

Migratory birds skip Shirui

Source: *The Sangai Express*

Imphal, May 14 2011: Excessive poaching by villagers settled in the Shirui Hill range in Ukhrul district has been cited as the main reason for the decline in the number of migratory birds from Siberia that flock to the hill range to feed on seeds of a flower-bearing tree (Leihao) .

Informing that a tiny Siberian migratory bird species known in the local parlance as Siri used to arrive at the hill range, where the Manipur State flower Shirui (siroy) Lily grow, to feed on Leihao seeds, Manipur State Coordinator of Indian Bird Conservation Network Dr RK Ranjan said the bird species normally arrive at the hill range in between July to September months.



The Shirui hill range and (inset) Siri migratory bird

Interacting with some newsmen on the occasion of World Migratory Birds Day observance organised jointly by the Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH) and the Network's State unit at Manipur Press Club here today, Dr Ranjan said in addition to the decline in the number of the migratory birds due to poaching there is tell-tale sign of the Leihao flower not blooming in recent years.

Informing that theme of the annual observance this year is 'Land use changes from a bird's eye view', the environmentalist also pointed out that presence or absence of migratory birds at a specific location is an indication on the ecological condition of the area.

He also confided that from an environmentalist's point of view migratory birds from far-off place not returning to their annual feeding place or flocking in reduced number is a sign of degrading environmental condition of the said zone. Further highlighting that when Manipur was a kingdom, Porompat used to be a natural habitat of the migratory bird species called Porom (Coots), Dr Ranjan said gradual transformation of the Porompat landscape and conversion of the site into an institutional area has resulted in shrinkage or total vanishing of the bird's annual feeding place.

Another wildlife activist, RK Birjit, who is also president of Generation de New Image, joining in the interaction described as worrisome environmental condition of the Loktak Lake where number of migratory and local bird species is informed to have declined from 127 species, as per 1879 record maintained by the British, to only 44 species at present.

Moreover, the fact that only about 20,000 of the birds prefer Loktak Lake as its habitat deserves immediate attention of all concerned to replenish the Lake's resources, he suggested while expressing concerned that until and unless appropriate measures to restore the Lake's ecological system is not initiated there is apprehension of the gradual decadence diluting historical relevance of the largest fresh water body.

Members and volunteers of Manipur Association for Science and Society, and Environment and Human Development Manipur also participated in the observance of World Migratory Birds day.