



## GOOD PRACTICES FROM THE STATE

### **Amur Falcon Conservation Program at Pangti Village, Doyang, Wokha District, Nagaland**

**The Before:** The Amur falcon is a species from the Siberian region which migrates to the African region for wintering covering a long distance of 22000 km and completing an elliptical loop. While migrating, it stops at several places in Northeast India with the main roosting site being Doyang catchment area in Nagaland, to fatten up before taking off again. In 2012 a Bangalore based NGO Conservation India came out with a report of mass killing of the birds in the Doyang catchment area, mostly in Pangti village which was widely publicized by the print and electronic media. Although it received a mixed response it succeeded in accelerating the conservation movement in Nagaland. This species is included under Schedule IV of the Wildlife Protection Act 1972 and India being signatory to the Convention on Migratory Species is duty bound to prevent the hunting of these migratory guests and provide a safe passage to them. The birds were trapped, killed and sold in the market in large numbers.

**The Intervention:** The Forest Department deployed frontline staff at the roosting sites to control the killing trapping and selling of the birds. They seized all the trap nets used for capturing the birds, all live birds were released and the dead were burnt. All the local law enforcement agencies such as Forest Police and Administration were alerted for further necessary action against recurrence. A Sub-committee consisting of all the Amur Falcon bearing territorial Divisional Forest Officers and Wildlife Warden has been constituted to monitor and supervise in the field level. Efforts have intensified since the year 2013. The Forest Department has evolved a multipronged strategy of awareness creating strict enforcement and alternate livelihood generation.

Different kinds of awareness methodologies have been employed to cater to the needs of different groups of people at different times. In preparation of the arrival of these magnificent birds the Forest Department sounded a State level alert and began working stealthily well in advance. Awareness programs were also conducted for villagers Officers and staff of all forest division NGOs and students etc where they were apprised about the background biology behaviour and importance of the Amur Falcon. The Church being an organised institution and with a huge impact and reach among the masses moral or ethical education was carried out in coordination with the Pastors. They devoted Sunday devotional service to the issue followed by Signature Campaigns to save the Amur Falcon spreading centrifugally from Pangti village to Sungro Sanis and Englan Ranges which forms the catchment area of the Doyang reservoir. It culminated in a resolution taken up by the Kyong Baptist Ekhumkho Pastorden Sanrhyu which involved 138 churches of the Lotha community to pray for and support the initiative to protect the migratory bird during 53rd annual conference on Oct. 2013. The Department plans to extend the activity to all churches in Nagaland through Nagaland Baptist Church Council. According to The Telegraph daily effort of this kind for conservation by the churches is unheard of anywhere.

In the Amur falcon bearing areas Eco clubs under the Forest Departments flagship programme National Green Corps were given specific scientific input through presenting wildlife movie screenings, storytelling etc. NGOs came forth with different education programmes for schools like Under the Canopy programme by the Friends of Amur Falcon an initiative by Nagaland Wildlife and Biodiversity Conservation Trust and Animal Action Education by the Natural Nagas and Wildlife Trust of India

For legal awareness a workshop on relevant provisions of the Wildlife Protection Act 1972 was conducted for personnel of the Forest Department along with the District Administration Police

Department village level law enforcing authorities NGOs and Fishermen Union etc. The local communities as a whole were involved in awareness seminars carried out by the Forest Department local NGOs covering different aspects of Amur Falcon conservation. It was a two way interaction to note the grievances of people as well as to come up with viable solutions. Open air wildlife movie screenings and community discussions were among the other means to reach out to the communities.

Above all distribution of literature posters, bookmarks, hoardings etc are being done to generate widespread awareness about Amur Falcon. Flexi banners depicting slogans for Amur conservation and about the punitive measures as well have been put up in public places. Eco clubs of various schools have also put up banners in relevant areas. The Forest Department also used news dailies to spread awareness through the media by publishing relevant articles on conservation.

Equal efforts were also put on the enforcement front. District Level Co-ordination Committee for controlling wildlife crime is formed in all the districts evolving Village Councils District Administration Police Department NGOs Revenue Department and other prominent community organisations. The Committee checks the bottlenecks like market strategic transit routes through raids; patrolling is done regularly and check posts are established. Military and paramilitary forces have also been roped in for a similar purpose.

Forest Protection Force is being deployed in strategic roosting sites every year and has been working round the clock for effective prevention and control of trapping and killing of the birds. Patrolling raids, surprise checks and camping around the roosting sites are the most effective enforcement measures for the protection of Amur Falcon and are carried out by the Forest Protection Force till the birds leave.

The state government has a notified policy of zero tolerance to the hunting, killing trapping of the Amur falcons in the State with the penalty being withholding of Grant in aid to the defaulting villages and notifications regarding the same has been relayed by the Chief Secretary and the Director Rural Development Department. This action has immensely helped the conservation effort and the Forest Department has issued thousands of posters carrying the message of conservation on one side and the concerned notifications on the other.

#### **The After:**

1. Selected for E Poster Presentation at World Parks Congress 2014 Sydney Australia.
2. Congratulatory note from Mr Bradnee Chambers Executive Secretary UNEP lauding the efforts of GoI Forest Department Nagaland and the communities for safeguarding and satellite tagging.
3. Appreciation letter from China Bird watching Society Beijing and Wild Child Children Society Beijing; United Nations Environment Programme Convention on Migratory Species ; Bombay Natural History Society; The then Minister of Environment Forest and Climate Change Dr M Veerappa Moily; Director General of Forests Dr S S Garbyal IFS.
4. Scientists from India and overseas stated the efforts were looked upon by the World Community for their wonderful efforts towards conservation of Forest and Wildlife particularly through the eyes of Amur Falcon. Dr. Suresh Kumar WII Dehradun. Nick William UNEP Peter Fehervari and Szabolcs Solt Birdlife Hungary.
5. The Conservation Program had been recognised at different forums over the years and were the recipient of the followings:
  - Governor's Commendation Certificate 15th August 2014 to the Nagaland Forest Protection Force.
  - Balipara Foundation Annual Awards 2014 at the ITA Machkkowa Guwahati Assam on November 7.
  - Royal Bank of Scotland Earth Heroes Awards 2014 in Save the species category. The award was given away by the then Union Minister of Environment Forest and Climate Change Prakash Javedekar.
  - Tigerland India Film Festival Award 2015

## Beneficiary Quotes:

“Being a Lotha (Naga) mastered in hunting since time immemorial, Amur Falcons were hunted for consumption for over a decade. However, after the intervention by the Govt. and other NGOs, people of Pangti village accepted the importance of conservation and preservation of wildlife. Protection of the Amur Falcon, especially by the hardcore hunter (hunter turned conservationist), helped achieve ZERO HUNTING in 2014. The same has been maintained thus far. This is the biggest achievement so far and I am looking forward to the best- victory over random killing and hunting of wildlife. The Forest Department through various initiatives, has been very crucial and instrumental throughout this successful story” N. Thungbemo Shitiri, President Amur Falcon Roosting Area Union Pangti

## Goal Impact:

1. A Conservation Action Plan of Amur Falcon which includes components like involvement in protection work, self-help groups, micro-financing eco-tourism habitat improvement and research has been prepared and is in place.
2. Enhanced awareness on conservation issues amongst the public.
3. Conservation and protection oriented convergence of various departmental programs of the government.
4. Strengthened community protection squads with the involvement of the village council and the people.
5. Full protection and almost zero killings of Amur falcon which has also been extended for other species too.
6. More co-operation of the sensitized public with the department and the government.
7. Inclusion of Village Council, signing of MoU creation and support of Community Conservation areas with specific emphasis to roosting areas.
8. In lieu of conservation, developmental incentives for the villages were provided by the forest department, tourism department and by various NGOs. Deployment of village protection squads funded by the department and NGOs involved were done during the season.

**Key Success Factors:** Traditionally the people of the state are hunters and are still being practiced in isolated pockets till today. The low level of awareness amongst the public before the initiative had drastically reduced the population of wildlife of the state. This owing to the fact that the land and its resources belonged to the people and the state government with only 11.2 percent of the total geographical area under its control could not effectively stop the hunting processes for the last many years. With the massive surge in awareness campaigns on protection of the birds through the involvement of local national and international media and ground level educational programmes of the department and its associated NGO partners and other government agencies there have been sea changes in the perception of the people vis-à-vis wildlife resources and its importance. Direct involvement of the Village council in the protection process under the supervisory directives of the government has led to more effective management and better deliverance of various schemes and programs at the village level. This has led to the strengthening of the village institutions whereby in many villages local wildlife protection squads and volunteers have emerged. Other NGOs like the church bodies, student organizations, schools and colleges etc have also been positively shaped to face challenging situations and are more enthusiastic on conservation issues. This initiative has also strengthened the Forest department and the government agencies for better collaboration and effective delivery mechanism with renewed skill and knowledge. The organization of UNEP has termed “ Amur falcon capital of the World ”

## Infographics:

- Total number of villages/local bodies involved :Approximately 13 villages with focussed attention on Pangti Village
- Total number of women/girls benefitted : Approximately 2000
- Total number of families benefitted : Approximately 1500

**Photographs/Images:**

Amur Falcon at roosting site in Wokha District, Nagaland



Awareness creation camp among villagers on conservation of Amur Falcons carried out by Forest Department, Government of Nagaland



Former Hon'ble CM of Nagaland releasing the satellite tagged Amur Falcon at Itanki National Park, Nagaland



Release of special postal cover on satellite tagging of Amur Falcon by Forest Department in association with the Postal Department