are in the vicinity. Adults drop food into the nest only after the murder of crows has moved away and in some cases they waited more than half an hour, holding prey in their beak, till the crows had moved away.

Once, at 17:35 hrs, the eaglet, which had learnt flying just three days ago, arrived at the nest from a near by perch, to find three bonnet macaques actively moving in the canopy of the nest tree. The young one fumbled on seeing them, but regained its balance quickly, turned and went back to its earlier perch. None of the adults assisted the eaglet in regaining the nesting tree from the macaques. That was a cloudy day and by 18:30 hrs it was dark. The eaglet couldn’t occupy the nest and spent entire night on another tree.

Discussion
In the five years’ breeding observations, nests have fallen off, causing chicks’ mortality, in the second and third years. The dead chick from the third year, a day or two old was collected and sent to Bombay Natural History Society for preservation. The fourth-year nest also fell down. However, the adults raised a second brood.

The fourth-year breeding continued almost up to the end of September, coinciding with an extended monsoon.

In all the breeding years, we feel that the nests were not strong or suitable for breeding activity. Yet, the pair raised three broods out of five. The nest should ensure the safety and protection of eggs and the newborn young (Brown 1976). But it doesn’t seem so and protection of eggs and the newborn of five. The nest should ensure the safety activity. Yet, the pair raised three broods out up to the end of September, coinciding with the fourth-year breeding continued almost up to the end of September, coinciding with an extended monsoon.

Acknowledgements
We are grateful to Dr Vibhu Prakash and Mr W.S. Clark for providing valuable information through reference materials. We express our sincere thanks to Dr Shivanandappa, Mr K.B. Sadanand and Mr Sampathkumar K., for providing information on raptors breeding biology and identification of plants. We thank Mr P. Guruprasad, Manu and Ms. Vijayalaxmi for nurturing us all these years. We are grateful to Mr S. Subramanya, M. Srinivas, S. Karthikeyan, J.N. Prasad and S. Yashawini for helpful comment and support after visiting the nesting site.

References


A. Shivaprakash is an amateur naturalist actively engaged in the bird, butterfly and floral studies in and around Mysore district, Southern Karnataka. His little information is utilized in compilation of Important Bird Areas (IBA) around Mysore.

S. Tejaswi is a postgraduate in Zoology from Mysore University and pursuing Ph.D. in National Center for Biological Sciences, Bangalore. He has been the significant contributor in anthology of many Important Bird Areas (IBA) in Karnataka.

K.R. Kishendas is a software engineer and a keen butterfly watcher. Presently working seriously on butterfly migration in peninsula. He is a keen wildlife photographer. Interest in raptors is the source behind the photographs submitted for present article.

T. Girija and A. Sharath are bird and butterfly enthusiasts active in Mysore district, southern Karnataka.

Birding in the Saryu-Ramganga river valleys (1,500-4,133 m), Kumaon Himalayas
Arun P. Singh
Entomology Division, Forest Research Institute, P. O. New Forest, Dehra Dun, Uttarakhand 248006, India.

Email: singhap@icfre.org

(With three colour photographs on back cover)

Birds were surveyed on a trek from 27.ix.2004-7.x.2004, in Bageshwar and Almora districts of Kumaon, Uttarakhand, India. The trek started from Song / Supi village (1,500 m; 30°02’N 79°00’E) located along the Saryu River (see map), passing through Bhdratunga village (1,600 m), Madhari Pass (3,040 m), lower Raj Kharak (2,520 m), Gogina village, Ramaganaga River bridge (1,870 m), Namik village (2,200 m), Sur-Sungri Pass (3,240 m), lower Thaltok (2,950 m), upper Thaltok (3,200 m), Sudam Khan Pass (4,133 m), back to upper and lower Thalkot and Sur Sungri Pass and then a descent to Jakala valley [2,200 m below Rur Khan Pass (3,500 m) which lies above Munsiyari on the other side], and finally ending at Birthing village (1,750 m) – about 100 km in seven days. I passed through some spectacular scenery: forests, wild flowers and mountain peaks (Nanda Devi, Nanda Ghunti, Trishul, Badrinath, Kedarnath, Gangotri, Shivling, Bandarpunch, Kamat, Panch Chuli, etc). There was unprecedented rain and snowfall on the higher reaches.
Birds recorded on the trek

105 species of birds were recorded. Sightings of interest were Black-faced Warbler *Abroscopus scisticeps*, Spot-bellied Eagle Owl *Bubo nipalensis*, Himalayan Snowcock *Tetraogallus himalayensis*, Kokk Pheasant *Pucrasia macrolophra*, Impeyan Monal *Lophophorus impejanus*, Yellow-billed Chough *Pyrrhocorax graculus*, Green Shrike-Babbler *Pteruthius xanthochlorus*, Little Pied Flycatcher *Ficedula westermanni* and Collard Grosbeak *Myoceros affinis*.

Song village to Bhadratunga camp along the Saryu River: Cultivation and open scrub. A large assemblage (c. 600+) of Nepal House-Martins *Delichon nipalensis*, flying and perching high on electric wires along the steep rocky cliffs near a village Patiadhar. Many Himalayan Griffons *Gyps himalayensis* circled overhead. Rufous Sibia *Heterophasia capistrata* and Blue-throated Barbet *Megalaima asiatica* were heard frequently. Brown Dipper *Cinclus pallasii*, Plumbeous Rheycornis fuliginosus and White-capped Redstarts *Chaimarrornis leucophalus* were noted on the Saryu River. The Blue Whistling-Thrush *Myophonus caeruleus* actively sang at dusk near our tents at Bhadratunga temple.

Bhadratunga to Madhari Pass: Mixed moist-temperate patch of Indian Cedar *Cedrus deodara*, Oaks *Quercus leucotrichophora*, *Q. semicarpifolia* and *Q. dilatata* and *Rhododendron arboreum*: Saw Rufous-bellied Niltava *Niltava sundara* and heard Striated Laughingthrush *Garrulax striatus* (= *Grammatopelia striata*) calling from a 'nullah', Crested Serpent-Eagle *Spilornis cheela* basking on a tree and a party of Black-faced Flycatcher-Warblers *Abroscopus scisticeps* (6+) moving through foliage. Also seen on this route were White-tailed Nuthatch *Sitta himalayensis*, Grey-faced Leaf-Warbler *Phylloscopus maculipennis*, and Greenish Leaf-Warbler *Phylloscopus trochiloides*.

Madhari Pass to lower Raj Khairak: Mixed oak with meadows (‘Bugiyars’). Variegated Laughingthrush *Garrulax variegatus* and three Common Hill Partridges *Arborophila torquела* were recorded in *Rhododendron complanatum* shrubbery and a Mountain Hawk-Eagle *Spizaetus nipalensis* settling on a tree top.

Lower Raj Khairak: Many Chestnut-bellied Rock-Thrush *Monticola rufiventris* pairs and a few juveniles were also present, chasing each other and calling in the evening. Other sightings included Himalayan Pied *Dendrocopos himalayensis* and Large Scaly-bellied Green Woodpecker *Picus squamatus*, Himalayan Swiftlets *Collocalia brevirostris* (= *Aerodramus brevirostris*), Blue-fronted Redstart *Phoenicurus frontalis*, Yellow-breasted Greenfinches *Carduelis spinoides*, Orange-gorgeted Ficedula *strophiata*, Ultramarine *F. s平民ialis*, Verditer *Eumyias thalassina* and Sooty *Muscicapa sibirica* Flycatchers, Brown-crested Tit *Parus dichrous*, White-throated Laughingthrush *Garrulax albogularis*, Eurasian Jay *Garrulus glandarius*, and Oriental Turtle Dove *Streptopelia orientalis*.

Lower Raj Khairak—Rangama River—Namik Village: Open scrub, cultivation and mixed oak. A flock of Slaty-headed Parakeet *Psittacula himalayana* was seen flying over Ramanga River, where Brown Dipper was present. A mixed hunting party consisted of Yellow-naped Yuhina *Yuhina flavicollis*, Black Bulbul *Hypsipetes leucocephalus*, Rufous Sibia and a Black Eagle *Ictinaetus malayensis* flying across. Ashy Drongo *Dicrurus leucophaeus*, Black-headed *Garrulus lanceolatus* and Eurasian *G. glandarius* Jays in the forest, and a Pergrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus* flying across, were also seen.

Namik village to Sur-Sungri Pass: Dwarf rhododendrons *R. complanatum* in a forest with Ban Oak (Himalayan Silver Oak) *Q. leucotrichophora*; yew and silver fir trees. Blue-fronted Redstart, Spot-winged Crested Tit *Parus melanolophus* observed feeding in shrubbery. A Lammergeier *Gypaetus barbatus*, flew over us from time to time. On large trees were Large Scaly-bellied Green and Himalayan Pied Woodpeckers; a female Collard Grosbeak *Myoceros affinis*; Mrs. Gould’s Sunbird *Aethopyga gouldiae* and two Mistle Thrush *Turdus viscivorus* feeding on the ground.

Lower Thaltok: These bare rocky mountain slopes, rising above our tents, had 100+ Upland Pipits *Anthus sylvanus* spread all over and three Yellow-billed Choughs feeding near our tents in the morning. Calls of Hill Partridge and Impeyan Monal were heard at dusk, from the mountain tops.

Upper Thaltok: The sub-alpine meadows with *Polygonum* sp. were ideal ‘Monal country’. Groups of up to 12 individuals were recorded several times at close range, calling ‘whee-(uw)’, and on being disturbed, gliding away downhill, to another vale, in an long arcing trajectory, with males showing their brilliant plumage. Flocks of Upland Pipit were recorded in high numbers. At dusk, calls of Kokk Pheasant, a repeated ‘kok-kok-korrok’, from nearby slopes, drew a response from other individuals in the vicinity. Lower down, a dense forest with rhododendrons, a few birch trees, and conifers, had a feeding party of Bar-throated Minla *Minla striigula* and Stripe-throated Yuhina in the morning. A flock of Hill Pigeon *Columba rupestris* was also noted circling overhead.

Upper Thaltok to Sudam Khan Pass: This was the toughest part of the trek with a sub-alpine treeless area on the ridge. Impeyan Monal and Upland Pipit were present all along this route. Alpine Accentors *Prunella collaris* (probably) were also noted. Just below Sudam Khan Pass, on our return journey, two Himalayan Snowcock *Tetraogallus himalayensis* were feeding on bare rocky ground. Seeing us, both flew away together, displaying the white patches in their primaries.

Sur-Sungri Pass to Jakala Valley: There is a steep descent from the pass downhill to the valley, through an excellent oak forest. The highlight of this trip was a lone Speckled Wood-Pigeon *Columba hodgsonii*, which flew in and perched on a tree top.

Jakala Valley—Birthi village: Dense oak forest. A Forest Eagle-Owl *Bubo nipalensis* was perched on the branch of a large tree where it was being mobbed by birds until it flew away. A large party of 30+ White-throated Laughingthrush was making various types of calls in the tree tops and a Greater Pied Kingfisher *Ceryle lugubris* was seen on the river.

Binsar Wildlife Sanctuary, Almora district (12 km from Almora town): Vegetation mainly of Sub-tropical Chir pine and Himalayan moist-temperate with Ban Oak and Deodar forest on the ridges. I trekked in a nearby village and to the highest point in the sanctuary. Unique sightings included: Rufous-bellied *Dendrocopos hyperythrus* (= *Hypicipus hyperythrus*) and Himalayan Pied Woodpecker pairs feeding on a pine tree on which many Brown-fronted Pied Woodpeckers *D. auriceps* were also present. At night, calls of Asian Barred Owlet *Glaucidium cuculoides* (‘Kao-kuk’) and Spotted Scops-Owl (?) *Otus spilocephalus* (a metallic ‘poop-poop’), were heard. Other birds recorded at Binsar were: Oriental Honey-Buzzard *Pernis ptilorhynchus*, Common Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*, Red Junglefowl *Gallus gallus*, Oriental Turtle-Dove *Streptopelia orientalis*, Wedge-tailed Green-Pigeon *Treron sphenura*, Slaty-headed Parakeet, Oriental Cuckoo *Cuculus*...

Dr Arun P. Singh is working on the conservation of biodiversity of the western Himalayas with special reference to butterflies and birds, since last 13 years. He is keen on trekking, bird counts, bird photography, teaching, and writing. He received the Dr Sálim Ali National Wildlife Fellowship Award 2001, recently for research on avian wildlife, awarded by the Ministry of Environment and Forests, Government of India. Besides research, also worked in UNDP, IDRC (Canada), World Bank aided projects on forest conservation and poverty alleviation, in India.

Map: The trek route starting from Song and ending at Birthi, Bageshwar district, Uttaranchal, India.