

# Hume's Pheasant: A tragic recovery

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The pheasants (Family: Phasianidae) so called Game Birds were formerly plentiful in the forest-clad hills of Manipur including the foothills facing the valley, the hill-riverside and also the sacred groves in the valley of Manipur. They are characterized by their terrestrial habit with stout naked legs for progress on the ground and admired as one of the most ornamental birds in existence. As is the case with a majority of birds, a male with well-developed hard spurs on their hind legs sports brighter colour, while the female is invariably drab. Pheasants are particularly sedentary birds, spending most of their time scratching for food, which include among other seeds, grains, fruits, leaves, roots, worms, slugs, insects etc. and usually perch on the trees at 2-3 metres high during night. They occur mostly in pair or in small groups, and when pursued run swiftly downhill, instead of taking flight.

### Manipur Pheasants :

Manipur has a legacy of pride for having been the home of five species of fascinating pheasants endemic to this region - the Hume's pheasant, Peacock Pheasant, Kalij's Pheasant, Greybellied Horned Pheasant and Green Peafowl. The peacock pheasant or Lamyen wahongman in Manipuri or Luilam in Kabui or Valee in Kuki (*Polyplectron bicalcaratum bakeri*) has prominently purple and green rows of ocelli, particularly on wing-coverts and long tail. The female is smaller with shorter tail and with smaller and duller ocelli. The earlier range of the bird covering almost all places of the hills has currently shrunken to certain pockets in the south eastern evergreen forests.



**BLYTH'S TRAGOPAN**  
Photo Courtesy : Internet

The Blyth's tragopan or Rachangpui in Liangmei or Chingthao in Tangkhul (*Tragopan blythii blythii*) has orange-yellow face, black patches on the forehead, and bright crimson colour on the hindcrown, neck, wing shoulder and upper breast. The upper crimson plumage with conspicuous white and maroon ocelli looks the bird more colourful. The lower breast and belly are smoky grey. The females and immature males have brownish-grey with indistinct ocelli or spotting all over the body. The broadleaf temperate forest and bamboo forest of Dzuku valley (Dzu meaning frozen and ku meaning water in Mao Pukmai) on the border of Manipur and Nagaland support a sizable number of Blyth's Tragopan. The Dzuku lily (*Lilium chitragadae*), a sister of Siroi lily (*Lilium chitragadae*) is the pride of this frozen valley. Blyth's Tragopan is the state bird of Nagaland.

The Blackbreasted Kalij Pheasant or Waba in Manipuri or Rickchuk in Ronhmei or Warik in Purum (*Lophura leucomelanos lathami*) is a large black pheasant having black and backwardly directed crest. The crimson-red orbital skin extends up to ear-coverts. The upper back is glossy blue black, lower back and rump is black, and irregularly white barred. The neck, throat and upper breast are entirely black glossed with steel blue and purple. The tail is longer than the wing. A female example was rescued from Kabowakching village in Bishnupur district on March 5, 2008. This bird, now in Manipur Zoological Garden, Iroisemba paired with a male from Chandel (2005) and laid 11 buffy white eggs on June, 2009 and after incubation period 24 days in the Zoo's enclosure by the hen, 4 black chickens hatched out.

The Green Peafowl or Wahong-asungba in Manipuri or Chakhuipui in Liangmei or Sachipui in Maram (*Pavo muticus spicifer*) is readily distinguished from Indian peacock by having green colouration all over the body. A male bird has a tuft of upstanding and pointed crest (fan like in

