

markets of the north-east along with other areas like Mumbai, Bangalore, Chennai, Delhi and Sikkim. Being a lesser known food product, bamboo shoot processing has potential to be developed as an innovative and promising enterprise. Annually, over two million tonnes of edible shoots are consumed all over the world, mostly in Asia. China alone earns over US\$ 20 million annually. The world trade in bamboo shoots for 2002 was Rs 34,000 million (300,000 tonnes). In north-east India, annual average consumption of shoots (in tonnes) is: Arunachal Pradesh 1979, Manipur 2188,

Meghalaya 442, Mizoram 433, Nagaland 442 and Tripura 201 (ref. 2). The region has a vacuum processing unit (Natural Hill Food Products) at Aizawl, vacuum processing and canning unit (Luit Valley Food Processing) at Jorhat, and canning and pickling unit (Nagaland Foods) at Dimapur.

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## Snow partridge hopes for a safe home in Arunachal Pradesh

The Eastern Himalaya, being an abode of mammoth biodiversity is known to house an uncountable number of floral and faunal species. With a portion of the Eastern Himalaya extending into the western part of Arunachal Pradesh, the state happens to contribute richly to the biodiversity of the country. Among a long list of enigmatic bird species is the family Phasianidae which represents indicators of habitat quality due to its substantial dependence on understorey and ground layer vegetation. Unfortunately, it is also known to be hunted for its meat and feathers. This group includes species like Himalayan monal (*Lophophorus impejanus*), blood pheasant (*Ithaginis cruentus*), satyr tragopan (*Tragopan satyra*) and many others, but the species in focus here is the timorous snow partridge (*Lerwa lerwa*), a rare resident of the higher reaches of the Eastern Himalaya. Though listed in the least concern category by International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), the species is struggling to secure a safe home in the Tawang district of Arunachal Pradesh.

Wildlife habitat fragmentation, a common consequence of human develop-

ment is affecting the species survival. Tawang positioned at the trijunction of India, Bhutan and China, attracts a large number of tourists all round the year. The road passing through the area connects the district to mainland India. Frequent sightings of snow partridge flocks are reported from the area surrounding the Sela Lake, situated at 4100 m at the entrance of Tawang. The lake lies in the alpine zone and is surrounded by less vegetation and dominated by rocks and low shrubs which are considered as a good habitat for snow partridges. Movement of vehicles seems to be one of the significant threats to the snow partridge population and several other wild floral and faunal species thriving in the area. The flocks while crossing the road may fall victim to road accidents. Furthermore, the vegetation of the area including the fascinating Rhododendrons, also seems to suffer from habitat degradation and fragmentation due to road widening and repair by the Border Roads Organization (BRO). The partridges may fall prey to the labourers. Also, the accumulation of a significant amount of non-biodegradable waste in the form of plas-

tic bags and bottles can act as a source of diseases to the flocks roaming around.

Conservation of a species is not possible without the knowledge of its ecology. A detailed study of the snow partridges with proper documentation has to be conducted in the area. A database regarding the present population status and range of movement of the species should be generated, so that a regular check can be kept on fluctuations experienced by the population in the area over a period of time and necessary conservation measures for the same can be taken accordingly. Also, large scale awareness programmes among the local communities and visitors related to the conservation importance of the area along with its floral and faunal components should be extended before robustly promoting further tourism in the area. Provisions for proper dumping of wastes should be made and littering should be strictly prohibited through sign boards, etc. It is advisable to work intently to endow this rare and amiable species of Himalaya with a safe home before the situation worsens.

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