

## STATUS AND CONSERVATION OF PHEASANTS IN KAGHAN VALLEY

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### ABSTRACT

Pheasants are considered the most beautiful birds in the world. Out of 49 species of pheasant found in the world five species i.e. Monal, (*Lophopus impejanus*) koklass (*Pucrasia macrolopha*), Kalij (*Lophura leucomelana*), western horned Tragopan (*Tragopan melanocephalus*) and Cheer (*Catreus wallichi*) are found in Pakistan while four (4) species i.e. Monal, Koklass, Kalij and Western horned Tragopan are found in the study areas of Kaghan valley.

This study was conducted in the Kaghan valley to know the status and conservation of pheasants. A questionnaire was designed and the villages were selected which were located near the reserve forest. A sample of 60 persons were interviewed in detail.

The study revealed that the climate and topography of target area provides good habitat to pheasants, but impediments such as illegal hunting, poaching and human interference are the main causes for the decline in population. However declaration of some areas of the Kaghan valley as protected area (National park and wildlife sanctuary) has considerably contributed in the increase of pheasant population. The major earthquake in 2005 in the area had considerably decreased the population of pheasants as well as it has damaged the habitat of pheasants.

It is recommended that there should be control on deforestation, habitat improvement and awareness raising campaign should also be carried out.

### INTRODUCTION

Pheasants are the gallinaceous birds with beautiful, brilliant, multicolored and highly ornamental plumage. (Shah, 1987). Within the order Galliformes the pheasants comprise a very huge family with over 16 Genera amongst which there are 49 distinct species and sub species (13 occurring in sub continent) (IUCN, 1998). The only true pheasants of the tribe phasianini are the western horned Tragopan, Monal, Kalij, Koklass and the Cheer.

Some true pheasants are the resident species of Himalayas, mainly Hazara, Swat, Chitral, Murree Hills, Kashmir and some part of Northern Areas of Pakistan. They inhabit an altitudinal range of 1,000 meters to 4,000 meters and shift their zones according to the seasons i.e. they go higher up with the increase in temperature and snow melt and come down with the decrease in temperature and snowfall. Coniferous forests are the natural abode of the species.

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Monal Pheasant



Western Horned Tragopan



Kalij Pheasant



Koklass Pheasant



Cheer Pheasant

Most of the pheasant roost on trees at night. As pheasants spend much of their time on the ground, therefore they walk and run well and also use their strong feet and bills to scratch and dig the ground in search of food. They are omnivorous feeder but seeds and berries are basic diet of the majority, out of breeding seasons (Delacour, 1951).

All pheasants species are either threatened or vulnerable due to habitat disturbances in most of their native range, according to the IUCN Red data book over one third of total species of pheasants are officially listed as in danger of extinction from their native habitat (Howman 1993, IUCN, 2006). Pheasants have always been a source of attraction for human beings. The reason behind this attraction and interest is their protein (IUCN, 1998) Pheasants therefore yield significant importance and economic benefits to human population (IUCN, 1998).

## MATERIAL AND METHOD

In order to study the status of pheasant in Kaghan valley different methods were adopted including review of literature, development of questionnaire, interviews/information gathering from the inhabitants about the status, conservation and distribution of different species of Galliformes. Field visits of Shogran, Malakandi, Manshi and Kaghan villages were conducted and surveys were carried out to collect data about the population status of different pheasant species from different target groups of localities belonging to different professionals e.g. wildlife officials, conservation community members and other non-governmental organizations were consulted. Questionnaire were filled in and data analysis was carried out.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

In order to achieve the objectives 60 respondents were interviewed to know the perception of the people about the species of pheasants found in the Kaghan valley. The data has been collected via questionnaire and meeting with wildlife watchers, supervisors, deputy rangers, nomad and local community members. Results are presented in the form of tables below:

Table 1. Profession of Respondents in the study area

| Profession         | Frequency | % age |
|--------------------|-----------|-------|
| Teachers           | 7         | 11    |
| Agriculturists     | 12        | 20    |
| Sheapherds         | 4         | 7     |
| Shopkeepers        | 11        | 18    |
| Wildlife employees | 8         | 13    |

| Profession       | Frequency | % age |
|------------------|-----------|-------|
| Owners of hotels | 4         | 6     |
| Hunters          | 5         | 9     |
| Total            | 60        | 100   |

Table 1 shows that 11% of the respondents from Kaghan valley are associated with the profession of teachers, 20% agricultural, 4% are shepherd, 11% shopkeeper, 8% wildlife employees, 4% owners of hotel, 5% hunters, 6% government servant, 3% students.

Table 2. Education level of respondents in the study area

| Education level | Frequency | % age |
|-----------------|-----------|-------|
| Illiterate      | 36        | 60    |
| Up to metric    | 10        | 16.67 |
| Above metric    | 8         | 13.33 |
| Graduate        | 6         | 10    |
| Total           | 60        | 100   |

Table 2 shows that majority of the respondents in the study area are illiterate, 16.67% people have education up to metric, 13.33% above metric and 10% of respondents are graduated.

Table 3. Forest visit by people

| Forest visit by people | Frequency | % age |
|------------------------|-----------|-------|
| Forest visitors        | 58        | 96.67 |
| Non visitors           | 02        | 3.33  |
| Total                  | 60        | 100   |

Table 3 reveals that a big majority people of area visit the forests regularly and have some knowledge about wildlife and pheasants.

Table 4. Observation of pheasant.

| Observation of pheasant | Frequency | % age |
|-------------------------|-----------|-------|
| Pheasant observers      | 23        | 38.33 |
| Pheasant non observers  | 37        | 61.67 |
| Total                   | 60        | 100   |

The above table shows that majority of the respondents 61.67% have not seen pheasants in the forest, whereas 38.33% of the respondents have seen pheasants in forest. The result confirms that the area has a very little population.

Table 5. Heard voice of pheasant

| Have you heard voice of pheasant | Frequency | % age |
|----------------------------------|-----------|-------|
| Pheasant heard                   | 3         | 5     |
| Call not heard                   | 57        | 95    |
| Total                            | 60        | 100   |

The above result reveals that majority 95% of the respondents have not heard the voice of pheasant while on the other hand only 5% of the respondents have witnessed pheasant by hearing voice. It might be due to the reason that people can't recognize the pheasants by their calls. It needs experience and skill which lacks in general population.

Table 6. Observation site

| Observation       | Frequency | % age |
|-------------------|-----------|-------|
| Forest floor      | 14        | 32.33 |
| Near water points | 07        | 11.67 |
| On trees          | 02        | 3.33  |
| Not observed      | 37        | 61.67 |
| Total             | 60        | 100   |

Table 6 shows that majority 61.67% of the respondents have not seen pheasant by naked eyes whereas 23.33% of the respondent have seen pheasant on forest floor, furthermore 11.67% and 3.33% have seen pheasant near water point and on tree respectively. The results depict the preference of pheasants for roosting and activity.

Table 7. Identification of pheasant

| Identification | Frequency | % age |
|----------------|-----------|-------|
| Sound          | 12        | 20    |
| Eyes           | 1         | 1.67  |
| Crown head     | 10        | 16.67 |
| By photographs | 37        | 61.67 |
| Total          | 60        | 100   |

The above table reveals that majority 61.67% can recognize pheasants by photographs, on the other hand 20%, 1.67%, and 16.67% of the respondents have identified pheasant by voice, eyes and crown head respectively.

Table 8. Observation of eggs and chicks

| Observation of eggs & chicks | Frequency | % age |
|------------------------------|-----------|-------|
| Egg                          | 4         | 6.67  |
| Chick                        | 3         | 5     |
| No                           | 53        | 88.3  |
| Total                        | 60        | 100   |

Table shows that majority 88.3 have not seen the chicks and eggs of pheasant in forest whereas only 5% have seen chicks and 6.67% have seen eggs of the pheasant in forest. It shows that pheasants remain confined during breeding season.

Table 9. Mostly found species.

| Mostly found species | Frequency | % age |
|----------------------|-----------|-------|
| Koklass              | 30        | 50    |
| Monal                | 17        | 28.33 |
| Kalij                | 13        | 21.67 |
| Tragopan             | 0         | 0     |
| Total                | 60        | 100   |

The above table shows that 50% of the respondents have seen Koklass pheasant while on the other hand 28.33%, 21.67% have seen Monal and Kalij pheasant whereas no one have seen Tragopan pheasant in the area.

Table 10. Population of pheasant increasing or decreasing

| Population of pheasant increasing or decreasing | Frequency | % age |
|---|-----------|-------|
| Increasing                                      | 21        | 35    |
| Decreasing                                      | 39        | 65    |
| Total   | 60        | 100   |

The above table shows that 65% of the respondents were in opinion that population of pheasant is decreasing while on the other hand 35% thought that the population of pheasant is increasing.

Table 11. Reason of decrease

| Reason of decrease   | Frequency | % age |
|----------------------|-----------|-------|
| Hunting              | 33        | 55    |
| Habitat destruction  | 13        | 21.67 |
| Population expansion | 09        | 15    |
| Naturally            | 05        | 8.33  |
| Total                | 60        | 100   |

Table 11 reveals that majority of the respondents were in opinion that hunting was main cause of pheasant decrease whereas 21.67%, 15% and 8.33% of the respondents gave opinion that habitat destruction, population increase and natural calamities are the reasons of pheasant decrease in the area.

Table 12. Professional skills regarding conservation of pheasant

| Professional skills regarding conservation of pheasant | Frequency | % age |
|--|-----------|-------|
| Yes  | 7         | 11    |
| No   | 53        | 89    |
| Total  | 60        | 100   |

Many of the teachers of the study area educate their students about the conservation of natural resource. They were trained by wildlife department having exposure through seminar, workshops, etc.

Table13. Project for pheasant's conservation in the study area

| Whether project implemented | Frequency | % age |
|-----------------------------|-----------|-------|
| Yes                         | 20        | 33.33 |
| No                          | 40        | 66.67 |
| Total                       | 60        | 100   |

The above table shows that majority of the respondents 66.67% have not heard the name of any project while 33.33% were aware of the two projects, inventory, conservation and development launch in the study area.

### Threats to wildlife

Wildlife is a natural renewable resource and in order to maintain biodiversity the conservation of wildlife is the need of the day. The following are threats to wildlife reported during the study.

- Encroachment

- Use of modern technology in Agriculture sector. (insecticide, pesticide)
- Lack of awareness among peoples for conservation of wildlife
- Limited resources
- Insufficient inventories and data
- Lack of research
- Poaching
- Indiscriminate hunting
- Natural calamities

## CONCLUSION

Research study has shown estimate that 65% of pheasant population has decreased in the recent times due to hunting pressure, secondly encroachment is the main cause of loss of habitat which is interlinked with the decline in the population of pheasants species, besides this other factors are the natural calamities like earth quake of 2005 has caused great destruction to the population of these species and to conserve these species strict action are necessary. The wildlife status among the pheasants found in the area is endangered and is near to extinction. The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa wildlife departments have declared pheasants species protected under the wildlife act of 1975. There are lacks of research facilities and adequate funds to conduct mega research in this regard. Due to high prices of LPG most people depend on fuel wood which is causing great damage to local habitat.

## RECOMMENDATION

- Hunting of such species which are on the verge of extinction should be controlled and strict action should be taken against those who violate the wildlife rules.
- Habitat has a great impact on wildlife so their habitat (food, water, shelter) must be conserved.
- Deforestation disturb the wildlife the Govt. should provide the best alternative to the peoples of these regions to shed the pressure from these forests to ensure the biodiversity.
- Awareness should be created among the peoples through school conservation clubs.
- Communities organizations play key role in conservation and sustainable development of natural resources. The initiative to well support meeting and workshop at community level to enlist the support of local community for wildlife management.
- Spiritual leader/Pesh Imam should involve in the awareness raising campaign. Islamic values and religious approach may also affect attitude



- of the peoples and may influence on communities.
- Publicity boards carrying conservational notes, slogans and information related to wildlife may be prepared and erected at various sites.
  - Awareness material such as brochures, charts, stickers and planning diaries and calendars etc will be designed and printed under project.
  - Conservation of wildlife may be done at community level by constructing and organizing the conservation and development works through village conservation fund.
  - A strong print and electronic media campaign or derive may play sublime role regarding the conservation of pheasants in these areas. If possible constant awareness programmes may be launched through local media from time to time.
  - New potential sites may be identified and they may declared as protected areas this will not only bring more area under protection but will also conserve wildlife resources in the respective areas on sustainable basis.
  - Eggs picking should be discouraged.

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