

## WORKSHOP ON WILDLIFE

Note by Abdul Aleem\*

A workshop on wildlife was held at the PFI on May 10, 11, 1977. Keith Howman, Secretary, Overseas Projects, World Pheasant Association was the chief guest. Mirza (Z.B.) imputed the decline of wildlife populations to deterioration of habitat, over shooting and the absence of scientific management and emphasised the need of surveys to determine the status of all wild animals, starting with those on the danger list: Cheetah, wild ass, Marco Polo's sheep, Suleiman markhor; great Indian bustard, western horned tragopan, snow leopard, Baluchistan bear, goitered gazelle, gavia and some waterfowl e.g., swans, marbled teal etc.

Yar Mohammad Khan presented his report on wildlife surveys of N.W.F.P. The reported occurrence of red jungle fowl (*Gallus gallus*) in Galies was questioned and the speaker agreed that kaleej pheasant (*Lophura leucomelana*) known as 'jungli murghi' in the tract, had wrongly been reported as red jungle fowl.

Aleem reported his 1974, 75 and 77 studies on markhor in Chitral Gol (Pak'stan J. For. 26(2), 27(2)). The best census time was the rutting season (December-January) because markhor concentrate at lower elevations in the main valley where snow is not deep enough to restrict movement and cover food plants. Livestock population is also not high at this time and it is easy to spot and study the animals.

Mirza introduced his studies on the distribution, status and behaviour of the Punjab urial started in early 1976. His research associates described various aspects of the study. Qadeer reported the occurrence of Punjab urial in the Salt and Kala Chitta ranges. The population was estimated by spotting through 16 x 50 binoculars, at about 2,000: more than half of them at Jabba, a private game reserve of the Maliks of Kalabagh. Asghar described its habitat as dry scrub type (Champion, Seth and Khattak,\*\* 1965: dry sub tropical broadleaved forest) and the total plant cover as 40% to 50%. He also reported that at Jabba in April, 1976, captive animals preferred *Acacia modesta*, *Zizyphus nummularia*, *Grewia populifolia* and *Lasurus hirsutus* out of 13 plant species growing in the area. Beg described the feeding and chewing behaviour of a pair of adult and a pair of young urials in Lahore zoo. He described the alternating process of food intake and regurgitation and stated that the animals preferred natural forage over the fodder normally supplied in the zoo.

Keith Howman described the pheasants of Pakistan and their habitat, imputing decline in their numbers mainly to destruction of habitat. He advised study of animal

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behaviour and their habitat to develop census methods and also described methods of captive breeding of pheasants, as an aid to conservation. Habitat improvement and training of personnel was strongly emphasised, also the need for honesty in communicating wildlife problems, in particular, all mortality in captive breeding and their causes.

Yar Mohammad Khan presented his views on pheasant conservation in N.W.F.P., giving the major credit for initiation of interest in pheasant conservation to Philip Wayre, Director, World Pheasant Trust, England who visited N.W.F.P. in 1971, and reported on the status of western horned tragopan, monal, koklas and chir pheasants in Kaghan valley. He recommended captive breeding of these pheasants and their subsequent release in the natural habitat as a restoration measure. The conservation campaign, started in earnest after the visit of Keith Howman in April, 1974. Captive breeding nuclei were established at Malakandi, Shogran, Nathiagali and Marghzar and breeding of koklas and monal pheasants was initiated. He strongly emphasised the need for the protection of habitat and effective control on illegal shooting.

Hamid Ali presented a talk on waterfowl in Sind, describing the major wetland habitats in Sind and stating that swans, bar headed geese, marbled teal, whistling teal and pelican populations were on the decline.

Mirza reported a study on houbara bustard carried out in 1971, estimating the population at 1000 birds/2500 km<sup>2</sup>. The various aspects of houbara hunt and falcon training were illustrated with slides. Conclusion: proper control over hunting and scientific management of the species to improve its present status as the bird lays only 2 eggs in a clutch and it would take a long time to remedy the present declining situation through captive breeding.

Iqmail spoke on the birds of prey of N.W.F.P., describing different species of falcons and methods to capture and train them. Peregrin falcon (*Falco peregrinus*) was the preferred bird for falconry and was very popular with the Arab Sheikhs visiting Pakistan for their hunting trips.

Keith Howman was of the view that earnings from tourism in Pakistan could be efficiently utilized for wildlife conservation. He also emphasised the importance of beautiful landscapes covered with vegetation, and fish and wildlife in their natural habitat as aids to tourism. He stressed vigorous reforestation programmes to improve tourist appeal.

Hamid Ali described the efforts of Sind Wildlife Management Board to develop tourism, citing Haleji, Kalri and Hadero lakes as outstanding examples.

M.P. Bhandara observed that the nation was realizing the importance of wildlife conservation and emphasised the need for developing tourism as an industry and suggested reforestation, ornamental planting, development of fisheries and restoration of wildlife in their natural habitat as measures towards this end. He also stressed the need for detailed surveys of wildlife populations and their habitat to determine what we have and how to manage it.



The management of green turtles is posing a problem in Pakistan. Mirza illustrated the management of leather back turtles in Malaysia with the help of slides provided by World Wildlife Fund and stated the possibility of green turtle management on similar lines.

Zoos all over the world play a very important role in the preservation of species by breeding them in captivity. Dr. Saeed Asghar, described the breeding work at Lahore Zoo. He thought zoos could play an important role in educating the public about the need for conservation of wildlife and the natural environment.

Winding up the seminar, Abeerullah Jan, Chief Conservator of Forests, N.W.F.P. emphasised the need for starting formal education in wildlife management in Pakistan.

Khattak (G.M.) agreed with Abeerullah Jan that initiating formal education in wildlife management was the most important need of the country for the conservation of wildlife. Till this was done, all resources committed to this task would be largely wasted.

#### Participants referred

1. Aleem, Abdul. Wildlife Management Specialist, Pakistan Forest Institute, Peshawar.
2. Ali, Hamid. Park ranger, Khirthar National Park, Sind.
3. Asghar, Dr. Saeed. Curator, Lahore Zoo, Lahore.
4. Bhandara, M.P. President World Pheasant Association, Pakistan.
5. Khattak, G.M. Director General, Pakistan Forest Institute, Peshawar.
6. Mirza, Z.B. Administrator World Wildlife Fund, Pakistan.
7. Yar Mohammad. Conservator of Forests (Wildlife), N.W.F.P.