

FIELD TOUR REPORT



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Brief

Under Immediate Objective 2.i, output 2.15, 'there is no declining trend in the population in the Palas valley ', and 2.17 'populations of key species of fauna and flora, and extent of key habitat types, not declining or degrading', the Programme Officer Biodiversity and Conservation and Range Officer, Wildlife, Palas, one Deputy Ranger, visited Bar Sheryal, Bar Palas. The objective of this field visit was to conduct a bird survey with emphasis of pheasant species.

Field visit

A field visit was made to Bar Sheryal, Palas to survey the avifauna of the area, including possible habitat for western tragopan. It also served as planning visit for future surveys. The team comprised of PO-BDC, RO Wildlife, DR Wildlife, one Cf and three porters.

Content.

Due to other project commitments, the survey was confined to only five days, not sufficient time for the team to reach western tragopan habitat in Sheryal nullah. However, the team did record a number of birds and conduct a brief Koklas pheasant survey. The visit also allowed the PO to assess the quality of the forest and plan for future trips.

Bird species recorded were as follows:-

English name

Koklas pheasant
Oriental Turtle Dove
Common Cuckoo
Indian Cuckoo
Oriental cuckoo
Tawny Owl
Little Swift
Common Swift
Fork-tailed Swift

Scientific name

Pucrasia macrolopha
Streptopelia orientalis
Cuculus canorus
Cuculus micropterus

Strix aluco
Apus affinis
Apus apus
Apus pacificus

Alpine Swift	<i>Apus affinis</i>
Himalayan Pied Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos himalayensis</i>
Scaly-bellied Woodpecker	<i>Picus squamatus</i>
Asian House Martin	<i>Delichon dasypus</i>
Citrine Wagtail	<i>Motacilla citerea</i>
Grey Wagtail	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>
Long-tailed Minivet	<i>Pericrocotus ethologus</i>
Black Bulbul	<i>Hypsipetes madagascariensis</i>
Indian Blue Robin	<i>Erithacus brunneus</i>
Plumbeous Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus fuliginosus</i>
Collared Bush-chat	<i>Saxicola torquata</i>
Pied bush-chat	
Stonechat	
White-capped Redstart	<i>Chaimarrornis leucocephalus</i>
Blue Whistling Thrush	<i>Myiophoneus caeruleus</i>
Himalayan Blackbird	<i>Turdus mereula maximus</i>
Western-crowned Leaf Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus occipitalis</i>
Pallas's Leaf Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus proregulas</i>
Brook's Leaf Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus subviridis</i>
Hume's Leaf Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus inoratus humei</i>
Slender-billed Leaf Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus tytleri</i>
Tickell's Leaf Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus affinis</i>
Sooty Flycatcher	<i>Muscicapa sibirica</i>
Verditer's Flycatcher	
Spotted ?	
Asian Paradise Flycatcher	<i>Terpsiphone paradise</i>
Streaked Laughing-thrush	<i>Garrulax lineatus</i>
Black Crested Tit	<i>Paurs rufonuchalis</i>
Spot-winged Tit	<i>Parus melanolophus</i>
White-cheeked Nuthatch	<i>Sitta leucopsis</i>
Himalayan Tree Creeper	<i>Certhia himalayana</i>
King Drongo	
Spotted Nutcracker	<i>Nucifraga caryocatactes</i>
Large-billed Crow	<i>Corvus macrorhynchos</i>
Yellow billed blue magpie	
Russet Sparrow	<i>Passer rutilans</i>
Black and Yellow Grosbeak	<i>Mycerobas icteroides</i>
Rock Bunting	<i>Emberiza cia</i>

A annotated list will be prepared as a technical reported to be submitted to the PMU, PCDP.

The forest above Bar Sheryal is both good in quantity and quality and though may not be holding western tragopans, should be conserved within the core-zone due to its watershed value. The forest above Bar Sheryal (i.e the ridge between Sherakot/Kolai and Shryal has been degraded and soil erosion is visable in

places. We would like to suggest that conservation importance is given to these forests due to their size and importance to biodiversity in Palas. We also recommend that some steps should be taken such as rehabilitation of the habitat directly above the Sheryal settlements.

Other notes and observations

Bar Sheryal is a large population and boasts a school nearly every 100 meters! It also has a 'Basic Health Unit'. However, none of these buildings seem to have teachers or doctors. The need for project intervention is probably high, starting with CBO formation. It is therefore suggested that COP and SCF make a visit to the area as soon as possible.

Secondly, there is a suspension bridge formerly constructed by Himalayan Jungle Project, lying unused near the junction of the head nullahs of Bar Sheryal. Why this bridge has fallen into disrepair seems uncertain but locals blame the contractor who made it. At present a local made cateliver bridge is in place right next to the HP bridge and though it is serving the purpose, locals say that it needs to be reconstructed regularly. It maybe beneficial for one IRD staff to visit this bridge to judge whether it is feasible to repair it or not.

Warning: anybody traveling from Sherakot to Sheryal would be advised to travel the traditional route, ie. the one that travels down from Sherakot pass and not the one that goes straight through the forest. Even the locals will tell you that the straight path is a short cut, it is actually a 15km path that will be used for the water channel to Sherakot. Our team on the advise if a local (who strangely enough was also going to Sheryal but didn't use this particular 'short-cut') and we walked for four hours along a very nice but very long path. It has one water spot and will lead you nowhere! However, on the plus side it is very good for bird-watching and has potential for eco-tourism since it is a very straight and level path (perhaps good for visiting diplomats)

Thanks

Thanks goes to Kut Baz for his uplifting gupshup, Noor Naeem for pretending to be a woman half the time and the three porters, Alsam, Wali and the other who kept us watered and fed for five days. Thanks also to the inhabitant of Sheryal who provided lassi and maize bread every-night.