

PASTORAL PRACTICES, WILD MAMMALS AND CONSERVATION STATUS
OF ALPINE MEADOWS IN WESTERN HIMALAYA¹

G.S. RAWAT²

¹Accepted December 07, 2006

²Wildlife Institute of India, Chandrabani, Dehradun 248 001, Uttarakhand, India. Email: rawatg@wii.gov.in

An ecological expedition was conducted across the alpine region of western Himalaya, from June to October 2004, to assess the conservation status of alpine meadows, current land use practices, patterns of plant species diversity and wildlife use. This paper deals with the findings pertaining to pastoral practices, abundance of wild mammals and status of alpine meadows under varying intensity of livestock grazing. Barring 3-4 protected areas (PAs), most of the alpine meadows were heavily grazed during summer. Abundance of wild mammals was very low in heavily grazed and degraded PAs. Unless management authorities rationalize livestock grazing, in consultation with the local communities, several PAs would fail to meet conservation objectives, and alpine meadows would further degrade, leading to environmental disaster in the region.

Key words: alpine meadows, ecological expedition, habitat degradation, livestock grazing, pastoral practices, western Himalaya, wild mammals