

University of Nebraska - Lincoln

## DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln

---

Galliformes Specialist Group and Affiliated  
Societies: Newsletters

Galliformes Specialist Group and Affiliated  
Societies

---

Winter 2010

### WPA News 86 (2010/2011)

World Pheasant Association

Follow this and additional works at: [https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/galliformes\\_newsletters](https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/galliformes_newsletters)



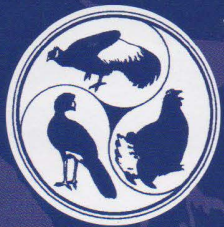
Part of the [Biodiversity Commons](#), [Environmental Policy Commons](#), and the [Ornithology Commons](#)

---

World Pheasant Association, "WPA News 86 (2010/2011)" (2010). *Galliformes Specialist Group and Affiliated Societies: Newsletters*. 112.

[https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/galliformes\\_newsletters/112](https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/galliformes_newsletters/112)

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Galliformes Specialist Group and Affiliated Societies at DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln. It has been accepted for inclusion in Galliformes Specialist Group and Affiliated Societies: Newsletters by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln.



# WPA news

The International Newsletter of the World Pheasant Association

Number 86 Winter 2010/2011

Polynesian  
megapode surveys

2010 WPA  
Symposium in  
Thailand

International  
captive breeding  
co-operation



# From the Office

## WPA Convention in the Czech Republic

Some exciting news for members next year as arrangements are being explored for a WPA Convention to be held in the Czech Republic from 13-17 October 2011.

This will offer UK WPA members the chance to meet members from Europe and the opportunity to visit the beautiful city of Prague where the convention will be held. Plans are being made for a guided tour of the city with opportunities to visit zoos on Friday 14 and Saturday 15 in addition to one or two private collections. There may even be a chance for opera lovers to visit Prague National Theatre for a concert. Details will be finalised in April 2011 when we will be able to provide you with further information about costs of accommodation and an itinerary.



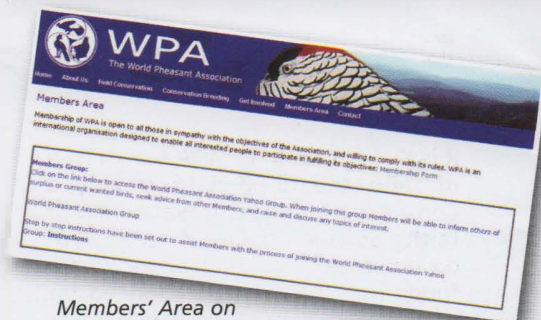
### CONTENTS

From the Office .....	2-3
From the Field .....	4-5
WPA Annual Convention .....	6
Changes to WPA's Governance ....	7
WPA Symposium in Thailand ....	8-9
Megapode surveys in Tonga .....	10
Vigilance in released grey partridges.....	11
Avicultural Roundup .....	12-13
International captive breeding co-operation .....	14
Raising funds for WPA.....	15
New initiative for the Himalayas..	16

## Updating the Members' Area

We are moving forward with the update of the WPA website. Recently our focus has been on the discussion forum and you may have noticed that there have been several changes to the Members' Area over the last few months leading to what is now a new and hopefully improved service.

Members can now join a special 'Yahoo' group. The benefits of using Yahoo are considerable once you have signed up. It is much more user friendly, offers instant password reminders and the running cost is reduced to a minimum. We would like to encourage more members to use the forum and a huge advantage of the site is that discussion topics and events can be emailed to all members, making it easy to keep in touch with others and stay up to date with news on Galliformes and the WPA. Members also now have the ability to



Members' Area on the WPA website

upload photos of events or of Galliformes, attach relevant documents to be read, link to other websites of interest, and view and add WPA events on the calendar.

To access the Yahoo group please use the link in the Members' Area of WPA's website ([www.pheasant.org.uk/membersarea](http://www.pheasant.org.uk/membersarea)). There are also instructions to follow to make the signing in process as smooth as possible for those who are not familiar with Yahoo.

It is wonderful to see that the group has already gained momentum as discussions and messages have begun to circulate. We look forward to having a very interactive Members' Area and we welcome any feedback that you may have so please email Barbara ([office@pheasant.org.uk](mailto:office@pheasant.org.uk)) if you have any further ideas or thoughts about the group.

## DIARY DATES

### 2011

5-6 February	CBAG-UK weekend, Cotswold Wildlife Park, Oxon
6 May	Charity Clay Shoot, Crompton Manor Estate, Hampshire
19-21 August	British Birdwatching Fair, Rutland
9-11 September	WPA-Germany Convention, Stuttgart, Germany
23 September	Black Grouse Charity Clay Shoot, Craigie Farm, Fife, Scotland
13-17 October	WPA Convention in Prague and Pilsen, Czech Republic (to be confirmed)
22 October	WPA AGM and UK Convention, Newcastle upon Tyne

### COPY DATES

The next issue of *WPA News* will be produced in May 2011. Articles, stories, letters and advertisements for publication should be with the WPA office by **14 March 2011**.

*WPA Annual Review* will be produced in August 2011.

Articles represented in *WPA News* do not necessarily represent the views of the World Pheasant Association

Cover photograph: Tibetan Partridge *Perdix hodgsoniae*. Courtesy of Que Pinjia, Beijing Forestry University.

# Farewell Natalie

It is three years since WPA took a leap of faith and decided to employ a Conservation Officer. It was a leap of faith as we believed that our development was at a stage where funds were there to be obtained for conservation work if we had more time and the ability to apply for them. Very encouragingly we seem to have been proved right and that is in large part down to the person we recruited: Natalie Clark. She has become a very familiar name to many in WPA and an even more familiar face to those who attend meetings and other events and so many will be sorry to see her leave to start the next stage in her career. Since joining WPA Natalie has taken on everything that has been asked of her, including the editing of WPA News and the Annual Review, working on proposals for project and core funds, co-ordinating the captive census and managing our increasing global network that is reflected on the inside front and back covers of the Annual Review. It is a very diverse range of activities and all of them have been tackled with a very positive attitude. We wish her the very best for her PhD research at the University



Natalie receiving her parting gift (a print of 'lapwings driven west by freezing weather')

© Billy Wilson

of Reading in southern England, and we will be able to keep an eye on her as Natalie will still be involved with WPA as she continues to co-ordinate and assist with the ever growing Pipar project in Nepal (see page 5 for a further update).

We are delighted, however, to welcome Laura Owens as our new Conservation Officer. She has just returned to the UK from South Africa where she ran a research station and completed an MSc in Conservation Ecology and Planning from the University of Pretoria. Laura has already settled in well and we look forward to the continued development of WPA.

## 2011 CBAG-UK avicultural weekend 5-6 February

The CBAG-UK annual meeting is here once again ('doesn't time fly'), and will be held on the weekend of 5-6 February at the Costwold Wildlife Park.

There will be various talks given, covering all aspects of aviculture from the UK and other areas across the globe, in addition to updates from CBAG and WPA.

The talks will include the following topics:

- Breeding and re-introduction of corncrakes
- Life of a large breeder of peafowl
- Update on conservation breeding of Bornean peacock pheasant in the UK
- Tommy Haran's large Galliformes collection in Ireland

There will be an opportunity for everyone to have a guided tour of the



Manor House at Cotswold Wildlife Park

© Natalie Clark

aviaries and there will of course be a dinner on the Saturday night at a local carvery. For full programme information or if you would like to attend the event please visit the website [www.pheasant.org.uk](http://www.pheasant.org.uk) (under 'Get Involved'/'Events and Meetings') and fill in the application form which can then be emailed or sent to Simon Mayes.

If you have any questions please contact Simon on 01983 615236 / 01983 872306; email: [simonmayes1@btinternet.com](mailto:simonmayes1@btinternet.com)

## IN BRIEF

Changes in biological research on grouse are afoot. The trends in scientific studies are moving away from a focus on disease, diet, behaviour and reproduction and are becoming increasingly orientated towards conservation with a focus on habitat, landscape ecology and genetics. Research is also emerging on species of grouse that are of increasing conservation concern such as the Near Threatened Chinese grouse *Bonasa sewerzowi* and Vulnerable lesser prairie-chicken *Tympanuchus pallidicinctus*. Encouragingly, this change of research trends should assist with the management and conservation of grouse and their habitats.

There is genetic evidence to suggest that the population of southeast China's endemic pheasant the Cabot's tragopan *Tragopan caboti*, can be split into two groups; the 'West group' and the 'East group'. Geographic changes in the landscape over time have created a barrier between these two groups which have effectively isolated the East population from the West population. This will have implications on how the species is conserved with focus on managing the two groups as separate units.

Advanced surveying and analysis techniques are providing researchers with more precise information with which to predict and map species distributions. Using radio-telemetry and a geographical information system a new study has developed a model that determines the distribution and habitat preference of the Near Threatened Caucasian grouse *Tetrao mlokosiewiczi*. The model shows that the grouse prefers open habitat and that their distribution is determined largely by annual temperature and rainfall. This habitat model will improve detection of the grouse and allow more accurate population estimates, assisting with identification of priority areas for conservation and management of the species.

# From the Field

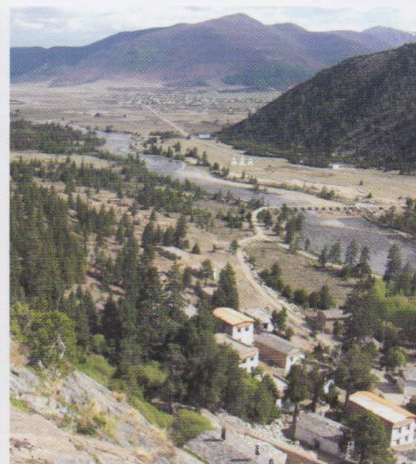
## Studying blood pheasants in Daocheng

Geoffrey Davison and Wang Nan

Some lucky WPA members will cherish memories of their visit to Daocheng after the 2007 WPA Conference in Sichuan. Thanks to the generosity of the College of Nature Conservation, Beijing Forestry University and the Sichuan Forestry Bureau, we were fortunate enough to spend two months this year as WPA Research Associates studying blood pheasants *Ithagin cruentus* in Daocheng. The focus of our study was driven by four different characteristics of the blood pheasant.



In the evening, groups of white-eared pheasants and blood pheasants can be seen going off together to roost sites



Above the agricultural valley bottom at Bangpo, the slopes bear pasture, fir and prickly oak

© Geoffrey Davison (all p4 pictures)

The diet of blood pheasants was a special interest during our study as they are exclusively vegetarian, making them difficult to keep in captivity. Breeding success in Europe and in China has been very limited, with exceptional efforts required to keep a captive population viable. Chinese researchers have previously demonstrated that the diet of blood pheasants is governed by seasonal variation but unfortunately we were not able to investigate this as our research was limited to the months of May and June. However, we were able to show that the diet of the Daocheng population differs greatly from that of some populations in other parts of China and even within Sichuan, due to the different habitats the blood pheasants occupy throughout these areas.

Since Ernst Schäfer worked in Sichuan between the wars, it has been known for many years that blood pheasants associate with flocks of white-eared pheasants *Crossoptilon crossoptilon*. During our observations we collected information about the feeding rates and vigilance of male and female blood pheasants when they were with and away from white-eared pheasants. Our study period however, occurred during the breeding months when the association between the two species dissolves, so the reason why the two species group together as yet remains unanswered.

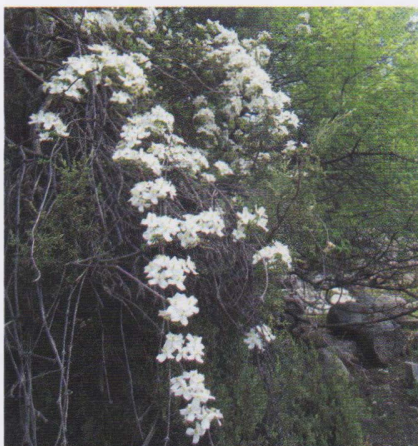
To add to our growing amount of data we also collected more than 280 faecal samples of blood pheasants, mostly from known individuals where we could be sure of their spur number (if male) or the spur number of their mate (if female), as well as information about their feeding rate, status (mated or not), stage of the breeding cycle (either pre-laying, incubating, or laying) and their vigilance. Using this information we will investigate whether there is a link between hormone levels in the faeces and the blood pheasant's behaviour and morphology.

It has been wonderful for us to go back to Daocheng to learn more about the blood pheasants. We have been very fortunate to begin this study and hope to reveal new information about the biological characteristics and behaviour of this species in the coming months.



Male blood pheasants often use boulders as lookout points

Our initial interest, having written the first scientific paper exclusively on avian spurs 25 years ago was to investigate the reasons for differences in spur number within the species. Spur number in male blood pheasants can vary from none to possibly eight (up to seven have been noted in museum skins). Research on common pheasants in Europe and wild turkeys in North America has explained some aspects of inter and intra-sexual selection for spur length, but further study is required for species with multiple spurs.



Blossoms of wild clematis are amongst the food of blood pheasants

# Progress for Pipar

Natalie Clark

2010 was a very busy and successful fundraising year for the Pipar Project. As well as securing funds for extensions on two of the Pipar schools, money was also raised to conduct the tenth survey of Galliformes in the biodiverse forests high above the schools.

A recent visit to the area by Keith and Jean Howman has allowed us to confidently assess the current status of the Pipar schools and where our future education fundraising may be directed. The visit also illuminated the need for an assessment of poaching levels at Pipar which we hope to conduct within the next few months. Whilst there, Keith and Jean were able to present Meg Raj secondary school with a new computer and stationary equipment using funds which had been raised last year.

A full update on the Pipar Project, including updates on the two school extensions, the pheasant survey and levels of poaching, will appear in the WPA Annual Review (distributed in late summer). For now, we'll leave you with a few photos of the landscape and people around Pipar. If you're tempted to see these sights for yourself, see the box below.



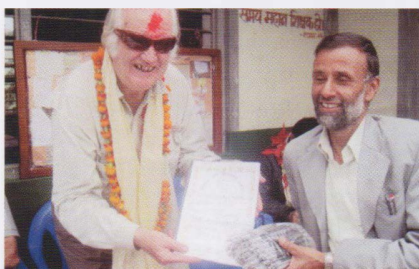
New computer presented by WPA to Meg Raj school

©Jean Howman



The new Dalit school built 18 months ago with funding from the JOR memorial fund

©Jean Howman



Keith Howman and Headmaster of Meg Raj school exchanging gifts

©Jean Howman



School children in Pipar

©Natalie Clark

## 2011 Pipar Trek

- Would you like to visit Pipar's biodiversity rich forests which hold five of Nepal's six Himalayan pheasant species?
- Would you like to visit some of the Pipar schools and talk to the teachers and students?
- Or perhaps you'd like to see the villages dotted along the valley below Pipar, meet the local people and witness their everyday lives?

If you answered yes to any of these questions then do not fear. This autumn we will be running the third Pipar Trek, allowing you to visit Pipar's forests, people and schools. More information will appear in the next WPA News but if you have any interest in joining us on this once-in-a-lifetime trip, please email [natalie.clark@pheasant.org.uk](mailto:natalie.clark@pheasant.org.uk) or contact the WPA office using the details on the inside front cover of the newsletter.

## IN BRIEF

If you had a turkey for your Christmas lunch this year, spare a thought for its wild relative the ocellated turkey *Meleagris ocellata*, endemic to the Yucatan peninsula in Mexico. A detailed assessment of its distribution in this area confirms that the species is on the decline. The familiar formula of hunting and habitat loss is exacerbating the decline and it seems in this instance that social changes will not be enough to halt it. The only way to ensure its local survival would be to develop a network of locally protected reserves.

Anyone with doubts that Mothers know best should cast them aside. White-tailed ptarmigan *Lagopus leucurus* hens effectively teach their chicks which plants are the best to eat in terms of nutritional value. Observations of foraging hens showed that some hens emit a food call to chicks for certain species of plant that have higher protein levels than others. The hen's food calling biased the chicks' preference for specific food, so that even when older and away from the mothers, they still chose the more nutritious plants.

There is to be a new Angel of the North, except this time it will be in the form of a grouse. The grouse has been chosen to be a symbol of Perthshire given its connection to the species and its importance to the economy of local communities and the new 14.5m sculpture will soon be seen on the gateway to Perth. There are some worries about the sculptures perceived links to drinks advertising but it is hoped that it will become a key landmark, representing Perth's location.

# 2010 WPA Annual Convention at Chester

The 2010 WPA Annual Convention got off to a flying start at Chester Zoo. Despite the typical British wet weather about 20 WPA members turned up for the tour of Chester Zoo's aviaries and Galliformes. Andrew Owen, Curator of Birds, provided us with an extremely informative tour of the birds, highlighting their captive and breeding programmes and discussing Chester's international projects for Galliformes. Species seen included the red-billed curassow *Crax blumenbachii*, satyr tragopan *Tragopan satyra*, Salvadori's pheasant *Lophura inornata* and the little known Congo peafowl *Afropavo congensis*. Many of the group also had the opportunity to view the elephant enclosure which housed numerous Asian elephants, observe the giant otters in action as well as see a spectacular pair of Andean Condors in their new aviary.

Chester University kindly supplied us with a very suitable setting for varied presentations and an excellent meeting. The proceedings began with Stephen Browne supplying us with a final update for the Symposium in Thailand. Stephen worked extremely hard organising all the arrangements for the big event. Philip McGowan brought members up to date on the running of WPA. There have been significant changes in the way we regulate our funding and conservation work that means WPA has had to work hard to ensure it remains viable and working for the public benefit (see page 7). A clear and (for those who have come across the extreme complexities of genetics before) surprisingly comprehensible presentation about the genetic processes necessary to identify the Trinidad piping-guan *Pipile pipile* was presented to us by Louise Robinson. Using a limited number of samples from native birds Louise has been able to clarify that individuals in Europe thought to be Trinidad piping-guan are actually the sub species Gray's piping guan *Pipile cumanensis grayi*.

Detailed video presentations from Billy Wilson and Tommy Haran gave us an insightful look into Tommy's pheasant collection whilst explaining the intricacies necessary to successfully breed and raise a large and varied collection of Galliformes. This provoked much discussion from members on many husbandry techniques.



Tour of the aviaries at Chester Zoo

©Natalie Clark

We were also very fortunate to have Nigel Collar, a global authority on threatened birds, give his thoughts on the areas WPA should focus on in the future to continue promoting and aiding the conservation of Galliformes. The WPA has diligently helped to conserve many species and their habitats across the globe but there are still threatened Galliformes that require further study and conservation effort. These include the Endangered Swierstra's francolin *Francolinus swierstrai* in Angola and the Endangered horned guan *Oreophasis derbianus* in Guatemala and Mexico.

And although we are sad to see her go, Natalie Clarke gave us an enjoyable review of the developments and projects she has

been involved with during her time as Conservation Officer with WPA. Significant aspects included her dedicated contribution to the Pipar project and with the development and maturation of the WPA Annual Review and News. To express WPA's sincere thanks for her exceptional work as Conservation Officer, Natalie was presented with a print of 'Lapwings driven west by freezing weather' from Richard Carden on behalf of WPA.

Many thanks go to all those who helped to organise a very successful event and particularly to Will Harrison for allowing members to visit his collection following the AGM, to Stephen Jaques, Andrew Owen and staff at Chester Zoo, Louise Robinson and staff at Chester University.

Cooling elephants at Chester Zoo



©Natalie Clark



# WPA - fit for the future

The World Pheasant Association became a registered charity in the UK in 1976. Its formation occurred a few months earlier in 1975 when, during a supper in Keith and Jean Howman's home in southern England, six people decided that the time was right. The world in which the Association operates today is vastly different from those days and WPA Council has been working hard over the last couple of years to bring the running of the Association up-to-date. Not only do we have to ensure that we are in line with the constant updates of Charity Commission requirements, but we also have to provide donors with increasingly sought evidence that our work is strategically identified and carried out to the highest standards.

The first issues tackled were 'Strategy' and 'Governance'. Both sound dry and uninspiring, but are actually issues that everyone is thinking about when they discuss any WPA activities. Strategy includes what we are doing, why we are doing it and how the various activities we are involved with, relate to each other. Governance is simply concerned with making sure that WPA is running as efficiently as possible. This includes ensuring that there is a wide skill set on which the management of WPA is based, not relying on a just a few individuals, and acquiring new people to help take us forward.

Interestingly, whilst we were

producing the Strategy and Governance documents under the experienced eye of Trustee Richard Carden, it became evident that changes in Charity Commission requirements and other developments in conservation and funding required a revision of our rules. Although this sounds serious, and was a considerable undertaking, it has actually been a very constructive process, sharpening our thoughts and bringing us completely up-to-date.

WPA has only revised its constitution (or rulebook) once before in 1993, in response to a significant change in the law governing UK registered charities. Changes in legislation were again the reason behind the development of our new constitution. The 2006 Charities Act was a radical revision of charity law and in order to be legally defined as a charity, required all organisations to demonstrate that they have both 'charitable purposes' and that they provide a public benefit. The reason for these changes was to clarify the difference between charities and other organisations such as membership clubs and societies. The latter provides services only (or primarily) to members which are deemed for private benefit and should not be registered as charities.

## Good Governance: A Code for the Voluntary and Community Sector Summary

### Legislation since the formation of WPA

- Charities Act 2006
- Charities (Amendment) Act 1995
- Charities Act 1993
- Charities Act 1992
- Charities Act 1985 (repealed)

## Charities Act 2006

- The Charities Act 2006 modernised the legal framework for charities in England and Wales.

### It aimed to:

- enable charities to administer themselves more efficiently and be more effective
- improve the regulation of charity fundraising and reduce regulation on the sector, especially for smaller charities
- provide a clear definition of charity with an emphasis on public benefit
- modernise the Charity Commission's functions and powers as regulator, increase its accountability, and preserve its independence from ministers

To see full details of the Charities Act 2006, visit the following website:  
[www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/voluntary-sector/charity-law-regulation/charities-act-2006.aspx](http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/voluntary-sector/charity-law-regulation/charities-act-2006.aspx)

After Council took the decision to revise the constitution, we discussed our intentions with the Charity Commission, who provided us with invaluable advice on what could and should change and what could not. The draft constitution was circulated to all members in August 2010 and, after discussion, approved unanimously at the AGM held in Chester on 2 October 2010. The Charity Commission has now written to us to indicate that their records have been updated and we are now operating under our new constitution.

All of this means that we enter 2011 well equipped to meet the challenges facing WPA and make the most of the many opportunities facing us. This is clearly very important and now allows us to get on with our real work: conservation!



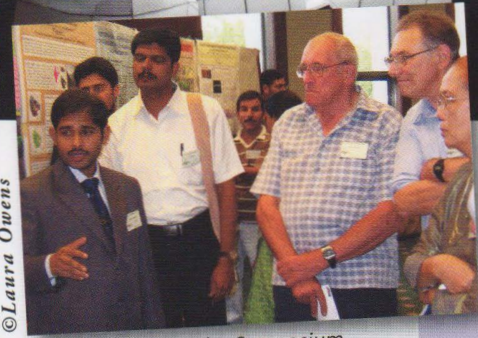


©Natalie Clark

©Huw Lloyd



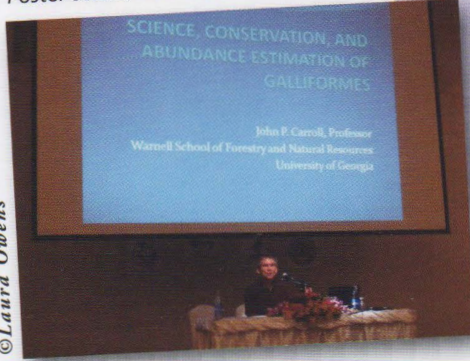
# 2010 WPA



© Laura Owens

Poster session at the Symposium

After all the monumental preparations and excitement, the WPA Galliformes Symposium week in Thailand finally arrived in early November. Participants from twelve different countries came together to discuss current research and conservation action for many Galliformes species. Everyone received a warm welcome on their arrival at the Imperial Mae Ping Hotel and many people got the chance to reunite with friends and colleagues who had not been seen since the last Symposium three years ago in China. This atmosphere provided a great start to five days of well organised presentations, workshops and visits into the stunning city of Chiang Mai.



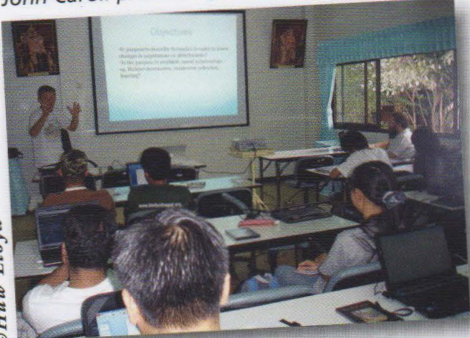
© Laura Owens

John Carroll presenting

During the Symposium there was a good representation of high quality presentations from Thailand, India, China, Nepal, Vietnam, Trinidad, and the UK discussing a variety of topics including the current conservation status of Galliformes, field research techniques, conservation breeding, Galliformes taxonomy, and the effectiveness of protected areas. Many important issues were discussed with particular emphasis on the necessity of expanding the high standard of research undertaken and the importance of communicating this research to as wide an audience as possible. Implementing these points will ensure that researchers from WPA and associated organisations have maximum influence on global conservation policy.

Endangered Djibouti francolin *Francolinus ochropectus*. It was evident from presentations that field research techniques to survey and map populations of Galliformes in the wild is being greatly enhanced with the use of camera traps and Geographical Information System technology. Combining these techniques with other monitoring systems and data analysis is helping to increase the sophistication and scientific standard of Galliformes research. A more detailed report on these topics will appear in the Annual Review.

At the end of three days of presentations and discussions, WPA threw a terrific banquet for all attendees and participants complete with ice sculptures of peacocks! It was a time to put aside the formality of the last few days and relax into various cultural traditions of socialising, including sampling the huge variety of delicious Thai cuisine (with or without chop sticks). Evenings in Chiang Mai were charged with a



© Huw Lloyd

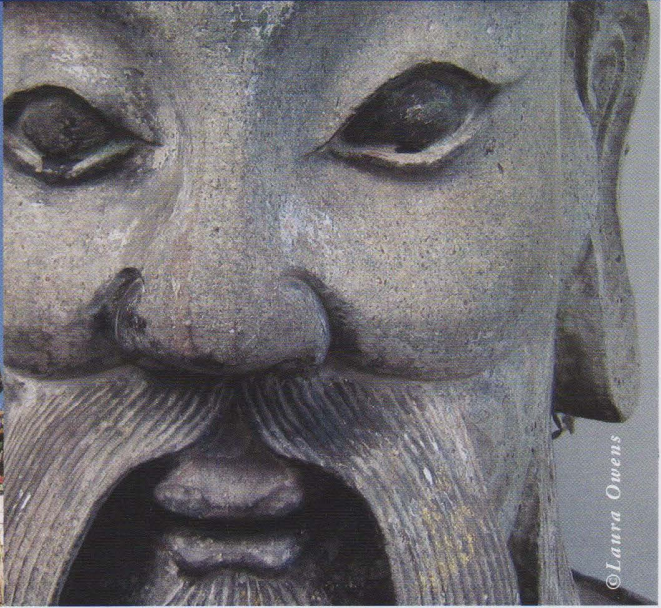
Workshop



© Laura Owens

Presentation stand

Other salient topics included the future conservation challenges for threatened Galliformes across the globe such as the Vulnerable swamp francolin *Francolinus gularis* and the Critically



# Symposium in Thailand

sense of festivity which was partly due to the colourful and bustling night market stalls that lined the streets of city but also to the occurrence of the Buddhist 'Yi Peng' festival or festival of light which meant that the streets of Chiang Mai were decorated with bright lights and beautiful lanterns. During the week many hot air lanterns could be seen floating across the night sky with several people getting an opportunity to launch their own.

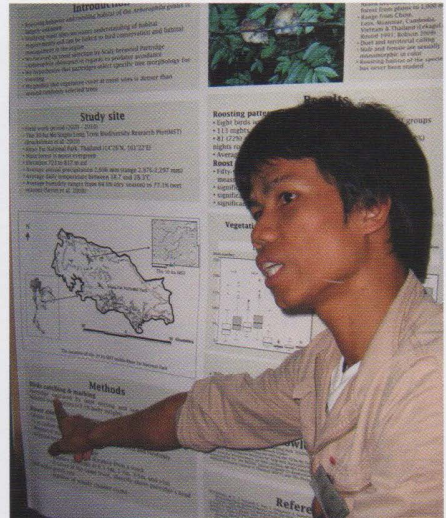
The three days following the talks were a mix of workshops and cultural tours. The workshops provided groups with the opportunity to discuss and plan conservation action and priorities, particularly for Chinese and Himalayan Galliformes. Many people then had the chance to visit Chiang Mai's large zoo in the centre of the city as well as visiting several of the vibrant Buddhist temples around the area.

A great deal of hard work and went into the preparation and organisation of this Symposium. Special thanks must be given to Stephen Browne, Tommaso Savini and Simon Dowell for producing a hugely successful event and also to the four wonderful Thai students who made sure that the programme ran perfectly. The staff at the Imperial Mae Ping hotel were perfect hosts and provided everyone with an enjoyable stay.

*Pictures above L - R Elephant lantern in the Festival of Light. Lanterns in the Festival of Light. Temple of Reclining Buddha, Bangkok. Stone statue at a temple in Bangkok.*



*Temple in Chiang Mai*



*Tiwa Ong-in presenting his poster*



*Neil Aldrin Mallari giving his presentation*

©Laura Owens

©Laura Owens

©Laura Owens

©Laura Owens

©Ronald Allan Altamirano

# Polynesian megapode surveys on Niuafu'ou, Tonga

Huw Lloyd

©Claudia Torres-Sovero



Adult male Polynesian megapode, Niuafu'ou

September 2010 saw the start of an exciting new project for WPA, surveys and action planning for the globally-threatened Polynesian Megapode *Megapodius pritchardii*. Known locally as *Malau*, this is one of only three obligate geothermal incubation specialists in the Megapode family. It is currently listed as Endangered on the IUCN Red List due to over-harvesting of eggs and predation by feral cats on the volcanic island of Niuafu'ou in the Kingdom of Tonga. The team carried out a two-week survey of the known nesting grounds of the *Malau* on Niuafu'ou. We had hoped to spend a week on another volcanic island - Fonualei - to determine the status of the translocated population there but severe weather conditions made this impossible.

This survey was the first for the species on its native island since the pioneering work of Ann Göth and Owe Vogel in 1991-1993. In addition, the team conducted two community workshops and three school visits to gain a better understanding of the experiences, knowledge and perceptions that the Niuafu'ou rural communities have toward *Malau* conservation. Surveys revealed that the *Malau* population has almost certainly undergone a serious population decline, and is entirely confined to small areas of largely undisturbed and inaccessible forest within the volcanic caldera, with only rare sightings of wandering individuals (adults) outside of the caldera in recent years. All sightings of adult birds were within close proximity to nesting grounds within the caldera, and no birds were seen or heard in forest areas away from nests.

Of greatest conservation concern however, is the sharp decline in the number of nesting grounds. Historically 27 *Malau* nesting grounds were known from 13 different sites across Niuafu'ou, but we found that only 10 active nesting grounds from just seven sites remain. Egg collecting also appears to have declined markedly over the same period, and now eggs are collected only occasionally from the most accessible nesting grounds whilst fishing for *Tilapia* fish within the crater lakes. Although many people of the island still believe that feral cat predation of young birds or egg-laying females remains the primary threat, the team observed very little evidence for this.

The reasons for the decline in number of nests remains unknown but further research examining soil temperature

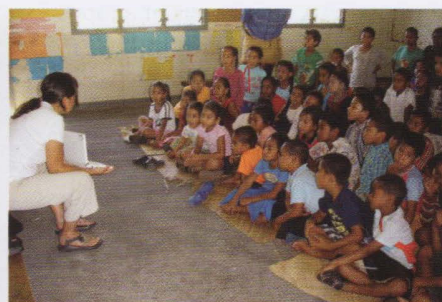
profiles and geothermal activity on Niuafu'ou are urgently required. Feral pigs are almost certainly destroying suitable foraging habitat for young birds and probably limiting individuals to areas within the caldera.

We had hoped to spend a week on another volcanic island - Fonualei - to determine the status of the translocated population there but severe weather conditions made this impossible.

A Conservation Strategy is near finalisation and includes a series of community-based conservation initiatives. Discussions are underway to see this strategy implemented by the Tonga Community Development Trust, World Pheasant Association and the Tonga Ministry of Environment and Climate Change.



Dr Huw Lloyd and a young *Malau* chick found in a nesting burrow on Niuafu'ou



Claudia Torres-Sovero with pupils from the Kolofu'o Primary School, Niuafu'ou



Sione Faka'osi and staff of the Tonga Community Development Trust

The survey was co-funded by grants from the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund and Program of Work for Protected Areas given to the Tonga Community and Development Trust.

**Survey team:** Sione Faka'osi, Executive Director of the Tonga Community Development Trust, Malakai Finau and Senituli Finau of the Tonga Ministry of Environment and Climate Change, Claudia Torres-Sovero a WPA Research Associate and Huw Lloyd.

# Poor vigilance in reintroduced captive-bred grey partridges

Elina Rantanen

Wildlife reintroductions for restoring threatened species and releases of captive-bred game birds to restock local populations are similar practices used in wildlife management. However, high mortality rates among the released animals are a common problem. A potential cause of this mortality could be poor-quality anti-predator behaviour, such as vigilance, in the released captive-bred population. Generations of captive breeding with constant exposure to stress may produce a population that has reduced response reactivity, such as a low susceptibility to psychological stress, and thereby lead to a poor perception of danger among the animals.

Vigilance is an important anti-predator defence in wild grey partridges *Perdix perdix*. Sensitivity to predation risk is the basis of adaptive anti-predator vigilance behaviour and poor vigilance could cause increased vulnerability to predators among captive grey partridges released into the wild. Few studies have previously measured post-released vigilance in captive-bred animals, and none reported background vigilance rates in released grey partridges. We suspected that released captive-bred grey partridges may not show adaptive behaviour in terms of post-release vigilance. Therefore, as a part of post-release behavioural studies on captive-bred grey partridges, we observed and measured vigilance rates in 26 released grey partridge autumn coveys.

This study was carried out in the autumn of 2006 and 2007 in Oxfordshire and east Gloucestershire in the UK. We selected sympathetically managed farms as study sites that provided key habitats for nesting, brood rearing and over-winter cover for grey partridges. Before each release we radio-tagged four or five individuals in every covey to enable us to find them again. Once the coveys were located, we observed and recorded group vigilance rates as well as time budgets of individual behaviour, including vigilance and feeding. We discovered that released



Grey partridge rearing pens



Vigilant cock with fostered chicks



Radio-tagged male grey partridge

grey partridges had low group vigilance rates (4-5% of the birds in the covey being vigilant), and showed similarly poor individual vigilance (4-5% of time spent vigilant) compared with wild grey partridges which, according to earlier studies, spent on average 43% of their time vigilant. Moreover, released birds spent 30-48% of their time feeding and fed at this rate throughout the day, instead of concentrating their feeding around dawn and dusk like wild grey partridges do.

Since being less vigilant decreases an animal's chances of detecting a predator before it is too late to escape, the low vigilance rates in released grey partridges revealed by this study probably increased the birds' vulnerability to predators. Rearing methods of grey partridges and possibly other species would therefore need to be developed to produce more wary animals. For instance by preventing habituation to humans and other fear-inflicting stimuli through isolation breeding. Furthermore, feeding generally compromises alertness to predators, and the continuous feeding by the released birds throughout the day could also help explain their high predation rates observed with these and previous releases. Therefore, the dawn-dusk feeding routine of wild grey partridges should be encouraged in the captive-bred birds by feeding them only at these times.

#### More information can be found in:

Rantanen, E.M., Buner, F., Riordan, P., Sotherton, N. and Macdonald, D.W. (2010) Vigilance, time budgets and predation risk in reintroduced captive-bred grey partridges *Perdix perdix*. *Applied Animal Behaviour Science* 127:43-50.

Or by contacting the author for more information:  
elinarantanen1@gmail.com

# Avicultural Roundup

## A cause and cure for egg-eating?

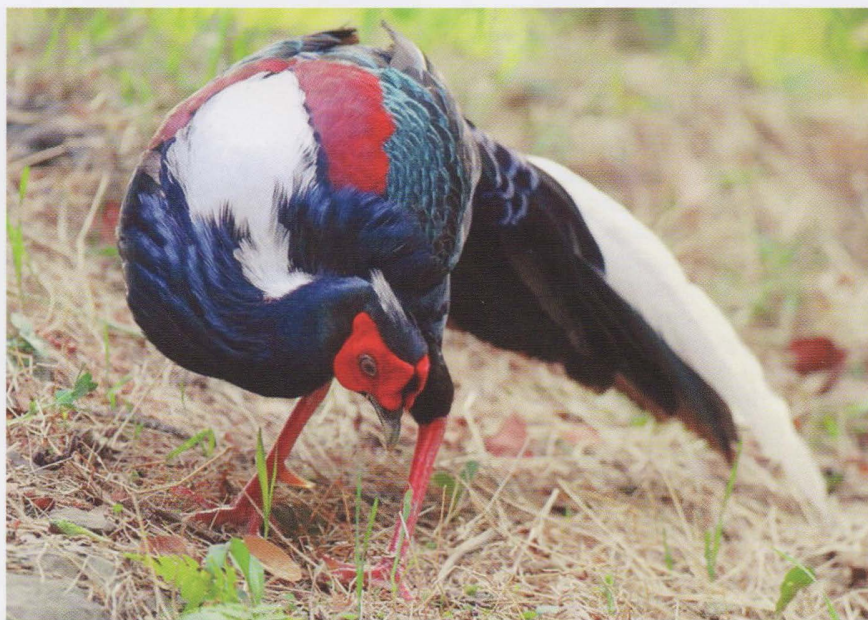
Mark Baker

You may remember the article written by Tim Lovel in last year's winter edition of WPA News 84, regarding the problem of birds eating the eggs of its mate once they are laid. Ten years ago I started breeding Swinhoe's pheasant *Lophura swinhoii*, an attractive species with a magnificent display and easy to breed. However... male Swinhoe's pheasants demonstrate this egg eating behaviour, aggressively tearing open the egg and removing it from the nest. The response from the hen is to move location and lay new eggs.

After experiencing this frustrating problem of egg eating with two breeding pairs of Swinhoe's pheasant for six years, it was a revelation when the behaviour finally stopped. Having only recently moved from a suburban area to a rural setting I attributed this dramatic change in behaviour to a change in the birds environment. The establishment of two new aviaries which were of similar size and height to the old ones, led to two important changes, the inclusion of tall tussock grass and no predation from rats.

Within a short space of time each pair successfully hatched and reared their young, continuing this pattern for three years. However, in the fourth year one pair began to demonstrate egg-eating behaviour once again. Perhaps not surprisingly this happened to coincide with an increase in nest predation from a population of local rats that had been able to dig under the aviary wire. In the pheasants' old aviaries at our previous location, rats had also made a home under a concrete slab next to the aviaries and had no difficulty entering them. To add to this the vegetation in the new aviary was almost completely denuded, leaving few areas for the birds to hide. Were these combined factors a possible cause of the egg-eating?

Having observed this behaviour my theory was that the environment in which the breeding pairs lived had become unsafe to breed in, causing the birds to destroy their eggs.



Male Swinhoe's pheasant

© John & Fish

Swinhoe's pheasant normally live in dense vegetation. The lack of grass in the aviary combined with the threat from the rats may have provoked the males to destroy the eggs in an attempt to encourage the hen to lay the eggs in a more secure location and therefore improve the chances of successful reproduction.

In an attempt to solve the problem and change the birds' environment by reducing the threats, I moved the pair to an old aviary which had been revegetated with tussock grass and that was completely rat proof. After three weeks the hen laid her first clutch but unfortunately the

behaviour continued as the male promptly devoured the first two. Consequently I had to remove the cock completely to protect the eggs as I wanted the chicks to be parent reared.

My feeling is that the threat has to have been present for quite a while to make the birds eat their eggs in the first place, and it is easy to imagine that once a bird perceives a threat it may be difficult for it to feel secure again. The new aviary was only 5 m from their old aviary. To stop the egg-eating the first time, I had to drive them 25 km to a new location!

In the new breeding season I now plan to move the pair to a brand new, rat proof aviary with plenty of tussock grass and at a much further distance from the rat population and hope that the pair feels comfortable enough to raise a new clutch of chicks.



© Mark Baker

Male caught in the act

If you have any comments or have additional questions why not continue the discussion at [www.pheasant.org.uk/membersarea](http://www.pheasant.org.uk/membersarea) which is now the new WPA member's forum.

# Physical changes in captive grey peacock-pheasants

Kurt Landig



© Herman Verbeek

Grey peacock-pheasant

The grey peacock pheasant *Polyplectron bicalcaratum* is found throughout Southeast Asia, primarily in Laos and Vietnam and it is abundant in its habitat of semi-evergreen forest. Its distinctive eyespots illuminated against long grey feathers make it an attractive species for captive collections. However, there could be some cause for concern as the morphological characteristics of the grey peacock pheasant may be changing in captive populations.

Observations of the peacock-pheasant in several private collections suggested that their spurs and central rectrices (tail feathers) might be changing as a result of captivity. The spurs seemed to be absent or small and the central rectrices appeared shorter in both sexes, irrespective of age. These changes in the pheasant's physical characteristics could be a result of genetic changes in the captive populations.

To explore the extent of these physical changes they were compared to specimens in several museums

including the Natural History Museum (at Tring, Hertfordshire, UK), the American Museum of Natural History (New York) and the Chicago Field Museum (Illinois), both in the US. The number of spurs and the length of tails were measured on grey peacock-pheasant specimens to provide a

source of baseline information with which to compare physical characteristics of captive birds.

The table below details the results collected at Tring from 19 male specimens of Burmese grey peacock *P. b. bicalcaratum* and Himalayan grey peacock *P. b. bakeri* subspecies.

The length of the main tail feathers in these male specimens ranged from 30 cm to 35.5 cm with an average of 33 cm. The average tail feather length in female specimens was 23 cm.

Over 70 specimens of grey peacock-pheasant were found across each of the three museums. Most of the male specimens in the American Museum of Natural History and the Chicago Field Museum also possessed double spurs on each tarsus or two spurs on one tarsus and a single spur on the other. Further observations made of other *Polyplectron* species in these museums indicated that males also possessed double or single spurs on each tarsus up to 2.5 cm in length.

When these results are compared with captive bred peacock-pheasants it becomes obvious that there is a decline in spur number and tail length in these birds. What is causing these changes in *Polyplectron* species needs further investigation.

Number of specimens	Number of spurs on each tarsus	Length of spurs	Distance between spurs
11	2	1.9 – 2.5 cm	1 – 2.5 cm
3	3 and 2	1.9 – 2.5 cm	1 – 2.5 cm
3	2 and 1	1.9 – 2.5 cm	1 – 2.5 cm
2	1	1.9 – 2.5 cm	1 – 2.5 cm



© Kurt Landig

Measurements taken of the tail of an adult male



© Kurt Landig

The spur development of an adult male grey peacock-pheasant

(Photos courtesy of American Museum of Natural History, New York)

# International captive breeding co-operation

Keith Chalmers-Watson

November 2009 saw the annual meeting of the European Conservation Breeding Group in Lisbon together with the launch of the new WPA Portugal chapter. The meeting of both organisations in Lisbon led to the development of new relationships with many breeders, in particular were those fostered with the curators of Lisbon Zoo and Lourosa Park in Oporto.

Further discussions with Patricia Vilarinho, curator at Lisbon Zoo and Andreia Pinto, curator at Lourosa Park, revealed the great potential for the exchange of birds between Portugal and the UK and the considerable benefits to be gained for breeding programmes in both countries.



©Keith Chalmers-Watson

Simon Mayes during his trip in Cologne



©Keith Chalmers-Watson

The exchange involved a group of twelve birds including pheasants, curassows, guinea fowl and a pigeon. Lynda Burrill (Royal Zoological Society of Scotland) and I, together with Patricia and Andreia tackled the problem head on over the following months, to find the most convenient way to transport and exchange the birds.

The biggest difficulty we faced was the cost of the air freight transport. However, these fears were soon quashed as our inimitable chairman of CBAG-UK Simon Mayes, volunteered to drive the consignment from the UK to Portugal. The long journey began with the Royal Zoological Society of Scotland and Fenton Barns sharing transport of the birds to Portsmouth. Once in Portsmouth there was the gruelling task of organising paperwork but persistence paid off and the birds left our shores on 16 July. The new group of birds returned in Scotland just over a week later with Simon having had a brief respite in Lisbon.

I am very happy to report that all the birds made the journey successfully and are settling in well. All in all some 4000 'bird miles' were covered. Everyone involved would like to offer Simon our most grateful thanks for making this triumphant journey and ensuring the exchange of much-needed bloodlines.

Captive helmeted curassows having successfully made the journey

# Raising funds for WPA

Keith Howman

WPA has been running clay pigeon shoots to raise funds for over a decade. More than £100,000 has been raised and many new members and friends have been made. Importantly, almost all of the money raised can be regarded as 'un-restricted'. Unrestricted funds can go towards the core running of the charity, whereas restricted funds have to be 'ring fenced' and used only for the specified purpose or project for which they were raised. As membership subscriptions cover only 10-15% of WPA's annual running costs the value of this form of fundraising can be appreciated.

Our charity shoots have to date been held in south east England and central east Scotland. The southern event is held at the Compton Manor Estate near Stockbridge, Hampshire, with friendly staff and is easily accessible. The events are run by a select committee who work hard to plan and organise each event down to the smallest detail. In order to reduce costs and increase the amount raised, the committee provides both the catering and drinks for the event.

In Scotland we originally based the charity shoot at the excellent Dunkeld Hilton Shooting Grounds but having built up a larger following we now hold the event at the Scottish clay pigeon shooting grounds near Leuchars in Fife. The grounds are on the private Craigie Farm Estate owned by John Foster who until recently was Chairman of the Scottish Countryside Alliance (SCA). Nicola Simpson (née



Top Team - The Crockarts Team, (L-R) Brian McIntosh, Michael Clarke, William Manning, Robert Jamieson

© Keith Howman - all pictures p15

Chalmers- Watson) who was for many years WPA administrator runs the Scottish Countryside Alliance Educational Trust Charity (SCAET) located within the SCA offices. Joining forces with John and Nicola and the associated organisations, utilising the estate and their experience, has greatly assisted with the smooth running of the annual event.



Not the top shots but winners of a bottle of Champagne (L-R) Mark Stevens who runs the Bridge of Cally Hotel, John Milne from Hampshire away from home territory, Matt Geary WPA's black grouse man on invitation day

The annual clay shoots are great days out with plenty of laughs and an abundance of prizes with almost as many given to the poorest performances as to the top ones! At this year's Black Grouse Charity Shoot held on 8 October, Matt Geary (our black grouse student) along with two others won a bottle of champagne for having a joint bottom score. Considering Matt had not shot before he performed well for the WPA clay conservationist's team with a borrowed gun, extending his good performance with a very well presented talk on his Perthshire Black Grouse Project.

Over the years the clay pigeon shoots have gathered a huge amount of support along with new members for WPA and the Golden Pheasant Club. Many of our supporters now regularly attend the events and help to raise a considerable amount of money for WPA.

Our 2011 charity shoot in the south will again be held at Compton Manor Estate in Hampshire and will be run by David and Kerry Malaperiman, David and Susan Hewetson-Brown, John and Boo Milne and Keith and Jean Howman on Friday 6 May. The Black Grouse Charity Clay Pigeon Shoot will be on Friday 23 September at Craigie Farm and will be run by SCAET, Keith and Jean Howman and Keith Chalmers-Watson on behalf of WPA.



The Borland Belles, (L-R) Jean Howman, Jane Wright, Claire Valentine and Nicola Simpson

If you are interested in taking part in either event, or perhaps you would like to organise your own charity shoot for WPA, please contact the WPA office ([office@pheasant.org.uk](mailto:office@pheasant.org.uk)).

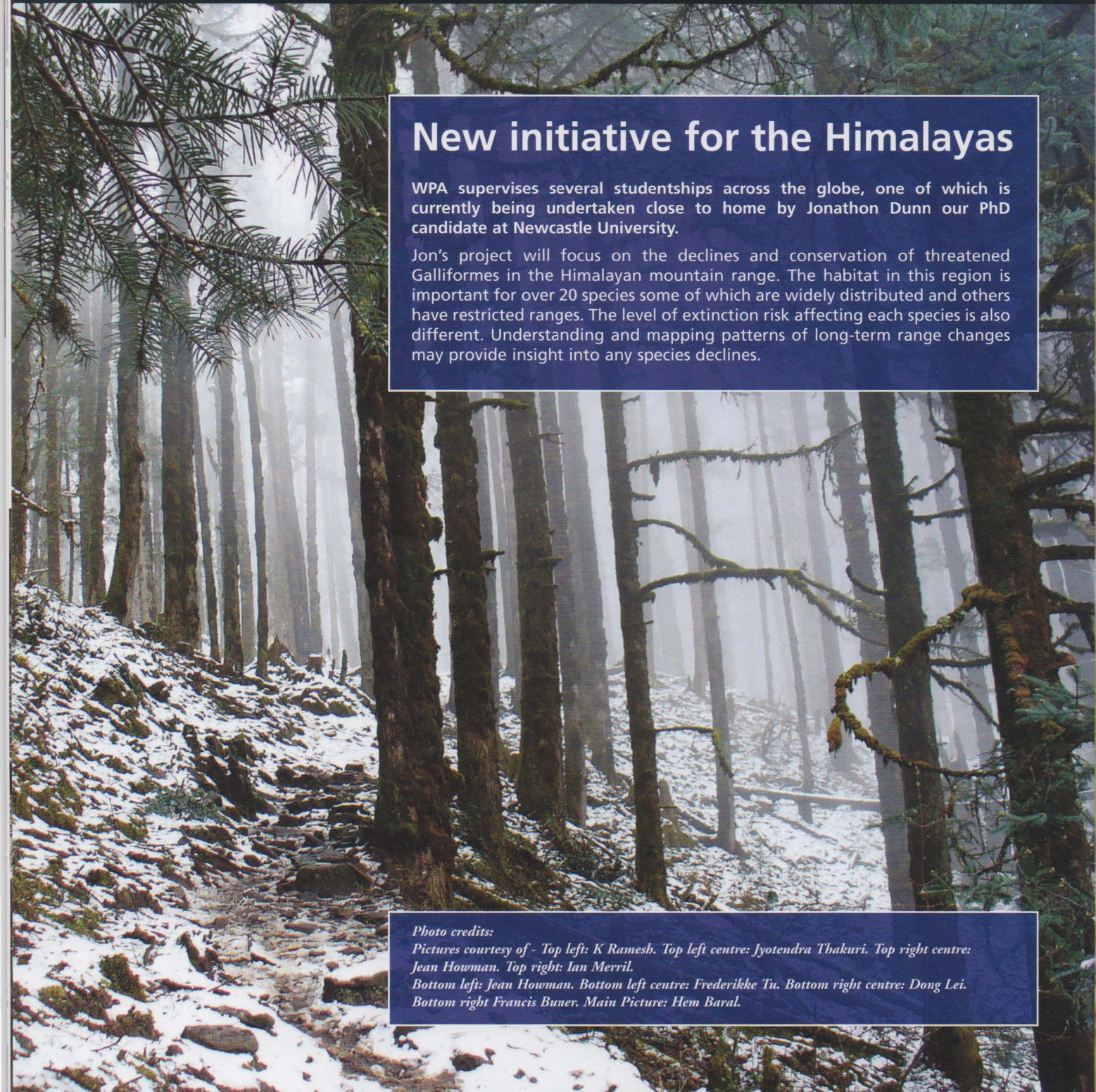




## New initiative for the Himalayas

WPA supervises several studentships across the globe, one of which is currently being undertaken close to home by Jonathon Dunn our PhD candidate at Newcastle University.

Jon's project will focus on the declines and conservation of threatened Galliformes in the Himalayan mountain range. The habitat in this region is important for over 20 species some of which are widely distributed and others have restricted ranges. The level of extinction risk affecting each species is also different. Understanding and mapping patterns of long-term range changes may provide insight into any species declines.



*Photo credits:*

*Pictures courtesy of - Top left: K Ramesb. Top left centre: Jyotendra Thakuri. Top right centre: Jean Howman. Top right: Ian Merril. Bottom left: Jean Howman. Bottom left centre: Frederikke Tu. Bottom right centre: Dong Lei. Bottom right Francis Buner. Main Picture: Hem Baral.*

