Apart from sporadic one-off records from much lower elevations like Point Calimere (Hussain 1977), Manipal (Singal 2011), and Rajapalayam (Sharan 2015), or from the Eastern Ghats (Price 1979), most known populations of this species are from the highlands of the Western Ghats. However, its presence in Belgaum evokes the possibility that more such pockets may be present outside its main range in the Western Ghats in the hills of Peninsular India.

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Letters to the Editor

Demoiselle Cranes *Anthropoides virgo* at Uran, Navi Mumbai, western coast, Maharashtra

We have been regularly birding at a wetland (18.90°N, 72.98°E) between Sonari and Belpada villages, Uran Tehsil, Raigad District, Maharashtra, for the past four years. On 06 February 2013, between 1500 and 1800 hrs, we saw two Demoiselle Cranes *Anthropoides virgo* there. One bird was sitting on a grassy outcrop in the middle of the wetland **[139]** while the other was foraging in the wetland. This record seems exceptional—as this is only the second instance that this species has been reported from the Konkan coast of Maharashtra (Prasad 2004). The earlier record was one from somewhere near Mumbai, during 1899–1900, but lacked details (Aitken undated). Ali & Abdulali (1939) may have quoted Aitken (undated) stating, 'several' birds were seen in winter, whenever there was a drought in Gujarat and Deccan. Though wintering mainly in Gujarat, Rajasthan, and Haryana (Rasmussen & Anderton 2012), there are sight records of this species from various parts of the Deccan (Prasad 2004) including one of about 1000 individuals from Veer, Pune (Gole 1977; Naik 1987; Naik 1989). In spite of subsequent regular visits to the site between February 2013 and February 2016, we did not see the Demoiselle Cranes again.

Mrugank Prabhu

139. Demoiselle Crane at Uran.

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Fruits of *Trema orientalis* in the diet of the Pale-capped Pigeon *Columba punicea*

The Pale-capped Pigeon *Columba punicea* is classified as Vulnerable (Bird Life International 2016), and is considered rare or very local in its distribution (Rasmussen & Anderton 2012). While working on a floristic survey between December 2014 to February 2015, in and around Bhubaneswar (20.48°N, 85.75°E),

Odisha, these pigeons were observed in the semi-urban areas of the city and their feeding preferences were recorded.

On 10 December 2014 a single bird was observed feeding on the small fruits of *Trema orientalis* (aka Pigeon Wood) **[140]** Though it perched on a variety of trees, including *Michelia champaca, Grewia disperma, Naringi crenulata, Melia azedarach, Lannea coromandelica, Bankara malabarica, Simaroubaglauca, Gargua pinnata, Peltophorum pterocarpum, Cassia siamea, etc.*, its distinct preference for *T. orientalis* was observed.

Ali & Ripley (1987) state that the species eats wild figs and other fruits and berries and also bamboo seeds, paddy and other grains. Amongst grains, it is known to frequent fields of rice, millet [=bajra], vetch, and is particularly fond of ripe Indian corn *Zea mays* (Baker 1913). Specific fruits that have been recorded in its diet include *Litsea nitida* (Mooney 1934), *L. monopetala* (Chitampalli 1977), *Syzygium cumini* [=*Eugenia jambolana*] (Jerdon 1864; Beavan 1868; Gopi & Pandav 2007), *Strychnos nux-vomica* (Beaven 1868), *Bambusa arundinacea* (BirdLife International 2001—citing Smith 1942 and, Smythies 1986), *Phyllanthus* species [given as "zi" tree] (ibid.). A number of "large plum-coloured drupes" were found in the stomach of one female in Myanmar (Armstrong 1876). However, no prior worker has reported this species feeding on *T. orientalis*.

140. Pale-capped Pigeon feeding on fruits of *Trema orientalis*.

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Editorial

Avian checklists, and those of all life forms, are not the simple datasets they seem. They hide multitudes in their columns, entire populations of living forms that populate geographical landmasses. The sum of their whole is much larger than that of their parts: while one encompasses eternities of tellurian upheavals, the other endures a contrapuntal cycle of evolutionary fine-tuning.

Checklists are different tools to different people. They are a record of names to some—who weigh in on correct spelling and the order of listing. A commingling of languages, spiraling back a few centuries, and connecting contemporary usage with formative laws of taxonomy and systematics. To some they are slightly deeper: The joy of deciphering the Greek and Latin—which might lead to further strands of information. To some they comprise statistics—to be chopped into guilds, families, genera, species, and races. To the sentient, they are doorways leading to entire landscapes. They rekindle a sense of place, or strengthen it: the ebb and flow of shorelines, over the rapidly changing topography as one travels inland, over human-modified landscapes, up and down the rise and fall of the land, past flowing waters, within the earth – shrouding forests, up into the rapidly cooling hills or mountains. Skimming checklists ignites memory and anchors the well heeled to moments in time, often rekindling a desire to travel and experience anew.

Checklists are the bulwarks of landscapes against thoughtless conversion of land usage. They become the litmus of our ecological footprint as caretakers of a legacy bequeathed to the progeny of planet Earth.

In their compilation, checklist are added to and built upon. Once they mature, they may well be pruned, or whittled down, for it is better to remove a taxon than allow it to teeter there rootlessly. An up to date checklist is a fine tool for conservation.

I sincerely hope that state lists, such as the one for Karnataka published in this issue, are compiled, monitored, and published to strengthen the foundations of Indian ornithology.

—Aasheesh Pittie