

INDIAN BIRDS

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Bundh Baretha reservoir
Oriental Honey-Buzzard
Interspecific feeding

READY-RECKONER

Bird conservation organisations

Bombay Natural History Society: Honorary Secretary, Hornbill House, Shaheed Bhagat Singh Marg, Mumbai 400023, Maharashtra. Website: www.bnhs.org. Email: bnhs@bom3.vsnl.net.in. Publish: *Journal of the Bombay Natural History Society*; *Hornbill*. Contact above for: Indian Bird Conservation Network: Publish: *Mistnet*. Envis Centre: Publish: *Buceros*. Salim Ali Centre For Ornithology And Natural History: Director, Anaikatty P.O., Coimbatore 641108, India. Website: www.saconindia.org. Email: salimali@vsnl.com

Birdwatchers' Society Of Andhra Pradesh: Honorary Secretary, P.O. Box 45, Banjara Hills, Hyderabad 500034, India. Email: siraj.taher@gmail.com. Publish: *Mayura*; *Pitta*.

Madras Naturalists' Society: Honorary Secretary, No. 8, Janaki Avenue, Abhirampuram, Chennai 600018, India. Website: www.blackbuck.org.in. Email: mns_members@yahoo.co.in. Publish: *Blackbuck*.

Institute Of Bird Studies & Natural History: Director, Rishi Valley, Chittoor District, India 517352. Email: birds@rishivalley.org. Conduct: Home Study Course in Ornithology.

Oriental Bird Club: P.O. Box 324, Bedford, MK42 0WG, U.K. Website: www.orientalbirdclub.org. Publish: *Forktail*; *BirdingASIA*.

Wildlife Institute Of India: Post Bag # 18, Chandrabani, Dehradun 248001, India. Website: www.wii.gov.in.

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Birds of Kolkata: <http://www.kolkatabirds.com/>

Delhibird: <http://www.delhibird.net/>

ENVIS BNHS: <http://www.envisbnhs.org/>

India Birds: <http://www.indiabirds.com/>

Indian Jungles: <http://www.indianjungles.com/>

Internet Bird Collection: <http://www.hbw.com/ibc/>

John Penhallurick's Bird Data Project: <http://worldbirdinfo.net/>

Karnataka: <http://www.monsoons.ca/karnatakabirds.htm>

Kerala: <http://www.birdskerala.com/>

N.C.L. Centre for Biodiversity Informatics:

<http://www.ncbi.org/in/biota/fauna/>

Nagpur: <http://nagpurbirds.org/>

Optics: www.betterviewdesired.com

Red Data Book: <http://www.rdb.or.id/index.html/>

Sanctuary Asia: <http://www.sanctuaryasia.com/>

Saving Asia's threatened birds:

http://www.birdlife.net/action/science/species/asia_strategy/pdfs.html/

The Northern India Bird Network: <http://www.delhibird.com/>

Zoological Nomenclature Resource: <http://www.zoonomen.net/>

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Aims & Objectives

- To publish a newsletter that will provide a platform to birdwatchers for publishing notes and observations primarily on birds of South Asia.
- To promote awareness of birdwatching amongst the general public.
- To establish and maintain links/liaison with other associations or organized bodies in India or abroad whose objectives are in keeping with the objectives of the Trust (i.e. to support amateur birdwatchers with cash / kind for projects in ornithology).



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Front cover: Forest Owlet *Heteroglaux blewitti*, Melghat.

Photographer: Nikhil Devasar

Occurrence and abundance of waterbirds at Bundh Baretha reservoir, Bharatpur, north-western India

Ashok Verma

Verma, A. 2009. Occurrence and abundance of waterbirds at Bundh Baretha reservoir, Bharatpur, north-western India. *Indian Birds* 4 (5): 150–153 (2008).

Ashok Verma, Wildlife Institute of India, Dehradun 248001, Uttarakhand, India. Email: vermaasok@rediffmail.com

Present address: Society for Research in Ecology and Environment (SREE), Bharatpur 321001, Rajasthan, India.

Ms received on 22nd September 2008.

Introduction

Waterbirds—birds ecologically dependent on wetlands—are an important component of wetland ecosystems. After fish, this is probably the most important faunal group that attracts people to wetlands. They form a vital prey base for many living organisms in the food webs of wetland ecosystems and are important components of nutrient cycles—many species also playing a role in the control of agricultural pests (Anonymous 1996).

A large numbers of waterbirds migrate into India annually, from their breeding grounds in the northern hemisphere, especially Siberia. They start arriving by late July, departing generally by early March. Ringing recoveries indicate that these migrants originate from as far away as 6,000 kms, chiefly from the Caspian region and Siberia (Ali & Ripley 1978).

This paper documents the species composition, seasonal variation, and abundance of both resident and migratory waterbirds at Bundh Baretha reservoir during 2005–2008. Major threats affecting survival of waterbirds are also discussed.

Study area

The Bund Baretha reservoir (BBR) (26°48'N 77°25'E; Bharatpur district, Rajasthan) lies about 57 km south-west of Bharatpur and 10 km west of Bayana towns. Situated in a valley, it has a catchment of 181 km², a storage basin of 1,500 mcft, full water spread of 10 km² and a maximum depth of 12 m below escape level. Various habitat types recorded at BBR included: a) deep open water, which is the major habitat type, b) submerged vegetation, c) floating vegetation, d) reed beds and e) shoreline.

The Baretha bund is situated across the Kakund River, which originates in Karauli district, near the village of Sooka Sela in Bayana tahsil. The Kakund is a small seasonal river entering the south-western border of Bayana tahsil from the Karauli side. It was formerly a tributary of the Gambhir River but has become famous after the construction of BBR, where its waters are impounded and released to irrigate northern regions in Bayana and Rupbas tahsils. Since its construction in 1897 the wetland has been an attraction for tourists (Anonymous 1971). In fact, this is the only work of irrigation in Bharatpur that, except in years of very scanty rainfall can be considered a

source of perennial irrigation (Anonymous 1971).

Methods

To obtain quantitative data and a better picture of the ornithological importance of the area, field surveys were conducted between 2005 and 2007 by a team of two researchers. A total of 17 visits were made to BBR, with a census being carried out each time from 0900 hrs to 1500 hrs along a standard route, using binoculars and telescopes. Total counts of waterbirds were carried out on foot in fine weather during winter (November–March), summer (April–June) and autumn (August–October) from various elevated points so as to cover a large extent of wetland. The maximum counts were taken as the best estimate of bird abundance since counts varied noticeably among censuses within a given season.

Bird species were grouped into four categories;

1. Waterfowls: grebes, cormorants, darters, ducks, geese, rails.
2. Waders: herons, egrets, storks, ibis, spoonbills and cranes.
3. Shorebirds: jacanas, plovers, stilts, avocets, and sandpipers.
4. Other birds: gulls, terns, skimmer, pratincoles, raptors and kingfishers.



Dhritiman Mukherjee

Fig. 1. Indian Skimmer *Rynchops albicollis*

The birds arriving from regions outside India, from as far away as Siberia are considered as long distance migrants while birds breeding within India, including in and around the study area are treated as residents. Resident migrants are those species whose resident breeding populations are augmented by long distance migrants.

Results

A total of 8,179 waterbirds including 2,000 unidentified (24% of the total counts) of 68 species belonging to 19 families were recorded during 2005–2008 from BBR (Table 1). Anatidae, Scolopacidae, and Ardeidae were recorded as the dominant families. Of 68 species, 58% (N=35) were resident waterbirds, 30% (N=22) long distance migrants and 12% (N=11) resident migrants. However, based on numbers, the long distance migrants (48%) outnumbered residents (29%) and resident migrants (23%).

Of the four waterbird categories identified at BBR, waterfowl accounted for 84.5%, shorebirds 8.5%, waders 3.6% and others 3.0% of the waterbird population (Table 1). A total of 5,274 waterfowl were recorded with ducks and geese being dominant (62%) followed by coots and moorhens (30%), cormorants (7%) darters (0.6%) and grebes (0.4%). Of 528 shorebirds, 90% were sandpipers, stints, godwits, ruff, 4.7% avocets and stilts, 3.8% plovers and lapwings, 0.8% jacanas, 0.4% painted-snipes, and 1% thick-knees. Of 225 waders, 57.8% were herons and egrets, 22% ibises and spoonbills, 19% storks and 0.9% cranes. Of 187 other water dependent birds, 84% were gulls and terns, 10.7% pratincoles, 2.7% kingfishers, 1.6% skimmers and 1.1% raptors.

The maximum counts for ten waterbird species were: Common Coot *Fulica atra* 1,500, Northern Shoveller *Anas clypeata* 628, Northern Pintail *A. acuta* 490, Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa* 350, Red-crested Pochard *Rhodonessa rufina* 240, Common Teal *A. crecca* 228, Spotbill Duck *A. poecilorhyncha* 200, Gadwall *A. strepera* and Little Cormorant *Phalacrocorax niger* 180 each, and River Tern *Sterna aurantia* 150. For other birds see Table 3. In winter, migratory raptors like Greater Spotted Eagle *Aquila clanga*, Imperial Eagle *A. heliaca*, and Steppe Eagle *A. rapax*, though not observed during the study period, have been recorded in the past from BBR (personal observations of author).

Seasonal variation

Autumn

39 spp. of waterbirds were recorded. Of these, 24 were residents (61%), 12 long distance migrants (31%) and 3 resident migrants (8%). However, in numbers, the long distance migrants (73%) outnumbered residents (19%) and resident migrants (8%). Waterfowl and waders comprised 13 spp. each, dominating shorebirds (7 spp.) and other waterbirds (6 spp.).

Winter

The highest diversity of waterbird species was noted during winter, with large concentrations of waterfowl, especially ducks and coots. A total of 53 waterbird species were recorded. Of these, 26 were residents (49%), 19 long distance migrants (36%) and 8 resident migrants (15%). However, according to numbers the long distance migrants (44%) outnumbered residents (24%) and resident migrants (32%).

Waterfowl were recorded as most abundant, both in terms of species (25) and numbers (N= 4,596). Shorebirds (12 spp.) had a maximum count of 194, waders (11 spp.) 144 and other water dependent birds 160.

Summer

36 waterbird species were recorded. Of these, 24 were residents (67%), 8 long distance migrants (22%) and 4 resident migrants (11%). According to numbers also the residents (63%) outnumbered others. The long distance migrants accounted for 34% followed by resident migrants (2%).

There were 15 species of waterfowls, 10 waders, 9 shorebirds and 2 other birds.

Population fluctuation

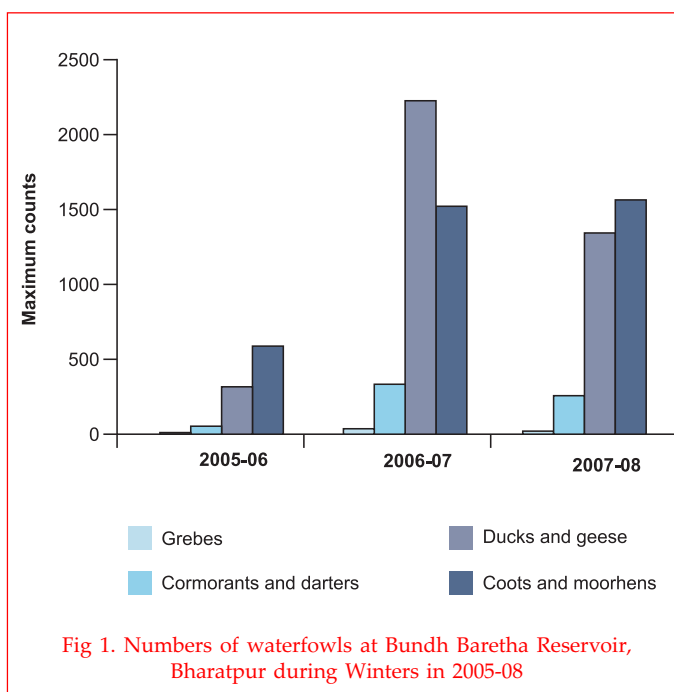
Waterfowl are one of the most important waterbird groups of BBR in terms of numbers—their population peaking in winter (69%). A comparison of their winter population during various years is presented in Fig. 1. Except 2006–2007, coots and moorhens dominated other waterbird groups. During 2006–2007, ducks and geese increased substantially.

Grebes showed their high numbers (N= 21) in 2006–2007 followed by 2007–2008. Cormorants and darters were recorded to be high in 2006–2007 followed by 2007–2008. The numbers of ducks and geese increased in 2006–2007 and declined in the subsequent year. Coots and moorhens were in abundance in the winter of 2005–2006 but declined in 2006–2007 however an increase was again recorded in 2007–2008.

Of the waterbird species found at BBR—Oriental Darter *Anhinga melanogaster* and Oriental White Ibis *Threskiornis melanocephalus* are classified as Near Threatened while Sarus Crane *Grus antigone* and Indian Skimmer *Rynchops albicollis* are classified Vulnerable (Table 2) (IUCN 2008).

Discussion

The BBR is an important bird area supporting a large number of resident and migratory waterbird species especially waterfowls. The 2006–2007 drought in the Keoladeo National Park (KNP) was probably responsible for an increase in the numbers of waterfowls especially ducks and coots at BBR. In adverse conditions at KNP it is the closest perennial waterbody acting as refuge for many waterbird species. A decline in the year 2007–2008 was because of drought conditions at both KNP and BBR.



The reservoir provides critical habitat for diving waterbirds especially pochards, coots, *etc.*, during winter and therefore serves as an important wintering ground. The presence of Garganey *Anas querquedula* in the beginning and prior to return migration indicates that they use the site as staging ground. The area also supports large concentrations of resident ducks such as Spot-billed Duck *A. poecilorhyncha* and Cotton Teal *Nettapus coromandelianus*. The wetland provides habitat for the habitat specific Indian Skimmer and Great Stone-Plover *Esacus recurvirostris*.

The importance of BBR regionally may increase over time as other parts of the wider wetland ecosystem in the region are gradually losing their significance for birdlife due to anthropogenic pressures. It supports IUCN Red List species and provides breeding and wintering habitats for a number of waterbirds.

Conservation

Commercial fishing in winter may be detrimental to the continued presence of both migratory and resident waterbird species as this activity disturbs the birds. The impact of such activities on the avifauna has not been studied so far. Waterbirds that graze on agricultural grains and in rice paddies in surrounding fields become unwitting victims of pesticides that farmers use on their crops. The runoff of hydrochlorinated pesticides from agricultural fields into the wetland makes the water toxic for waterbirds. How this affects the birds is not known. This is also the source of water for Bharatpur city. The drainage of wetlands during winter adversely affects waterbirds' survival and therefore a strategy has to be put in place to address this critical issue concerning the use of water for irrigation as well as biodiversity conservation.

To develop a proper migratory species conservation plan for the region, further fieldwork and data are required from both upstream and downstream of BBR, including the catchments. Regular counting of waterbirds is an excellent means of monitoring the health of many wetlands and the natural capital these wetlands represent. NGOs and local communities could become the driving force in monitoring and conservation activities, thereby assisting government at the local level.

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Table 1. Families, groups and waterbird species present at the Bundh Baretha Wetland during 2005–2008.

S.No.	Family	Bird group	Species	Maximum count (2005–2008)
1	Podicipedidae	Grebes	2	21
2	Phalacrocoracidae	Cormorants	3	368
3	Anhingidae	Darters	1	30
4	Ardeidae	Herons, egrets	8	130
5	Ciconiidae	Storks	3	43
6	Threskiornithidae	Ibises, spoonbills	3	50
7	Anatidae	Geese, ducks	17	3,247
8	Accipitridae	Raptors	2	2
9	Gruidae	Cranes	1	2
10	Rallidae	Rails, moorhens, coots	3	1,573
11	Jacaniidae	Jacanas	1	4
12	Rostratulidae	Painted-snipes	1	2
13	Charadriidae	Plovers, lapwings	3	20
14	Scolopacidae	Sandpipers, stints, <i>etc.</i>	9	476
15	Recurvirostridae	Avocets, stilts	2	25
16	Burhinidae	Thick-knees	1	1
17	Laridae	Gulls, terns, skimmer	5	160
18	Glareolidae	Pratincoles	1	20
19	Alcedinidae	Kingfishers	2	5
20	Unidentified	Waterfowl	—	2,000

Table 2. Overview of the status of waterbirds at Bundh Baretha Wetland, Bharatpur.

Category	Migrant	Local migrant	Resident	Total
Safe	22	11	31	64
Threatened	0	0	4	4
Total	22	11	35	68

Table. 3. Seasonal abundance recorded at the Bund Baretha. Numbers correspond to species' highest tallies within any one season. (Note: R =resident, M =long distance migrant, RM = Resident migrant). The species with * and ** denote Near-threatened and Vulnerable

S. No.	Species	Family	Autumn	Winter	Summer	Max. count
Waterfowl						
1	Little Grebe <i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i> (R)	Podicipedidae	0	10	0	10
2	Great Crested Grebe <i>Podiceps cristatus</i> (M)		0	11	0	11
3	Little Cormorant <i>Phalacrocorax niger</i> (R)	Phalacrocoracidae	8	180	40	180
4	Indian Shag <i>P. fuscicollis</i> (R)		8	48	45	48
5	Great Cormorant <i>P. carbo</i> (R)		0	140	2	140
6	Oriental Darter* <i>Anhinga melanogaster</i> (R)	Anhingidae	3	30	0	30
7	Lesser Whistling-Duck <i>Dendrocygna javanica</i> (R)	Anatidae	3	70	80	80
8	Greylag Goose <i>Anser anser</i> (M)		0	12	0	12
9	Bar-headed Goose <i>A. indicus</i> (RM)		0	65	0	65
10	Brahminy Shelduck <i>Tadorna ferruginea</i> (RM)		0	27	13	27
11	Comb Duck <i>Sarkidiornis melanotos</i> (R)		0	18	25	25
12	Cotton Teal <i>Nettapus coromandelianus</i> (R)		0	85	6	85
13	Gadwall <i>Anas strepera</i> (M)		0	180	11	180
14	Eurasian Wigeon <i>A. penelope</i> (M)		29	92	0	92
15	Mallard <i>A. platyrhynchos</i> (RM)		0	55	0	55
16	Spot-billed Duck <i>A. poecilorhyncha</i> (R)		0	200	550	550
17	Northern Shoveller <i>A. clypeata</i> (M)		250	628	0	628
18	Northern Pintail <i>A. acuta</i> (M)		161	490	5	490
19	Garganey <i>A. querquedula</i> (M)		50	38	350	350
20	Common Teal <i>A. crecca</i> (M)		225	228	25	228
21	Red-crested Pochard <i>Rhodessa rufina</i> (M)		0	240	0	240
22	Common Pochard <i>Aythya ferina</i> (M)		25	130	15	130
23	Tufted Pochard <i>A. fuligula</i> (M)		14	45	0	45
24	Purple Moorhen <i>Porphyrio porphyrio</i> (R)	Rallidae	0	25	5	25
25	Common Moorhen <i>Gallinula chloropus</i> (R)		13	48	0	48
26	Common Coot <i>Fulica atra</i> (RM)		131	1,500	12	1,500
	Total		920	4,590	1,184	5,274
Shorebirds						
1	Bronze-winged Jacana <i>Metopidius indicus</i> (R)	Jacanidae	1	4	2	4
2	Greater Painted-Snipe <i>Rostratula benghalensis</i> (R)	Rostratulidae	0	0	2	2
3	Little Ringed Plover <i>Charadrius dubius</i> (RM)	Charadriidae	0	0	3	3
4	Red-wattled Lapwing <i>Vanellus indicus</i> (R)		10	10	15	15
5	White-tailed Lapwing <i>V. leucurus</i> (M)		0	2	0	2
6	Common Snipe <i>Gallinago gallinago</i> (M)	Scolopacidae	0	4	0	4
7	Black-tailed Godwit <i>Limosa limosa</i> (M)		350	50	50	350
8	Eurasian Curlew <i>Numenius arquata</i> (M)		4	2	0	4
9	Common Redshank <i>Tringa totanus</i> (M)		17	12	3	17
10	Marsh Sandpiper <i>T. stagnatilis</i> (M)		0	4	0	4
11	Green Sandpiper <i>T. ochropus</i> (M)		1	0	0	1
12	Wood Sandpiper <i>T. glareola</i> (M)		0	0	15	15
13	Common Sandpiper <i>Actitis hypoleucos</i> (RM)		0	1	0	1
14	Ruff <i>Philomachus pugnax</i> (M)		0	80	0	80
15	Black-winged Stilt <i>Himantopus himantopus</i> (R)	Recurvirostridae	19	19	14	19
16	Pied Avocet <i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i> (R)		0	6	0	6
17	Great Thick-knee <i>Esacus recurvirostris</i> (R)	Burhinidae	0	0	1	1
	Total		402	194	105	528
Waders						
1	Little Egret <i>Egretta garzetta</i> (R)	Ardeidae	27	31	8	31
2	Grey Heron <i>Ardea cinerea</i> (R)		26	6	2	26
3	Purple Heron <i>A. purpurea</i> (R)		2	3	2	3
4	Large Egret <i>Casmerodius albus</i> (R)		16	30	3	30
5	Median Egret <i>Mesophoyx intermedia</i> (R)		2	10	4	10
6	Cattle Egret <i>Bubulcus ibis</i> (R)		15	0	0	15
7	Indian Pond-Heron <i>Ardeola grayii</i> (R)		14	10	6	14
8	Chestnut Bittern <i>Ixobrychus cinnamomeus</i> (R)		1	0	0	1
9	Painted Stork <i>Mycteria leucocephala</i> (R)	Ciconiidae	0	0	1	1
10	Asian Openbill-Stork <i>Anastomus oscitans</i> (R)		39	5	32	39
11	White-necked Stork <i>Ciconia episcopus</i> (R)		3	0	0	3
12	Glossy Ibis <i>Plegadis falcinellus</i> (R)	Threskiornithidae	0	5	2	5
13	Oriental White Ibis* <i>Threskiornis melanocephalus</i> (R)		30	27	0	30
14	Eurasian Spoonbill <i>Platalea leucorodia</i> (R)		2	15	10	15
15	Sarus Crane** <i>Grus antigone</i> (R)	Gruidae	2	2	0	2
	Total		179	144	70	225
Other birds						
1	Black-headed Gull <i>Larus ridibundus</i> (M)	Laridae	1	0	0	1
2	River Tern <i>Sterna aurantia</i> (R)		27	152	0	152
3	Little Tern <i>S. albifrons</i> (M)		2	0	0	2
4	Whiskered Tern <i>Chlidonias hybridus</i> (M)		0	2	0	2
5	Indian Skimmer** <i>Rynchops albicollis</i> (R)		0	3	3	3
6	Small Indian Pratincole <i>Glareola lactea</i> (R)	Glareolidae	20	0	20	20
7	White-breasted Kingfisher <i>Halcyon smyrnensis</i> (R)	Alcedinidae	3	0	0	3
8	Lesser Pied Kingfisher <i>Ceryle rudis</i> (R)		0	2	0	2
9	Marsh-Harrier <i>Circus aeruginosus</i> (M)	Accipitridae	0	1	0	1
10	Osprey <i>Pandion haliaetus</i> (R)		1	0	0	1
	Total		54	160	23	187

—Photo essay—
A brief glimpse into the private world of the
Oriental Honey-Buzzard *Pernis ptilorhynchus*

Gobind Sagar Bhardwaj

Bhardwaj, G. B. 2009. Photo essay: a brief glimpse into the private world of the Oriental Honey-Buzzard *Pernis ptilorhynchus*. *Indian Birds* 4 (5): 154–156 (2008).

Gobind Sagar Bhardwaj, Scientist-E, Department of PA Network, Wildlife Management & Conservation Education, Wildlife Institute of India, P. O. Box No. 18, Chandrabani, Dehradun 248001, Uttarakhand, India. Email: gsbifs@yahoo.co.in
Mss received on 17th May 2008.

I studied and photographed (between July and August 2007) this nest of an Oriental Honey-Buzzard *Pernis ptilorhynchus* in Siyakheri forest block (24°16'30"N 74°43'43"E), adjacent to the Chittorgarh–Pratapgarh national highway in Rajasthan. I shot the pictures while seated inside my vehicle, which was parked behind lantana bushes on the roadside. The birds remained undisturbed despite the movement of hundreds of vehicles on the busy national highway.



The male Oriental Honey-Buzzard *Pernis ptilorhynchus* was chased and hounded by House Crows *Corvus splendens* for over 30 min., for it seems it had plundered one of their nests for the nestling that it grasps in its talons while perching on a *Boswellia serrata*, before flying to the nest and delivering the food.



The female Oriental Honey-Buzzard and her chicks waiting impatiently for the male to deliver food.



When the food was delivered into the nest, the two nestlings tussle to grab it. Already the difference in size between them is visible.



The larger, dominant chick managed to snatch the prey and swallow it whole. The entire family is present here.



True to its name, the Oriental Honey-Buzzard feeds on bee honey, honeycomb and larvae. Here the male is feeding honey larvae to a chick...



...here the female, a honeycomb...



...and here the male, a drop of honey.



Sibling rivalry is intense and gradually the second (and younger) chick is deprived of food and constantly pecked and harried by its larger and older sibling till it succumbs.



The female with two chicks and fresh green leaves of *A. latifolia*, placed on the rim of the nest.



Finally just one chick remained in the nest.



The female carrying a sprig of fresh green leaves of *Anogeissus latifolia* for its nest. Green leaves, it is thought, cool the nest.



More wing exercises.



Here it is seen exercising its wings.



Gradually attaining adulthood.

Avifauna of Kambalakonda Wildlife Sanctuary, Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh, India

P. S. Raja Sekhar, Rahul Pandey & K. L. N. Murthy

Sekhar, P. S. R., Pandey, R., & Murthy, K. L. N. 2009. Avifauna of Kambalakonda Wildlife Sanctuary, Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh, India. *Indian Birds* 4 (5): 157–159 (2008).

P. S. Raja Sekhar, Associate Professor, Dept. of Environmental Sciences, Andhra University, Visakhapatnam 530003, Andhra Pradesh.

Rahul Pandey, Curator, Indira Gandhi Zoological Park, Visakhapatnam 530040, Andhra Pradesh.

K. L. N. Murthy, Wildlife Biologist, Indira Gandhi Zoological Park, Visakhapatnam 530040, Andhra Pradesh.

Email: murthy_cobra@yahoo.co.in

Ms received on 13th June 2008

Introduction

In this note we present preliminary baseline data of the avifauna of Kambalakonda Wildlife Sanctuary (KWS), Visakhapatnam district, Andhra Pradesh. No earlier study on the wildlife of the region has been done; except for a field report (Shekhar 2004) submitted to the Andhra Pradesh forest department on the carrying capacity of the park for leopard *Panthera pardus*. That report also described the phyto-geographical aspects of the sanctuary.

The present survey has been carried out in KWS in two seasons between November 2007 and June 2008 to assess the avifauna of the park. The study is also aimed to evaluate the anthropogenic threats associated with the ecological degradation of the sanctuary, and suggest conservation strategies for preservation of avifauna and other wildlife in one of the last remaining protected urban wilderness areas of the region.



Fig. 1. A view of the Kambalakonda Wildlife Sanctuary with dense deciduous and semi-evergreen forest.



Fig. 2. Degala Gedda is a natural freshwater reservoir located at the foothills and is an important source of water for all wildlife of the sanctuary.

Study area

KWS (17°47'–17°50'N 83°04'–83°20'E) is c. 20 km (by road) north-east of Visakhapatnam city, along NH 5. It is a cluster of west-east running Eastern Ghats hills covering an area of 75 km² along with an unprotected wilderness buffer zone of 80 km² on its western side. Its topography is a steep and undulating terrain of rolling hills, thickly vegetated gorges and valleys with an average altitude of 200–300 m (Fig. 1).

KWS supports three broad categories of vegetation—tropical semi-evergreen, tropical moist-deciduous and tropical dry-deciduous. The dominant species being *Acacia auriculiformis*, *A. nilotica*, *Albizia procera*, *Tectona grandis*, *Tamarindus indicus*, *Terminalia catappa*, *T. tomentosa*, *Syzygium cumini*, *Borassus flabellifer*, *Azadirachta indica*, *Mangifera indica*, *Anacardium occidentale*, *Bauhinia vahlii*, *Dendrocalamus strictus*, *Phoenix sylvestris*, *Ziziphus oenopli*.

The sanctuary is located in a belt of tropical monsoon climate with two distinct rainy seasons that start in late June and end in mid-October. The area is humid with an average rainfall of 900–1600 mm. Temperatures oscillate between 12°C–40°C. About 20 villages are located less than 500 m from the sanctuary.

A number of seasonal streams and small nullahs within the sanctuary eventually merge into the Degala Gedda reservoir, which attracts wading and predatory birds, and is also the major source for water for all other wildlife (Fig. 2).

Materials & methods

Observations on the avifauna were made during November–February 2007 and March–June 2008. All accessible zones of the sanctuary including the surrounding areas were thoroughly surveyed. Most observations were carried out twice a week between 0600 hrs and 0900 hrs and between 1600 hrs and 1800 hrs.

Standard field guides (Ali & Ripley 1983; Ali 1996; Grimmett *et al.* 1999) were used for identification. The nomenclature follows Manakadan & Pittie (2001).

Students of Andhra University and local youth of kambalakonda village assisted in the fieldwork.

Results & discussion

We recorded a total of 112 species. Among these, 81 are residents, 29 are local migrants and two migrants

KWS is a dynamic habitat supporting a good prey base of small mammals and reptiles for raptors. Natural blanks [empty

spaces] with open grassy patches are ideal for many herbivore mammal species. Even though it is a protected sanctuary, anthropogenic pressure on it is very high due to the surrounding villages and the busy NH 5.

Although, there have been no threats to the bird life at present, the construction activities for eco-tourism development and utilization of forest resources of the sanctuary (collection of minor forest produce) by the surrounding villagers may prove detrimental to the resident bird fauna as they have serious repercussions on the ecological resources of the sanctuary over a period of time.

Suggested conservation measures

Metallic roads are being laid inside KWS for eco-tourism development. Instead of this it would be better to utilise the existing trekking footpaths for nature trails.

Aforestation is recommended on degraded patches on hilly slopes, with appropriate native flora, so as to attract the insectivorous and frugivorous bird fauna.

Illegal felling of trees for firewood, in the buffer zones, and collection of minor forest produce from the core areas of KWS by the surrounding villagers should be checked.

The park is becoming a major tourist attraction with increasing influx of tourists. Development of some areas of

the KWS for tourism should be taken up only after environmental impact studies.

Acknowledgements

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Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*

Dhritiman Mukherjee

Table 1. Preliminary checklist of the birds of Kambalakonda Wildlife Sanctuary, 2007–2008

Little Grebe <i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>	Collared Scops-Owl <i>Otus bakkamoena</i>
Little Cormorant <i>Phalacrocorax niger</i>	Eurasian Eagle-Owl <i>Bubo bubo</i>
Great Cormorant <i>P. carbo</i>	Spotted Owlet <i>Athene brama</i>
Darter <i>Anhinga melanogaster</i>	Common Indian Nightjar <i>Caprimulgus asiaticus</i>
Little Egret <i>Egretta garzetta</i>	Asian Palm-Swift <i>Cypsiurus balasiensis</i>
Grey Heron <i>Ardea cinerea</i>	House Swift <i>Apus affinis</i>
Large Egret <i>Casmerodius albus</i>	Small Blue Kingfisher <i>Alcedo atthis</i>
Cattle Egret <i>Bubulcus ibis</i>	Stork-billed Kingfisher <i>Halcyon capensis</i>
Indian Pond-Heron <i>Ardeola grayii</i>	White-breasted Kingfisher <i>H. smyrnensis</i>
Black-crowned Night-Heron <i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>	Lesser Pied Kingfisher <i>Ceryle rudis</i>
Painted Stork <i>Mycteria leucocephala</i>	Small Bee-eater <i>Merops orientalis</i>
Asian Openbill-Stork <i>Anastomus oscitans</i>	Blue-tailed Bee-eater <i>M. philippinus</i>
Common Teal <i>Anas crecca</i>	Indian Roller <i>Coracias benghalensis</i>
Oriental Honey-Buzzard <i>Pernis ptilorhynchus</i>	Common Hoopoe <i>Upupa epops</i>
Black shouldered Kite <i>Elanus caeruleus</i>	Brown-headed Barbet <i>Megalaima zeylanica</i>
Black Kite <i>Milvus migrans</i>	Coppersmith Barbet <i>M. haemacephala</i>
Brahminy Kite <i>Haliastur indus</i>	Lesser Golden-backed Woodpecker <i>Dinopium benghalense</i>
White-bellied Sea-Eagle <i>Haliaeetus leucogaster</i>	Eastern Skylark <i>Alauda gulgula</i>
Egyptian Vulture <i>Neophron percnopterus</i>	Common Swallow <i>Hirundo rustica</i>
Short-toed Snake-Eagle <i>Circaetus gallicus</i>	Red-rumped Swallow <i>H. daurica</i>
Crested Serpent-Eagle <i>Spilornis cheela</i>	White Wagtail <i>Motacilla alba</i>
Pallid Harrier <i>Circus macrourus</i>	Yellow Wagtail <i>M. flava</i>
Shikra <i>Accipiter badius</i>	Large Cuckoo-Shrike <i>Coracina macei</i>
Eurasian Sparrowhawk <i>Accipiter nisus</i>	Small Minivet <i>Pericrocotus cinnamomeus</i>
White-eyed Buzzard <i>Butastur teesa</i>	Common Woodshrike <i>Tephrodornis pondicerianus</i>
Bonelli's Eagle <i>Hieraetus fasciatus</i>	Red-whiskered Bulbul <i>Pycnonotus jocosus</i>
Osprey <i>Pandion haliaetus</i>	Red-vented Bulbul <i>P. cafer</i>
Common Kestrel <i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	Common Iora <i>Aegithina tiphia</i>
Grey Francolin <i>Francolinus pondicerianus</i>	Rufous-backed Shrike <i>Lanius schach</i>
Jungle Bush-Quail <i>Perdica asiatica</i>	Blue-headed Rock-Thrush <i>Monticola cinclorhynchus</i>
Painted Spurfowl <i>G. lunulata</i>	Orange-headed Thrush <i>Zosterops citrina</i>
Yellow-legged Buttonquail <i>Turnix tanki</i>	Indian Robin <i>Saxicoloides fulicata</i>
White-breasted Waterhen <i>Amaurornis phoenicurus</i>	Oriental Magpie <i>Copsychus saularis</i>
Purple Moorhen <i>Porphyrio porphyrio</i>	Pied Bushchat <i>Saxicola caprata</i>
Common Moorhen <i>Gallinula chloropus</i>	Yellow-eyed Babbler <i>Chrysomma sinense</i>
Common Coot <i>Fulica atra</i>	Common Babbler <i>Turdoides caudatus</i>
Bronze-winged Jacana <i>Metopidius indicus</i>	Jungle Babbler <i>T. striatus</i>
Yellow-wattled Lapwing <i>Vanellus malabaricus</i>	Common Tailorbird <i>Orthotomus sutorius</i>
Red-wattled Lapwing <i>V. indicus</i>	Tickell's Blue-Flycatcher <i>Cyornis tickelliae</i>
Common Snipe <i>Gallinago gallinago</i>	Asian Paradise-Flycatcher <i>Terpsiphone paradisi</i>
Common Sandpiper <i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>	Purple-rumped Sunbird <i>Nectarinia zeylonica</i>
Blue Rock Pigeon <i>Columba livia</i>	Purple Sunbird <i>Nectarinia asiatica</i>
Little Brown Dove <i>Streptopelia senegalensis</i>	White-throated Munia <i>Lonchura malabarica</i>
Spotted Dove <i>S. chinensis</i>	House Sparrow <i>Passer domesticus</i>
Eurasian Collared-Dove <i>S. decaocto</i>	Baya Weaver <i>Ploceus philippinus</i>
Rose-ringed Parakeet <i>Psittacula krameri</i>	Asian Pied Starling <i>Sturnus contra</i>
Pied Crested Cuckoo <i>Clamator jacobinus</i>	Common Myna <i>Acridotheres tristis</i>
Indian Cuckoo <i>Cuculus micropterus</i>	Eurasian Golden Oriole <i>Oriolus oriolus</i>
Banded Bay Cuckoo <i>Acacomantis sonneratii</i>	Black-naped Oriole <i>O. chinensis</i>
Indian Plantive Cuckoo <i>C. passerinus</i>	Black Drongo <i>Dicrurus macrocercus</i>
Asian Koel <i>Eudynamis scolopacea</i>	Ashy Drongo <i>D. leucophaeus</i>
Sirkeer Malkoha <i>Phaenicophaeus leschenaultii</i>	Indian Tree pie <i>Dendrocitta vagabunda</i>
Greater Coucal <i>Centropus sinensis</i>	House Crow <i>Corvus splendens</i>
Barn Owl <i>Tyto alba</i>	Jungle Crow <i>C. macrorhynchos</i>

Additions to the bird list of Kanha Tiger Reserve, Madhya Pradesh

Sanjay Thakur

Thakur, S. 2009. Additions to the bird list of Kanha Tiger Reserve, Madhya Pradesh. *Indian Birds* 4 (5): 160 (2008).

Sanjay Thakur, Biome Conservation Foundation, 18, Silver Moon, S. No. 1/2A/2, Bavdhan Kh., Pune 411021, Maharashtra, India.

Email: sanjaythakur12@rediffmail.com

Mss received on 29th April 2008

Kanha Tiger Reserve (KTR) is situated in the Satpuda–Maikal landscape area of Madhya Pradesh (22°01'05"N–22°27'48"N–80°26'10"E–81°04'40"E). Established in 1973, Kanha Tiger Reserve's avifauna has been particularly well studied (Güntert & Homberger 1973; Newton *et al.* 1987; Ghosal 1995; D'Cunha 1998; Moulton & Hulsey 1999; D'Cunha & Ali 2001). Dookia & Gupta (2008) added to the comprehensive list of birds published by Chandra *et al.* (2006).

I regularly surveyed the tourism zone of KTR, for birds, between September 2006 and April 2008. During this period 252 species of birds were recorded out of a total of 297 species reported by Chandra *et al.* (2006). Seven species were observed which have not been reported in previous literature and are reported here as additions to the bird list of KTR.

Alpine Swift *Tachymarptis melba*: Flocks of 40–50 birds were seen during February–March in Bamni dadar. Presumably a passage migrant. The bird cannot be mistaken due to its large size, white throat and belly with brown breast-band. It calls in flight.

Richard's Pipit *Anthus richardi*: This bird was observed on the Kisli meadows close to the roads from December to February. About five to six individuals were seen in the meadows foraging on insects and grass seeds. The birds were very commonly seen during this period and were observed boldly perched on the rocks and chirping. This species was distinguished from the other pipits seen in KTR—especially Paddyfield *A. rufulus* and Blyth's *A. godlewskii* Pipits—by size, upright stance, black stripes on the back and more orange buff flanks. Though Richard's Pipit is a common winter visitor to the entire peninsular India (Rasmussen & Anderton 2005), surprisingly it has not been recorded from KTR before.

Black-crested Bulbul *Pycnonotus melanicterus*¹: This bird was observed only once in the forest below Bamni Dadar in January. Two birds were seen of which one was perching on top of a tree and had adult plumage. The other bird was a semi-adult, with brownish head and was observed flying nearby. Though it is known to occur in hills of Madhya Pradesh (Rasmussen & Anderton 2005), this is the first record of the species from KTR.

Marshall's Iora *Aegithina nigrolutea*: This species was commonly seen in Kanha Ghat, Chamar Ghat, Silhari Talao, Cheetal fire-line road, Bapsa Behara, Neela Nalla throughout the survey period. Birds were often seen foraging for insects at the mid-canopy level and frequently in mixed hunting parties. Once it was seen with a Common Iora *A. tiphia*. The Common Iora forages on the top canopy of the trees. Marshall's Iora is found on mid level of the trees and in dense foliage. There is clearly distinction between the habitats of both the birds. It gives a distinct call while flying and foraging. This is again a first report for KTR. The call of Marshall's Iora is different than the Common Iora.

Tickell's Thrush *Turdus unicolor*: Presumably a passage migrant, this bird is common in October and in early March in sparse forest, foraging on the ground, rummaging leaf litter. It is a shy bird, and seen typically in Mocha and in forests close to Banjar River. The birds are very parochial, as they seem to occupy the same patches during their spring and autumn migrations.

Himalayan Rubythroat *Luscinia pectoralis*: A single bird responded to the playback of a recorded call of Siberian Rubythroat *L. calliope* in Nakti

Ghati anikut in January. It was perched on the ground and then flew on to a tree, providing opportunity for clear identification. It was seen close to a stream, foraging in low bushes and reeds in the wet area. Himalayan Rubythroat is clearly distinguished from the *L. calliope* by the presence of black tail with white tips, black breast band and absence of sub-moustachial streaks. This is a new record for peninsular India as this species is reported only from the Himalayan region (Grimmett *et al.* 1999; Rasmussen & Anderton 2005). The bird was seen in the first half of March 2008 with Siberian Rubythroat and Bluethroat *L. svecica*. More observations are needed to understand if it is a regular winter visitor to central India or a vagrant.

Paddyfield Warbler *Acrocephalus agricola*: This bird was seen on the Bandri-Chappar road in Nakti ghati and on the 7 number link road, close to the percolation tank. The bird forages in low grass and reeds. It is an uncommon winter visitor and stays in KTR till mid-March. Its typical call and manner of sitting and foraging is useful for identification. The bird has a white supercilium, which extends behind its eye and is uniformly pale brown above with pale whitish-cream throat and belly. Apparently a first record for KTR. Nick Burry, Tikaram Giri, Lluís Sanz and the author have seen it in December–February (2006–2007).

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¹ Rasmussen & Anderton (2005) treat this is *P. flaviventris*.

Potential breeding records of the Black-necked Stork *Ephippiorhynchus asiaticus* in Corbett Tiger Reserve, Uttarakhand, India

Asghar Nawab & Amit Kumar Srivastava

Nawab, A. & Srivastava, A. K. 2009. Potential breeding records of the Black-necked Stork *Ephippiorhynchus asiaticus* breed in Corbett Tiger Reserve, Uttarakhand, India. *Indian Birds* 4 (4): 161–162 (2008).

Asghar Nawab, Freshwater & Wetlands Division, WWF-India Secretariat, 172-B Lodi Estate, New Delhi 110003. Corresponding author. Email: anawab@wwfindia.net.

Amit Kumar Srivastava, A-106, Beta 1, Greater Noida-201301, Uttar Pradesh, India. Email: amitcorbett@gmail.com

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The Black-necked Stork *Ephippiorhynchus asiaticus* (Fig. 1), classified as near-threatened (BirdLife International 2008), has declined in India due to population fragmentation, removal of nestlings and habitat loss (Rahmani 1989; Barman & Talukdar 1996; Sundar & Kaur 2001). The breeding biology of Black-necked Stork has been described in a handful of studies from India (Ishtiaq 1998; Sundar 2003; Maheswaran & Rahmani 2006). Information on current breeding sites remains sporadic and scanty.

In this note, we report sightings of Black-necked Stork, comprising adults with young birds between November and June in 2001–2004 inside Corbett Tiger Reserve (CTR).

Corbett Tiger Reserve (29°25'–29°40'N 78°45'–78°5'E), spreads over an area of 1,288 km² in the foothills of Uttarakhand Himalaya, between 400 m and 1,200 m above msl. Vegetation is mixed deciduous tropical and sub-tropical forests. The drainage system comprises River Ramganga and its major tributaries Sonanadi, Mandal and Palain, which remain dry for most part of the year. The drainage system has great conservation importance since distribution and abundance of several wildlife species are known to revolve around these water sources.

Fieldwork was carried out along six perennial water bodies covering a riverine stretch of 190 km. The riverine stretch

was monitored in winter and summer and sightings of Black-necked Storks were recorded. Our observations cover three breeding seasons between mid-August and October, the prime nesting season (Sundar 2003; Ishtiaq 1998; Maheswaran 1998), however, delayed nesting could occur until December. Fledgelings leave the nest after 60 days (Ishtiaq 1998; Maheswaran 1998). Therefore, juveniles observed with the adults could have been first year birds or sub-adults (Table 1). Juveniles accompany adults until next breeding season and then disperse. We could not distinguish the fledged young ones by age.

Adult male and female Black-necked Storks were seen inside the reserve; however, total number of pairs could not be identified owing to lack of markings. We observed one fledgling in 2002 and two in 2004 accompanying an adult pair (Table 1) and remaining sightings includes single pairs during winter (November–February). The birds were always seen in shallow waters of River Ramganga and on the northern shores of the reservoir, with slow currents, probably with easy access to fish. Since no nests were located inside CTR, we regard this as a possible breeding record for the tiger reserve. There is a possibility of the nesting sites being outside the reserve but that needs to be further explored.

Table 1. Sighting records of Black-necked storks in Corbett Tiger Reserve

Date	Place	GPS location	No. of individuals
24th February 2002	*Shishumkhata	29°34'41"N 78°45'32"E	1 adult + 1 young bird
	*Chetanal	29°36'15"N 78°46'02"E	2 adults + 1 young bird
19th May 2002	+Gairai	29°32'53"N 78°59'14"E	2 adults + 1 young bird
	*Ringora	29°36'17"N 78°51'40"E	2 adults + 1 young bird
23rd September 2003	*Chipalghatti	29°37'59"N 78°40'17"E	2 adults
21st October 2003	*Gaujda	29°36'52"N 78°50'04"E	2 adults + 1 young bird
9th January 2004	+Nakatal	29°28'15"N 79°02'18"E	2 adults + 2 young birds
21st February 2004	+Gairai	29°33'35"N 78°59'34"E	2 adults + 2 young birds
28th September 2004	+Sajgadi sot	29°31'42"N 79°04'25"E	2 adults + 2 young birds
Footnote: *Along the reservoir; +Along rivers and streams.			

Acknowledgements

The observations were made during the study on ecology of otters in Corbett Tiger Reserve: Impact of Kalagarh reservoir on habitat use pattern. We wish to place on record our indebtedness to the Forest Department, Uttarakhand; Director, Wildlife Institute of India, Dehradun and Dr S. A. Hussain, Principal Investigator of the Project. We are grateful to R. Jayapal, K. Ramesh and K. S. Gopi Sundar for their encouragement and valuable comments on the manuscript. We thank the anonymous referee for reviewing the manuscript. The first author acknowledges the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (HRD Group), New Delhi for awarding a research grant. During preparation of this manuscript, the first author was working at the WWF-India (Secretariat) New Delhi; he thanks Dr Parikshit Gautam, Director, Freshwater & Wetlands Division, for providing necessary facilities.

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K. S. Gopi Sundar / ICF

Fig. 1. A female Black-necked Stork *Ephippiorhynchus asiaticus* drinks water from an irrigation canal in Mainpuri district, Uttar Pradesh.

Interspecific feeding of Asian Paradise-Flycatcher *Terpsiphone paradisi* nestlings by Oriental White-eye *Zosterops palpebrosus*

Raghavji Balar

Balar, R. 2009. Interspecific feeding of Asian Paradise-Flycatcher *Terpsiphone paradisi* nestlings by Oriental White-eye *Zosterops palpebrosus*. *Indian Birds* 4 (5): 163–164 (2008).

Raghavji Balar. Email: drbbalar@yahoo.co.in

Ms received on 31st July 2008

Pravin Indrekar telephoned me on 24th July 2008 and asked whether I had ever seen an Oriental White-eye *Zosterops palpebrosus* feeding chicks of the Asian Paradise-Flycatcher *Terpsiphone paradisi*? I told him that I hadn't. Later he emailed me his photographs of that very occurrence, for verification.

Next day he took me to Arayan Udyan, which is part of Indroda Park on the eastern bank of the Sabarmati River in Gandhinagar, Gujarat. Less than 100 m from the gate, inside the garden and just on the roadside, I saw a nest of an Asian Paradise-Flycatcher, c. 2 m above the ground, within the twigs of a tree. A rufous plumaged male Asian Paradise-Flycatcher was feeding the chicks (Fig. 1).

On the right of that nest, hardly 3 m away and at the same height above the ground, was a nest of an Oriental White-eye—with a bird incubating eggs (Fig. 2).



Fig. 1. Rufous male Asian Paradise-Flycatcher feeding its fledglings.

Fig. 2. Oriental White-eye incubating in its nest.



Pravin Indrekar (both)

Figs. 3 & 4. Oriental White-eye feeding nestlings of Asian Paradise-flycatcher in the latter's nest.

No sooner did the male flycatcher fly away from its nest, than the non-incubating partner of the nesting white-eye pair came to the flycatcher's nest and began feeding the chicks of the flycatcher, as if they were its own (Figs. 3 & 4)!

During our stay of about one-and-a-half hours I observed that there were two rufous male Asian Paradise-Flycatchers that were feeding the chicks. The female came to the nest once, but was driven away by a male. I also noticed that the 'free' partner of the nesting Oriental White-eye pair seemed to wait 'anxiously', for a gap in the male flycatchers' nestling-feeding routine, to feed the flycatcher chicks.

There was a nest of a Common Iora *Aegithina tiphia* c. 3–4 m away from the flycatcher's nest, on its left and little higher up. The birds were incubating, but the pair ignored the other two species.

Later in the evening I requested Shri Lavkumar Khachar to explain this unusual behaviour. He opined that perhaps, as one of the Oriental White-eyes was incubating, its partner, which was bringing food for the incubating bird, was attracted by the gaping mouths of the flycatcher's chicks and impulsively fed them.

Editor's notes

The phenomenon of interspecific helping among birds, by way of feeding or adoption seems to be relatively well known (Shy 1982). However, from India, the only traceable published record is by Gruisen (2004). In her comprehensive review of this topic, Shy (1982) stated that, 'the subject is potentially of considerable evolutionary interest since in interspecific helping, kin selection is impossible.' In her paper she summarised '140 cases of interspecific feeding,' and categorised interspecific feeding into 'eight probable proximate causes...(1) for some reason, the bird was raising a mixed clutch; (2) the original nest and brood of the bird were destroyed; (3) the nest of another species was very close to that of the bird performing the behaviour; (4) young birds calling stimulated another species to feed them; (5) orphaned birds were adopted temporarily or permanently; (6) a male bird fed another species while his mate incubated; (7) finding a mateless bird, or being mateless itself, a bird joined a heterospecific individual or pair with young; (8) a miscellaneous category: none of the above reasons were evident.'

The interesting behaviour recorded in the above note could have been the result of either the third, fourth or sixth of Shy's categories. It is unfortunate that further observations were not carried out on these nests, but fortunate that the photographer captured this exciting record on camera. It is possible that published information on this phenomenon exists in the mass of ornithological literature from India. I request readers to keep a look out for such occurrences in the field as well as point me to published literature from South Asia.

I would like to thank L. Shyamal and K. S. Gopi Sundar for help with literature searches and magically producing published literature.

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—Aasheesh Pittie

Unusual nest of Crested Bunting *Melophus lathami* at Suhagpura, Pratapgarh district, Rajasthan, India

Gobind Sagar Bhardwaj, Harkirat Singh Sangha & Devender Mistry

Bhardwaj, G. S., Sangha, H. S. & Mistry, D. 2009. Unusual nest of Crested Bunting *Melophus lathami* at Suhagpura, Pratapgarh district, Rajasthan, India. *Indian Birds*. 4 (5): 165–166 (2008).

Gobind Sagar Bhardwaj, Deputy Conservator of Forests, District Chittor, Rajasthan, India. Email: gsbswm@rediffmail.com

Harkirat Singh Sangha, B-27, Gautam Marg, Hanuman Nagar, Jaipur 302021 Rajasthan, India. Email: harkirat.sangha@gmail.com

Devender Mistry, 3 Ashiana, Vishwakarna Colony, Gariyabas, Udaipur, 313001, Rajasthan, India.

Ms received on 29th September 2008.

The Crested Bunting *Melophus lathami* is a common resident of the Indian Subcontinent, but is rather local and capricious (Ali & Ripley 1999). Within Indian boundaries it is found from eastern Rajasthan and Gir forest, south-western Maharashtra, northern Andhra Pradesh, eastern Madhya Pradesh, southern Bihar through Sikkim, Meghalaya, Cachar, Manipur and Sikkim (Byers *et al.* 1995).

It breeds between April and August, commencing with the local wet season. The nest is either placed on the ground, under a rock or a bush, in a crevice, under roots or steep banks, walls and precipitous slopes, in a hollow in a bank or loosely built stone-wall, between the stones forming the embankment between narrow terraced fields (Roberts 1992; Byers *et al.* 1995; Ali & Ripley 1999).

We are not aware of any recent nesting records of the species from Rajasthan except very old nesting records of Capt. E. A. Butler (1875). On Mount Abu, Sirohi district, Butler found it breeding in June and July. He found nests, “generally

placed in a hole on the side of a bank, or at the foot of a rock under cover of a tuft of grass or ferns.”

HSS found four active nests in Jhalana forest, adjoining Jaipur, between 1999 and 2005. One nest was in a crevice of a crumbling stone wall. The remaining three nests were on quite steep sand banks of an ephemeral nullah in the forest and concealed under tufts of grass.

An active nest was found on 9th August 2008 by DM barely c. 1.60 m away from the Pratapgarh–Chittor road near Dhamotar (24°08'N, 74°43' E) in Pratapgarh district (Fig. 1). The nest was on the ground just at the base of a stunted coppice growth of babul *Acacia nilotica*. The cup-shaped nest measured 65 mm in diameter and was made of rootlets and fine grass. He observed the female feeding the chick. When we examined the nest on 10th August 2008, the chick had fledged. There was one egg left in the nest but no parents could be seen.

The nests of Crested Bunting in Jaipur and Pratapgarh match the description in published literature (see above). However, GSB and DM found one nest in an unusual location on 17th September 2007 near Suhagpura village (23°53'N, 74°42'E) on Pratapgarh–Banswara road (Fig. 2). Noticing a female Crested Bunting carrying a caterpillar in its beak and entering into a lantana *Lantana camara* bush, they searched for the nest—and found it the well concealed, c. 2.75 m away from the busy road. The cup-shaped nest was c. 80 cm above the ground in the upper portion of the exotic bush and comprised rootlets, fine grasses and twigs of herbaceous plants. The three chicks in the nest were in down. Unlike other locations described above the area around Suhagpura was devoid of any trees, the only vegetation being scattered bushes of *Lantana camara* along the road. The undulating landscape was essentially grassland with few small patches of agricultural fields.

Although the site for the nest varies considerably in this species, a nest in a bush is extremely rare. A. O. Hume thus summed up his own experiences: “The nest is place in holes in banks or walls, on the ground under some overhanging clod or rock, or concealed in some thick tuft of grass and, very exceptionally (I have only seen one such), in a low thick bush within a few inches of the ground” (Baker 1934).

Dedication

This note is dedicated to our friend, Thakur Digvijay Singh of Dhamotar (1939–2008). Besides his encyclopedic knowledge of



Fig. 1. Crested Bunting *Melophus lathami* nest on ground, 2008.



Fig. 2. Crested Bunting *Melophus lathami* nest in lantana bush, 2007.

the wildlife of Sitamata Wildlife Sanctuary, Pratapgarh district, Dhamotar was an excellent field man. One of the active nests was discovered quite close to Dhamotar *garh* (fort) where he spent most of his life and entertained his friends.

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Crested Bunting *Melophus lathami*

—In memoriam—

Jan-Hendrik Becking

1924–2009

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W. Alan Rodgers

?–2009

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Hodgson's ornithological articles published in the *India Review* (1836–1837)

Edward C. Dickinson

Dickinson, E. C. 2009. Hodgson's ornithological articles published in the 'India Review' (1836–1837). *Indian Birds* 4 (5): 167 (2008).

Edward C. Dickinson, Flat 3, Bolsover Court, 19 Bolsover Road, Eastbourne, East Sussex BN20 7JG, United Kingdom.

Email: edward@asiaorn.org

Mss received on 5th July 2008.

During the period October 1836–May 1837 Brian Houghton Hodgson, writing essentially about new birds from Nepal, published five notes in a journal sometimes cited as the *India Review* and sometimes as the *Indian Review*. Correctly, the full title of it, at its inception, was *India Review and Journal of Foreign Science and the Arts*. At least the first volume was published in Calcutta by G. Woollaston and edited by Frederick Corbyn. The monthly issues began in April 1836.

This is a rare periodical, which I believe extended until November 1842 (Ripley & Scribner 1961). It is not held by the library of the Natural History Museum in London, although photocopies of Hodgson's articles are on file at the library in Tring. It is held by the British Library in London (call no. ST 223). I cannot claim to have examined the complete series for my interest in it centred on new names proposed by Hodgson and their dates.

The issues examined, seem to lack a dated front page so I imagine there were covers but I found none. Previous authors citing Hodgson's papers have usually had difficulty with the dates, very likely due to this lack. Vaurie (1949) is an honourable exception.

Dating does however seem possible; each issue examined contained a central local news section where a date could be found. As far as it is possible to tell these dates approximate the dates of publication.

The issues included sections on General Science and within those subsections for 'Original Communications'; this is where Hodgson's papers appeared, each one stating, below its title, and his by-line, "For the India Review" (although possibly shorthand it would seem that this was the subtitle applicable to a part of each monthly issue).

My notes relating solely to the vital period yield the following information:

Vol.	No.	Pagination	Date found within	See page
1	7	247–304	15th October 1836	286
1	8	305–366	15th November 1836	334
1	9	367–420	15th December 1836	391
1	10	421–552	15th January 1837	459
1	11	553–620	15th February 1837	594
1	12	621–694	15th March 1837	671
2	1	1–74	15th April 1837	52
2	2	75–138	15th May 1837	128

With this information, the five papers by Hodgson in which he described new birds, one appearing in two parts, can be easily identified to the appropriate issue for citation and given a date that is approximately correct.

Acknowledgements

Grateful thanks as usual to the staff at the British Library and at the libraries of the Natural History Museum. I should add that information on the editor and publisher of this journal were found on the website of AntiQbook www.antiqbook.co.uk where in early July 2008 a bound copy of volume 1 was offered for sale. This was purchased by Aashesh Pittie who then very kindly provided data that could be added to the first Table.

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Hodgson's papers: column 4 gives the number of species group taxa described

Title	Date	Citation
Description of sundry new species of <i>Cinnyris</i> inhabiting Nepal	1836 (Oct.)	<i>Ind. Rev.</i> 1 (7): 272–274 7 ¹
On some new species of the Edolian and Ceblypyrine subfamilies of the Laniidae of Nepal.	1836 (Nov.)	<i>Ind. Rev.</i> 1 (8): 324–329 8 ²
On some new species of the more typical Laniidae of Nepal.	1837 (Jan.)	<i>Ind. Rev.</i> 1 (10): 445–447 5 ³
Indication of a new genus of Inessores, tending to connect the Sylviadæ and Muscicapidæ	1837 (Mar.)	<i>Ind. Rev.</i> 1 (12): 650–652 3 ⁴
Indication of some new forms belonging to the Parianae	1837 (Apr.)	<i>Ind. Rev.</i> 2 (1): 30–34 5 ⁵
Indication of some new forms belonging to the Parianae (Cont.)	1837 (May)	<i>Ind. Rev.</i> 2 (2): 87–90 5 ⁶

2 *Cinnyris Magna* (p. 272); *Cinnyris Epauletta* (p. 272); *Cinnyris Strigula* (p. 272); *Cinnyris Miles* (p. 273); *Cinnyris Nipalensis* (p. 273); *Cinnyris Saturata* (p. 273); *Cinnyris Ignicauda* (p. 273).

3 *Edolius (Chibia) Casia* (p. 324); *Edolius (Chibia) Malabaroides* (p. 325); *Edolius (Bhringa) Tectirostris* (p. 325); *Edolius (Bhuchanga) Albirictus* (p. 326); *Edolius (Bhuchanga) Annectans* (p. 326); *Edolius (Chaptia) Muscipetoides* (p. 327); *Grauculus Nipalensis* (p. 327); *Volocivora Melaschistos* (p. 328) [the central names in parentheses were given as subgeneric names].

4 *Lanius Nipalensis* (p. 445); *Lanius Tricolor* (p. 446); *Lanius Ferrugiceps* (p. 446); *Tenthaca Pelvica* (p. 447); *Tenthaca Leucurus* (p. 447).

5 *Niltava Sundara* (p. 650); *Niltava Fuligiventer* (p. 650) *Niltava Brevipes* (pp. 650, 651); *Siphia Strophilata* (p. 651)

6 *Parus Nipalensis* (p. 31); *Parus Sultaneus* (p. 31); *Parus (Suthora) Nipalensis* (p. 32); *Minla Ignotincta* (p. 32); *Minla Castaneiceps* (p. 33). The previously overlooked evidence of simultaneous introduction of two names employing the binomen *Parus nipalensis* will be taken up with the International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature with the request that both be conserved.

7 *Mesia Argentauris* (p. 88); *Mesia (Bahila) Calipyga* (p. 88); *Mesia (Siva) Cyanouroptera* (p. 88); *Mesia (Siva) Nipalensis* (p. 89); *Mesia (Siva) Vinipetius* (p. 89); *Mesia (Siva) Strigula* (p. 89).

A race against time and feathers

James J. Williams

Williams, J. J. 2009. A race against time and feathers. *Indian Birds* 4 (5): 168–169 (2008).

James J. Williams, 20 Ahmed Sait Road, Fraser Tow, Bangalore 560005, Karnataka, India. Email: jamesj.williams@yahoo.co.in

We were one of 32 human teams, racing against birds, against the clock, to see how many different species of the feathered kind we could catch up with, close enough, so we could recognise them by sight or by sound.

An unfair race perhaps? We humans may have had motor vehicles, binoculars and human brains at our disposal, but the birds had wings, telescopic eyesight and camouflage, and the only traffic they would have to contend with along the way were noisy flocks of their own kind. No disrespect to my fellow team members, but I would have been on the birds' side any day!

We had 12 hours to race. Start time 06:00 hrs; finish time 18:00 hrs. At least we would have daylight to help us...but not until sunrise.

Having won the toss of the coin, we opted to field first, choosing to begin our day in the birds' own backyard, well

away from the urban chaos of home but still within 50 km of the city as per the race rules. Here, on the edge of the forest, we would at least be able to hear the soothing songs of nature during the early hours of blinding darkness, safe in the knowledge that we would be far from any unsavoury distractions caused by men and their machines.

We reached our forested starting-post nine hours early. Enough time to allow our rather inadequate senses to at least partly acclimatise to the opposition's home territory.

Under canvas we lay that night, listening first to the gentle breeze and then to the incessant 'did-he-do-it' shrieks of the low-flying Red-wattled Lapwing *Vanellus indicus*, as he tirelessly went about his job of disturbing our sleep to give the feathered opposition an even bigger advantage. So much for our own teamwork—these crafty winged creatures already had the upper hand, and we hadn't even started!



James J. Williams

Red-wattled Lapwing *Vanellus indicus*...the pacer!

The clock neared 0600 hrs. The four of us stood like statues in the darkness, torch in hand, our sleepy eyes watching the seconds count down the coming of the starting gun, our ears all pricked-up, ready and waiting for the first sound from the forest around, perhaps from the eerie hooting of an owl?

We didn't need the clock to tell us the time. We didn't need to wait. Right on cue, bang on six o'clock, the silence was broken by the all-too familiar and piercing 'did-he-do-it' calls of the lapwing! What else did we expect?! A ghostly owl hoot would have been a much more romantic way to start, but the lapwing had other ideas. He was of course the referee, the race-starter, the front-runner, and the pacer. He was without doubt the captain of this formidable feathered team. And as we were to find out, he would be with us all the way, popping up many times throughout the day, keeping a watch on us—making sure we followed the rules and didn't come too close to any of his team mates!

There was eventually some silence again as the high-octane lapwing took a well-earned rest, gracefully giving his team-mates a chance to join in the fun.

Ten minutes of tranquillity went by. We stared blankly into the forest from a pond-side clearing, a freshly-brewed chai keeping our hands warm and helping us to calmly re-awaken our senses at a time when it seemed easier to drift off back to sleep. The other birds still slept perhaps, preferring to enjoy their lie-in rather than getting up early for some silly game with a bunch of humans who could never compete anyway!

And then, out of the shadows, we saw a moving reflection in the pond, something gliding over the water silhouetted by the vaguely lightening sky above. With no calls to help us, we struggled to track the movement of this mysterious creature until we finally caught the gleaming bright orange eyes of what was our second bird of the day, a nightjar *Caprimulgus* sp., as it hunted hapless insects in search of the last meal of its nightshift.

The owls all remained aloof, but their no-show was soon forgotten as the habitual early risers soon began their early morning chorus, led by White-cheeked Barbets *Megalaima viridis*, Asian Koels *Eudynamis scolopacea* and Grey Junglefowls *Gallus sonneratii*, and accompanied by a mass of far less-obvious calls from the habitually confusing warblers and other small passerines.

The onset of daylight was indeed a major relief to us, as it was only then, when our eyesight kicked in, that we could start to add to our bird list with some degree of regularity and accuracy. Whilst some birds alerted us to their presence by their call alone (the skulking Spotted Babbler's *Pellorneum ruficeps* happy and tuneful song a good example of this) it was the magnificent colours of feathers reflecting in the early morning sunlight that gave others away. The leading stars of this colourful spectacle included Eurasian Golden Orioles *Oriolus oriolus*, Purple Sunbirds *Nectarinia asiatica*, Copper-smith Barbets *Megalaima haemacephala*, Oriental White-eyes *Zosterops palpebrosus* and Asian Paradise-Flycatchers *Terpsiphone paradise* whilst a single, stylishly costumed Yellow-fronted Pied Woodpecker *Dendrocopos mahrattensis* made his own presence known as he pecked away at a tree-trunk high above us.

As the sun grew hotter it became obvious our feathered friends were easily getting the better of us, the dense foliage ensuring that far more of them remained elusive than those

that we could spot! It was time for us to move on, to pastures anew where water would be more abundant, where tree-cover would be less and where new birds would be on parade.

In reedy ponds we found Purple Moorhens *Porphyrio porphyrio* and Purple Herons *Ardea purpurea*, Common Coots *Fulica atra* and Little Grebes *Tachybaptus ruficollis*. Around dryer rock-pools we were treated to the tail displays of Large Pied *Motacilla maderaspatensis* and Grey Wagtails *M. cinerea* and Indian Robins *Saxicoloides fulicata* whilst our eyesight was challenged by the earthy camouflage of pipits *Anthus* spp., and larks *Mirafra* spp.

As the day progressed we crossed several more habitats, ranging from prickly scrubland hiding insectivores such as shrikes *Lanius* spp., babblers *Turdoides* spp., and Small Minivets *Pericrocotus cinnamomeus*, to a vast wetland roaming with waders both big and small, including Wood Sandpipers *Tringa glareola*, Painted Storks *Mycteria leucocephala*, Black-winged Stilts *Himantopus himantopus* and Little Ringed Plovers *Charadrius dubius* as well as the usual variety of pure white egrets. In the skies above, Brahminy Kites *Haliastur indus* soared and swooped on the lookout for fish, Lesser Pied Kingfishers *Ceryle rudis* hovered like hummingbirds in their quest for the same, and numerous swallows *Hirundo* spp., hyperactively combed the waters for aquatically inclined insects.

Although the eagles managed to evade us on our race with the birds, we at least managed to see a few other raptors including the Oriental Honey Buzzard *Pernis ptilorhynchus*, Egyptian Vulture *Neophron percnopterus*, Common Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus* and Shikra *Accipiter badius*.

Nearing the city, as we drove back towards the finishing post, picking up one or two extra species as we wearily looked out of the window, we reminisced on a great day out in the sun—very tiring by the end, yet incredibly rewarding and a lot of fun.

Thankfully we managed to avoid the worst of the Bangalore traffic by spending most of our time in the less populated areas outside the town, although our desire to focus on birding rather than road racing still didn't stop us from being cautioned by a highway patrol police car for the crime of scanning a roadside pond with our binoculars (I must add that we were stationary on the hard shoulder at the time, not driving!).

The traffic police were however no match for what was undoubtedly the most vigilant of all our 'opponents'—an untiring biped who was not only our first bird of the day but managed to follow us pretty much everywhere we went—namely the good old Red-wattled Lapwing.

But... "Did-he-do-it?"

Well, with a little help from the lapwing, the majority of Bangalore's 350 bird species did indeed do it. Whilst the winning human team spotted 130 different birds, over 200 of them had avoided being seen or heard, thus ensuring an overwhelming victory for our feathered friends.

Roll on the next bird race!

[The author was captain of the Wryneck Team, Bangalore Bird Race 2008.]

—A flight down memory lane— Procrastination!

Lavkumar Khachar

Khachar, L. 2009. A flight down memory lane: procrastination! *Indian Birds* 4 (5): 170–171 (2008).
Lavkumar Khachar, 14 Jayant Society, Rajkot, Gujarat, India. Email: lavkumarkhachar@gmail.com

I intend to dwell on this terrible failing of humanity for the very simple reason that it is something, which we all do every day of our lives and as a result, we not only reduce our personal levels of achievement, but also reduce our contribution to raising standards in society. What indeed has this got to do with *Indian Birds*? Everything really, here is a young editor striving to bring out a high quality publication and a large majority of us, including myself, are not being regular in sending him material. I am especially deserving of censure since he extends to me so much respect. The last time he gently reminded me that all my manuscripts had been used up and that I should send in something and, I made a lame excuse that at my age it was getting more and more difficult to put thoughts together! What absolute nonsense really. But then it is this putting off, to-be-done-later, which is the real excuse. Today, 16th February 2009, I simply forced myself to sit down and put thought to paper along with my morning coffee. At my age, I may be excused for giving a small homily on this very real weakness of the human race.

I have actually two articles outlined for *Indian Birds* one on how the Himalaya and Himalayan birds became an obsession, and the other on redstarts in my life that await to be fleshed out. It is just this universal failing of putting off things for another day that has prevented them from seeing the light of day. Well, the editor's polite prodding and the two last issues of *Indian Birds* finally compelled me to write this piece. The last two issues: vol. 4 (2) with the picture of the Western Tragopan *Tragopan melanocephalus* and vol. 4 (3) with the White-bellied Sea-Eagles *Haliaeetus leucogaster* brought great memories of years gone by, which I just have to share with all of you. The tragopan takes me back to the autumn of 1949 and the eagles to the winter of 1955–1956! And, how vivid the memories are!

In 1949, during a long weekend, I had taken the then rather ramshackle bus to Narkanda from Shimla and trekked along the upper Hindustan–Tibet road to Bahli. I had a booking in the delightfully sited forest rest house that overlooked a valley flowing to the south of the ridge connecting Mt. Hattoo east of Narkanda to Maralkanda, a prominent forested peak on the southern watershed of the deep Nogli Khad that drains the precipitous western face of the spectacular Hansbeshan massif into the Sutlej. The upper Hindustan road continues along this great ridge, itself a watershed of the Sutlej to the north and the Jamuna to the south. I regret never having done the trek along this stretch of road beyond Bahli, passing as it did through the then still extant primeval conifer and high altitude oak forests. But, I

did walk the forest trail west along the ridge to the open top of Hattoo with its panoramic views. It was a delightfully easy trek, which I took slowly, savoring the excellent bird watching as I loitered through some wonderful, undisturbed forests. There were tits, warblers, minivets, laughingthrushes, nuthatches, treecreepers and woodpeckers in the undergrowth, and up in the trees on every side. It was on this forest trail, at a little over 2,440 m, that I suddenly saw two large birds; the size of Impeyan Monal *Lophophorus impejanus*, squatting on the leaf littered path. In the gloom of the tall forest, the colors were not distinct, especially the crimson of the male, but even today I recall the white spotting against the dark background body plumage of what I presumed was the male. As I cautiously approached the crouching birds, they crouched lower and then suddenly flew off into the tall trees. None of the bird books I then possessed mentioned any tragopan, but I presumed they were a pair of Satyr Tragopan *T. satyra*, being familiar with a fine mounted specimen displayed back home in a glass case in the Jasdan palace card room. It was years later that I realised I had actually seen a pair of the Western Tragopan and not the commoner and more widespread Satyr. Significantly, the forests of the Maralkanda and the Nogli watershed were identified later as an area with a large population of Western Tragopan along with Monal and Koklas pheasants leading to the notification of the Dharanghati Wildlife Sanctuary. Vol. 4 No. 2 of *Indian Birds* carries a well-written paper on this area. My one complaint is that despite the use of satellite images from Google World, the authors have not provided names of ridges nor indicated the upper Hindustan–Tibet road on the excellent reproduction of the satellite image of the general area. The late M. A. Wynter-Blyth trekked along this road to Sangla in the Baspa Valley in the early 1950s and wrote a very readable account of his trek for the *Journal of Bombay Natural History Society* (JBNHS).

Fifty years later, I traveled from Manali across the Jalori Pass and the Sutlej to Narkanda, Shimla and on to Chandigarh. We broke journey at Narkanda, which has grown considerably and lost its early charm though I was delighted to find the forest still in excellent condition. Looking up at Hatto I recalled my climb to the top and wondered whether the wildlife was still as plentiful as when I had been there half a century earlier. On the last occasion, on my way back during the late afternoon to the Bahli forest rest house I had heard two leopards *Panthera pardus* "sawing". From the account that prompts me to write this note, I see that there are plenty of tragopan and Monal in the Dharanghati Sanctuary.

The cover photograph of the White-bellied Sea-Eagles is outstanding. It brings out dramatically the aerial mastery of these attractive raptors, which happen to be my favorites, in a charismatic group. It was in February 1956 that the late Dharmakumarsinhji had visited Karwar and the Oyster Rocks lighthouse in his capacity as the Chief Wildlife Warden of the erstwhile Bombay State. Karwar was then part of the Bombay Sate (Presidency of British times). Dharmakumarsinhji was the first Wildlife Warden at a time when the post was first constituted and non-forest department individuals were appointed to the position. Being the great raptor expert that he was, he immediately noted a pair of these fine eagles nesting on a pinnacle of a stack to the west of the lighthouse island. On his return to Mumbai (Bombay of those days), he urgently called me over and directed me to proceed to Karwar to photograph the nesting pair. I was to be cared for by the

lighthouse keeper who was delighted to have me as his guest. The account of my experiences appears in the JBNHS. I spent several days in a hide observing and photographing the eagles during day and at night in a sleeping bag on the rocks below, just above the high tide mark. The experience was memorable; being the very first time I had spent days and nights alone by the sea. On my return to Karwar I was greeted by the news that I had become a father to a boy! My son now looks after the nature camps I first initiated in the 1980s at Hingol Gadh and his son, now in the last year of school, has extracted a promise from me to use my 'influence' with Romulus Whitaker to let him work at the Madras Crocodile Bank after he graduates! I hope the progeny of my pair of eagles is continuing to nest in the Oyster Rocks eerie. Incidentally, the illustrated pair shows the smaller male making a pass at the larger female.

—Reviews—

- Audio CD-call of Indian birds Vol 4. Produced by Nature Club Surat, Surat 395007, Gujarat, India. Price not mentioned.
- Audio-Visual CD-birds of Western Ghats. Produced by Birdsong, Sangli 416416, Maharashtra, India. MRP: Rs. 200/-.

Nature Club Surat have been quite active in the field of producing audio recordings of bird calls in India and the CD under review here is the fourth in their series. The collection on this CD consists of calls of 49 species of birds, recorded by Mukesh Bhatt. Each call is preceded by announcements of names of the bird in English and Gujarati. A booklet accompanies the CD and has illustrations of all the birds featured on the album. The illustrations (in colour) are by Dr Narasimhan, Falguni Patel and Vinit Patel.

Some of the interesting birds featured in this collection include Bronze-winged Jacana *Hydrophasianus chirurgus*, Crab-Plover *Dromas ardeola*, Malabar Trogon *Harpactes fasciatus*, Oriental Pied Hornbill *Anthracoceros albirostris*, Heart-spotted Woodpecker *Hemicircus canente*, Marshall's Iora *Aegithina nigrolutea*, Rufous-fronted Prinia *Prinia buchanani* and Black-breasted Weaver *Ploceus benghalensis*.

The recordings are of good quality, free from excessive background noise. They range from 0.27 to 1.33 min. in duration and the total duration of the CD is 46.04 min.

I have the following comments and suggestions on this CD.

The recordings of many species tend to lack variations in calls and tend to be too long (> 1 min). They are also repetitive for some species, e.g., Spot-billed Duck *Anas poecilorhyncha* and Bronze-winged Jacana. In some cases, only the song is included, e.g., Lesser Whitethroat *Sylvia curruca*, but no indication is given as to the context of the call or whether the recording pertains to a song or a call. Since bird calls have

regional dialects, it would be helpful if the location from where the recording was made is mentioned in the booklet. For instance, I found that the call of the Common Woodshrike *Tephrodornis pondicerianus* is quite different from the calls I am familiar with in southern India. The Blyth's Reed-Warbler's *Acrocephalus dumetorum* calls sounded somewhat distorted in their tonal quality and appeared to be repeated more frequently.

I would also like to point out some ambiguity in the booklet. For the Brown-capped Pygmy Woodpecker *Dendrocopos nanus* (#22), the alternative name (?) is given in the bracket as Grey-crowned Pigmy Woodpecker *Dendrocopos canicapillus*, which is a distinct species. One is not sure if the recording of Black-crested Bulbul *Pycnonotus melanicterus* pertains to the northern or the southern subspecies (ruby-throated *gularis*). The absence of additional information such as scientific names and location adds to the confusion.

I would urge Nature Club Surat to seriously consider bringing out CDs that cater to specific regions of the country as the present one contains a mix of bird species occurring in various regions.

The second CD under review seems to be an answer to the suggestions made above. Here, one gets to not only hear the bird calls but also see various photographs of the songsters as well as their habitats. Calls or songs of 40 Western Ghats species are found on this CD. These have been recorded by Sharad Apte. There is also a running commentary throughout the entire duration on the Western Ghats, importance of bird calls, habits, habitats, conservation, etc., of birds. A few interesting tidbits concerning local knowledge/lore concerning the calls have been mentioned, e.g., Black-headed Cuckoo-Shrike *Coracina melanoptera*. The total duration of the CD is 1.15.08 hrs. Also there are legends that give essential details about the bird species discussed. Photographs have been contributed by Sharad Apte, Clement Francis and other well-known bird photographers.

Several interesting bird species feature in this collection, including endemics like Blue-winged Parakeet

Psittacula columboides, White-bellied Shortwings *Brachypteryx major*, Wynaad Laughingthrush *Garrulax delesserti*, White-bellied Blue Flycatcher *Cyornis pallipes* and White-bellied Treepie *Dendrocitta leucogastra*. Here care has been taken to include wider repertoires of calls and songs and also to explain their context.

However, there are some errors that I wish to point out in this CD. The "Scops owl" call might actually be that of either a Long-tailed *Caprimulgus macrurus* or a Jerdon's *C. atripennis* Nightjar. The Lesser Golden-backed Woodpecker's *Dinopium benghalense* calls have wrongly been substituted by the drumming and vocalisation by its bigger relative—the Greater Golden-backed Woodpecker *Chrysocolaptes lucidus*! I wonder if the calls attributed to Thick-billed Flowerpecker *Dicaeum agile* are correct. Some of the photos shown as Indian Jungle Nightjar *C. indicus* and Jungle Prinia *Prinia sylvatica* might need a closer look for correct ID.

I found the commentary too long, repetitive and redundant since some of the information is already displayed in a legend. By making it briefer, the entire duration of the CD could have

been reduced. Enough care has not been taken with respect to the spellings as well as accuracy of information. There were several cases where, for instance, the breeding season in the legend differed from the dates mentioned in the commentary. The background music too, I felt, was unnecessary in an audio CD of this nature (pun unintended!). Often I found it distracting, e.g., when calls of the Malabar Whistling-Thrush *Myophonus horsfieldii* was being played.

These are but minor criticisms of an effort that deserves to be praised and emulated. Both the CDs are valuable resource material for naturalists, environmental educators, serious ornithologists as well as lay persons. We should have more and more of such material so that we can better understand this poorly studied and sadly neglected aspect of Indian ornithology. I hope this effort would also be extended to include other life-forms such as frogs, mammals, insects, *etc.*, which also have a wide repertoire of calls and sounds that need to be urgently documented.

— V. Santharam



Ashish Kothari. 2007. *Birds in our lives*. Hyderabad: Universities Press (India) Private Limited. Paperback (14 x 21.5 cm), pp. i-xvi, 1–292, 103 colour photos. Price Rs 550/-.

"*Birds in our lives* provides glimpses of the incredible diversity of India's birds: the ecosystems where different kinds of birds are found, the various ways—cultural and economic—in which birds have touched our lives, as well as a brief account of the history of ornithology in India. It stresses on the serious threats that bird habitats and populations face, and gives a sense of both the continued erosion of Indian birdlife, as well as the rapidly growing efforts to save it. Finally, it provides key pointers for what needs to be done if we want to save this precious natural heritage," (from the blurb on the front cover flap).

Most of the ornithological publications in India have been species, family or region specific. For several years I've felt the paucity of a work that would deal with birds in our lives—in a comprehensive yet synoptic way. Kothari achieves this with great success and lucidity in this compact book—little in size but thorough in content, lavishly replete with excellent colour photographs and primarily, eminently readable. Indeed, he may have penned a book that would have been on the tick-list of at least a handful of Indian ornithologists (this reviewer included)!

The first five chapters are about how birds have been a part of our lives—as the epitome of beauty, freedom,

inspiration and wonder, as the focus of extensive and intensive scientific study, as the ultimate trophy of a hunter's skills, as icons of culture and religion and as a source of food. Chapters 1–5: Birds, birds, everywhere! (pp. 1–52); Birds in Indian culture (pp. 53–67); Ornithology through Indian history (pp. 68–80); Brought in by the wind: The wonder of migration (pp. 81–89); What good are they to us? Birds in India's economy (pp. 90–106).

The sixth and seventh chapters, which I feel are the most important, as they show the way forward, highlight the effect of human ignorance and folly upon the lives of these same birds and what remedial measures, however meager, we have taken to conserve our avian heritage. Chapters 6–7: An ill wind blows: Indian birds in danger (pp. 107–157); The winds of change: Conservation of India's birds (pp. 158–205).

The book ends with four useful appendices. The first two are a testament of our callousness, listing birds that are today direly threatened and the third, to the remedial measures we can take to try and change the fate of birds in our lives—and thereby enrich the quality of our own. The fourth points towards sources that readers can use to further their ornithological interests. Annexures 1–4: Threatened birds of India (pp. 220–233); Annexure 2: Important Bird Areas of India (pp. 234–266); Annexure 3: Ramsar sites in India (pp. 267–286); Annexure 4: Some periodicals on Indian birds and related issues (pp. 287–290).

The publishers and the author are to be lauded for this work, which should find a place in the library of every Indian interested in birds. It also makes an ideal gift.

—Aasheesh Pittie

Errata

Indian Birds Volume 4 Number 4 (July–August) 2008

Page 140, 2nd column, 11th line from bottom, read 'Karaivetty' instead of 'Karavetty'.

Page 143, 1st column, 11th line from bottom, read 'Fregata' instead of 'Fregetta'.

Page 145, 1st column, 19th line from bottom, read 'Φ' instead of the first '?' and 'ϕ' instead of the second '?'.

Page 145, 1st column, last line of penultimate paragraph, read 'X' instead of the first '?' and 'χ' instead of the second '?'.

Page 145, 1st column, last line, read 'Ψ' instead of the first '?' and 'ψ' instead of the second '?'.

—In the news—

Compiled by Prashanth N. S.

From the field

A Bar-headed Goose *Anser indicus* with collar band 'C7' was reported from Kaggalipura tank (Mysore district, Karnataka) on 4th January 2009 by Sahana and team (Bngbirds). In December 2007 M. Nirajan had reported a bird with collar band 'E6' from the same tank. There were two more records on 4th January 2009 of Bar-headed Geese—Manu and his team reported a sighting from Maralli tank in Mysore district and over 300 were seen on the backwaters of Cauvery River near Krishnaraj Sagar dam by M. K. Vishwanath. Karthik Thambihalli reported another collared individual (V9) from Somnathapura, Mysore district in January 2009 while Tarun Balpande photographed one (Collar marked 'NU') from Paradgaon Lake in Nagpur, Maharashtra on 18th March 2009 (Nagpurbirds). Martin Gilbert, of the Wildlife Conservation Society, while confirming that these birds were banded as a part of a project in Mongolia in July 2008, reiterated the importance of these two wetlands where these birds seem to be returning year after year in large groups (Bngbirds). Mike Prince reported nest-building Tawny Eagles *Aquila rapax*, Yellow-throated Bulbul *Pycnonotus xantholaemus* and Hume's Leafwarbler *Phylloscopus humei* from Nandi Hills in early January 2009 (Bngbirds). On 15th March 2009, P. C. Rajeevan reported a pipit with a reddish throat and streaks on the flanks from Paanavayal, a wetland north of Pazhayangadi in Kannur district, Kerala, which was later identified as a Red-throated Pipit *Anthus cervinus*, and photographed by K. V. Uthaman (Keralabirder). Praveen J. clarified that this might be only the third record of the bird in southern India, the most recent one being the three successive winter records and photographs of the bird from Hesaraghatta, Bangalore by Mike Prince. Vinay Das reported an inland record of a Black-capped Kingfisher *Halcyon pileata* between Bannur and Somnathpur in Mysore district (Bngbirds). In the January edition of his 'Mysore birding diary', A. Shivaprakash recorded, among several other things, over 7,000 Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa* and about 300 Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybridus*. In February, he reported the Indian Spotted Eagle's *Aquila hasata* nesting activity in the outskirts of Mysore, and an inland Western Reef Heron *Egretta gularis* from Mysore city's drainages. Sachin Shurpali reported seven Baillon's Crakes *Porzana pusilla* and six Pin-tailed Snipes *Gallinago stenura* from Ramapura lake near Bangalore (Bngbirds). Puttaraju photographed a Lesser Adjutant *Leptoptilos javanicus* near Kaiga town in Uttara Kannada district of Karnataka. Another one was reported soaring over thermals above Kulgi Nature Camp in Dandeli Wildlife Sanctuary (Karnataka) by K. S. Seshadri and others (Bngbirds). Sqn. Ldr. S. S. Mahesh sighted hundreds of Barn Swallows *Hirundo rustica* performing ritual flights over their roost in a sugarcane field near Hajipur lake in Bareilly (please give state). He recorded the same behaviour among Red-rumped Swallows *H. daurica* in Bidar, Karnataka. Kiran Poonacha photographed a Short-eared Owl *Asio flammeus* in Bangalore (INW), which is close to its southern limit in India, and later

reported about 20 Golden Plover *Pluvialis fulva* from a dry lakebed on the outskirts of Bangalore (INW). Muthunarayanan reported the arrival of over one hundred Greater Flamingo *Phoenicopterus roseus* in Tuticorin, Tamil Nadu (Tamilbirds). The Field Ornithology Group of Sri Lanka (FOGSL) reported the first sighting of Grey-necked Bunting *Emberiza buchanani* from the island nation in December 2008 (Orientalbirding). V. Santharam reported a Marshall's Iora *Aegithina nigrolutea* from Rishi Valley, Chittoor district, Andhra Pradesh (Tamilbirds). Bhaskar Das reported a Large-billed Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus orinus* from a dry mangrove bed at Koikhali in West Bengal (Birdphotoindia). N. Shivakumar reported 162 Spot-billed Pelicans *Pelecanus philippensis* from Kolleru wetland in Andhra Pradesh. C. Sashi Kumar and team reported 300 species of birds including several Western Ghats endemics like Wyanad Laughingthrush *Garrulax delesserti* as a part of their survey, which retraces areas visited in Kerala by Salim Ali 75 years ago. Other records from their survey include courting Lesser Fish Eagle *Ichthyophaga humilis* at Thattekad, Scaly Thrush *Zoothera dauma* at Pambadum Shola, a group of Lesser Kestrels *Falco naumanni* at Periyar Tiger Reserve and several Broad-tailed Grassbird *Schoenicola platyura*. Rajesh Sachdev recorded a Pied Harrier *Circus melanoleucos* from Uran (Maharashtra) during the 5th HSBC Mumbai Bird Race.

100 volumes of JBNHS in a DVD

The Journal of the Bombay Natural History Society was first published in 1886. It completed 100 volumes in 2003. Recognised as the premier scientific peer-reviewed journal on natural history, it is the authoritative publication on the biodiversity of the Indian Sub-continent. Now this seminal work is available as a DVD! The DVD, comprising the first one hundred volumes, was released on 18th February 2009. This DVD is priced at Rs. 1,000/- (packing and forwarding extra @ Rs. 50/-). Please get one before the stock is exhausted. [<http://www.bnhs.org>]

Coimbatore forest division website and Birds of Coimbatore

The website of the Coimbatore Forest Division [<http://www.coimbatoreforests.org>] provides useful information about the conservation and management activities of the department as well as information for visitors and tourists to the protected areas in the region. The website carries recent news as well as notes on human-elephant conflict and its management. It also documents the flora and fauna of Coimbatore's forests. Coimbatore is strategically located near several important protected areas of the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve as well as the Anamalai Hills and contiguous hill ranges. Senthilmurugan, a wildlife biologist working in the department, announced the release of a book on the email group, Tamilbirds-entitled Birds of Coimbatore and priced at Rs. 150/-, it contains information about the birds in the forests in and around Coimbatore. It can be obtained from the District Forest Officer, Coimbatore (Ph: 0422-2302925).

—Obituary—

Dr Ravi Sankaran (1963–2009)

Ravi was different things to different people. He was an excellent field worker, biologist and dedicated conservationist; he had a—no-airs, no-nonsense approach to life—at the same time was warm and full of fun, a wonderful person with a delightfully sharp tongue and a true friend. He was a maverick in the sense he was unconventional, but he had all the good values. Unlike some biologists with their heads in the clouds, Ravi would mix freely with birdwatchers, conservationists, scientists, nature lovers and children. He had the knack of getting on with everyone. He often played by his own rules when he thought necessary, but always had an underlying sense of purpose. His research transcended into conservation. In his projects on the Lesser Florican *Sypheotides indicus* and the Edible-nest Swiftlets *Collocalia fuciphaga* he combined good science with dedicated, persistent conservation and would find practical solutions for the conservation and protection of the species he was studying. Even to date he was fighting for the conservation of both these species.

His scientific output was considerable. Sixteen published reports covering surveys in western India for identifying important habitat for the Lesser Florican and justify the identified areas. Ecology on some endemic birds of the Andaman & Nicobar Islands, which included conservation of the Edible-nest Swiftlet and impact of nest collection on this species' population. He also studied the Narcondam Hornbill *Aceros narcondami* and the Nicobar Megapode *Megapodius nicobariensis*. In 1999 he studied the Lesser Florican in Rajasthan. Published six research reports. He has also conducted an ornithological survey of Nanda Devi National Park in 1993. Several papers on



Dr Ravi Sankaran on Doyang bridge, Andamans

Pankaj Sekhsaria

varied species on topics from Edible-nest Swiftlet, Lesser Florican, desert habitat and wildlife conservation, Narcodam Hornbill, Nicobar Megapode and avifauna of the Andaman & Nicobar Islands. He gave numerous lectures and published popular articles to create conservation awareness. He also advocated conservation for the subjects he had studied actively through posters in local libraries. Recently he was involved in community conservation training young people in Nagaland.

Not being totally conventional, it was refreshingly surprising news for many people when he recently became Director of SACON. He immediately dived into bringing the organization up to his own high standards, at the same time continuing his conservation fieldwork in Nagaland and the Andamans. Long neglected meetings, policy decisions, regular evaluation procedures were being put into place. SACON was turning the corner.

I remember calling him up occasionally at 2200–2300 hrs (our favoured time for speaking) and he would still be in the office. It is a shame that he passed away so very suddenly just when he had so much to offer. His daughter, Yamini, was the apple of his eye and he doted on her. He was full of hope and ideas for SACON. He will be sorely missed. I hope someone is following up on Ravi's strategy to protect the Edible-nest Swiftlets in the Andamans with the co-operation of the local people. That would be the perfect tribute as this mission was very close to his heart.

—Rishad Naoroji

[Editors' note: A 'Facebook' page has been created for Dr Ravi Sankaran: <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Dr-Ravi-Sankaran/59602514000>. An example of the 'Facebook' posts is given below. Please visit to learn more about him and his work.]

What can I say? And yet I must, for my friend Ravi would have glowered at my silence. The memory is alive with the clear light of purpose that shone from his eyes, for we met a few weeks ago in Bangalore. 'No one dare refuse an invitation from Zafar', he'd said. And characteristically announced his arrival with a booming, 'I'm going to throw a cat among the pigeons!' There were some there who did not know him from Adam and some who were relieved that Ravi had come too.

I didn't know him as well as his Bombay buddies, and yet I knew him so well! Admiration for the man and his work drew me to his world like a moth is drawn to the living flame. Ravi epitomized a science that was rigorous to the core. His approach to field ornithology was so refreshing that the sheaf of papers that his predecessors wrote, seemed bleak compared with his well-rounded work. The clarity of his thought was such that in meetings he had the uncanny knack of putting a person in a spot with a laser sharp query, but he was a

master of that weapon and wielded it with velvet gloves. Ravi was full of beans. Ravi could seize a momentous issue and spell it out with awesome simplicity. Ravi was a natural at his trade. During the early days of our friendship I often made hesitant plans to visit him at his outposts in the Andamans. But really I never had his guts or his amazing endurance. I couldn't think of washing up in Chennai wracked with malaria and returning to the Islands again for a repeat dose. But that was Ravi and can anyone question his selfless dedication, his blistering passion?

The last words he spoke, before we dispersed for lunch that afternoon were, 'I'm going to give my everything for my dream with SACON. I'm glad that the tide is turning.'

Ravi's left behind some very big shoes to fill...and a legacy that demands endurance. Fulfilling that is the greatest tribute we can pay this astonishing naturalist.

I pray for strength in trying times and forbearance and fortitude.

—Aasheesh Pittie

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¹ This list may not be complete. I would be grateful if readers could send me citations of papers that I've missed out.

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—Correspondence—

In their note on the Olive-backed Sunbird *Cinnyris jugularis*, Pande & Sant [*Indian Birds* 4 (3): 116–117] state that the nesting of sunbirds on electric wires has not been reported previously. In view of this I am sending two photographs of Purple Sunbirds *Nectarinia asiatica* nesting on an electric wire in Rajkot, Gujarat. The nest was observed on 13th March 1999. The pair raised two broods in the same nest. A note about this was published in the Gujarati bird newsletter *Vihang* (Grishma–99) along with a photo.



— Ashok Mashru. Email: mashruashok@gmail.com. 2nd March 2009

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Contact addresses The Editor, *Indian Birds*, P.O. Box 2, Banjara Hills, Hyderabad 500034, India. Email: editor@indianbirds.in. Please send by ordinary post. Do not courier.

Photography

Clement Francis: <http://www.clementfrancis.com/>

Delhi Bird Pix: delhibirdpix@googlegroups.com

Dhritiman Mukherjee: <http://www.dhritimanimages.com/>

India Nature Watch: <http://www.indianaturewatch.net/index.php>

Kalyan Varma: <http://www.kalyanvarma.net/photography/>

Oriental Bird Club: orientalbirdingpix-subscribe@yahoogroups.com

Ramki: <http://www.wildventures.com/gallery/main.php>

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