the species shows that these records were from three sites in Orissa, one site in Rajasthan, and one site in Tamil Nadu; Li and Mundkur (2004) provided similar figures for subsequent years – 1997: 0, 1998: 0, 1999: 2, 2000: 0, 2001: 20.

Some of the records collected during the Asian Waterfowl Census counts have been questioned (e.g. Rahmani 1992) but this is published information and should not be ignored. The counts take place in winter when this species is more difficult to distinguish from the widespread Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybridus* and the rarely reported Black Tern *C. niger*. It is thus quite possible that some of the counts of White-winged Tern involve other species but note that, with experience, it is relatively easy to identify this species in non-breeding plumages, even at some distance.

The birds of South Asia. The Ripley guide was reviewed in the same issue of *Indian Birds* (pp. 92-94). Aasheesh Pittie suggested that 'The maps in the *Ripley guide* are based largely on verified specimens, which fact might reduce the range of species when compared with those in other books, but one could say they are more defensible in their accuracy.' However, the *Ripley guide* maps the White-winged Tern as occurring over a large swathe of north-west India from Kashmir south to Gujarat, including all of Haryana (where there are no records), and extensively inland in northern Orissa. Compare this with the maps in Grimmett *et al*. (1998) and Kazmierczak and van Perlo (2000) where the actual records are mapped far more conservatively.

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Predation of fledgling Painted Stork *Mycteria leucocephala* by a Spotted Eagle *Aquila* spp. in Sultanpur National Park, Haryana

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In India, wintering raptors are known to supplement their diet with nestling storks (Naoroji 1990). This phenomenon, as reported from the Keoladeo National Park, appears to be a common reason for stork mortality (Naoroji 1990) but is not reported from other heronries in the country in spite of widespread occurrence of raptors (Urfi 1993, 2002). Methods of predation of stork nestlings have not been actually observed and are not known (Naoroji 1990). Here I report on the predation of a stork nestling from Sultanpur National Park, Haryana with a description of the method of predation.

Spotted eagles *Aquila* spp., are common wintering birds at the Sultanpur National Park. Heronries with at least two species of storks (Ciconiidae), many herons (Ardeidae), cormorants (Phalacrocoracidae) and darters (Anhingidae) are a predominant feature of the Park in years with regular

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 (Naoroji 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 (Naoroji 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.

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

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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 Avalanche 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.

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