Doda district, was on Monday released into its natural habitat.

The one and half year old Cheer Pheasant had suffered injuries on its wing and a leg possibly caused either by the attack of some wild animal or by hunters, Range Officer of Bhaderwah forest division, Shafqat Mahmood Malik, who rescued the bird, told Greater Kashmir.

The officer later took the injured bird to the Forest Division Bhaderwah, where it was given treatment at its Wildlife Rescue and Transit Facility for two days.

The critically endangered pheasant was released to its natural habitat near Thanthera forest, around 12 kilometres from Bhaderwah town early Monday morning by Conservator Forest Chenab Circle, Sat Paul Pakhru along with DFO Bhaderwah, Chander Shekhar, DFO Demarcation, Mohinder Jamwal and officials of Neeru Forest Range.

Pakhru said the pheasant species is one of the critically endangered species and is mentioned in Red list category of IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature) as "most vulnerable species", which needs to be conserved for the survival of mankind.

The Cheer pheasant's habitat is Himalayas and in J&K, it is found in Bhadarwah and Bonjwah areas of Chenab valley, Pakhru said.

The Conservator Forest Chenab Circle also commended RO Neeru Range, Shafqat Mehmood Malik and his team for his efforts of saving the vulnerable bird.

It is pertinent to mention here that the cheer pheasant, also known as Wallich's pheasant or chir pheasant, is a vulnerable species of the pheasant family, Phasianidae. It is the only member in the genus *Catreus*.

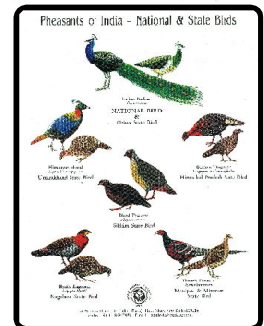
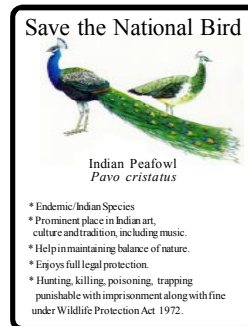
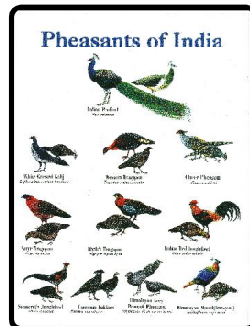
The environmentalists at the Institute of Mountain Environment, Bhaderwah Campus while appreciating the rescue of the endangered bird, have raised serious concern over the rapidly decreasing number of the rare species of pheasants due to hunting.

Head of the institute, Dr Neeraj Sharma called for a mission to conserve the species while urging people not to hunt wild birds. Significantly, most of the pheasants found in Indian Himalayas belong to species listed endangered by the IUCN. They are also protected under the Wildlife (Protection) Act of 1972 and the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora.

Resource Material - available on request

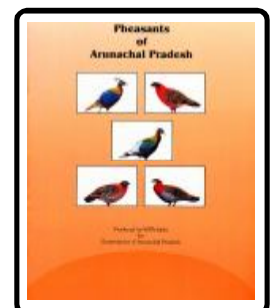
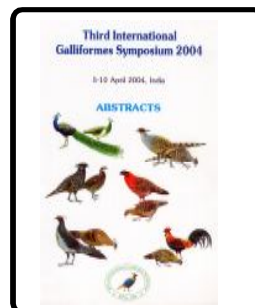
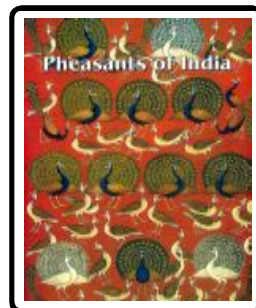
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