(BirdLife International 2014). These heronries lie outside protected areas and are closely associated with the human population.

Although there is lack of awareness among the local people, they usually do not harm a heronry directly. Instead, habitat deterioration through sewer discharge, encroachment, and eutrophication are the primary threats (Dwevedi & Urfi 2011). Hence, preservation of heronries needs an integrative approach with the participation of all the stakeholders. Active participation of locals in long term monitoring and creating awareness will improve the chances of heronries to remain protected and the birds they harbour, to be conserved.

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References


Black-necked Stork *Ephippiorhynchus asiaticus* feeding on Indian flap-shell turtle *Lissaeumys punctata*

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On 06 January 2013 we visited Wadhavana Reservoir (22°10′N, 73°29′E) for bird watching, and to assess the status of winter migratory bird species. During the visit we came across an interesting sight of a Black-necked Stork *Ephippiorhynchus asiaticus* feeding on a turtle in the evening hours. MT was able to click few photographic evidences of the actions [124].

Wadhavana Reservoir (Dabhoi tehsil, Vadodara District, Gujarat) is spread over an area of 11.2 km². It is a century-old (1909–1910) man-made earthen dam, constructed by Shrimaan Maharaja Sir Sayajirao Gaekwad III of the erstwhile State of Baroda. Its waters are mainly used for irrigation, but it is also one of the important wetlands for birds in Gujarat. In 2004, the Union Ministry of Environment and Forests and the Forest Department of Gujarat declared it a Nationally Important Wetland, on the basis of the rich diversity of migratory birds during winter, and also a stable abode for many local birds, and reptiles.

The Black-necked Stork is one of the large storks (Ciconiidae), and is a globally Near Threatened species (BirdLife International 2014). Two races are recognised, *E. a. asiaticus* and *E. a. australis*: the former widely distributed in South and Southeast Asia, the latter having a disjunct population in southern New Guinea, and Australia. The Black-necked Stork feeds characteristically while wading in shallow water pools. It feeds on various species of aquatic invertebrates and vertebrates (Hancock et al. 1992). It is a known obligate carnivore with a diet including water birds (Breeden & Breeden 1982; Verma 2003; Isthiq et al. 2004), fish, amphibians, and reptiles (Sundar & Kaur 2001; Maheswaran & Rahmani 2002; Sundar 2011). In Australia, the Black-necked Stork is known to occasionally feed on marine...
turtle hatchlings (Whiting & Guinea 1999). In India it predates, rarely, on turtle’s eggs (Chauhan & Andrews 2006).

An adult female Black-necked Stork was foraging in a 20–30 cm water, on the opposite side of the reservoir, along with other waterbirds like Northern Shoveller Anas clypeata, Spot-billed Duck A. poecilorhyncha, Common Teal A. crecca, and a small flock of Greylag Geese Anser anser. We saw the stork moved swiftly, and after a few steps, catch a large-sized prey in its beak. It was surprising to see the stork predating on a live turtle, as it seemed too large to swallow. We could see that the stork had some difficulty in controlling the struggling prey. After some effort it was able to restrain the turtle and get a firm grip on it in its beak. Immediately afterwards the stork flew away, along with the prey held firmly in its beak [125], landing on open ground away from the water. Once the prey was absolutely still and had stopped struggling, the stork swallowed it straightaway, with repeated jerks of its beak and head.

This entire episode lasted just a few minutes. The act of flying away from the water, with the turtle, might be a strategy; the stork could have lost its grip on the prey in the process of swallowing it, and it is easier to catch an escaping turtle on ground, than it is in water.

The 8–10 cm sized prey was identified as a juvenile Indian flap-shell turtle Lisssemys punctata, by carefully studying and analyzing the photographs taken during the feeding episode. This turtle is a common freshwater species, and is widely distributed in peninsular India, growing up to a size of 35.0 cm (carapace) (Daniel 2002).

Though this turtle has been recorded as a prey species of the Greater Adjutant Leptoptilos dubius (Sivasubramanian & Bhupathy 1991), this is a first evidence of Black-necked Stork, especially the Ephippiorhynchus a. asiaticus, feeding on a juvenile fresh water turtle. An earlier record of the sub-species, australis, feeding on a turtle Chelodina longicollis, exists from New South Wales, Australia (Glancy 2011).

References


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References


