rainfall. On 3.xii.2004, in the early hours of the morning, one spotted eagle was seen to dive onto a nearly-fledged Painted Stork, which was on a nest with two other young birds. The nest was on a clump of Prosopis sp., amongst other nests of Painted Storks and herons. The parent storks were not at the nest. The eagle aimed for the middle part of the neck of the young stork, caught it, attempted to fly off with the prey, and when it could not, tumbled off the nest into the vegetation. The actual killing and eating of the young stork was not observable.

Single spotted eagles are not able to displace adult Painted Storks from nests (Naorori 1990), and the absence of adults at the predated nest must have attracted the eagle’s attention. Adult Painted Storks were seen on several occasions to give open-winged threat displays to over-flying raptors that included harriers and eagles (Accipitridae), and lunge displays to raptors that flew too close overhead. These behavioural displays are apparently commonly used by this species to prevent predation of nests by raptors (Naorori 1990). The absence of nest-predation records by raptors at other heronries is puzzling considering the large population of wintering raptors in India, and this form of mortality to stork young is likely to be much more widespread than literature would have us believe. The impact of such mortality on the breeding success of the globally near-threatened Painted Stork is an important aspect to be studied.

Acknowledgements
I thank S. Chaudhry and G. Mallikyar for their company during the observation, S. Kittur for help with literature, and A.J. Urfi for discussions.

References

K. S. Gopi Sundar has worked with waterbirds for several years in India. He presently coordinates the activities of the International Crane Foundation in India and develops programmes for the Indian Cranes and Wetlands Working Group which includes a national coordinated road count of large waterbirds.

A note on the breeding of the White-bellied Shortwing Brachypteryx major from the Western Ghats, south India

V.V. Robin 1, 2

1Centre for Ecological Sciences, Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore, India. 560012. Email: robinvijayan@yahoo.com.
2Present address: National Institute of Advanced Studies, Indian Institute of Science campus, Bangalore 560012, India.

The White-bellied Shortwing Brachypteryx major is one of the endemic birds of the Western Ghats, India (Ali and Ripley 1983) and is a globally Threatened species (BirdLife International 2001). The classification and nomenclature used in this manuscript follows Monroe and Sibley (1997). During a status survey of this species, conducted in the Kerala and Tamil Nadu sections of the Western Ghats, from January to May 2001, I made a few observations on its breeding behaviour in montane evergreen or Shola (as they are locally known) forests. Mating: Three instances of mating were observed. Brachypteryx major major was observed mating, at Avalunch in the Nilgiris on 18.iv.2001. The other two instances were of Brachypteryx major albiventris mating, at Eravikulam National Park on 2.ii.2001 and 27.iii.2001. On all instances, mating was on the ground, and lasted a few seconds.

Nest Building: Two nests (hereafter referred to as nest-1 and nest-2) of B. m. major were found at Longwood Shola, Nilgiris. Nest-1 was detected when it was being built, while nest-2 was discovered with eggs. At the time nest-1 was detected, its framework seemed to be complete (with twigs and roots) and a bird was lining and shaping the inner parts of the nest with moss. Observations were made for eight hours (from a hide), over three days (19-21.iv.2001), during this stage, after which nests were checked every morning. Two individuals were seen active near the nest. Only one individual, presumably the female, was observed building the nest. The other individual, perhaps the male, was observed bringing food (‘nuptial gift’) to the other (female?) only once during the observation period. Considerable time (>4days) seemed to be spent on creating the right shape and lining the nest with moss, after the framework was completed. Every time more moss was brought, it shaped the inside by pressing its belly to the inside of the nest and moving itself, occasionally moving parts of the moss here and there with its beak. Mating could not be recorded for this individual.

Nest: The shape, structure and location of the nests were on lines with the description by Ali and Ripley (1983) except that nest-1 was 1.8m above the ground in a crack on a tree trunk. Nest-2 was almost at ground level, placed between the buttresses of a tree. Nest-2 was situated along a path and was not concealed in any way.

Eggs: Both nests were checked daily. Two eggs each were observed in both nests. The eggs were slightly oval with brownish tinged cap on the broad side, generally in accordance with Ali & Ripley (1983). In nest-1 the second egg was laid a day after the first egg, which seems to be the case with most passerines (Birkhead & Moller 1992). An unknown predator preyed upon nest-2, both eggs were missing with no trace of shell fragments, the entire nest was loosened from the original position and was lying on the ground when inspected two weeks later. Enthusiastic naturalists living near-by mentioned that they have observed crows from the town of Kothagiri prey upon many eggs. Though it is possible that the predation could be from the large number of crows in the region, any other small carnivore could have also preyed upon this nest.

Incubation: Incubation period at nest-1 was 16 or 17 days. Although this information is from only one nest, it is important, as there is no previous record of the incubation period for any Brachypteryx spp. However, data needs to be collected from more nests.

The identification of predators and their effect on the nesting success of this threatened bird needs to be looked into.

Acknowledgements
Various people and institutions played a vital role in this study. I thank: Wildlife Conservation Soc...
Sighting of Bar-headed Goose Anser indicus at Kanha National Park (India)
Dhirendra Devarshi

490 Krishna Nagar, Bharatpur, Rajasthan 321001, India. Email: ddevarshi@hotmail.com

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
Zafar Futehally

#2205 Oakwood Apartments, Jakkasandra Layout, Koramangala, 3rd Block, 8th Main, Bangalore, Karnataka 560034, India.
Email: zafarfutehally@gmail.com

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 sighting 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-coop-coop” 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.