

the relatively smaller cones of the Himalayan Hemlock *Tsuga dumosa*. Since there is an overlap in the range of the two conifer species, Edelaar feels that there may be substantial geographical overlap in the two forms of crossbill as well. Edelaar writes that DNA and field studies in this region of overlap will be necessary to determine whether the two crossbills warrant elevation to distinct species, rather than just subspecies.

In a recent essay, I highlighted the importance of scientific collections of birds not just to describe new species, but also to 'spawn many unexpected and unanticipated surprises long after the specimens themselves are added to museum drawers...' (Kannan, R. 2007. *J. Bombay Nat. Hist. Soc.* 104: 12-18). This case bolsters that argument. Edelaar did not do any fieldwork for this clever exposé, and his work stemmed from a careful examination of museum specimens that were collected by museum ornithologists, years ago. In fact, the two crossbill forms may never have been told apart by mere field observations. Thanks to museum collections and his intelligent and meticulous work, we know of a new crossbill for the Himalaya.

- **Ragupathy Kannan**

Round, P. D. & G. A. Gale. 2008. Changes in status of *Lophura* Pheasants in Khao Yai National Park, Thailand: A response to warming climate? *Biotropica* 40: 225-230.

There is a preponderance of evidence that global warming has affected bird populations in various parts of the world, but much of this evidence is in temperate or polar zones. The fact that birds are now arriving and breeding earlier in spring in northern latitudes is well established. Similarly, pole-ward and altitudinal shifts in bird distributions too have been documented. But to my knowledge, only one major paper has clearly documented such changes in avifauna from the tropics: Pounds et al.

(*Nature* 398: 611-615) reported that low elevation species in Costa Rica are now increasingly found in montane cloud-forest habitats, and linked this phenomenon to decrease in frequency of mists in higher elevations induced by spikes in air temperatures.

Now, Philip Round and George Gale of Thailand report an analysis of a series of sight records spanning a quarter century of two syntopic species of pheasants, one lowland, and other montane or submontane, in Khao Yai National Park, Thailand. Their results are strikingly similar to that reported above from Costa Rica. The lowland species, Siamese Fireback *Lophura diardi*, is increasingly encountered at higher altitudes in relation to those of the higher elevation resident, the Silver Pheasant *Lophura nycthemera*. Unlike the Costa Rica study, however, the authors were unable to establish a direct cause-and-effect relationship between climate change and these shifts in altitudinal distributions, and hence hypothesize that the shifts could be a response to a warming climate.

What makes this study of especial interest is it illustrates the value of maintaining long-term bird records with meticulous notes on elevations and other pertinent information. The authors pored over sight records archived in three organizations from 1978 to present. They also appealed for sightings of the two pheasants in a posting on the Oriental Birding Newsgroup and were able to get additional information. To all this, they added their own sight records and systematic survey data that they themselves gathered. They then used simple linear regression models to correlate changes in pheasant encounter rates with changes in rainfall and temperature across time frames.

This study should be a model to illustrate how simple maintaining and archiving of bird records could spawn interesting studies years after the birdwatchers made those observations. Even amateur birders can contribute significantly to the scientific study of birds, simply by maintaining, and periodically archiving, their bird records.

- **Ragupathy Kannan**

—In the news—

Compiled by Praveen J.

Migration time for Amur Falcons

There has been a wave of Amur Falcon *Falco amurensis* sightings from different parts of India in the last month of November. This species is believed to be a passage migrant through the Indian Subcontinent and is seen along the western coast and eastern parts of the country during November. The first report for this season was by Sumit K. Sen from Kolkota on 23.x.2007 where he photographed a single bird from his home. Bill Harvey reported a tiercel from Sunderbans on 14.xi.2007. A sizable flock of 250-300 birds was reported on 19.ix.2007 near Mumbai by Adesh Shivkar.

Later on 22.ix.2007, he saw two birds at Gowlideo Hills near Mumbai. Shashank Dalvi photographed a massive bazaar of 1,000+ Amur Falcons at Nameri National Park in Assam on 11.xi.2007. Vaibhav Deshmukh reported three birds at Ramdharneshwar Hills near Alibag (Maharashtra) on 19.ix.2007 and one bird on 25.xi.2007. Around Hyderabad, J. Pranay Rao saw a falcon on 3.xi.2007 near Medchal and eleven birds over a grassy path around Shamirpet on 24.xi.2007. Raju S and Rajasree photographed a falcon from Punchakkari, Thiruvananthapuram on 18.xi.2007. With more bird-watchers going out in the field, an increase in

annual sightings of this handsome bird is bound to happen. Courtesy: *BengalBird, BirdsofBombay, KeralaBirder*.

A Sarus story

Bill Harvey and Mughda Sethi have framed a delightful children's story with rich paintings portrayed around the pair of Sarus Cranes *Grus antigone* that nests at Basai wetland (Haryana), an Important Bird Area near Delhi. The story, *Shoba and the Sarus Cranes*, is about a young girl who takes initiatives to convince her elders to protect the nesting site of her friends, a pair of Sarus Cranes. It was inspired by Harvey's visits to and his experiences at Basai, a wetland that has been, unfortunately, converted into fields in recent years. The author also touches meekly the Siberian Cranes *G. leucogeranus* that used to winter in Bharatpur years ago and conveys that it is too late to do anything now. Harvey and Sethi have donated the story to International Crane Foundation (ICF) and hope to inspire people across the world to work together to conserve cranes and wetlands. The full story, indeed a treat to read, can be downloaded freely from the ICF website http://www.savingcranes.org/about/whats_new/index.cfm

Dispersal of Malabar Whistling Thrush

Malabar Whistling Thrush *Myiophonus horsfieldii*, an endemic species in peninsular India, is known to have some local movements, which are largely unstudied. This season, it has sprung up in two surprise localities. On 22.xi.2007, Prasanth Narayanan reported a single bird from Nehru Zoological Park in Hyderabad. However, he did not see the bird during subsequent visits. On 24.ix.2007, C. Sashikumar reported it from Karikilli Bird Sanctuary near Chennai on the eastern coast. There have been stray sightings of this species during previous years from the outskirts of Bangalore, Chamundi Hills, Nandi Hills (all in Karnataka) and Rishi Valley (Chittoor district, Andhra Pradesh). Courtesy: *KeralaBirder, TamilBirds*.

Celebration time for the Barn Owl Project

The Barn Owl Conservation Group, a unique venture initiated to protect Barn Owls *Tyto alba* in Bangalore city (Karnataka), tasted its first success when Ms. Mukta Nagaraj spotted an owl entering the artificial nest box installed near her kitchen. The experimental nest box installed in her apartment by the conservation group in October (one among eight other boxes distributed in the city) happens to be the first one to be adopted by a pair of barn owls. "Nest boxes are popularly used by doting birdwatchers around the world to give barn owls a safe nesting place –the owls are increasingly looking for places to nest in apartment complexes, which are replacing old tree hollows," says S. Subramanya, one of the founders of the 25-member group, comprising teachers, doctors, housewives, businessmen and scientists. "We would like to study the owls closely, perhaps with the help of a web camera, to learn more about their feeding and breeding habits." This information, he hopes, will be turned into educational material, "to make people see the positive role played by barn owls –they do us all a

big service by consuming a couple of rats at night". Read more about it from <http://www.bangalorebarnowl.com>.

A course in basic ornithology

To promote scientific awareness about birds, avian ecology and conservation aspects amongst people, the M. E. S. Abasaheb Garware College and ELA Foundation (Pune) have jointly initiated a 'Certificate Course in Basic Ornithology'. This is the fourth consecutive year of this unique course, which begins on 17.xii.2007. The course is conducted on a no-profit-no-loss-basis and all participants are given a comprehensive book of lecture notes. Course participants, in association with NGOs and forest department personnel, counted Indian Peafowl *Pavo cristatus* at Morachi Chincholi. A project on installation of artificial nest boxes for hole nesting birds is also undertaken. Several birds have been rescued and successfully released in nature by the course participants and some are also carrying their own research studies on birds.

Any person having completed 11th standard in any faculty is eligible to join this course, which is conducted in English. The previous two courses were attended by persons from all walks of life: doctors, engineers, software personnel, lawyers, journalists, junior and senior college students from arts and commerce faculty as well as from zoology, botany, biodiversity and environmental sciences and various other professions.

The course comprises about 40 bi-weekly audio-visual lectures and demonstrations on topics like avian anatomical adaptations, physiology, migration, bird flight, breeding and roosting behaviour, identification, bird photography, bird call recording, cultural aspects, archaeo-zoological aspects, birds as pest controllers, environmental law, etc. Four field visits are included as well as one each to the Zoological Survey of India and Bird Orphanage to learn about preserved bird skins, biometry and bird first aid and care.

Contact Dr. Sanjay Kharat, course coordinator or S. N. Suryawanshi HOD, Zoology Department of MES College between 10:30 hrs and 16:00 hrs, on working days.

Last chance to comment on the proposed Red List Category Changes for 2008

BirdLife International's (BLI) first round of review of the IUCN Red List assessments for threatened birds is coming to a close. BLI has assessed all the contributions from the Threatened Birds forums and information available from other sources. In the light of all available information, they have prepared a draft list of proposed revisions for the 2008 IUCN Red List. This has been posted on the Threatened Asian Birds forum at <http://www.birdlifeforums.org>. BLI now wants final comments on this list, which can be directly posted on the forum before 20.xii.2007. After this, BLI will reassess the draft decisions based on any new information obtained and frame the final decisions.

From the field

With winter setting in, there is a lot of action in the field.

Sharad Sridhar photographed a White-browed Bushchat *Saxicola macrorhynchus* at Sultanpur, Haryana on 17.xi.2007.

There are just a handful of records from Haryana in the recent past and it is listed by BirdLife International as Vulnerable. Courtesy: *Delhibird*

On 2.x.2007, Gururaja and his friends photographed a Lesser Adjutant *Leptoptilos javanicus* from Yellapur-Haliyal road near Dandeli National Park, Karnataka. It is perhaps the second photographic record of this Near-threatened species from this region after Vijay Mohan Raj photographed it in 2001. The species is believed to be sparingly distributed throughout the Western Ghats. Courtesy: *Bngbirds*

The state-wide bird race in Kerala on 11.ix.2007 came up with two sightings of uncommon *Aquila* eagles. A photograph of a Tawny Eagle *A. rapax* was taken at Kole Wetlands by Sandeep Das and Vivek Chandran. As per Rishad Naoroji's *Birds of Prey of Indian subcontinent*, this is an extremely rare bird in the Malabar region. On the same day, Raju S., reported a Greater Spotted Eagle *A. clanga* from Punchakarai-Vellayani near Thiruvananthapuram, perhaps the most southerly record from the Indian Subcontinent. Courtesy: *KeralaBirder*

K. V. Eldhose and Sudheesh reported a dead Orange-breasted Green-Pigeon *Treron bicincta* from Thattekkad, Kerala on 28.xi.2007. It is considered one of the rarest birds in the Western Ghats. Courtesy: *KeralaBirder*

Marshall's Iora *Aegithina nigrolutea* is now being recorded from several dry areas and scrub jungles in Karnataka. Recent reports in November are from Daroji Bear Sanctuary near Hampi by S. Subramanya and from Bommasandra in Kaveri Valley by Mike Prince and Vijay Ramachandran. S. Subramanya also reported several Rufous-fronted Prinias *Prinia buchanani* including several sub-adults and a flock of 250 Grey-necked Buntings *Emberiza buchanani* from the same area. Courtesy: *Bngbirds*

Bill Harvey and others saw a Mishmi Wren-Babbler *Spelaornis badeigularis* among several other north-east Indian specialties from Mishmi Hills in Arunachal Pradesh during a weeklong field trip between 18-24.xi.2007. Courtesy: *OrientalBirding*

V. Santharam reported 8-10 individuals of Philippine Shrike *Lanius cristatus lucionensis* at several locations from Dhanushkodi-Rameshwaram area during first week of xi.2007. All individuals of *L. cristatus* he saw were of this race. Courtesy: *TamilBirds*

Vivek Chandran reported three White-tailed Lapwings *Vanellus leucurus* from Adat-Kole in Kerala on 23.xi.2007. This is the third winter, since 2000 that this species is being reported from Kole Wetlands. Courtesy: *KeralaBirder*

Sumit K. Sen reported a new easterly limit for Common Babbler *Turdoides caudatus* when he recorded six individuals of this species from Purbasthali wetlands, West Bengal on 1.xii.2007. This species was known to be distributed only up till north-eastern Bihar. Courtesy: *BengalBird*

Kumar Ghorpade and his associates reported Isabelline Wheater *Oenanthe isabellina* from the outskirts of Raichur (Karnataka) on 01.xii.2007. This is an addition to the birds of Karnataka and perhaps the southern most record of this species for the subcontinent. Courtesy: *BngBirds*

Prasanth Narayanan and friends reported two Black Storks *Ciconia nigra* from Gauthami River near Kotiappli in Andhra Pradesh on 17.xi.2007. Courtesy: *KeralaBirder*

A Red-breasted Parakeet *Psittacula alexandri* was again reported among several Rose-ringed Parakeets *P. krameri* at GKVK campus, Bangalore by S. Subramanya on 13.xi.2007. Courtesy: *Bngbirds*

David Raju and Meena Haribal recorded nine Black Bazas *Aviceda leuphotes* at Thattekkad in 22.xi.2007. Courtesy: *KeralaBirder*

Adesh Shivkar reported an incident of a Pale Grasshopper-Warbler *Locustella naevia* caught in the web of a Giant Wood Spider *Nephila* sp., on 18.xi.2007 at Tungreshwar WLS in Maharashtra. This is the third instance of a bird in the web reported from Indian region. Courtesy: *BirdsofBombay*

There have been a few reports of Common Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus* in the past two months. S. Subramanya reported one from Yelehanka tank on 03.xi.2007 and another from Hampi region on 23.xi.2007. Courtesy: *Bngbirds*. K.V.Eldhose reports having seen this bird every day between 1-11.xi.2007 at Thattekkad, Kerala. Courtesy: *KeralaBirder*

David Stanton reports a Nepal Wren-Babbler *Pnoepyga immaculata*, two Striated Laughing-thrushes *Garrulax striatus* and six White-throated Laughing-thrushes *Garrulax albogularis* from Kangra Valley in Himachal Pradesh on 1.xi.2007. Courtesy: *OrientalBirding*

A Large-billed Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus magnirostris* and a Pied Thrush *Zoothera wardii* were reported from Nandi Hills by Mike Prince on 27.x.2007. Courtesy: *Bngbirds*

Vishnu Das reported twenty chicks of Oriental White Ibis *Threskiornis melanocephalus* from Panamaram heronry, from about eight nests, on 5.x.2007. This species has been recently found breeding in Kerala and this is one of the two nesting sites in Kerala. Courtesy: *KeralaBirder*

Launch of the AWC Strategy for 2007-2015

On 13.xi.2007, at the second meeting of the East Asian-Australasian Flyway Partnership in Beijing, Wetlands International launched a strategic document for waterbird monitoring in the Asia-Pacific region entitled *The Asian Waterbird Census: Development Strategy 2007-2015*. The Development Strategy was endorsed by the Flyway Partnership Meeting as a regional mechanism that contributes to the Flyway Partnership Implementation Strategy through the monitoring of waterbirds and their habitats. The AWC strategy is the major output of AWC Coordinators' Meetings held in 2003 and 2006; the aim of the meetings was to achieve a high standard of waterbird monitoring in the Asia-Pacific region. The strategy focuses on seven objectives, 28 actions and 84 implementation points for the development of the AWC. The target is that by 2015 a high quality monitoring programme, covering most of the internationally important wetland sites for waterbirds, will be carried out to a very high standard in all countries in the Asia-Pacific region.

A review of the development of the AWC over the past 20 years clearly reveals that the programme has seen many

achievements. Its greatest strength has been its ability to mobilise large networks of volunteers to undertake the census work. However, there have also been challenges, typical of the problems in many developing Asian countries. Major issues are the lack of adequate census capacity, equipment and financial support, and changes in levels of volunteer interest, resulting in inconsistent site coverage and data quality. The strategy is intended to function as a guide, not only for Wetlands International and the organisations that coordinate the AWC in the region but also for each individual who participates, supports or expresses interest in the AWC. It is highly recommended that AWC volunteers have a look at the strategy document at <http://www.wetlands.org>.

White Stork—an emblem for Indo-Russian relations

A European White Stork *Ciconia ciconia* pictured with the colours of Indian and Russian national flags have been chosen as the emblem for Year of Russia in India. Twelve works were on the short-list for the emblem. Nikolai Kiselev, 24, an artist from Novosibirsk, won. His sketch was also named the best by Kanwal Sibal, then Indian Ambassador to Russia, at the gala on the 60th anniversary of bilateral diplomatic relations.

“Storks spend the winter in India to fly to Russia for the warm season. These birds of passage build air-bridges between the two countries,” said Anzhelika Zhukova, chief executive officer of IMA Dialogue and contest organiser.

The jury thinks the stork will also make a good emblem for the reciprocal Year of India in Russia, scheduled for 2009. “The bird flies right to left in the Year of Russia emblem. It needs only to reverse direction a year later,” Ms. Zhukova said.

Read the full story at: <http://www.hindu.com/2007/12/07/stories/2007120755682400.htm>.

State birds of India

Since the news item of announcing the new state bird for Himachal Pradesh appeared in Jul-Aug issue of IndianBirds, Digambar Gadgil from Nashik requested for the complete list of state birds of India. Thanks to Wikipedia and Google, a complete list of state birds for all the Indian states is available and reproduced in Table 1. It is interesting to note that Indian Roller, Great Hornbill, Hill Myna, Green Imperial Pigeon and Mrs. Hume’s Pheasant are state birds of multiple Indian states.

Table 1. State birds of India

State	Species	State	Species
Andhra Pradesh	Indian Roller <i>Coracias benghalensis</i>	Maharashtra	Green Imperial Pigeon <i>Ducula aenea</i>
Arunachal Pradesh	Great Hornbill <i>Buceros bicornis</i>	Manipur	Mrs.Hume ’s Pheasant <i>Syrmaticus humiae</i>
Assam	White-winged Duck <i>Cairina scutulata</i>	Mizoram	Mrs.Hume ’s Pheasant <i>S.humiae</i>
Bihar	Indian Roller <i>C.benghalensis</i>	Nagaland	Blyth ’s Tragopan <i>Tragopan blythii</i>
Chhattisgarh	Common Hill Myna <i>Gracula religiosa</i>	Orissa	Indian Peafowl <i>Pavo cristatus</i>
Goa	Black-crested bulbul <i>Pycnonotus gularis</i>	Punjab	Northern Goshawk <i>Accipiter gentilis</i>
Gujarat	Greater Flamingo <i>Phoenicopterus roseus</i>	Rajasthan	Great Indian Bustard <i>Ardeotis nigriceps</i>
Haryana	Black Francolin <i>Francolinus francolinus</i>	Sikkim	Blood Pheasant <i>Ithaginis cruentus</i>
Himachal Pradesh	Western Tragopan <i>Tragopan melanocephalus</i>	Tamil Nadu	Emerald Dove <i>Chalcophaps indica</i>
Jammu & Kashmir	Black-necked Crane <i>Grus nigricollis</i>	Tripura	Green Imperial Pigeon <i>D. aenea</i>
Jharkhand	Asian Koel <i>Eudynamys scolopacea</i>	Uttarakhand	Himalayan Monal <i>Lophophorus impejanus</i>
Karnataka	Indian Roller <i>C.benghalensis</i>	Uttar Pradesh	Sarus Crane <i>Grus antigone</i>
Kerala	Great Hornbill <i>B.bicornis</i>	West Bengal	White-breasted Kingfisher <i>Halcyon smyrnensis</i>
Meghalaya	Common Hill Myna <i>G. religiosa</i>		
Madhya Pradesh	Asian Paradise Flycatcher <i>Terpsiphone paradisi</i>		

—Correspondence—

In *Indian Birds* 3 (3): 109 there was a report of Lesser Golden-backed Woodpeckers *Dinopium benghalense* feeding on rice put out for them. In context to this, please record in the next issue—a male Lesser Golden-backed Woodpecker joining Red-vented Bulbuls *Pycnonotus cafer*, Jungle Babblers *Turdoides striata*, Common *Acridotheres tristis* and Brahminy *Sturnus pagodarum* Mynas and House Sparrows *Passer domesticus* along with squirrels *Funambulus* sp., to feed on bread pieces and uncooked rice put out for birds in a Chandigarh (India) garden. Sitting out in the sun on the morning of 22nd December 2007 with my host, I was pleasantly surprised to see this woodpecker join the other birds to glean rice and later fly to a bowl of water for a drink. Apparently he has been a regular visitor for quite some time.

—Lavkumar Khachar
23rd December 2007