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RESEARCH ARTICLE

An Avi-Faunal Inventory of Miangan Tarakai Game Reserve: A Future Destination for Eco-Tourists

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Received: Jan 02, 2019	This study was conducted at Miangan Tarakai Game Reserve from December 01-20,
Accepted: May 05, 2019	2017. The main objective of the study was to prepare a checklist of the local birds
	and to suggest recommendations for conservation of migratory water fowls so as to
Keywords	launch ecotourism programmes. Point count was used for determining number of
Avifaunal biodiversity	bird species in a sampling point. A total of 8104 individuals were counted,
Eco-tourism	belonging to 23 families and 30 species. Most of the species represented family
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	Phasianidae (12.90%). The second-most species-rich families included Alaudidae,
Migratory birds	Accipitridae, Sturnidae, and Corvidae, each of these represented by two species
	(6.45%). According to the Jackknife species richness estimator, the current study
	seems to be virtually complete. Shannon-Weiner Diversity Index (H) (2.91),
	Simpson's Diversity Index (D) (0.92), and Equitability (E) (0.87) were determined
	for overall families. Post construction of Jallozai Barrani Dam, migratory water
	fowls were reported for the first time in the area. According to the results, the area
	seems to be a promising station for the migratory birds, which can ultimately be very
	useful to launch bird watching and ecotourism programmes. So far, all the migratory
	birds have been declared as protected at many Game Reserves across Pakistan.
	Under the circumstances, it is suggested that that the existing law should be
	extended to Miangan Tarakai Game Reserve, and that hunting practices of local
*Comore on din a Arrthony	birds should be strictly regulated and controlled according to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa
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INTRODUCTION

Faunal inventories are of great importance in the environmental conservation practices, particularly in areas facing excessive anthropogenic pressures (Ruiz-Esparza et al., 2016). Birds play a key role as bioindicators of eco-systems (Canterbury et al., 2000). One of the major roles played by birds is serving as a natural biological control agent by consuming agricultural pests, their eggs and larvae, and thus proving themselves to be the true friends of farmers (Mian, 1995; Beg and Qureshi, 1972). Birds are the primary focus of ecotourism (Buckley, 2004) and bird watching is making huge progress as a vast specialist sector of the ecotourism industry (Jone and Buckley, 2000). Ecotourism can generate stable revenue for local communities (Goodwin 1996; King and Stewart 1996), and especially birdwatchers form the largest ecotourism group, who are often well-educated and having above-average income (Vayanni et al., 2005; Cordell and Herbert, 2002; Ceballos-Lascuráin, 1996). Kerlinger and Brett (1995) estimated the annual revenue from five birding sites in America to be US\$ 2.4 million to US\$4 million. According to Munn (1992), each Macaw (*Ara macao*) in south-

eastern Peru can potentially generate US\$ 750-4700 in one year and US\$ 22500–165000 over whole life based on attracting visitors. This clearly illustrates that bird watching can be a potential tool for economic development and can be a source of income for local communities (Glowinski, 2008; Kerlinger and Brett, 1995).

Pakistan has a vast range of ecosystems which harbour rich bird diversity and is also very appealing for migratory birds to exploit the resources of these rich ecosystems (Khan et al., 1966). More than 668 species of bird are present across Pakistan with their unique occurrence in the three zoogeographical regions, Oriental, Ethopian and Palaearctic region (Grimmett et al., 2008). Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK), formerly called North West Frontier Province harbours a rich avian biodiversity. Many iconic bird species are found in the province but are not fully explored and documented. Pathan et al. (2014) and Dad et al. (2014) recorded avian diversity of Swat and Buner districts, respectively. In Pakistan birds are hunted and captured on a large scale and the current status of species are stable, but this trend of extensive hunting can cause drastic declines of local species populations (Fuller et al., 2000).

This study was aimed to explore and document the avian fauna of Miagan Tarakai Game Reserve. The study was also focused to educate and increase the knowledge of local people about the local fauna and its worth and to suggest recommendations to initiate ecotourism programs. Findings of this study will serve as a baseline data for future studies necessary for conservation of natural resources.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Study area

The study was conducted within Miangan Tarakai Game Reserve and its boundary situated in Dak Ismail Khel (33°51'N, 71°49'E), Nowshera district, KPK (Fig. 1). The reserve encompasses an area of 17.4 km^2 (1740) ha). The forest is sub-tropical broad-leaved evergreen forest (scrub forests). The main plant species are Acacia modesta (Phulai), Acacia nilotica (Kikar), Zizyphus Monotheca mauratiana (Ber) and buxifolia (Gwargurah). In addition, many shrubs and tall grasses are also abundant in the forest. The area is also used as pasture for livestock. Previously no inventory surveying has been done to record the fauna. As reported by the local community and personal observation during the survey, wild boar (Sus scrufa), Asiatic jackal (Canis aureus), red fox (Vulpes vulpes), wild rabbit (Lepus nigricollis), porcupine (Hystrix indica), Hedgehog (Hemiechinus collaris) and House shrew (Suncus murinus) were observed as common animal species. Additionally, livestock depredation records and locals'

responses about wild mammalian fauna revealed common leopard (*Panthera pardus*) as a regular visitor the area, likely because of functional corridors that link the reserve with Cherat Wildlife Park and being adjacent to Manglot Wildlife Park, both occupied by this large felid (Personal Communication with Haleem khan Marwat, Divisional Forest Officer-Peshawar Division and Farhan Hayat, Range Officer-Cherat wildlife Park). The reserve also harbours a variety of reptiles which are not scientifically assessed and documented yet. Authors observed that *Saara hardwickii, Varanus bengalensis, Bungarus caeruleus*, and *Platypus rhodorachis* were common.

The reserve was officially declared as community game reserve under the title "Miangan Tarakai Game Reserve" in 2007 by KPK Wildlife Department after an agreement with the local stake holders. In 2014, the construction of a small dam named "Jallozai Barani Dam" was approved by Government of KPK for irrigation purpose, with a storage capacity of approximately 931,000 cubic meters (Anonymous, 2014a).



Fig. 1: Map of Miangan Tarakai Game Reserve depicting sampling points for bird surveys.

Survey methodology

Field surveys were conducted from December 01- 20, 2017. Different direct and indirect methods were used to record the bird species. We used fixed point-count method (Bibby et al., 1992; Hutto et al., 1986). The study area was divided into 0.5 km² blocks for the purpose of spatial stratification to avoid clustering of points. In order to carry out exhaustive sampling, a total of 97 fixed points were randomly selected across all the blocks. A buffer of 50-meter radius was chosen for each point. Binoculars (8 x 40) were used to scan the circular buffer (Haldin and Ulfvens, 1987). In some open areas where the birds usually avoid humans, we used camouflage clothing or cover. Following the methodology of Volpato et al. (2009), the sampling

time for each point was kept 15 minutes. Field surveys were carried out in the morning period, 6.30am- 9.00am and late afternoon period i.e. 3.00pm - 5.00pm.

Species were identified with the help of previously published literature (Grimmett et al., 2008; Mirza and Wasiq, 2007; Roberts, 1991). While moving from one block to another we performed flushing for the game birds, especially in areas with tall grasses and shrubs. We walked roughly with a speed of one step per second (Jiménez et al., 2013). Flushed birds were identified and recorded. In order to decrease the chances in recording false absences, opportunistic observations were also included in data (Devi and Saikia, 2010). Night surveys were also conducted for nocturnal species by using flashlights in the areas marked in daytime, identified as possible nesting areas for such species. In the methodology, we assumed not to carry out field visits on rainy days and with strong wind (Volpato et al., 2009). Throughout the study period the weather was uniform, with exception of being cloudy for few days.

For each independent sighting we also recorded naïve abundance. Common, frequently observed, abundant species however, due to the impracticality and redundancy of precisely counting every individual, were given a standard total value of 1,000 pooled across sampling days and points. Five species were given these abundance values: house sparrow (Passer domesticus), common myna (Acridotheres tristis), jungle babbler (Turdoides striata), common house martin (Delichon urbicum) and house crow (Corvus splendens). Each of these five species were seen in such high numbers within aggregations, and the totals of each species were far greater than for any other species encountered. It was considered reasonable to assume a standardized value for these species which was at least moderately representative of their relative abundance.

Bird species diversity

In order to evaluate species diversity, species richness and evenness, Shannon-Weiner (Shannon and Weaver, 1949) and Simpson diversity indices (Simpson, 1949) were calculated for overall bird families.

Shannon-weiner index

$H' = - [\sum Pi \ln Pi]$

Where H' = Shannon Diversity Index; Pi = Proportion of each species; lnPi = natural logarithm of this proportion **Simpson index**

 $D = 1 - \{\sum n (n-1)/N (N-1)\}$

D = Simpson diversity index; N = total count of all species; n = total count of a particular specie

For estimating the total winter species richness of the area, we used Jackknife 1 calculated in Estimates 9.0 (Colwell et al., 2012). Arc-GIS 10.2.1 was used for map development and the Digital Elevation Model for the area was downloaded from USGS (Glovis, <u>https://glovis.usgs.gov</u>).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A total of 8104 birds were observed in the study area belonging to 23 different families and 30 species (Table 1). The majority of species were observed from the family Phasianidae (n=4, 12.90%). This was followed by Alaudidae, Accipitridae, Sturnidae, and Corvidae. Each of these preceding families was represented by two species (6.45%). The rest of the families were represented by a single species. Family Phasianidae was represented by four species: chukar patridge (Alectoris chukar), grey francolin (Francolinus pondicerianu), black francolin (Francolinus francolinus), and see-see partridge (Ammoperdix griseogularis). Newton (1995) described chukar patridge to be the most adaptable game bird within different habitats, including rocky, arid and high elevations. Mann and Chaudhry (2000) also reported black francolin from Cherat which lies next to our study area. In the present study, the total number of black francolin and see-see partridge individuals was less than chukar patridge, and grey francolin.

Out of observed bird species, the most abundant were house sparrow, common myna, jungle babbler, house crow and common house martin with more than 1,000 individuals of each specie in the study area. All were capped at a standard value of 1,000 individuals. All of these abundant species belong to the order Passeriformes, an order which includes the songbirds. This supports the worldwide dominance of this order with the exception of Antarctica (Abbas et al., 2014). The following species were next most abundant: Indian bush lark (Mirafra erythroptera), rock pigeon (Columba livia), and grey francolin. The rare species observed in the area were black kite (Milvus migrans), demoiselle crane (Grus virgo), Eurasian coot (Fulica atra), and rufous treepie (Dendrocitta vagabunda). None of the species observed in the area were included in the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species.

Shannon-Wiener Diversity Index (2.91) and equitability (0.87) suggested that all the species were evenly distributed throughout the area (Table 2). The value of Simpson's Index (0.9) indicated that the avifaunal diversity of the area was very low. These values can be used to compare the results with any future studies in the same or surrounding areas. The results therefore discouraged the continuity of hunting practices.

According to the Jackknife 1 species richness estimator within the first few sampling days, there is a potential that the true species richness is 31 species, marginally greater than the 30 as observed here (Fig. 2). The plateau in the species accumulation curve, observed at around 12 sampling days, suggested that the sampling was probably exhaustive; recording virtually all species that likely used the study area during the study period. There was no increase in species observation frequency after the 16th sampling day. The Jackknife estimator further indicated that the precision of the estimate increased with increasing sampling effort and agreed with a diversity estimate of 30 species on the 18th day of sampling. Here, we sampled for 20 days and observed 30 species, and we, therefore also considering the standard deviation of zero which indicated that our sampling was 100 % complete. Assuming comparably spatially representative sampling, the species accumulation curve strongly suggested that a strategy of only 16 days sampling is enough to achieve a full species inventory.

In order to avoid harsh and extreme winters, a large number of birds migrate from Europe and Central Asian countries to Pakistan. These birds usually arrive in Pakistan from November to mid-January every year. Among the seven fly-zones in the world, one is the Indus-fly zone in Pakistan. The migratory birds usually include cranes, geese, and ducks (Ali and Akhter, 2005; Ali and Ripley 1987). Being present at the base of Cherat Wildlife Park, the area harbours some endemic as well as migratory species as well. The construction of Jallozai Barani Dam is proving itself to be a new home for the winter migratory birds and a hope for ecotourism in the Nowshera District. In our study, three occasional birds (winter visitors) including little grebe (Tachybaptus ruficollis), Demoiselle crane (Grus virgo) and Eurasian coot (Filica atra) were recorded, which clearly indicated that the newly formed dam can routinely be a future station for these migratory birds. According to Grimmett et al. (1998), most of the birds in Pakistan are normally observed foraging in open cultivated lands inter-mingled with scrub forests and are rarely observed at elevations higher than 1200 m above sea level (ASL). Members of family Phasianidae, the peculiar game birds of the reserve, were showing a remarkable difference in elevational range use (Fig. 3). Chukar partridge was found on the highest rocky cliff between elevations of 700 to 767 m ASL. Robert (1991) also reported that chukar partridge prefered high elevations in rocky cliffs. Dad et al. (2014) reported the presence of chukar partridge at an elevation of 777 m ASL in Totalai Game Reserve, Buner District. Concerning elevational range use, this was followed by see-see partridge, recorded at 590 m in this study. According to Roberts (1991), see-see partridge, usually occurs on the lower elevations at dry rocky foot hills. Black francolin was found at lower elevations up to 540 m ASL in relatively plain areas with grasses and small shrubs. Findings from Dad et al. (2014) reported black francolin to occupy elevation range use of 770m; Grimmett et al. (1998) and Robert (1991) also confirmed the presence of the species at very low elevations. Grey francolin was the only game bird which was spread in the whole area from low to high elevations. According to Roberts (1991) grey francolin is a common resident of scrub forests occurring up to an elevation of 900 m ASL.





Species Elevational Range Use



Fig. 3: Game bird species' principal elevational range use in Miangan Tarakai Game Reserve, District Nowshera.

The very first step for initiating ecotourism in any area is to establish well-defined and authentic inventories of existing natural resources. Bird watching can play a key role in nature conservation, general human and wildlife well-being. It can also play role in uplifting the economic status of local communities (Anonymous, 2014b). Based on anecdotal reports and preconstruction of Jallozai Barani Dam, these results suggested that the dam attracted several migratory birds. This clearly indicated that the site can proved be a promising station for these migratory birds. In order to promote community-based ecotourism, bird watching can be considered as the main component of an inclusive tourism package (Burkhardt et al., 2005).

For sustainable ecotourism, it is of paramount importance to maintain the population of birds using the site, including the migratory birds for which the site evidently provides a valuable resource. Currently, more than 89 game reserves throughout the Pakistan, which share identical classification status as the game reserve of this study and the migratory birds witnessed here have been declared as legally "Protected" by the Pakistan Environmental Protection Act, 1997 (Anonymous, 2008).

	Species	Common Name	IUCN Status
Passeriformes	•		
Passeridae	Passer domesticus	House Sparrow	LC
Sturnidae	Acridotheres tristis	Common Myna	LC
	Acridotheres ginginianus	Bank Myna	LC
Alaudidae	Mirafra erythroptera	Indian Bushlark	LC
	Eremopterix griseus	Ashy-crowned Sparrow Lark	LC
Leiothrichidae	Turdoides striata	Jungle Babbler	LC
Corvidae	Corvus splendens	House Crow	LC
Corviduo	Dendrocitta vagabunda	Rufous Treepie	LC
Dicruridae	Dicrurus macrocercus	Black Drongo	LC
Monarchidae	Terpsiphone paradisi	Indian Paradise Flycatcher	LC
Ardeidae	Bubulcus ibis	Cattle Egret	LC
Pycnonotidae	Pycnonotus leucogenys	Himalayan Bulbul	LC
Hirundinidae	Delichon urbicum	Common House Martin	LC
Motacillidae	Motacilla alba	White Wagtail	LC
Galliformes	monucina alba	White Wagaan	Le
Phasianidae	Francolinus pondicerianus	Grey Francolin	LC
	Ammoperdix griseogularis	See-see Partridge	LC
	Francolinus francolinus	Black Francolin	LC
	Alectoris chukar	Chukar Partridge	LC
Coraciiformes	meetons chukur	Chukar Farthage	LC
Meropidae	Merops orientalis	Green Bee Eater	LC
Bucerotiformes	merops orientails	Green Dee Eater	LC
Upupidae	Upupa epops	Eurasian Hoopoe	LC
Strigiformes	Opupa epops	Eurasian Hoopoe	LC
Strigidae	Athene noctua	Little Owl	LC
Columbiformes	Ainene nociua	Little Owi	LC
Columbidae	Columba livia	Deal Discon	LC
	Columba livia	Rock Pigeon	LC
Accipitriformes	Milana	Black Kite	LC
Accipitridae	Milvus migrans		LC
Anseriformes	Accipiter badius	Shikra	LC
Anatidae	Anas crecca	Common Teal	LC
Caprimulgiformes			
Caprimulgidae	Caprimulgus europaeus	Eurasian Nightjar	LC
Coraciiformes			. c
Alcedinidae	Alcedo atthis	Common Kingfisher	LC
Podicipediformes			
Podicipedidae	Tachybaptus ruficollis	Little Grebe	LC
Gruiformes	~ .		
Gruidae	Grus virgo	Demoiselle crane	LC
Rallidae	Fulica atra	Eurasian Coot	LC
LC: Least Concern			

Table 1: Bird species observed in Tarakai Game Reserve along with IUCN Red List Status

 Table 2: Diversity Indices values for Tarakai Game Reserve, Nowshera District

Diversity Index	Symbol	Value
Shannon–Wiener Diversity Index	Н	2.91
Simpson Index	D	0.92
Equitability	E	0.87

Conclusions and recommendations

The results obtained from the current study provided the base-line information about the avian fauna of Miangan Tarakai Game Reserve, Nowshera district, indicating the site as a potential habitat for migratory birds. The quick arrival of migratory waterfowls is a clear indication for launching healthy bird watching and eco-tourism programs, which will be very appealing for conservation and boosting up the socio-economic conditions of the locals. It is suggested that existing level of protection of avian species may be strengthened and applied to Miangan Tarakai Game Reserve, thereby recognizing and mobilizing the already existing law. Native bird species which are known to be hunted in the game reserve must also be subject to investigation by government officials, to ensure that hunting is exclusively and strictly limited to the licenses issued. **Authors' contribution**

Cutions contribution

RHK conceived the idea, designed project, collected data, analyzed data and wrote manuscript. ZX performed overall project design and write up. SA helped in analysis and write up. ER helped in data collection and review, while NJR helped in results interpretation, write up and review before submission.

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