Sighting of Bar-headed Goose Anser indicus at Kanha National Park (India)

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On 27.xii.2004 while moving within Kanha National Park, I found a lone Bar-headed Goose Anser indicus at a shallow pond near Indri camp. Phagun Singh Marava, the forest guide who accompanied me, did not recognise the bird and informed me that he had never seen this species in the park. He had a copy of D’Cunha’s checklist (1998) in which it was not listed. Neither was this species reported from the park by Newton et al. (1986). The lone bird was swimming in the pond with four Greylag Geese Anser anser and there were not many other birds around. A juvenile Changeable Hawk-Eagle Spizaetus cirrhatus was also present on a dry snag.

Ali & Ripley (1987) suggest that this species is rare in Gujarat and Deccan, but leapfrogs as far south as Mysore in small numbers. The distribution map given in Kazmierczak (2000) suggests that there are only three records of this species from central, eastern and southern Madhya Pradesh. Tyabji (1994) saw this species once on 18.i.1987 in Bandhavgarh National Park. The two other records are probably from Pachmarhi and Pench. I surveyed ponds and lakes near Chhindwara town (southern M. P.) in the same week and found no signs of Bar-headed Geese in that area.

References

Recoveries from the Newsletter for Birdwatchers (1963) – 9

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Regional Secretaries were appointed on 23.xii.1962 at the second AGM of the Newsletter for Birdwatchers, and this ensured it a wider publicity, and enabled the editor to draw in birdwatchers from the whole country. The persons appointed were Salim Ali, Bombay; B. Biswas, Calcutta; Mrs. Usha Ganguli, Delhi; Prof. K. K. Neelakantan, Trichur (Kerala); Dr. R. M. Naik, Baroda; Mrs. Jamal Ara, Ranchi (Bihar); E. D. Avari, Darjeeling; K. S. Lavkumar, Saurashtra.

Several resident Englishmen at that time were very enthusiastic about the Newsletter. One of the keenest was S. K. Reeves. He reported the rare case of the arrival of a Houbara Chlamydotis undulata in Suffolk, England. This bird, which breeds in Afghanistan and Baluchistan, is a winter visitor to north-west India and is the unfortunate target of sheikhs from the Middle East, who bring their falcons here to hunt it. The Houbara, in consequence, is the cause of some unfriendly exchanges between our government and the rulers of Middle Eastern sheikdoms. Though not unlike the Great Indian Bustard Ardeotis nigriceps, this bird seldom occurs “south and east of a line from Delhi to Baroda”, and its sightings by Reeves in England was an important event.

K. S. Lavkumar made a wise suggestion about protecting our greatly endangered Great Indian Bustards. “The best method to safeguard the Great Indian Bustard is to include it on the list of the ‘farmers’ friends’...to make them aware of the value of the bird as a destroyer of locusts and other such pests. Our effort in this way to enlist positively their help in protecting the bustard would go further than all the legislation banning its shooting”.

The calls of birds are often a leading clue in determining a species. Mrs. Jamal Ara had a useful note in the January 1963 issue, describing the calls of 12 species of cuckoos in Bihar, ranging from the soft “cook-koo” of the migrant Common Cuckoo Cuculus canorus to the boisterous “coo-coo-coo” of the Greater Coucal Centropus sinensis. Having noticed a Common Cuckoo displaying before its mate in July near Ranchi, she says, “Undoubtedly it breeds there”. If true, this would be a significant discovery.