

Crested Hawk-eagle *Nisaetus cirrhatus* feeding on nilgai *Boselaphus tragocamelus* fawn carcass

Aditya Joshi & Raju Kasambe

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On 10 February 2010 one of us (AJ) was looking for scats of tigers *Panthera tigris* on a pre-determined trail in Bor Wildlife Sanctuary (Wardha district, Maharashtra), when he spotted a nilgai fawn *Boselaphus tragocamelus* carcass, but continued with his trail. On the way back, however, he saw a Crested Hawk-eagle *Nisaetus cirrhatus* feeding on this carcass. For the next three days, while on the same trail, AJ spotted this eagle feasting on the remains of the carcass everyday! Aditya made a video [<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KEJXy0L7WWM>] recording of this raptor feeding on the carcass.

It was difficult to comprehend what had killed the nilgai fawn, but it was clear that the Crested Hawk-eagle benefited. As the routes for Aditya's trails were fixed, he got to see it daily, and the raptor did not seem to be bothered by his presence at all, as it was busy eating.

When the YouTube link was posted on Internet, Niranjan Sant, renowned birder, replied that he had seen a similar event in Melghat Tiger Reserve (MTR; Maharashtra, India), where he had observed a Crested Hawk-eagle feeding on the carcass of a wild boar *Sus scrofa* (as posted on "seriousbirders" on 17 February 2010 by Mr. Niranjan Sant).

It is worth mentioning that an incidence of this raptor feeding on a jungle cat *Felis chaus* was earlier reported from MTR

(Kasambe 2004). The location of the sightings described by Sant (2010), and Kasambe (2004) seem to be close to each other, i.e., in the Chamar Udhada area of MTR, where a Crested Hawk-eagle pair nests regularly every year. On 5 June 2002 a Crested Hawk-eagle was seen feeding on a jungle cat by Mr Rafeeqe, the bus driver of the MTR'S tourist bus, and 30-odd tourists. When Rafeeqe saw the incident, he said that the cat was still alive, but it seemed to have been blinded by the eagle.

Vidal (1880) reported the raptor lifting four kittens, and a bird used for falconry in Germany acquired notoriety by eliminating cats from the countryside (Naoroji 2006).

Though, the raptor is "capable of tackling fairly large mammals and game birds" (Naoroji 2004) it was never reported scavenging on carcasses of dead wild animals. Presuming that the raptor did not kill the nilgai fawn or the wild boar, the observation of it scavenging on the carcasses is worth reporting.

References

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Recent sightings of the Sooty Gull *Larus hemprichii* off the coast of Mumbai

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Sooty Gull *Larus hemprichii* is primarily a maritime species found along shorelines and small oceanic islands. It is known to breed near the Red Sea, and along the African coast, up to the coast of Pakistan, from April to October. Post breeding some individuals disperse widely and are reported from up to Mozambique, Kenya, and Zanzibar. Prior to the breeding season, in May and June, it is known to congregate in the Karachi harbour (Burger & Gochfeld 1996). The object of this note is to place on record two sightings of Sooty Gull from Mumbai.

I have been travelling across Mumbai harbour to Mandwa

jetty, Alibaug, frequently by ferry, for the past five years. Most of the time I look out for birds flying by. In all these years I have observed the Sooty Gull twice in the harbour.

The first sighting was on 22 March 2009, about 15 nautical miles south, off the coast of Mumbai, way past Prongs Reef lighthouse. I was on a friend's catamaran sailboat enjoying an afternoon cruise at the tip of Mumbai when we chanced upon a distinctive dark gull perched upon a thermocol buoy. Its back, wings, and head were dark brown. A thin white collar separated the head from the back. It was rather close to the boat and I could see it well through binoculars. On our approach it took off,