

across old village women walking by on winding mud paths or workers at a construction site gently reminding tourists not to venture too near the birds as they are shy of strangers and have in recent years known to move away from the village when tourists intrude on their space.

The Sarpanch of the village, who also heads a local NGO is currently working towards making this a tourist spot by developing infrastructure on his own property. Whether or not this will be in the interest of the villagers as a whole or of the birds, only time will tell.

**Source:** Atul Sethi, 'Where Peacocks Enjoy Pride of Perch', Times of India, February 2008 and from a visit to Chincholi Morachi by the editor

## Nagaland

### Khonoma Nature Conservation and Tragopan Sanctuary

Khonoma is a village in Nagaland and home to the proud Angami tribe, traditionally known for its bravery, valour and hunting skills. The region was once rich in biodiversity and wildlife but had been stripped clear of most of its wildlife by 1993. However the trajectory of conservation efforts in Khonoma in the last decade has been awe inspiring.

Until 1994, guests to this village were treated to lavish feasts where the menu included a wide variety of wild meat. However in 1995, alarmed by the drastic loss of the local rich wildlife and due to the efforts of village elders like Tsilie Sakhrie, Forest Department officials like T. Angami and NGOs like Centre for Environment Education (CEE), the Village Council (the customary village institution) passed rules to regulate hunting in 70 sq. kilometres of the forest near Khonoma. In this area, only limited hunting of crop destroyers like some deer species and wild boar (*Sus scrofa*) was allowed and the sale of all wild meat was banned. Anyone caught breaking these customary rules was fined anywhere from Rs. 300 to Rs. 3000. The clans to which defaulters belonged also faced prospects of being fined. The stopping of hunting and selling of wild meat definitely affected the food

availability and livelihoods of local people to a certain extent, but the rules were upheld and followed.

In 1998, the Khonoma Nature Conservation and Tragopan Sanctuary was declared by the local community. Local rules and regulations, local institutions and local people nominated as officials were put in place by the Village Council to manage the sanctuary. In 2000, hunting was completely stopped and slowly wildlife is returning to the village, the sanctuary and the surrounding Dzuku Valley. Currently one finds considerable wild life here which includes the black bear (*Ursus thibetanus*), the sambar (*Cervus unicolor*) and the leopard (*Panthera pardus*), over 40 species of orchids, as well as the endemic Dzuku lily. Khonoma is also recognised as an Important Bird Area (IBA) and is home to the endangered Blythe's tragopan (*Tragopan blythii*). Feroze Ahmed, a biologist documenting the biodiversity of the area, reports that there are 20 species of frogs and toads in the area. Khonoma with its sophisticated cultivation technique is also a centre of impressive agro-biodiversity. It is home to 60 varieties of rice and a large variety of millets and maize.



The Central and State Government have stepped in to create tourism-based livelihoods for the conserving community, which to a certain extent may offset the loss to hunting-based livelihoods. In 2003, the Khonoma Tourism Board (KTB) was constituted and members of the local community were encouraged to take on jobs as guides, tour operators and

interpreters. The Union Ministry of Tourism and Culture also adopted the village under its Green Project and Khonoma now has some good roads and solar energy.

While biodiversity and wildlife have definitely returned with the effort, the livelihood issue is a bit more complicated. Some are of the opinion that the experiment in Khonoma is a complete success and Khonoma can become a role model for community-based conservation and livelihood security, while others feel that the livelihood benefits have been only at the individual level. Payments are made to guides, performers at cultural programmes and to individual families but the village as a whole has not benefited much.

**Source:** Amarjyoti Borah , 'Welcome to Khonoma Eco-tourism; A Success in a Nagaland Village', Down to Earth, March 2008