

perceptible dent on its availability status at present. This palm is dioecious (male and female flowers on different plants), which may hamper its reproductive process due to loss or acute shortage of male or female plants. Little information is available on its reproductive biology, growth and development mechanism as well as ecological processes, especially with regard to its population ecology and survival dynamics.

The plants are presently recorded from three locations in the Sikkim Himalaya, viz. Sivok (site no. 1, altitude 194 m, 26°52'57"N–88°28'00"E, 99 individuals) (Figure 1), Pashoke (site no. 2, altitude 1060 m, 27°04'45"N–88°23'15"E, 15 individuals) and Kasur (site no. 3, altitude

340 m, 27°09'10"N–88°21'35"E, 7 individuals). Human activities and vehicular movement have been greatest at site no. 1, followed by site nos 2 and 3. Under this scenario, the population at site no. 1 will be the first to become extinct unless effective conservation measures are implemented soon. The observed mature plants produce large amount of seeds which owing to the acutely inclined habitat fall directly into the streams or among the thick vegetation at the foot of cliff.

1. Johnson, D., IUCN Red List of Threatened Species, 2006.
2. Kholia, B. S. and Joshi, R., *NeoBio*, 2010, 1, 55–61.

3. Kholia, B. S., *Palms*, 2012, 56, 5–10.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS. We thank the Director, G. B. Pant Institute of Himalayan Environment and Development for providing facilities. This work is a part of a project funded by Department of Biotechnology, New Delhi.

L. K. RAI
K. K. SINGH*

G. B. Pant Institute of Himalayan
Environment and Development,
Sikkim Unit, Campus Pangthang,
Post Box 24,
Gangtok 737 101, India
*e-mail: singhkk20@yahoo.com

Conserve the endangered science, taxonomy

The recently organized refresher course on 'traditional and modern approaches in plant taxonomy' and the forthcoming refresher course on 'traditional and modern approaches in animal taxonomy' by the science academies of India are worthy initiatives, as taxonomy is the oldest science in biology. India is one of the megabiodiversity countries and it is high time we inculcate awareness about this important discipline. Indeed taxonomy as one of the oldest sciences continues to exist along with human existence; plants and animals can live without man, but man cannot live without them. Although some species are disappearing fast, there are many faunal and floral species that need to be documented. Such an important study is ignored by students, researchers, reviewers, funding institutes, etc., except as a piece-meal syllabus at school/college curriculum. The least-funded scientific discipline in biology is taxonomy. Such an attitude leads to misidentification of popularly known species too.

We quote two examples from *Current Science*. These mistakes came to light as the photographs of wrongly identified species appeared on the cover page. Normally the cover-page photograph is not peer-reviewed and hence the sole responsibility of the identification rests with the authors.

Bandyopadhyay *et al.*¹ reported the pharmacologically active fatty acids of tiger prawn *Penaeus monodon*, a marine crustacean. However, the photograph that appeared on the cover page of the journal was a freshwater prawn belonging to the genus *Macrobrachium*.

Mahato *et al.*² also made a similar mistake in the identification of bats. The photograph that appeared on the cover page of the journal was identified as *Pteropus giganteus*, the Indian flying fox; the error of misidentification was rightly pointed out by a rejoinder³. Mistakes of this kind result from poor knowledge in taxonomy. Carl Linnaeus alone estimated 26,500 species throughout the world. Though we have sophisti-

cated equipment and techniques, we are unable to estimate how many species of animals and plants live today. Hence it is time the national institutes and funding agencies encourage taxonomic work and grant ample finance assistance to strengthen the knowledge base in taxonomy.

1. Bandyopadhyay, C., Banerjee, D., Patra, T. K., Pal, D., Ghosh, A., Choudhury, A. and Misra, S., *Curr. Sci.*, 1993, 65, 707–708.
2. Mahato, A. K. R., Kumar, V. V. and Patel, N., *Curr. Sci.*, 2012, 103, 354–355.
3. Nathan, P. T., Mahandran, V. and Sripathi, K., *Curr. Sci.*, 2012, 103, 1142–1143.

PITCHAIMUTHU MARIAPPAN^{1,*}
CHELLAM BALASUNDARAM²

¹Department of Zoology,
Rajah Serfoji Government College
(Autonomous),
Thanjavur 613 005, India
²Department of Animal Science,
Bharathidasan University,
Tiruchirappalli 620 024, India
*e-mail: mnobili@gmail.com