

a.s.l.). The bird had taken shelter in a small crevice beside a water tank. It apparently had an internal injury in its right wing and could neither fly nor flap the wing properly. It appeared to be in a state of shock. The bird was carefully taken out and placed in a carton box. Based on the characteristic bay colour on top of its head, broad bridge above beak and on forehead, short ear-like tufts above sides of head, yellowish grey hair on tarsus, and black and white bands on primaries, the bird was identified as a Bay Owl (Grimmett *et al.* 1998).

The carton was later shifted to a partially darkened room. The bird was not active, inside the box, during day and sat quietly with eyes shut. But as the night progressed, it became restless and made some attempts to come out of the box. We had intended to release it in the forest on the night of its recovery. However, when we tried to release it at night in the forest, about 12 hours after it was rescued, it only sat quietly for many minutes. When it tried to walk, it got entangled in herbs and shrubs, and could cover only a couple of meters in about 3-5 minutes. As the bird seemed totally helpless, it was decided to retain it for a few more days.

In captivity, the bird, which weighed 230g, was fed at night with about 20-50g boneless chicken / mutton mashed into small pieces, provided on a small plate. The bird sensed the presence of the meat only when a small piece was brought near its beak, indicating that it possibly used an olfactory cue. Later it fed on its own directly from the plate. It fed only once in a night even when sufficient meat was offered.

After a couple of days of feeding, the bird gained strength to freely move around and looked energetic. However, its right wing remained drooped and showed no

signs of recovery from the internal injury. The bird was given preliminary veterinary attention in the form of an injection to treat the internal injury of the wing. Later it was handed over to the Forest Department (Sirsi Division) for further care. At the Sirsi zoo, the bird recovered quite well and exhibited the characteristic bobbing of the body.

On 29.i.2005, the bird was examined by Mr Saleem Hameed from the Bannerghatta Rehabilitation Centre, Bangalore. An X-ray of the damaged right wing showed a major fracture of the humerus. The bone could not be set, as the bone had moved away after the fracture. We realised that the severe injury completely incapacitated the bird and there was no question of rehabilitating it. The bird was shifted to Bannerghatta National Park, Bangalore.

This is an important sighting of the Ceylon Bay Owl, as it happens to be only the second sighting of the species in Karnataka and the northern most record within the Western Ghats.

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## Predation by Forest Eagle-Owl *Bubo nipalensis* on Mouse Deer *Moschiola meminna*

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The Forest Eagle-Owl *Bubo nipalensis* (Strigidae) inhabits humid and riparian forests up to an elevation of 2,100m in South Asia (Sibley and Monroe 1990) and is rare in distribution in India (Grimmett *et al.* 1999). It is a large owl, and though chiefly nocturnal, has been observed hunting opportunistically during the day (Ali 1984). The Forest Eagle-Owl is known to predate

on mammals like golden jackals *Canis aureus*, young barking deer *Muntiacus muntjak*, hares *Lepus* sp. (Ali 1984), Indian giant flying squirrel *Petaurista philippensis* (Henry 1971), civets (Viverridae) and carrion of tiger *Panthera tigris* and goat (Bovidae: Caprinae) (Baker 1927), and also on large birds like Indian Peafowl *Pavo cristatus*, junglefowl *Gallus* sp., and Kaleej Pheasant

*Lophura leucomelanos* (Ali 1984), monitor lizards *Varanus* sp. (Baker 1927), snakes and fish (Ali 1984).

An incident of predation on Indian chevrotain or mouse deer *Moschiola meminna* (Artiodactyla: Tragulidae) by a Forest Eagle-Owl was observed in Pudukkottai, a rain forest fragment (1,090m a.s.l.) approximately 90ha in size, bordering

Valparai town (Coimbatore district, Tamil Nadu) in the Anamalai Hills (Western Ghats). Walking up a narrow path into a clearing by a stream-bed between 13:00 and 14:00hrs, my field assistant and I flushed a Forest Eagle-Owl from the ground to our left. It had a small animal in its talons that it dropped as it flew across the stream ahead of us. On closer inspection, we saw it was a freshly killed young mouse deer, whose body was still warm. Its head had been completely torn off and was missing and the first few drops of blood began to flow as it lay on the ground.

The mouse deer occurs in Sri Lanka, peninsular India and possibly in Nepal (Corbett and Hill 1992). It is one of the smallest Artiodactyls in the world and weighs up to 4kg (Menon 2003). Mouse deer live in undergrowth on the edges of heavy lowland forests and are seldom found far from water (Nowak 1999). They are thought to be solitary, and females give birth to one or two young, usually by the beginning of winter (Prater 1971). Mouse deer are prey of Indian wild dogs *Cuon alpinus*, tigers and Leopards *Panthera pardus* (Easa 1995, Schaller 1972).

Mammals form an important component of the diet of other eagle-owls in different parts of the world (Serrano 2000). Eagle-owls are also opportunistic feeders, taking birds and mammals weighing up to 1.5kg (Frikke and Tofft 1997\*). Predation studies have also examined differential predation by owls, and it was observed that owls preferred juveniles and sub-adult individuals, and that they killed more often in open areas than in closed areas (Vaseallo et al. 1994, Rohner and Krebs 1996).

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## Common Mynas *Acridotheres tristis* robbing the eggs of a nightjar *Caprimulgus* sp.

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The Common Myna *Acridotheres tristis* is one of the most common and familiar birds of India. An accomplished omnivore and opportunist in feeding habits (Krishnan 1954, Murthy 1954, Narang & Lamba 1984, Ali & Ripley 1987) the birds are mostly seen feeding on ground pecking at fallen fruits or leap-frogging in associations with cattle in agriculture fields. They are known to occur in family parties except during the breeding season (Narang & Lamba 1984) and often congregate in large numbers for roosting.

On 14.v.2003, during a regular scanning survey, I was observing otters (*Lutra perspicillata*) at one of the vantage points at Khinnanauli in Corbett Tiger Reserve along the Ramganga River. It was close to dusk (18:20hrs) when I suddenly heard some loud repertoires of shrieking calls c.25m away. To my astonishment a group of three Common Mynas had attacked a nightjar (Caprimulgidae: unidentified species), which had been incubating in sand in the short grasslands. Incidentally, my attention was

diverted to the scene and I made the following observations:

The nightjar immediately ducked and turned its face nearly upside down to look at the attackers. These mynas wheeled around making frequent attempts to mob the nightjar, which ducked out of danger and made loud squawks of protests. Despite mobbing by mynas observed for about 10 minutes, the nightjar constantly defended its clutch. A few minutes later, four more mynas joined the group and all started mobbing the nightjar. With little choice left, the nightjar flew off reluctantly when the attacks became unbearable. Five mynas devoured the eggs while two kept the nightjar at bay. Meanwhile, the nightjar had made several futile attempts to drive away the mynas from the nest by flying close to it and calling out loudly. On close examination, I found that the egg contents were eaten while the eggshells remained scattered. The observations suggest an unusual opportunistic behavior of Common Mynas preying on eggs, so far unreported

and hence worthy of placing on record.

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