

Adaptations of the Indian Grey Hornbill *Ocyceros birostris* in an urban environment

The Indian Grey Hornbill *Ocyceros birostris* is only known to nest in tree cavities (Hall 1918; Ali & Ripley 1987; Santhoshkumar & Balasubramanian 2010), or inside artificial nest boxes (Nagare 2014). But on 15 April 2015 I spotted an unusual nesting site of an Indian Grey Hornbill pair—a hole on the concrete wall of the second floor of a multi-storied residential building in Indore city (Madhya Pradesh) [228, 229]. The hole was beside the window of one of the apartments and was approximately eight meters above the ground. It had been properly sealed by the female hornbill, leaving only a small slit for the male to feed the incarcerated occupants. The male used the window's ledge as a perch from which it would fly up to the nest cavity. The building stood beside a large playground, which would be crowded in the mornings and evenings. Many fruit-bearing trees like *Ficus bengalensis*, *F. religiosa*, *F. glomerata*, and *Azardirachta indica* were present in the vicinity. This nest has been successfully occupied for three consecutive years: 2015–2017.

In another instance I installed a high resolution CCTV camera, with zoom-in and zoom-out feature, to record the hornbill's nesting behaviour. The camera was fixed on a pole and was five meters away from the nest. The nest was located at the biodiversity nursery inside the forest campus, Indore. The camera was covered by an outer casing so as to protect it from rain. A DVR with 500 GB harddisk capacity was put in the nearby forest officer residence. The same was connected to a personal computer and the data was downloaded on it. The live feed was seen on the computer and depending on the type of footage required, the CCTV camera was zoomed in, or out. Apart from this, DSLR cameras with zoom lens, and binoculars, were also used to record the observations of the nest.

On 20 May 2013 I spotted a male regularly providing pieces of dry chapattis [230] and biscuits to the chicks. This food was obtained from a feeding table in a nearby residence, where the



229. Male Indian Grey Hornbill inserting food into nest cavity.

residents encouraged squirrels to feed off it. The hornbill was observed scaring away squirrels and taking the food. I later placed pieces of Indian milk-based sweets on the table, which the male readily took to the nest. I also observed that the male brought fruits of *F. religiosa*, *F. glomerata*, and *Syzygium cumini* to the nest. The chicks were also fed beetles and grasshoppers before they fledged (Patil et al. 1997; Santoshkumar & Balasubramanian 2015).



230. Male Indian Grey Hornbill feeding chapattis to its young.

The unusual nesting site, and the acceptance of 'different' food, indicate that this species has adapted remarkably to living in human-dominated environments.

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Pics: Ajay Gadikar

228. Male Indian Grey Hornbill approaches nest cavity, with a beak-full of food to feed its chicks.

Santhoshkumar, E., & Balasubramanian, P., 2015. Food habits of Indian Grey Hornbill *Ocyceros birostris* in Sathyamangalam forest division, Eastern Ghats, India. *Journal of the Bombay Natural History Society* 111 (2): 90–97 (2014).

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Bronzed Drongo *Dicrurus aenea* and Hair-crested Drongo *Dicrurus hottentottus* from Jammu & Kashmir, India

This note reports the addition of Bronzed Drongo *Dicrurus aenea* and Hair-crested Drongo *D. hottentottus* to the avifauna of Jammu and Kashmir.

On the sunny afternoon of 21 June 2016, NS noticed a medium-sized bird perched on a cherry-bark elm *Ulmus villosa* tree (32.89°N, 75.82°E; c. 2547 m asl), about five kilometers south of Padri, falling within the administrative jurisdiction of Jammu and Kashmir State along Bhaderwah–Chamba interstate highway. The bird was identified as a Bronzed Drongo [231] from its glossy bluish-green body, with a flatter bill, and less deeply forked tail (Rasmussen & Anderton 2012). The bird stayed on



231. Bronzed Drongo *Dicrurus aenea*.



232. Hair-crested Drongo *Dicrurus hottentottus*.

Pics: Neeraj Sharma

the tree for about three minutes and then flew away towards the dense mixed stand of a nearby temperate broadleaved forest. It is a resident of the Himalayas and has, so far, been reported up till Himachal Pradesh (Shah *et al.* 2016) in the north-western Himalayas (Ali & Ripley 2001; Grimmet *et al.* 2011; Rasmussen & Anderton 2012), and so its appearance near the state border is not unexpected, though it's an addition to the avifauna of Jammu & Kashmir.

Two Hair-crested Drongos were sighted near Samba (32.58°N, 75.20°E; c. 471 m asl), and one near Kathua (32.58°N, 75.35°E; c. 570 m asl) on 03 and 15 March 2016 respectively, by Parvez Shagoo (2016a,b). On the evening of 03 February 2017, while walking around the main campus, we noticed a group of five individuals feeding and fluttering around the blooming silver oak *Grevillea robusta*, Indian bottle brush *Callistemon citrinus*, and Silk floss tree *Ceiba speciosa* near the administrative block (32.71°N, 74.86°E; c. 318 m asl), University of Jammu, Jammu. The species was spotted again at the same location on 18 February 2017 by NS (two individuals) and on 11 April 2017 (five individuals) by AS. NS recently sighted a group of seven individuals hovering over a *Toona ciliata* canopy near Dalhori in Rajouri District (33.30°N, 74.45°E; c. 1075 m asl) on 06 August 2017. The species [232] was recognized by its glistening blue-black plumage, highly iridescent wings, sickle-shaped heavy bill, long filoplumes over crown, and steeply triangular tail with curled corners (Rasmussen & Anderton 2012). Its frequent sightings in and around Jammu and up to far west in Rajouri, in the recent past, suggests a possible range extension of the species further westwards of Kangra, Himachal Pradesh (den Besten 2004; Grimmett *et al.* 2011; Rasmussen & Anderton 2012).

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