Arunachal Pradesh (26°28′–29°30′N, 91°30′–97°30′E), also known as the 'land of the rising sun,' is located in the northeastern corner of India (. 1). Formerly known as North East Frontier Agency (NEFA), the state of Arunachal Pradesh covers an area of 83,743 km². It is bordered by Bhutan on the west, China (Tibet) on the north and north-east, and Myanmar on the east and south-east. The Indian states of Assam and Nagaland are located to its south. The population density of the state is one of the lowest in India, with 13 persons per square kilometer, whereas the country's average is 324 {Anonymous, 2006 #106} (Anonymous 2006).

Arunachal Pradesh is rich in biodiversity and has become a hub of scientific explorations leading to the discovery of taxa new species. In 2003, a new race of Sclater's Monal *Lophophorus sclateri arunachalensis* was discovered in the Subansiri region (Kumar & Singh 2004). A new species of primate, the Arunachal macaque *Macaca munzala* was discovered from Tawang district in 2004 (Sinha *et al.* 2005). In 2006, a new bird species, the Bugun Liocichla *Liocichla bugunorum* was discovered near Eaglenest Wildlife Sanctuary in western Arunachal (Athreya 2006). Of late Arunachal Pradesh has become the focus of national and international wildlife research and conservation, partly due to its status of being in the Eastern Himalayas 'biodiversity hotspot' (Myers *et al.* 2000).

The Mishmi Hills have always attracted botanists,

of Mishmi are known, the three main groups being Miju Mishmi in upper Lohit, and Anjaw districts; Digaru Mishmi in the western part of Lohit district; and Idu Mishmi in Dibang Valley (Mills 1952; Chowdhury 1982).

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Anjaw district was visited four times from 2006 to 2009 to study hunting practices of the locals, focussing on the hunting of birds (, 1). The recordings are based on *ad hoc* encounters during village trails, interviews, and interactions with professional hunters, and children who hunted birds with catapults. Pictorial bird guides were used to generate interest during the interviews and were used to confirm identifications of birds. Evidence of birds found in the region was also recorded through artifacts used by the local people. Village ceremonies, festivals, and celebrations were attended to document the utility of wildlife parts, and to gather additional information about hunting. Villagers demonstrated various types of traps used by them near the *jhum* fields, or in the canopies. Occasionally villagers made models of the traps and explained the mechanism.

The major tribal inhabitants of Anjaw district are Miju Mishmi, Digaru Mishmi, and Meyor. Mishmi are shifting cultivators who follow animism and believe in the presence of spirits in mountains, rivers, and trees, and the different names given for them emphasise the importance to their relationship with nature. This relationship is maintained in the form of domestic animal sacrifices, and wildlife hunting. The main crops grown are maize, millet, and some vegetables. Cash crops grown are cardamom, opium, and oranges. Agriculture, and other cultivated products are an important part of their economy and crop protection is a priority. Trapping overlaps with the shifting cultivation and is a frequently used technique to capture wild animals found near villages and in fields.

The Meyor, one of the lesser-known tribes of India, inhabit the Walong and Kibithoo circles of Anjaw district. They are Buddhists and are believed to have migrated from China to evade taxes. They are good at hunting and frequently travel to the snow-covered region to hunt. Unlike Mishmi, who practice slash-and-burn cultivation, Meyor practice terrace cultivation.

Hunting is a way of life among the Mishmi—whether for consumption, trade, cultural reasons, or sometimes for fun during leisure (Aiyadurai *et al.* 2010). Wildlife hunting is usually a winter activity when wild animals and birds descend from the snow-covered mountaintops in search of food. Pheasant hunting is common in winter in high altitude villages (Hilaludin *et al.* 2004; Aiyadurai 2007). Smoked wild meat is given as a 'brideprice' during Mishmi weddings. During village functions and ceremonies, wild meat is usually a luxury, reserved for special guests like priests or government officials. After the meat is consumed, parts like tail feathers are used as artefacts, some for ornamental purposes and some for religious ceremonies.

Bird hunting and trapping is common in the Anjaw region of Mishmi Hills. Tail feathers of Himalayan- *Lophophorus impejanus*, and Sclater's Monal *L. sclateri* are used as hand-fans, especially by chanting priests waving them during rituals. Some bird parts, like wing feathers, are used for decorative purposes, and occasionally women wear monal feathers around their necks (Aiyadurai 2007).

Hand-fans made from pheasant tail feathers are commonly seen in most Mishmi households. It is not clear why only pheasant tail feathers are used. Tails of six pheasant species were recorded in the villages visited: Himalayan- *Lophophorus impejanus*, and Sclater's Monal *L. sclateri*, Blyth's- *Tragopan blythii*, and Temminck's Tragopan *T. temminckii*, Kalij Pheasant *Lophura leucomelanos*, and Grey Peacock-pheasant *Polyplectron bicalcaratum*.

The hand-fan is sometimes partly covered with an ungulate's skin, usually goral *Nemorhaedus goral*, barking deer *Muntiacus muntjak*, or sambar *Cervus unicolor*. Feathers of other wild birds like Red Junglefowl *Gallus gallus*, and Racket-tailed Drongo *Dicrurus paradiseus* also find their place on the fan.

Different kinds of traps are used for hunting birds. Six most common traps are shown in . . 2.

Some traps are easy to make, like *Handam, kheyet,* and *diow* (. \(\seta \)), require limited skills, and can be reused. Trapping is a low investment and low cost method as traps are prepared with locally available material like bamboo. Trapping is practiced in a wide range of habitats, from farmlands, riverbeds, kitchen gardens, to forests, and mountaintops. Traps are set up at different heights: *hakap* and *tawan* (. \(\seta \)) traps are set at tree canopy level, targeting birds that arrive to feed on fruits, which are otherwise difficult targets for catapults or gun. Traps for pheasants and other ground-dwelling birds are set on the forest floor and checked after three or four days.

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Diow* Hakap* C	1	6,		
Handam* Kheyet				
Paipit*	4 , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , ,	11 1 . 1 & .		1
Tawan*	, , . 1.0 ,	<u>,</u>		

Boys start hunting at the young age of 12–14 years, using catapults, mainly targeting birds and squirrels. As they grow up, they join their fathers and uncles as assistants (porters and cooks) on hunting trips when they acquire hunting and trapping skills. There is no specific age for hunting. Men in their 20s hunt till they are in their 50s, indicating that hunting continues to be a popular activity and that skills continue to be acquired by younger generation.

Hunters with guns search and pursue animals. Generally shotguns are used, but one respondent in Yatong village (Anjaw districtunt 0s2