

etc. However every time all the birds were observed on the same dry tree. It seemed that by perching on such tree, the pigeons were directly exposing themselves to sunlight, and thus warming up during the cool mornings.

Sun-bathing is a form of thermo-regulatory behaviour, in which a bird absorbs heat from the sun and hence reduces the metabolic expenditure needed to maintain its optimum body temperature, especially in cool or cold conditions. It may occur during loafing and preening spells at any time of the year (in temperate regions, especially in spring, autumn, and winter) and at any time of the day (in tropical regions,

especially during the early and late hours, particularly on cold nights) (Simmons 1985). Sun-bathing has been observed often in other genera of the Columbidae, like *Columba* and *Streptopelia* (*pers. obs.*). Surprisingly, normally camouflaged birds become conspicuous during this process of thermoregulation.

The green pigeons spent more than two hours sunning themselves on 21.xii.2005 and 24.xii.2005. They are, perhaps, able to allocate so much time to sun-bathing as their food is sedentary (growing on plants) and they do not have to spend time searching or chasing after it.

Acknowledgments

I owe my deep gratitude to Dr B.M. Parasharya for his invaluable suggestions in improving text. I thank Shri Kishan Jadhav for identifying the plants. I also sincerely thank Shri S.V. Pawar, Inspector, C.G. Meteorology, Vadodara, for providing temperature data.

References

- Ali, S. & S.D. Ripley. 1983. *Handbook of the Birds of India and Pakistan* (Compact edition). Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Grimmett, R., C. Inskipp & T. Inskipp. 1998. *Birds of the Indian subcontinent*. Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Simmons, K.E.L. 1985. Sunning. In: *A dictionary of birds*. (Eds. B. Campbell & E. Lack.) Catton: T. & A.D. Poyser.

Black-necked Stork *Ephippiorhynchus asiaticus* nest with four chicks in Marine National Park, Gujarat, India

Kamal Bhatt

Opp. Dayaram Library, Ranjit Road, Jamnagar 361001, Gujarat, India. Email: kamalofddk@rediffmail.com

(See photo on back cover)

Globally, the Black-necked Stork *Ephippiorhynchus asiaticus* is classified as Near Threatened (BirdLife International 2004). It generally raises a successful brood of two or three young. So when I was informed by Mr Radadiya, ACF, Marine National Park, Jamnagar, that he has seen a nest of Black-necked Stork with four chicks at Jodiya Range of Marine National Park (Jamnagar district, Gujarat), I knew this was a rare occurrence. The nest was 60 km from Jamnagar and I visited it on 22.xii.2005. On the advice of Radadiya, two forest staff of Marine National Park accompanied me. The nest was on a neem tree *Azadirachta indica* (c. 19 m above the ground) situated on the cotton farm of Sri Chhaganbhai. When I reached the area I could see the adult male and female Black-necked Stork along with one juvenile on the nest while two chicks were on the ground. However, I could not see the fourth young one. In the meantime I took a few pictures of the nest with young. Perhaps disturbed by our presence, the adult storks flew from nest followed by the two young ones on the ground. The third juvenile, remained on the nest for a while and later followed the rest of the family. But I had not yet spotted the fourth juvenile. So I stayed the night at Jodiya and went searching for the family the next day. A short while later we found all the four juveniles along with the female stork in the nearby river. Probably this was the first time all the juveniles had left the nest.

In Dudwa National Park, Uttar Pradesh, nest building starts around August and chicks hatch around second week of October (Maheswaran 1998). One nest with three chicks was observed in 1996 but only two survived by the time they dispersed from the nest around mid-February. However, in Etawah and Mainpuri districts of Uttar Pradesh, Black-necked Stork start nest building around mid-August and chicks hatch by mid-January. According to Sundar (2003), breeding success was very low with only one young fledged successfully out of four nests that he observed. According to Maheswaran et al. (2004), population of the Black-necked Stork appears to be declining in India except Gangetic plains of Uttar Pradesh and north-western India especially Gujarat where populations are stable or marginally increasing. My observation of nest with four successfully fledged chicks supports their claim. To raise such a big brood, storks require an enormous amount of food, especially freshwater fish. The area still supports several freshwater wetlands with abundant fish, which provide an uninterrupted food supply for Black-necked Storks during their breeding season.

The RFO, Shri B.K. Shilu and his staff took good protective care of the nest and the storks during the nesting period.

References

- BirdLife International. 2004. *Threatened birds of world*. CD-ROM. Cambridge U.K.: BirdLife International.
- Maheswaran, G. 1998. Ecology and behaviour of the Black-necked Stork *Ephippiorhynchus asiaticus* in Dudwa National Park, Uttar Pradesh, India. Ph.D. thesis. Aligarh Muslim University, India.
- Maheswaran, G., A.R. Rahmani, & M.C. Coulter. 2004. Recent records of Black-necked Stork *Ephippiorhynchus asiaticus* in India. *Forktail* 20: 112-116.
- Sundar, K.S. Gopi. 2003. Notes on the breeding biology of the Black-necked Stork *Ephippiorhynchus asiaticus* in Etawah and Mainpuri districts, Uttar Pradesh, India. *Forktail* 19: 15-20.

Shama Futehally Award

Zafar Futehally would like to offer an award of Rs 5,000/- for the most enjoyable article in *Indian Birds* in the year 2006. The article will be judged by its success in combining its scientific quality with a light-hearted and enjoyable style. The award is offered in memory of his daughter Shama.