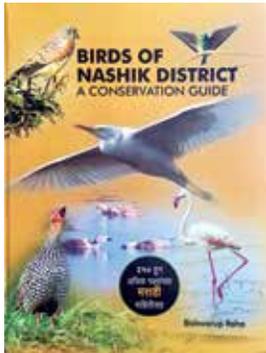


Review



*Birds of Nashik District:
A conservation guide*

By Biswarup Raha

Nashik: Nature Conservation Society
of Nashik. 2014.

Hardback (17.7 x 22.5 cm), pp. i–viii,
1–377.

Price: Rs. 750/-

A new book on the birds of Nashik District (Maharashtra) has recently been published by the Nature Conservation Society of Nashik, with financial support from the Forest Department of Maharashtra. Its author, Biswarup Raha, Honorary Wildlife Warden of Nashik District, is known for his exemplary work on the conservation of threatened species, including vultures, the Great Indian Bustard, and the Lesser Florican, in the Nashik area.

This is a bilingual guide describing 251 species of birds, in English, and Marathi. It generously spends 296 pages on illustrating 251, of the 341 species of birds (pp. 362–369) recorded by the author in Nashik District, depicting plumages of sexual dimorphism, and birds in flight or in flocks. Many species are illustrated with more than one photograph. Some photographs are of birds that are rarely sighted, like Ortolan Bunting *Emberiza hortulana* (p. 207), Broad-tailed Grassbird *Schoenicola platyurus* (p. 186), Common Shelduck *Tadorna tadorna* (p. 255), etc. Some photographs are stunning: Black Ibis *Pseudibis papillosa* landing, and Red-headed Falcon *Falco chicquera* (p. 129), in that they describe the behaviour of the species. The species descriptions are classified as per habitats into forest birds, grassland birds, and wetland birds, instead of a taxonomic order.

There are chapters dealing with general information about birds, tips for birdwatching, and taxonomic families of birds, a note on forests, besides information about important locations in Nashik District for bird watching. After the bird descriptions there are notes about some locations around Nashik, with interesting biodiversity, like the Ojhar Grasslands, Nandur Madhmeshwar, and Gangapur Dam. Issues like poaching, disease, and conservation of Great Indian Bustards, and vultures are discussed. Raha's contribution in addressing these conservation issues has been immense, and he has been quite successful in garnering public support for the conservation movement in the area.

Devoting one page to each species would have been sufficient, and would have reduced the size of the book by around 45 pages. The conservation notes, and photographs, about the work of the author in particular, and the Nature Conservation Society in general, are inspiring. But these (43 pages) are too long with too many photographs and could have been curtailed to half. Many bird photographs are not up to the mark: Streak-throated Swallow *Petrochelidon fluvicola* (p. 167), Long-billed Pipit *Anthus similis* (p. 197), Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus* (p. 241), Ortolan Bunting (p. 207), Red Munia *Amandava amandava* (p. 203), Greylag Goose *Anser anser* (p. 253), Lesser Pied Kingfisher *Ceryle rudis* (p. 311), etc. These should have been replaced with better ones, especially since species like the pipit, and the bunting are often difficult to separate from conspecifics. Stricter editing, with help from professional proofreaders, for the Marathi translation could have improved the text to a great extent.

In summary, though this book could have been more compact, and with a slightly downward price, it is a must buy for bird watchers and scientists working in, and around, Nashik as it contains a great deal of information about the birds of the region. Incorporating the conservation aspect is a novel idea, and has been executed nicely in the book. We need more such regional books.

—Raju Kasambe

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