

FOREWORD

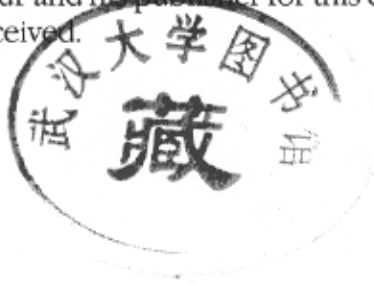
With our vast and varied terrain conditions, encompassing virtually every type of geographical feature, we are home to a large number of birds and also play host to several more varieties, who are winter visitors. Unfortunately, for one reason or another most of us do not have access to the requisite source material and specialised information that is so vitally important if we are to enjoy our flora and fauna more intimately, and to develop the empathy which will result in an increased concern for their well-being. This little book seeks to bridge that gap.

This story starts a few years ago, when I was commanding a Division in Ladakh and Ram Gaur joined me as my deputy. Though we were together in the Academy, our paths never crossed in the interim, but stories kept drifting back about this professional oddity, who seemed to spend a lot of time on his environment and had developed, over the years an increasing passion for it. During our first interview I asked him what he would like to do, since there was not enough work for both of us. With a straight face he told me that he would gladly let me work without interference, while he would concentrate on documenting the life in Ladakh. I accepted this broad division of duty, but only after emphasising that he was my deputy and not vice versa. The next two years passed happily enough.

He was mainly instrumental in changing the general perception of the Army-man from that of a poacher to a conservationist and has, over the years, enhanced his reputation and spread the message of conservation in a number of different forums, to increasingly appreciative audiences. Our initial venture was a pilot project for the protection of the Black Necked Crane and from those beginnings has developed the Army's credo.

I do hope that this beautifully produced book will enable more of our people to share his dreams. A deep and abiding interest in nature and the ability to live in harmony with our environment are mutually supporting endeavours, for which we can never do enough if we are to continue to share nature's bounty.

I congratulate Ram Gaur and his publisher for this delightful venture. I am confident that it will be very well received.



(SF RODRIGUES)

General

19 June, 1993