

Safdar Ali Shah

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Safdar Ali Shah is working as Conservator Wildlife Southern Circle in the Wildlife Department Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Born in Kalu Khan District Swabi on June 24, 1965, he graduated from Post Graduate College Mardan in 1986, followed by a Master Degree in Zoology with a distinction of Gold Medal from Peshawar University in 1990 with research on fisheries. In 1991 he was selected as Assistant Conservator Wildlife in the Wildlife Department of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and was sent to Pakistan Forest Institute for post service training leading to Master of Forestry in 1993. After completion of the course he was posted as Divisional Wildlife Officer Abbottabad, Swat and Peshawar for protection and management of wildlife in the field. In 1995 he was deputed to the GEF Funded UNDP project "Maintaining Biodiversity in Pakistan-PRIF phase" as Coordinator Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for testing community based conservation approaches through community participation in District Swat, Buner, Dir and Chitral of the Province. During the project he not only successfully tested the model but also prepared a number of Village Conservation and Development Plan for sustainable development of the project areas but also developed Valley Conservation Plans for sustainable use of the biodiversity resources of the area. Successful implementation of the Pre Investment Phase lead to a full scale GEF funded Mountain Areas Conservancy Project, which was implemented in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Northern Areas of Pakistan. In 1998, he played a pivotal role in organizing communities and establishment of Tooshi - Shasha and Gehrait Conservancies in District Chitral for promotion of community based trophy hunting programme. For scientific management of the programme he also prepared "Markhor Conservation Plan" for the respective areas which paved way for CITES permit of trophy hunting in the area. In 2001 he was sent to Leeds, UK for higher studies leading to Master in Biodiversity and Conservation with distinction. Chunk of his experience is in community based conservation of natural resources and raising of conservation awareness in the masses. He also serve as resource persons and deliver lectures to the target groups on various issues related to natural resource conservation and its sustainable uses. He is also one of the author of the recently published book "Wildlife of Northern Pakistan" and has authored and co-authored a number of research papers. Presently he is posted in Peshawar and is working as Conservator Wildlife Southern Circle in the Wildlife Department Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Potential sites for creation of Biosphere reserves in Pakistan

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Nature has gifted the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province of Pakistan with a variety of habitats. The province has an latitudinal variation of less than 300 m in the south to has high as 7708 m at Tirichmir (the highest peak of Hidukash mountain). Out of the nine ecological zones of Pakistan, at least eight are represented in the Province. The Province support the world largest surviving population of western horn tragopan pheasant in Palas valley of District Kohistan and flare horned Kashmir markhor in District Chitral, Dir, Swat and Kohistan. Areas of Chitral Gol national park and surrounding Kalash valleys in District Chitral, Kumrat Valley in Dir Kohistan and Palas Valley in Indus Kohistan are splendid areas of culture and biodiversity hot spots. Palas valley lies in the east of River Indus among the front ranges of the Western Himalaya with an altitudinal variation ranging between 1000m to 5151b m and a topography of mostly rugged and precipitous mountains. Higher altitudes of the area experiences temperate condition whereas sub tropical conditions at the lower altitudes. Mean annual precipitation varies between 900 mm to 1350mm mostly falling as

winter snow. The great altitudinal variation and climatic range of Palas support a wide diversity of natural plant communities. The forests of Palas are remarkable in their contiguity, diversity of plant associations and near primary condition. Chitral Gol National Park (CGNP) is situated in Chitral, the most northerly district of the Province. The Park having a core area of 7780 hectares and a buffer of 12145 hectares is comprises of deep valleys and basin surrounded by high rugged and steep mountains. The altitude varies from 1450 m to 4865m with more than 24 peaks exceeding 3000m. Climate is mostly dry temperate along with supported vegetation. Chitral Gol covers the country's most important remaining pristine tract of the natural limit of the arid temperate oak deodar forest and alpine pastures supporting snow leopard (*Uncia uncia*) and flare horned Markhor (*Capra falconeri*) as species of global importance. Kumrat valley is located in upper Dir district and ecologically falls in temperate zone where average annual precipitation is 1075mm, covering an area of 412, 570 acres out of which 33,915 acres are cultivated, 149,317 acres are natural forests and the remaining 229,338 acres are pasture land. Only a few agricultural crops such as Maize, Potatoes and Beans are grown. Population expansion in fragile environment is increasing burden on the limited resources. The area supports a wide diversity of natural plant communities, including subtropical dry oak *Quercus* dominated forests and scrub; temperate forests (deciduous, mixed and coniferous); sub-alpine birch *Betula* woods; alpine scrub and meadows. Besides the valley support populations of large mammals like Black and Born bear, common leopard, grey goral, rhesus monkeys, Giant Indian flying squirrel, etc. and avian.