



27 August 2013

“Friends of the Amur Falcon” Campaign Launched

A comprehensive campaign to protect the Amur Falcons that migrate through Nagaland every winter has been launched in Wokha District of Nagaland. It will include nature education, creation of Amur Falcon EcoClubs, patrolling and enforcement, as well as scientific study of the birds.

Nagaland Wildlife and Biodiversity Conservation Trust (NWBCT), an NGO based in Dimapur, is the principal lead of this campaign, supported by top conservation institutions like Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), Birdlife, Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS), Raptor Research and Conservation Foundation (RRCF) and Wildlife Conservation Trust (WCT). In addition, there is active support and encouragement from the Government of Nagaland.

The campaign is in response to the mass killings of Amur Falcon that was recorded last year by the team.

In a message of support, the Chief Minister of Nagaland Mr. Neiphiu Rio stated “The state government is committed to end the unfortunate killings of the migratory Amur Falcons in Nagaland while they are passing through the state. Further Mr. Rio added, “It is our duty to protect the Amur Falcons and, in true Naga tradition of hospitality, treat them as honoured and esteemed guests”.

The complete statement of support from the Chief Minister is attached to this press release.

The local administration (Deputy Commissioner) as well as the Department of Forests, Ecology, Environment and Wildlife will be stepping up vigilance to prevent any hunting this season.

Conservation education

NWBCT kicked-off a comprehensive education initiative covering the areas the falcons visit. This proven and comprehensive programme opens a window into the world of nature education as a tool for conservation.

A “training the trainer” workshop will prepare participants to help educate kids in the villages. The participants selected will have varied backgrounds such as teachers, church workers, NGO activists, interested youth of the village and even hunters willing to reform.

Next will be the formation of EcoClubs in specific villages that will focus on nature and wildlife education, fieldwork, creative arts and photography. Study of Amur Falcons and its protection will be central to these



EcoClubs. A “brand” will be built around the falcon so it becomes a mascot for the community. The EcoClubs will have Amur posters, stickers, badges and a highly educative “Amur Falcon Passport” for kids to record details of the falcons migrating through their village.

Managing trustee of NWBCT Bano Haralu believes that “Local communities respond better when the youth are educated and this can happen only through intensive grassroots education as the team has seen in other parts of the Northeast”.

Mass killings

Every October, huge numbers of Amur Falcons (Scientific name: *Falco amurensis*) arrive in northeast India from Siberia en route to South Africa. This little bird of prey has one of the longest migration routes of all birds, doing up to 22,000 km in a year. In addition to the distance covered, the birds are unusual in that they migrate a large distance over the sea and also continue their journey at night.

Last October, the NWBCT team documented the shocking massacre of tens of thousands of these migratory falcons in Wokha district of Nagaland in India’s northeast.

The migrating falcons descend to forested patches along the banks of the Doyang reservoir (30km from Wokha town) to roost. Here, hunters set up huge fishing nets (30-40m long, 10-12m tall) where the birds get caught in large numbers. Doyang reservoir in Wokha district probably hosts the single largest congregation of Amur falcons recorded anywhere in the world and it is tragic that they are mercilessly targeted by hunters here.

These findings were published in Conservation India (<http://www.conservationindia.org/campaigns/amur-massacre>) that resulted in national and international outcry. It is important to note that India, as a signatory to the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS), is duty bound to prevent this massacre, provide safe passage, as well as draw up action plans for the long-term conservation of this bird.

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