

Conservation and Management Plan for Schedule-1 species of Peacock (*Pavo cristatus*)

Introduction:

The Indian Peacock appears so frequently in religion, folklore, art and craft, that it is possibly the most recognised bird across India. Internationally as well, the peacock (perhaps alongside the tiger) is immediately associated with India. Having been declared the national bird in 1963, the species also finds itself under the highest level of legal protection in the country, being placed in Schedule I of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 and further amendments.

Peacocks are spread across the plains and hills of India, except in extremely dry or wet regions. The abundance trend is that of a general increase, both in the long term and currently. This trend appears to result from a combination of range expansion and a population increase virtually throughout its distribution.

The protection (and associated penalties for poaching and poisoning) afforded by being in Schedule I may also have contributed to increase. Some parts of the country report greater levels of crop damage by peacock, a trend that calls for careful conflict assessment and management. According to the State of India's Birds 2020 Report, Peacock population more than doubled in India during the past one decade. According to the IUCN Red list, Peacock is in the least concern (LC) category.

Threats & Recommendations for Conservation:

Peacock is a large and beautiful flying bird and rightly crowned as the national bird. It occurs all over India both in forest and non-forest areas. The Peacocks worshipped as the Vahana / carriers of gods in India, Nepal and Sri Lanka. Hence, there is no threat from locals.

In the project under consideration, Peacocks were found in the buffer zone mainly in local temples where they are protected. They were not found in the project site or core area. There are two major kinds of threats to Peacock. One is illegal poaching for meat and feathers and the other is due to consumption of pesticide treated seeds sown by farmers. In spite of the above, there are healthy populations according to the State of India's Birds 2020 Report and there is no risk of extinction. If allowed to domesticate, Peacocks shall become pet birds and their numbers can increase very rapidly.

Peacocks are of widespread occurrence and there is no specific conservation plan for this avian fauna similar to the specific conservation plan of Tigers, Elephants, Crocodiles, Sea Turtles etc. The project proponent is prohibited by law capture the Peacocks and domesticates them or breeds them under captivity. Any plan designed to conserve and manage a Schedule I species should take in to the account the basic scientific principles and criteria. Conservation does not mean preservation. Species conservation implies sustainable management under in-situ conditions. When an isolated male or female is found in one place within the buffer zone, no one can conserve the species by taking care of that solitary bird without violating the WPA. The conservation plan should be need based, realistic, practically feasible, scientific and technical. In case of Peacocks found in the buffer zone, the only thing that the project proponent can do is to create awareness among the public in general and the project dependent people in particular about the need to conserving them and to motivate them to act as protectors of Peacocks through mass media, social media, public education and nature clubs.

Budget Provision

The State of India's Birds 2020 Report, suggests that it is important to promote collaborations between public initiatives and researchers. It also suggests that the government should support the monitoring and conservation efforts by citizens and researchers. The report also suggests that there should be a dedicated fund for high concern species so that scientists and researchers can save those birds.

The project proponent is willing to contribute Rs.1,00,000/- per year (for a period of 3 years) to the National Wildlife Board for conservation of Wildlife including Peacocks.