



| **Report**

# **BOUNTIFUL HERITAGES: PROTECTING PAKISTANI PEACOCKS**

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## **Introduction**

Indian Peafowl, commonly known as peacock, has roots in India and is now widespread in other areas of subcontinent regions. Its range extends from Pakistan through Nepal and India, South of the Himalayas down to Sri Lanka. Specifically in Pakistan, a large part of the peacock population is in the extreme south-eastern part of Sindh province around Tharparkar, Sindh [1]. However, a small population is in the north-eastern border of the Punjab province, including Narowal district and northern Punjab district [2]. A thin peacock population is also present in the regions of Vatala and Deva in Azad Jammu and Kashmir [3].

Their preferred habitats for living include forest edges, grasslands, and lightly wooded forests. They are present in deciduous forests near water and thorn bushes. They like to rest in tall trees, away from any potential predators. When in danger, these creatures immediately hide in bushes or fly towards tall trees. Peafowls are omnivorous creatures and feed on seeds, grains, lentils, ground nuts, tender shoots of crops, flower buds, berries, drupes, wild figs, centipedes, scorpions, lizards, small snakes, insects, worms, and grubs.

## **Peafowls in Tharparkar**

The Thari desert region of Sindh province in Pakistan is estimated to inhabit approximately 65,000 to 70,000 blue and green wild Indian Peafowls. They are essential to the animal biodiversity of the Tharparkar desert [4]. Along with being an integral part of the ecosystem, they have a cultural and religious significance to the often persecuted Hindu minority community living there. They consider the peacocks scarred because of their association with several deities and killing them is deemed a sin in their religion.

Even though peacock holds a vital position in the context of natural habitat and religious ideologies of people living in the desert, they are now considered endangered and face the threat of becoming extinct if there are

more delays in implementing rigorous protective measures. There are numerous threats to peacocks existing populations, which include habitat loss and degradation, exponential increase in human populations, illegal poaching, intensive agricultural practices and use of pesticides, killing for their feathers, collection of eggs for consumption, killing for medical reasons, and limited funding by the Forestry Department Sindh for their protection. Another grave cause of concern for their death in the region is the Newcastle Disease, locally known as Ranikhet. It is a contagious viral infection that causes dehydration and severe effects on the brain that cause the bird to 'spin' to their deaths. In 2011, the Ranikhet swept through the areas of Thar and other districts of Sindh, leaving only about 200,000 survivors, an all-time low in the peacock population [5]. Although vaccines are available against this disease due to limited funding and poor management, the peacock population is still being affected by this viral infection.

Numerous research works and area studies suggest that protected areas or sanctuaries are an effective and popular tool in conserving and protecting threatened wildlife species and ecosystems. Although the local government and private organizations are constructing protective enclosures, more such areas are required to protect peacock populations from becoming endangered.

## **Construction of Sanctuaries by NHSD**

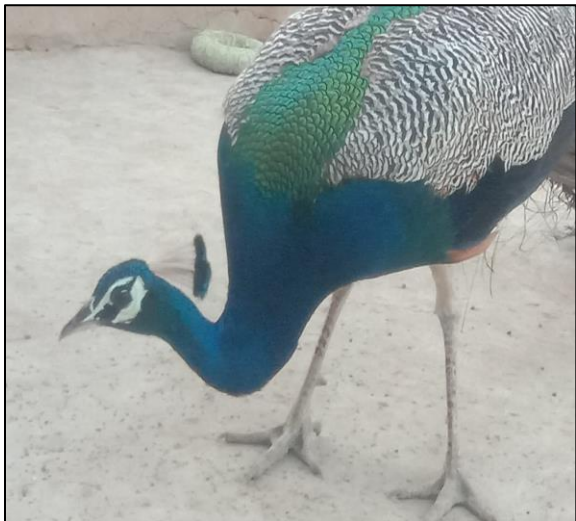
Network for Human and Social Development (NHSD) in collaboration with GlobalGiving understands the severity of the situation and is taking steps to protect the population of peacocks. NHSD has completed the construction of one walled sanctuary in Mithrio Charran, Tharparkar where 14 to 15 peacocks are being safeguarded and providing a viable environment for their breeding. With the donations received so far, a wall has been constructed around the protected area along this, security system has been installed to protect the birds from hazardous environments, poaching threats and save breeding. Tall trees and bushes are also present inside the

enclosure to make the place more habitable for the peacocks. They are provided with good quality bird food, with all the nutrients and vitamins needed for their healthy growth. The provision of a consistent water supply is also playing an important role in their well-being and healthy breeding patterns. The exhaustive measurements taken by NHSD have increased their number inside the enclosure, the health of the new peachicks is being monitored closing and they are thriving.

NHSD is also working on constructing an additional five sanctuaries and safe breeding grounds in Chahchro Tehsil. NHSD aims to provide the same and even better services in these enclosures.

## Pictures









## **Conclusion**

Efforts taken by the organization have increased the number of healthy peacocks and aim to do the same in the other areas of Chachro tehsil, Tharparkar. However, more work is still needed to maintain and increase the peacock population. More funding will help in the construction of additional enclosures. A continuous supply of drinkable water is a requirement for their survival, and measurements in the other areas of Chachro tehsil are needed in this regard. Another important thing for peacock survival is the availability of vaccination against Newcastle and other dangerous diseases. The provision of these vaccinations will have a grave impact on their survival and increase the number of their healthy offsprings.

## **References**

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