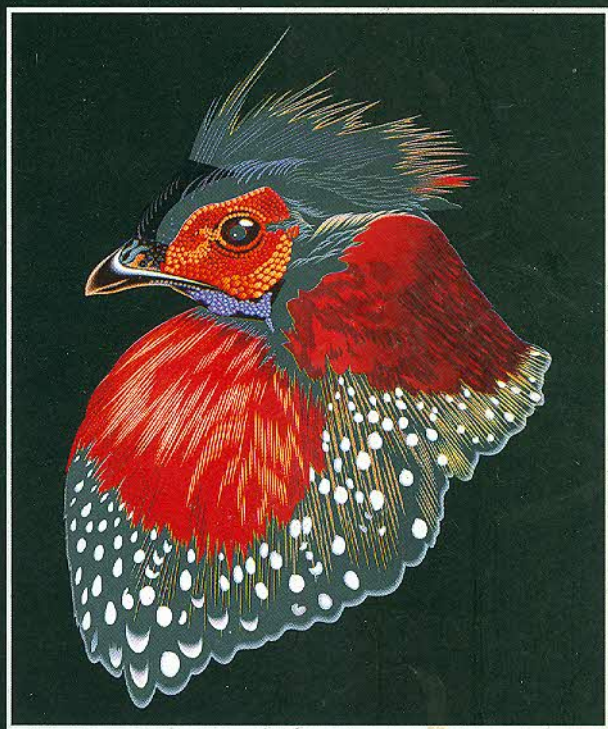


Birds

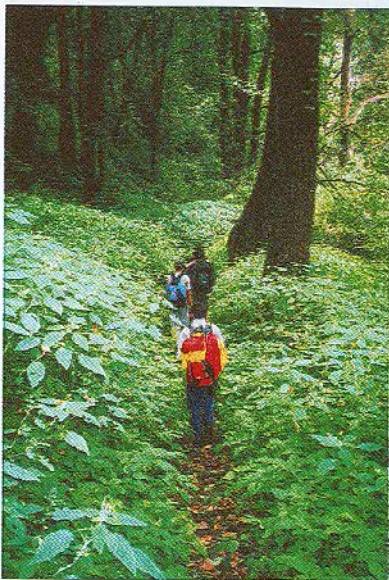


A Guide



The Great Himalayan National Park was created to preserve the unique, pristine beauty of Nature in the Western Himalayan region. Located in the Kullu Valley, the Park offers numerous opportunities to celebrate, conserve, protect, and preserve Nature.

In celebration of
International Year of Mountains and
International Year of EcoTourism 2002



Trekking through Sainj Forest



Black Eagle

Contents

| | |
|--------------------------------------|----|
| Introduction | 2 |
| Geography and Ecology | 2 |
| From Tropical to Alpine | 4 |
| Migration | 8 |
| A Round-up of Bird Families | 8 |
| Conclusions | 11 |
| Personal Impressions | 12 |
| Useful Information for Bird Watching | 18 |
| Bird List of GHNP | 20 |

FOREWORD

Perhaps nowhere in the world can one find birds as varied and as colourful as in the mountains - and nowhere more so as in the Great Himalayan National Park (GHNP). Encompassing the Parvati, Jiwa Nal, Sainj and Tirthan valleys in the Kullu district of the Western Himalayas, the GHNP extends from 1,700m to 5,800m above sea level, and represents almost all sub-temperate, temperate and alpine ecosystems to be found in the Himalayas. Each ecosystem, in turn, supports varied floral and faunal elements, some of which are quite unique to the area. It is these unique elements that are the major attraction of the Park.

Birdwatchers, experts and amateurs alike, can expect to find here a variety of bird species, not the least among which are the Cheer pheasant, Monal, Koklash, and the brightest among them all, the Western Tragopan. The last has perhaps the greatest concentration of number in the higher reaches of the Park, and has, therefore, been adopted as the symbol of the GHNP. No less important, although not as colourful or as attractive, are the flycatchers, magpies, tree pipes, parakeets, robins, bulbuls, eagles, and lammergeiers.

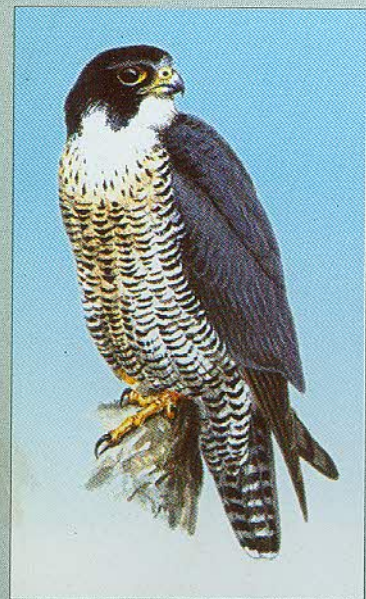
The Park has recorded 183 species of birds, visible during various parts of the year, with another 20 species that are likely to occur there. Some birds are resident, and breed within the Park environs, while others are summer visitors. All of them lend colour and sound to the landscape, a treat to the eyes and ears of even the casual visitor.

Birds of GHNP, written by Dr. A.J. Gaston of Canadian Wildlife Service and Sanjeeva Pandey, Director, Great Himalayan National Park is an excellent effort towards providing useful information to bird aficionado, and shall go a long way in creating awareness and interest among first time bird watchers visiting the Park. I wish the readers many hours of happy viewing and happy listening.

Shimla

Pankaj Khullar

PCCF-cum-Chief Wildlife Warden
Himachal Pradesh



Peregrine Falcon

Introduction

The Indian state of Himachal Pradesh is an enchanting area, both for scenery and culture. Besides its numerous attractions, it is world-class area for birdwatching. It is the best area in which to find a wealth of species of birds largely or wholly confined to the Western Himalayas. Within Himachal Pradesh, there is no better area to view the birds typical of middle and high altitudes than the Great Himalayan National Park (GHNP). The Park is situated more or less in the centre of the state, and contains a complete suite of the temperate and sub-alpine forest types characteristic of the ranges in this part of India. In this booklet, we attempt to give some impressions of what a visiting birdwatcher might find in the Park, and indicate the current status of mountain birds in the area. More than 200 species have been recorded in the Park.

A list of birds observed in the Park up to 1991 has been published previously.¹

Geography and Ecology

Himachal Pradesh consists of hill regions of the former Punjab State and takes in much of the Western Himalayas. From an ecological stand-point, it can be divided into three regions: the Shivalik or front ranges, the main Himalayan ranges, and the trans-Himalayan areas of Lahaul, Spiti, and Kinnaur. During the British period, the birds of Himachal were very well-documented, because of the presence of the Imperial summer capital at Shimla, and the development of several other popular hill stations (Dalhousie, Dharamsala, Kullu). Papers by Hugh Whistler^{2,3} on the birds of Kangra and Kullu districts are excellent accounts of representative areas, while those by A.E. Jones⁴, on the birds of Shimla, although never completed, are one of the most detailed local bird lists available from the sub-continent.

The Great Himalayan National Park is situated in Seraj Tehsil of Kullu District, Himachal Pradesh. It was created in 1984, following the recommendations of the Himachal Wildlife Project, a joint

British, American, and Indian venture to assess the status of wildlife and wildlife habitats, in Himachal Pradesh^{5,6}. At present, the Great Himalayan National Park (GHNP) comprises 754 sq kms. It is naturally protected on the northern, eastern and southern boundaries by areas under permanent snow or by impassable ridges. The varied wildlife habitats of the GHNP support the full range of western Himalayan biodiversity, from subtropical to alpine. To facilitate ecodevelopment programmes, an area of 266 sq km around the western periphery of the Park has been declared as Ecozone. It contains 120 small villages, comprising 1,600 households with a population of 16-18,000 people. In addition, there are two wildlife sanctuaries adjacent to the Park: Sainj (90 sq.km.) and Tirthan (61 sq. km.). The total area under the National Park administration is 1,171 sq km. The Park covers an altitude range of 1,700-5,800m and comprises the headwaters of four left bank tributaries of the River Beas: the Parbati, the Jiwa, the Sainj, and the Tirthan (see map).

The climate of the Park is typical of the front ranges of the Western

Himalayas. Precipitation is moderate over most of the year and abundant during the Monsoon season (June-August). In winter, snow falls throughout the Park, although it generally does not persist at the lower altitudes. Above 3,000m snow generally persists from November to March.

About one-third of the Park supports closed canopy forests, which extend from the valley bottoms to 3,300-3,600m, depending upon the aspect. A little over half of the area lies above 4,000m, which is the approximate upper boundary of the sub-alpine and alpine scrub vegetation in this part of the Himalayas⁷. The forested areas support good examples of most vegetation types representative of the area, including extensive stands of *Kharsu* Oak, Horse Chestnut, Birch, Himalayan Blue Pine (*Kail*), West Himalayan Silver Fir, West Himalayan Spruce, and Himalayan Cedar (*Deodar*). Besides these the lower altitude oaks, *Ban* and *Moru* are also found in small areas. The Himalayan Yew is an important under-storey tree in some places. Pure stands of any species are relatively rare as most of the forests are mixed to some degree.

