

S. No.	Systematic list	Seasonal status	Comments on habitat preferences; dates for resightings
149	OLIVACEOUS LEAF-WARBLER <i>P. griseolus</i>	W	Seen mainly in rocky streambeds in dense forest
150	HUME'S WARBLER <i>P. humei</i>	W	Seen mainly in undisturbed and riparian habitats
151	GREENISH LEAF-WARBLER <i>P. trochiloides</i>	W	Near Kirashka, 3.x.2003
152	COMMON LESSER WHITETHROAT <i>Sylvia curruca</i>	W	Mainly in disturbed habitats everywhere
153	RUSTY-TAILED FLYCATCHER <i>Muscicapa ruficauda</i>	P?	A few times in undisturbed riparian forest, waterholes
154	RED-THROATED FLYCATCHER <i>Ficedula parva</i>	W	Mostly in riparian also undisturbed scrub
155	VERDITER FLYCATCHER <i>Eumyias thalassina</i>	P?	Seen occasionally in riparian forest
156	TICKELL'S BLUE FLYCATCHER <i>Cyornis tickelliae</i>	R	Mainly in undisturbed riparian forest
157	GREY-HEADED FLYCATCHER <i>Culicicapa ceylonensis</i>	W	Mainly in undisturbed riparian forest
158	ASIAN PARADISE-FLYCATCHER <i>Terpsiphone paradisi</i>	S	Only in undisturbed scrub and riparian
159	WHITE-BROWED FANTAIL-FLYCATCHER <i>Rhipidura aureola</i>	R	Seen mainly in undisturbed habitats
160	GREAT TIT <i>Parus major</i>	R	Mainly in undisturbed habitats esp. riparian
161	PURPLE SUNBIRD <i>Nectarinia asiatica</i>	R	Seen in all habitats, more in open, disturbed areas
162	ORIENTAL WHITE-EYE <i>Zosterops palpebrosus</i>	R	Mostly in undisturbed habitats, particularly riparian
163	CRESTED BUNTING <i>Melophus lathami</i>	R	Mostly in disturbed habitats and scrub forest
164	WHITE-CAPPED BUNTING <i>Emberiza stewarti</i>	W	Seen in all habitats, more in undisturbed habitats
165	RED-HEADED BUNTING <i>E. bruniceps</i>	W	Dec 05 in Kalighati area
166	COMMON ROSEFINCH <i>Carpodacus erythrinus</i>	P	Mostly in degraded scrub forest
167	WHITE-THROATED MUNIA <i>Lonchura malabarica</i>	R	Disturbed scrub and riparian sites
168	SPOTTED MUNIA <i>L. punctulata</i>	R	Near Indauk village, x.2003
169	HOUSE SPARROW <i>Passer domesticus</i>	R	Few times in scrub forest
170	YELLOW-THROATED SPARROW <i>Petronia xanthocollis</i>	R	Seen in all habitats, but more in disturbed forests
171	BAYA WEAVER <i>Ploceus philippinus</i>	R	Open scrub forest near water
172	GREY-HEADED STARLING <i>Sturnus malabaricus</i>	W	Near Haripura, x.2003
173	BRAHMINY STARLING <i>S. pagodarum</i>	R	Seen mainly in disturbed habitats
174	ROSY STARLING <i>S. roseus</i>	P	Seen in flocks in degraded scrub
175	COMMON STARLING <i>S. vulgaris</i>	W	Kankwari, 3.xi.2003
176	ASIAN PIED STARLING <i>S. contra</i>	R	Seen occasionally in scrub forest
177	COMMON MYNA <i>Acridotheres tristis</i>	R	Seen mainly in riparian and scrub habitat
178	BANK MYNA <i>A. ginginianus</i>	R	Seen a few times near villages
179	EURASIAN GOLDEN ORIOLE <i>Oriolus oriolus</i>	S	Seen in all habitats, commonly in undisturbed sites
180	BLACK DRONGO <i>Dicrurus macrocercus</i>	R	Seen in all habitats
181	WHITE-BELLIED DRONGO <i>D. caerulescens</i>	R	Mostly in undisturbed habitats
182	JUNGLE CROW <i>Corvus macrorhynchos</i>	R	Karnakawas, 30.xi.2003
183	INDIAN TREEPIE <i>Dendrocitta vagabunda</i>	R	Abundant in all habitats

<sup>1</sup>Based on nomenclature used in Rasmussen & Anderton (2005).

## Recoveries from the Newsletter for Birdwatchers (1966)—11

### Zafar Futehally

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At our Annual Meeting on 15.i.1967, giving "vital statistics" for the year's performance, I reported that 46 persons had sent articles, 16 of whom were Englishmen and women, and these have proved to be our keenest supporters. The number of subscribers in December 1966 was 375.

There are some splendid articles in the 1966 Newsletter, of the type which could be models for current contributors—pleasant reading based on careful observation. So I thought I would quote extensively from some of these writers,

K.K. Neelakantan, Stewart Melluish, T.J. Roberts, etc. The wealth of material makes it necessary to spread this over more than one issue of *Indian Birds*, and in this one I confine myself to dealing only with 'KKN'.

Writing about the strange choice of roosts by crows, KKN [*NLBW* 6 (1): 1-2] said,

"That crows, mynas, house sparrows, and parakeets roost in larger numbers in trees standing in the middle of crowded bazaars is well known, but I used to think that this was due to the absence of more suitable roosts near by. A recent experience makes me wonder whether these birds

deliberately choose trees in the heart of the town.

"Towards the end of the third week of November I was passing through Shoranur (central Kerala) at 11 p.m. It was a dark night. The spot where we had stopped was at the very centre of this small town, not far from the Railway Station and close to a hotel which is open all night. It is also the town bus stand, and till about 10 p.m. is full of bustle. Throughout the night lorries and buses stop there and small, noisy crowds of people are never absent. The place is also brilliantly lit from dusk to dawn. Yet a clump of *Pongamia* trees standing under a street lamp and in the glare of the fluorescent lights of the hotel sign was full of crows. Those I

saw clearly were all House Crows. They sat without any attempt at concealment, and could easily be seen by people. There were innumerable trees, much taller and larger than the *Pongamia*-s everywhere in the town, but the crows had chosen to roost in the 'lime light'.

"I was surprised to find that some of the crows were calling, some moving from twig to twig, and a few every now and then flying up 50 to 60 ft. into the darkness overhead. Few of these last were seen returning to their perches. One crow sat across an electric wire, calmly preening!

"It was evident from the large and extensive patches of droppings under the trees and the white coating most of the leaves had received that the roost had been in regular use for a long time.

"I believe that many kinds of birds prefer to roost in trees close to man's dwellings. I have found Tree Pies, Blackheaded Orioles, Tailor Birds, Ioras, Whitebrowed Bulbuls, Paradise Flycatchers, Crow-pheasants and Whitebreasted Kingfishers preferring roosts close to the roof. In the Thekkady Game Sanctuary I found large numbers of Grey Wagtails coming from the surrounding forest to a tree near the rest house to roost. Also the trees near Aranya Nivas were extremely popular as roosts. Obviously the proximity of human beings affords some security to the birds from certain kinds of predators. Though I should think that this would be more than set off by the danger from domestic cats. Perhaps the crows of Shoranur were also impelled by this instinct to roost where the constant presence of human beings gave them a feeling of security.

"But those crows which occupied branches close to the road must have spent very disturbed night[s]. Some of them were behaving as though the sun had risen! Did these crows deliberately occupy perches where sleep would be impossible, or were they the late-comers who could not find better accommodation?

"Do crows habitually prefer a grove of spreading trees—such as mango, banyan, etc.—or, do they quite often spend the night scattered about over a larger area in coconut and other trees? In Trivandrum there are still very well-wooded patches with large spreading trees. But I find that at one place crows seem to sleep in small numbers on various coconut trees. This roost is not at all a spectacular one, and I discovered that quite a few crows were spending the night here only because on a number of occasions I happened to hear crows calling from various trees well before sunrise and when crows had not begun to fly about. It should be mentioned that these crows were heard during the non-breeding season, and so such a large number could not have been

occupying nests in that area."

Reporting on his visit to the local zoo, KKN was struck by the antics of a captive Great Hornbill [*NLBW* 6 (2): 8].

"On 16.1.1996 I paid a visit to the local zoo hoping to spend a couple of hours watching 'wild' birds, particularly some unfamiliar migrants which I expected to find in the bushes and trees which give the zoo its special charm. But, though I did find a Blacknaped Oriole, I found myself spending more time observing the antics of the lone male Great Hornbill that was acquired by the Zoo some time last year.

"The bird was in a cage some 8 ft. x 10 ft. and had been provided with a rusty iron bar to perch upon. The floor was covered with coarse sand mixed with some gravel. I found the bird repeatedly jumping down from the perch to the sandy floor two feet below it, keeping its wings open and laid flat on the ground, running its open bill through the sand. It took in a mouthful of sand, raised its head and let almost all the sand dribble away. Then raising its body, it took hold of one of the flight-feathers of a wing and swiftly combed it with the bill. Then it leaped back to the perch, spent a few seconds there and again jumped to the floor to run through the whole routine. I watched the bird for more than ten minutes, and during this period it must have repeated the performance at least ten times. Some times the bird scooped up the sand, let it fall and 'wiped' its wing feathers with the bill three or four times before returning to the perch. On a few occasions it kept the wing closed while pretending to eat the sand. Once a large stone, about the size of a lemon, got between the mandibles and the bird at once raised its head, opened the bill wider and let the stone fall off.

"I wonder whether the bird was indulging in a form of 'anting', for its behaviour suggested the sort of nervous excitement associated with this phenomenon. If it was a form of 'anting', it must be a habit acquired by the bird in captivity as it is not at all likely that a wild Great Hornbill will come down to the ground for such a purpose. It would be interesting to know whether William, the Great Hornbill who lived in the Bombay Natural History Society's office for nearly 30 years ever showed a tendency to 'ant'."

In the May 1966 *Newsletter*, KKN responded to an article by S.V. Nilakanta, written earlier, on 'bird quarrels'. SVN wrote "For the purpose of these observations two types of quarrels are omitted. They are 1) Quarrels between predators and prey. This being a serious matter of life and death is outside the scope of mere quarrels, and is also a completely one sided affair 2) Quarrels between birds

of the same species. This fascinating study involves social relationships like, pecking order, selection of mates, nesting sites, and such. Observations here are of such a wide scope that they (also) have to be omitted, "This leaves us with quarrels between different species and between the birds and other creatures. Strangely enough, these quarrels seem to be very few, because birds are not given to logical reasoning or revengeful action". KKN gives his own observations about these quarrels [*NLBW* 6 (5): 5-6].

"On reading Sri Nilakanta's article on bird quarrels, I was reminded of certain squabbles for which peevishness and nervousness rather than competition for food, nest-sites or perches appeared to have been the cause.

"Many years ago I used to pass a *Morinda* (a sort of wild fig with rasp-like leaves and abundance of sulphur-yellow fruits) every day. When the tree was full of fruits a male koel used to spend hours on the tree. Though the branches were laden with ripe fruit and I seldom saw the koel eating anything there, the koel would not allow any other bird to go near this tree. Whenever other koels or smaller birds like the bulbuls attempted to land on a branch, the koel would at once drive them away. He had more of the Man of Property about him than even the owner of a nesting territory.

"The Chloropsis (at any rate Jerdon's) also behaves like a dog in the manger though its desire to keep others off has something to do with the food ration. Once a Chloropsis arrives on a twig bearing berries or flowers, it spends more time driving other birds away than in feeding.

Once I witnessed a prolonged quarrel between a Spotted Dove and a Pied Crested Cuckoo. They were in a low bush in scrub country (the compound of the Christian College, Tambaram) and spent more than half an hour scrapping. The cuckoo's insistence on coming back to the bush from which the dove always drove it away seemed to be as illogical as was the dove's determination to shoo it off. I did not find any nest anywhere in the neighbourhood.

"Common Mynas have a curious habit of picking a quarrel with one of themselves who becomes the object of a combined assault by five or six of his (or her) kinsfolk. This starts late in the evening when the mynas are presumably on their way to the roost. A small group may be seen on top of a palmyra tree just resting and making the usual noises. Suddenly, before one knows what started it, pandemonium breaks out and all one sees is a couple of mynas tumbling 50 feet to the ground and then rolling about and pecking one another. Meanwhile the others would also have

flown down and would first form a circle of vociferous spectators and then they too would, one by one, join the fray. The whole thing would end as abruptly as it had started and the flock would disperse or move off together as though nothing unusual had happened. This sort of thing seems to be more frequent during the summer months.

"Having strayed from the topic of quarrels between birds of different species, let me conclude with the accounts of quarrels between birds and other animals, and birds and insects. The best example of the former is the quarrel between a squirrel and a shikra which I witnessed some 22

years ago. One would have thought that no self-respecting shikra would let a squeaking palm squirrel disturb its rest, but I found the shikra deserting its perch on being asked 'to get a move on' by the squirrel. The shikra sat on a wall up the side of which the squirrel ran. The squirrel's tactics consisted in making sudden rushes from one side of the wall towards the shikra. I do not remember now whether the squirrel uttered its usual ear-splitting alarm calls, but it had no difficulty in persuading the shikra to seek some other perch.

"On many evenings some months ago I used to enjoy the sight of a dispute between

a Loten's Sunbird and a dragonfly for the bare twig at the top of a tamarind tree. The twig was probably used more regularly by the dragonfly. Whenever the sunbird occupied this perch, the dragonfly would come and, by merely flying in a determined fashion towards the bird, force it to fly off. But the sunbird would return at once and take possession only to be driven off again by the insect. As the sunbird seldom spent much time on this perch the technical victory may be said to have gone to the dragonfly. "Watching such incidents and trying to find the reasons for them can be an absorbing pastime."

## Correspondence

### Comments

"We most certainly have come far since the get together in Zafarbai's delightful garden in Andheri, Mumbai (then Bombay) to agree on bringing out a *Newsletter for Birdwatchers*. Earlier in the morning, at breakfast, Zafar and I were nonplussed at the call of a bird in the tree branches shading the house. It was the bemused look on the face of Zafar's teenage son that made me realize we were making fools of ourselves. The "strange" bird was a Five-striped Palm Squirrel *Funambulus pennanti*! While I could be excused for my ignorance since I was till then familiar with the Three-striped Palm Squirrel *F. palmarum*, but that Zafar who probably heard the "chirrup" every day of his Bombay life should be confused would seem inexcusable by any standards. Much, much later, after getting to know legions of birdwatchers, I am now not surprised that the then Honorary Secretary of BNHS and today's Editor Emeritus of *Indian Birds* could not tell a common rodent from a bird! Most of the birding fraternity does bird watching, literally. Sound just does not play any significant part in their appreciation of birds! Evaluating our progress since that delightful, very properly "old fashioned" breakfast, I can caution my large numbers of young birdwatcher friends that they do not need to be too concerned about being recognized as great birdwatchers or ornithologists. If they regularly enjoy their birds and the world they live in long enough, they will, as a matter of course become "recognized". They should however also enjoy writing.

"While I was a precocious birdwatcher having had the good fortune to have been a boy in times when birds were common and everywhere and was growing up in a privileged environment dominated by the likes of Dharmakumarsinhji, Salim Ali, Horace Alexander, General Williams—my greatest regret has been that I got intimate with the incomparable Humayun Abdulali rather late in life, Zafarbai just could not escape getting some avian "flu" infection from his already acclaimed relatives. I think he and I both have gained immensely in our desire to see more and more people infected. The *Newsletter for Birdwatchers* will remain a tremendous tribute to my friend and now this *Indian Birds*! Look at your Trustee Board! Taej and Santharam, both of whom I knew as boys! Good friends like "Subu" and Rishad! Suhel I do not know of. I also like the way you do not prefix names with "Dr". "Dr" Taej Mundkur would make me imagine he has started carrying a stethoscope round his neck instead of a pair of binoculars!

"The talk of prefixes and suffixes reminds me of how long it took me to get rid of the "KS" to my name. It was quite irritating at first, though amusing in later years, to have myself addressed "Mr. K.S. Lavkumar". There was a period when I almost agreed to try for a Ph.D.—my very good friend, Professor R.M. Naik Ph.D., was adamant that I acquire the suffix and he took me to the Vice Chancellor of the Saurashtra University to have me registered for Ph.D. on the Vice Chancellor's quota. The whole thing came to an end when the VC instead

suggested I regularly lecture the M.Sc. students! Thinking back, would there have been a period with myself being labeled Dr. K.S. Lavkumar? Taej will remember the day I literally set him afloat in the Gulf of Kachchh to produce a report that still keeps popping up in learned seminars on the Gulf of Kachchh to think of what Taej wrote as an enthusiastic student being included in the environmentalists' arsenal against the Reliance refinery coming up at Jamnagar, is quite mind boggling—the pen is more powerful than the sword and all that?

"Well this garrulous piece has become quite long. Let me conclude on a more serious note. Anand Prasad's description is indeed that of a female Gold-naped Finch *Pyrrhoplectes epauletta*. I have seen a flock years ago in Ladakh, beside the track beyond Sissoo. This was long, long before motor vehicles had arrived at Rahla on the Kullu side of the Rohtang Pass. The males are very distinct. The birds I observed were gleaned seeds among sparse grass absolutely in the open and were extremely confiding. Just a word of caution though, the Plum-headed Parakeets *Psittacula cyanocephala* could have been the Slaty-headed Parakeet *P. himalayana*.

"In the "Correspondence" section, Nirmala Chathoth refers to me and the grandala she saw. Last Sunday—16<sup>th</sup> April—I happened to visit Surat and there, at a nearby lake, this time, I had to disappoint her and a large group of keen birdwatchers by identifying a flock of duck far out on the water as being Lesser Whistling-Duck *Dendrocygna javanica*