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SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR NEW DRAFT FOREST POLICY 2018: PROMOTING COMMUNITY BASED RESEARCH

India is one of the mega biodiverse country of the World with variety of habitats for flora and fauna. Though, we have protected areas for conserving these habitats and associated animals but long term studies are lacking which are important for their effective conservation. Currently some large mammals have been able to attract Government help and are now thriving well in their respective habitats. However, there are variety of fauna about whom detailed and long term monitoring studies are lacking. Such species of fauna if monitored on long term basis can give valuable information. For example fauna like butterflies, beetles, spiders, bees, bats, fishes, amphibian, reptiles and birds can be monitored on a long term basis. These fauna are critical component of ecosystem structure and functioning. Therefore, Government should promote field based and citizens science through NGOs.

As a researcher and trustee of NGO, I find Forest Departments are reluctant to provide access to NGO's and individual researcher to conduct independent research in Forest and protected areas. Only fewer Government Institution have access to protected area and they are not in a position to do comprehensive research considering the vast size of our country. In a democratic country, its important to involve NGO's and independent researchers to verify and investigate the current forest wealth of nation. There involvement will ensure protection of forest.

The power to grant permission to carry out field studies in the forest and protected area should be assigned to DFO/Conservator of Forest which is currently awarded by PCCF. In current scenario PCCF lack knowledge regarding the current state of forest and protected area at the local and regional level. CCF/DFO being posted at that place better know the threats, challenges and thrust area for future research. Therefore Government should consider to decentralise some of its power from top to bottom. The village panchayats and NGO will be assigned the task of maintenance of nursery, plantation, afforestation, Watershed development in the Eco zone of protected area and area adjoining the protected areas. For restoration activities funds should be provided in the same mode.

Fund should be provided to NGOs for organising workshop and training for promoting sustainable agriculture/forestry/sustainable management of natural resources in the areas adjoining the protected areas. Restoration of project affected villages in protected areas should be assigned to Village panchayat assisted through local NGOs.

Government should consider for awarding 5 stage grants to NGOs to be spent in villages located in Sanctuary and ecozone of protected areas.

- Stage-1 Initiation Grant: 1st Year- Rs 5-10 lakhs
- Stage-2 Development Grant: 2nd year – Rs 10-20 lakhs
- Stage-3 Continuation Grant: 3rd Year – Rs 20-30 Lakhs
- Stage-4 Continuation Grant: 4th Year – Rs 30-50 Lakhs
- Stage-5 Completion Grant: 5th Year – Rs 50 Lakhs

The grant will be for community based projects with identifiable and monitorable and measurable targets. Next level grant should only be provided once target has been achieved. These grants are meant for providing employment and development of green infrastructure in the region. Suggestions if accepted will conserve India's natural heritage along with strengthening of democracy.

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EARTH DAY SPECIAL : 22nd APRIL

Earth Day is celebrated around the world for the protection and preservation of Earth. It was Gaylord Nelson a US senator from Wisconsin who first gave the idea for commemorating Earth Day. Since 1970, Earth Day is being celebrated on 22nd April. From 1990s onward around 192 countries celebrate this day.

According to Earth Day Network, this year's Earth Day is dedicated to spreading awareness about the pollution caused by plastic and the need to eventually end its use.

"END PLASTIC POLLUTION"

The theme is quite relevant considering the impact of plastic pollution on our earth ecosystem. Plastic is a hydrocarbon polymer and is non biodegradable which make it persistent in our environment.

Our own Delhi which is considered as heart of India is witnessing unprecedented plastic pollution. If you have been passing through Delhi streets, roads and drains you can easily find out plastic waste. If you live near West Delhi and pass through Punjabi Bagh, Ring Road just opposite to Rajdhani College of University Delhi, you will find a small drain. This small drain often overlook by people, but if you stand beside this drain you will notice flood of plastic bags along the drain. If



Plastic pollution along the Drain

Black winged Stilt resting on plastic island in Najafgarh Drain



plants are surrounded by plastic bags.

you move further and reaches Najafgarh Drain, you will find mounds of plastic material with in the drain. This small drain present a story of plastic pollution in Delhi. In another case, there is a road known as Britania Road which connect Rani Bagh (Market) with Britania Chowk. This road, passes through market area and on every Wednesday, Government permit to install Wednesday Market for locals. As a result the road is jammed and has heavy traffic. After the market, on the very next day if you visit the road, you will find head of plastic waste on road divider. I have noticed it twice. The road also has avenue plantation in middle of the road and these

The two cases highlight the problem of plastic in Delhi. There are also many instances where you can find stray animals roaming on Delhi roads often feed on the waste further causing traffic jams. If you are a Delhites you may be well aware that this problem is present in almost every part of Delhi.

But the question is despite widespread plastic waste why Government unable to tackle the issue. Despite the fact that Delhi Government imposed ban on sale of plastic bags. However you will easily find plastic bags in market and consumers too are more than happy to use these bags. Its durability, water proof and cost effectiveness make it a preferred choice for use in packaging and carry bags. The solution of it lies strict implementation of plastic ban along with sensitization of people for accepting plastic free life style. This behavior change require dissemination of knowledge that Plastic pollution poses risk to human health and earth ecosystem.



Red-wetted lapwing using island contaminated with plastic material in side Najafgarh Drain

Another reason which need special mention is regarding the management of solid waste, though Government has launched Swachch Bharat Abhiyan a largest ever program for making India clean but on the ground zero level you may notice things have not changed much and in some instances situation is even worse. The problem lies in the conflict between local bodies and State Government. Local bodies who manage solid waste, alleges that State Government should provide them bailout package for providing salaries to contractual staff employed by them, but State Government has their own view point. All this



Road divider covered with plastic material near Najafgarh drain

led to accumulation of plastic waste throughout Delhi. There are many protests and Dharna by local bodies workers regarding non payment of salaries. If Government is serious both at the Centre, State and Local level than this problem can be resolved amicably. Its known fact that plastic pollution is dangerous and can reduce the life span of living organisms. Therefore on this Earth Day lets pledge to "Say No To Plastic" to reduce our impact on Earth.

Dr. Virat Jolli, BEST

BIRDS OF BUNDI, RAJASTHAN

Bundi is situated on South East of Rajasthan. It is 471 km from Delhi and 35 km from Kota. It is easily accessible via train and road network. It is surrounded on three sides by Aravalli Hills and it has some number of water bodies which is a lifeline for whole region. These water bodies includes small dams, lakes and ponds. These water bodies not only provide water in the region for agriculture and drinking purpose but they also being used by many birds including migratory one as stop over and nesting sites. Its not surprising that the Bundi is known to harbour variety of birds. This has prompted us to visit Bundi and explore the birds of the region.

Our team visited Bundi, during winter season i.e in the end of December 2017. We spent a total 4 days with a total of 10 hrs spent in bird watching and recorded a total of 51 bird species. I am presenting a short travelogue of my visit.

Day 1

On day one we visited Civil lines and Raniji Ki Baori both these places are in Bundi town.

Civil Lines: The Civil Line is official residence place of Government official of Rajasthan. It is well maintained and has thick avenue plantation that comprised of Neem, Peepal, Banyan and false Ashok trees. On these trees, flocks of Grey headed canary flycatchers, Rose ringed parakeets, Red vented bulbul and House crow were spotted. Apart from this White throated kingfisher and Spotted owlets were also spotted the later usually seen in the middle of canopy during late evening and night.



Grey-headed Canary Flycatcher

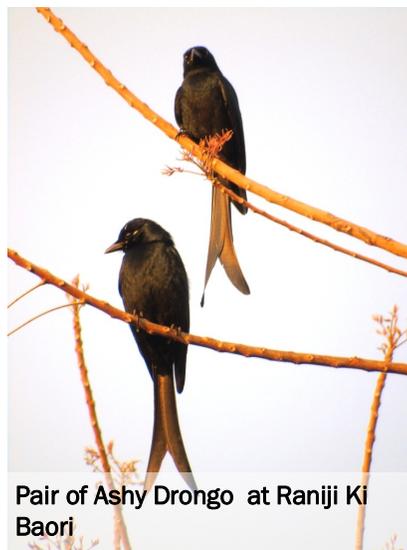
Flocks of Rock Pigeon roosting on Raniji Ki Baori



Raniji Ki Baori: The Baori was a source of fresh drinking water for Bundi people in the past now this site is maintained by Archeological Survey of India. Around this site we recorded large number of Rock pigeons, House sparrows, Common myna and Ashy drongos. It is to be noted that house sparrow is declining in majour cities of India, but their sighting in Bundi filled us with a ray of hope.



Flock of House Sparrow at Raniji Ki Baori

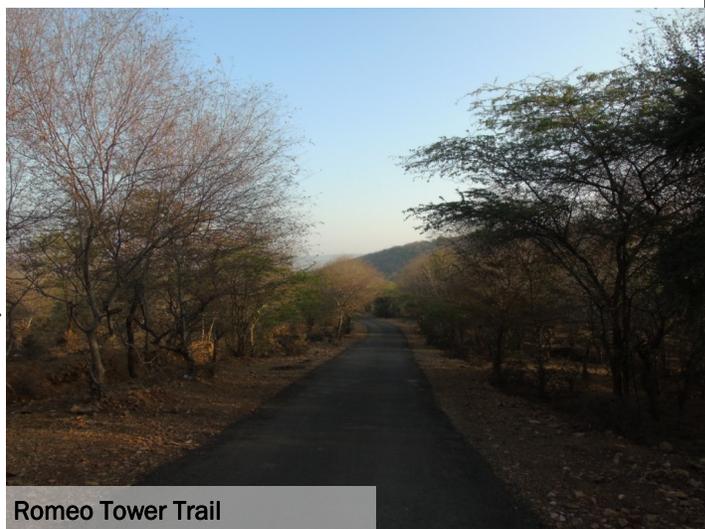


Pair of Ashy Drongo at Raniji Ki Baori

Day 2

On day two we visited Romeo Tower a forest site in Bundi town and later visited Buddla Dam.

Romeo Tower: We tracked 2 Km uphill for bird survey and reached Romeo Station which serve as signal tower for Bundi. Its part of Aravalli hill and is dominated with Vilaytee kikar trees. We spotted flocks of Jungle Babbler, Rufous tree pie, Grey partridge and House crow along this track. Plantation of non native trees resulted in low species richness of birds.



Romeo Tower Trail

Flock of Comb Duck at Buddla Dam



Buddla Dam: Its one of the largest Kuccha Dam of Rajasthan. The water body is surrounded by agricultural fields. We reached there at around 11:00 am and with the help of boat surveyed the Dam. We recorded migratory bird like Ruddy shell duck, Comb duck, River tern, Little egret, Indian pond heron, Black winged stilt, Great egret, Little cormorant and Sandpipers. Along its banks we spotted Pied starlings, Red vented bulbul and Jungle babbler. We also saw people engaged in fishing at the dam site along with agricultural activity around the dam. The presence of migratory birds like ruddy shell duck and other beautiful rare birds make this site important from conservation point of view.

Day 3

Umaid Sagar: Its a private property and is a resort. Its well maintained and must visit for nature lover and bird watchers. This is a shallow man-made jheel which attracts rare and large size birds and during my visit I spotted various migratory birds like Spotted billed ducks, Grey lag geese, Purple heron, Little grebe, Little cormorants, Bronze winged jacana, Purple swamp-hens, Common kingfisher, Black winged stilts, Red wettled lapwings and Oriental honey buzzard.

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Umaid Sagar a birding site in Bundi



Pair of Grey-lag Geese



Bird watching at Umaid Sagar

On the outskirts of this lake we spotted, Plum headed parakeets, Rose ringed parakeets, Pied Starlings, Common myna, Spotted dove, Rock pigeon, Flame-back woodpecker and Grey hornbill. The site is privately managed and is a must visit site for bird watchers.

Day 4

On 4th day we visited Jawahar Sagar Dam, a site close to Mukundra Hills Tiger Reserve.

Jawahar Sagar Dam: This site is located on Chambal River. Through boating we accessed the site and traveled a distance of 2 km within Dam. During our visit we spotted, River terns, Grey herons, Stork billed kingfisher, Common kingfisher, Woolly necked stork, Great cormorants, Striated heron, Indian Darter, Serpentine eagle and Osprey.

At the outskirts we recorded Rose ringed parakeet and Indian peafowls.



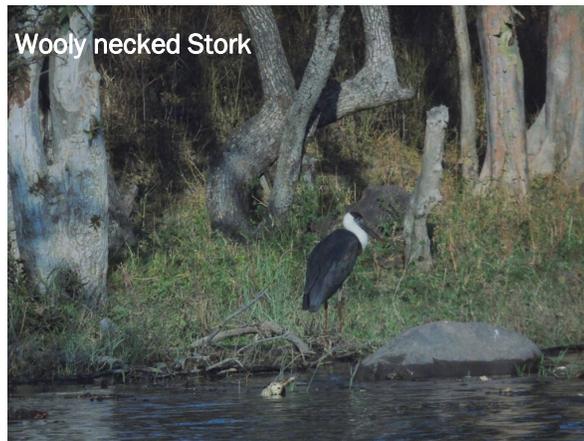
Our team on a visit to Jawahar Sagar Dam



Serpentine Eagle



Greater Cormorant Colony



Woolly necked Stork

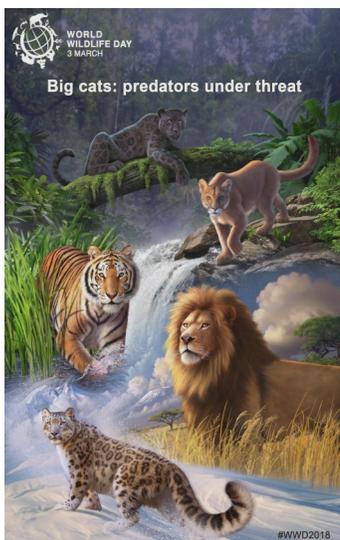
Bundi district of Rajasthan has plenty of avifaunal wealth. The undulating topography interspersed with agricultural field, semi arid forest and many man-made water bodies has the potential to support large variety of waterbirds. The number of waterbirds may fluctuate and is dependent of monsoon. Based on our interaction with locals they reported us that this year there is drop in number of migratory birds. Despite this fact, we encountered a total of 51 bird species which represent 1/10th of the total bird species recorded in Rajasthan. In future, we planned to visit similar sites.

Acknowledgment: We are thankful to Mr. Adarsh Sidhu (IPS) and Mrs Kiran Kang Sidhu (IPS) for their hospitality and encouraging us to undertake this survey.



ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS PROGRAMME: WORLD WILDLIFE WEEK, 3RD MARCH, KULLU, HIMACHAL PRADESH

Almost 5 year before on 20th December 2013 ,United Nations General Assembly in its 68th session proclaimed 3rd March as the day of signature of Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), as UN *World Wildlife Day* to celebrate and raise environmental awareness of world's animal and plant life. India is also signatory of CITES and therefore to spread its message we organize one day programme on 3rd March 2018 in Great Himalayan National Park Conservation Area (GHNPCA). For the event we selected Village Pashi, located in Sain Sub-tehsil of Kullu District of Himachal Pradesh, India. We celebrated the day with students of **Government Middle School, (GMS) Pashi**.



Lectures were delivered by our BEST Field Team led by **Mr. Dabe Ram** and assisted by **Mr. Govind Thakur**. The students took keen interest in talk and learnt about dwindling population of Big cats in India and World. Considering the current theme of World Wildlife Day 2018 i.e. "Big cat: the predator under threat" pamphlet and information related with wildlife were shared with GMS, Pashi students.

Such events are important, to make students aware about their duties for conservation of natural heritage of India. GHNPC is one of the most important natural site from conservation perspective and its natural heritage only by conserved if youth will show commitment to save it. GHNPC has population of leopard and snow leopard and there are incidents of human wildlife conflicts. Therefore role of youth is important in saving predators on Earth.



Acknowledgement: We are thankful to Principal and teaching staff of GMS, Pashi for their co-operation during the event.

TWEETS ON WORLD WILDLIFE DAY 2018



BEST @bestbirds5

#DidYouKnow that 3 of 9 **#tiger** subspecies have become extinct due to human activities? I don't want to live in a world without **#BigCats**! This **#WorldWildlifeDay**, let's all commit to protecting big cats.

#PredatorsUnderThreat
#iProtectBigCats **#WWD2018**



Tweet your reply

BEST @bestbirds5

We've lost 95% of wild **#tigers** since the beginning of 20th century, and **#lion** populations have decreased by 40% in 3 generations. RT if you care about protecting **#BigCats**. More at wildlifeday.org

#WorldWildlifeDay
#PredatorsUnderThreat
#iProtectBigCats **#WWD2018**



Tweet your reply

BEST @bestbirds5

In the last 20 years **#leopards** have been wiped out from at least 40% of their historic range in Africa and over 50% of their historic range in Asia. More at wildlifeday.org

#WorldWildlifeDay **#BigCats**
#PredatorsUnderThreat
#iProtectBigCats **#WWD2018**



Tweet your reply

BEST @bestbirds5

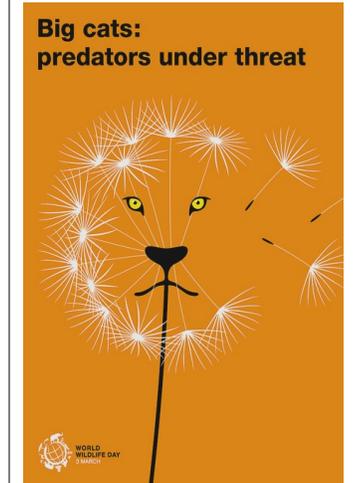
#Cheetah populations have decreased so much that in Africa they are now only found in 10% of their historic range, extinct in India RT if you care about protecting **#BigCats** More at wildlifeday.org

#WorldWildlifeDay **#BigCats**
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Tweet your reply

पाशी स्कूल में वन्य प्राणी दिवस पर एक दिवसीय जागरूकता अभियान



BEST @bestbirds5

The charismatic **#BigCats** are facing many & varied threats including **#HabitatLoss**, **#HumanWildlifeConflict**, **#poaching**, **#wildlifetrafficking** & **#ClimateChange** which are all caused by human activities.

#WorldWildlifeDay
#PredatorsUnderThreat
#iProtectBigCats **#WWD2018**



Tweet your reply

BEST @bestbirds5

One of the main threats facing **#pumas** is **#HabitatLoss**. They are only found in 50% of their original range in North America. RT add your voice and show you care! Get involved: wildlifeday.org

#WorldWildlifeDay **#BigCats**
#PredatorsUnderThreat
#iProtectBigCats **#WWD2018**



Tweet your reply

BEST @bestbirds5

Between 1960s & 1970s, **#jaguars** were heavily hunted & as many as 18,000 were killed every year to feed the trade in their skins. Since 1975 this trade was halted thanks to **#CITES**, and the population began to stabilize.

#WorldWildlifeDay **#BigCats**
#PredatorsUnderThreat
#WWD2018



Tweet your reply

BEST @bestbirds5

#DidYouKnow all **#BigCats** are protected under **#CITES** and commercial int'l trade in **#jaguar**, **#leopard**, **#snowleopard** and **#tiger** is prohibited since 1975?

#WorldWildlifeDay **#BigCats**
#PredatorsUnderThreat
#iProtectBigCats **#WWD2018**



Tweet your reply

BEST @bestbirds5

#Poaching & **illicit trafficking** remain an important threat to **#BigCats**. We are starting to see positive progress to **#EndWildlifeTrafficking**, but more needs to be done. **wildlifeday.org**

#WorldWildlifeDay **#BigCats**
#PredatorsUnderThreat
#iProtectBigCats **#WWD2018**



Tweet your reply

BEST @bestbirds5

#ClimateChange is having a serious impact on **#SnowLeopard**. RT if you care about protecting **#BigCats**. More at wildlifeday.org

#WorldWildlifeDay **#BigCats**
#PredatorsUnderThreat
#WWD2018



Tweet your reply

BEST @bestbirds5 · 03 Mar

#BigCats inspire us with their beauty, speed & strength! We humans have caused the threats facing big cats & we must be the solution. While the crisis can still be averted, the time for action is now!

#WorldWildlifeDay **#BigCats**
#PredatorsUnderThreat
#iProtectBigCats **#WWD2018**



Tweet your reply

श्रमदान किया।

विश्व वन्य प्राणी दिवस पर कार्यशाला

कुल्लू - राजकीय माध्यमिक विद्यालय पाशी में एकदिवसीय जागरूकता अभियान का आयोजन किया गया, जिसमें विश्व धरोहर ग्रेट हिमालय राष्ट्रीय उद्यान से सटे प्राणीय व विद्यालय के 38 छात्रों ने भाग लिया। इस मौके पर संस्था के अधिकाारी छात्रे राम राणा ने उपस्थित प्राणीय व छात्रों को संशोधित करते हुए कहा कि आधुनिक समय में बढ़ते अशैथिल शिकार के कारण हमारे वन्य प्राणी जैसे तेंदुआ, मोर्ह व मोनाल को संख्या घटती जा रही है। उन्होंने कहा कि संयुक्त राष्ट्र संघ की रिपोर्ट के अनुसार बही विश्वो की प्रजातिया जैसे सामान्य तेंदुआ, चीता, बाघ की पिछले 100 वर्षों में 95 प्रतिशत को आबादी में गिरावट आई है तथा अफ्रीकी शेर की आबादी पिछले 20 वर्षों में 40 प्रतिशत को आबादी कम हुई है। उन्होंने कहा कि विंग विश्वो की प्रजाती अफ्रीका, मध्य एशिया और दक्षिण एशिया में पाई जाती है, ठीक उसी तरह हिमालय में भी तेंदुआ की आबादी कम हुई है। इस अवसर पर प्रोग्राम अधिकाारी छात्रे राम बौदएसदी की ओर से छात्रों को विंग कैट को विंग कैट की प्रजातियों के संरक्षण में लोगों को प्रेरित करने व अपनी सहभागिता सुनिश्चित करने के लिए शपथ भी दिलाई गई। इस अवसर पर मुख्याध्यापक जीएसएस पाशी रूप लाम, मुख्याध्यापक राजकीय वीरठ माध्यमिक पाठशाला पाशी इंद सिंह , खेलना देवी, वार्ड सदस्य राम पंचायत रत्ना लाल चंद, राम लाल, वैसाखी देवी व गोविंद विशेष रूप से उपस्थित रहे।

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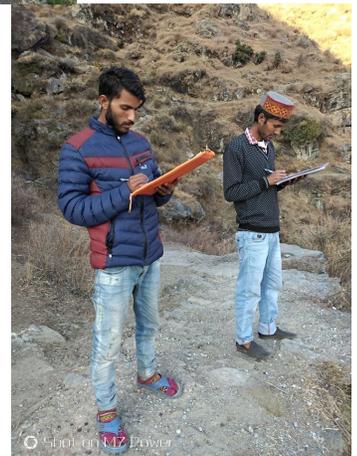
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GREAT BACKYARD BIRD COUNT 2018

Our team participated in *Great Backyard Bird Count*, February 18, 2018 at Village Pashi which lies within Eco-zone of Great Himalayan National Park, Kullu, Himachal Pradesh, India. Point count method was used to count backyard birds. During the count Black francolin, Blue fronted red start, Himalayan bulbul, Rock bunting and Common stonechat were the common species of the area. Mr. Chuni Lal, Dabe Ram along with volunteers counted birds in Pashi. The bird data was compiled and later entered on e-bird website.



Dr. Virat