in the evening at 16:30hrs. We observed three pairs of Green Avadavats feeding on the spikes of tall grasses inside the *nallah* for 10min. Their red beaks and zebra-striped flanks looked beautiful. On our approach, they hid inside the tall grasses for a short time then flew towards the big trees on the eastern side of fields.

Achalgarh: It is about 11km from Mount Abu city and is famous for its Shiva Temple. The open area in front of the temple has some abandoned construction. Lantana bushes and grass cover the rest of the unobstructed ground. At 06:45 hrs we sighted a flock of more than 12 Green Avadavats, flying towards the *Lantana*. At 07:30 hrs, to our amazement we sighted a large flock of 50 Green Avadavats feeding on the ground. On our approach the feeding group broke up in to several smaller flocks, ranging from a pair to more than 10 individuals. We observed their activity till 09:15 hrs by which time the birds gradually and in varied sized flocks, flew towards the patches of semi-evergreen trees around Achalgarh.

The importance of this bird lies in the fact that it is listed as *Vulnerable* in the C1 and C2a categories (C1 = continuing decline in population, C2a = severe fragmentation) (Collar, et. al. 1994). According to Ali and Ripley (1968–1998), the Green Avadavat is very locally and unevenly distributed.

Threats and conservation issues in Mount Abu

Trade is considered a major threat to Green Avadavat (Ahmed 1997, 1998). Owing to its relative fearlessness it can be trapped very easily (Ahmed 1997), and as a result of continued trapping, its populations appear to have been wiped out in certain areas (Bhargava 1996). The second major threat is habitat loss, but due to utilization of broad range of regenerating and open habitats, the species is not thought to suffer from this threat (BirdLife International 2001).

In Mount Abu, habitat loss is the predominant threat to the Green Avadavat. Although construction activities are banned in the sanctuary area, illegal clearing of land takes place. Being a tourist spot, development of hotels and other temporary activities like camping or parking of vehicles near or on the feeding areas of this species, threatens the species. Beside this, unconfirmed reports exist, of killing the bird for traditional medicinal purposes by tribal and local residents of the foothills. The birds are apparently located and stoned to death.

To our astonishment we found that local people are unaware of the rarity of the Green Avadavat. They consider it a common resident of the area and so its status is unimportant to them.

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Puttanahalli Tank, Bangalore (India), and surrounds

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Puttanhalli Tank is a shallow waterbody located on the Bangalore-Hyderabad road, about 16km due north of Bangalore. The site, maintained as part of a nursery by the Karnataka State Forest Department (KSFD), is a veritable bird paradise, the like of which has not been recorded during nearly 200-year ornithological history of Bangalore [as defined by George (1994)]. The tank is basically a shallow basin with an area of 11.89ha. At present, the northern and southern boundaries of the tank have been walled-up by existing residential areas. On its eastern side, the Bangalore-Hyderabad road passes over what was once the main bund of the tank.

Over the last four years, more than 126 bird species belonging to 50 bird families have been recorded at the site (see Annexure), indicating that the site supports over 30 per cent of the bird species recorded in Bangalore (George 1994). Also, this site is an important nesting and roosting site for a large number of waterbirds in Bangalore area (see Annexure). Ten large waterbirds nest on the trees growing on the two islands created by the KSFD. The nesting of Darter *Anhinga melanogaster* and Painted Storks *Mycteria leucocephala* at the site are the first ever records for Bangalore. Several thousand birds including egrets (Ardeidae), herons

(Ardeidae), cormorants (Phalacrocoracidae), ibises (Threskiornithidae) and storks (Ciconiidae) regularly roost on the trees growing on the islands, right through the year. The waterbirds that gather to roost at the site have been observed to fly in from over 10km.

Over the last decade, the KSFD has established a nursery on a narrow strip of land on the northern bank of Puttanahalli Tank. During this period, two islands were created in the Tank and planted over with trees. The main island, which is closer to the road (eastern boundary), has a number of trees including *Acacia auriculiformis*, *Acacia nilotica*, *Albizia* sp., *Anthocephalus chinensis* (Kadamba), *Lagerstroemia flos-reginae*, *Muntingia calabura, Pithecellobium dulce, Santalum album* and clumps of Bamboo *Dendrocalamus strictus*. This island is surrounded by waist-deep water. The second island, located behind the main one, is densely vegetated with bamboo, *A. auriculiformis, Muntingia calabura Pongamia glabra*, *Phoenix sylvestris*, *S. album* and overgrown with *Bougainvillea* sp., and *Lantana camara*. Reedbeds of *Typha* grow in several patches within the tank area. The open area along the water's edge and above the waterline is overgrown with Alligator Weed *Alternanthera philoxeroides*, which supports a mixed colony of nearly 200 Common Coots *Fulica atra* and Purple Moorhens *Porphyrio porphyrio*, both of which actively breed on the dense bed of this emergent weed.

The nursery area, which is a narrow strip of about 15m land located along the northern margin of the tank, is used for growing tree saplings by the KSFD. The nursery has several types of trees like, *Acacia*, *Anthocephalus, Eucalyptus and Muntingia and Teactona grandis.*

As the tank area is being used by the KSFD, it is not accessible to public and as a consequence, the site is totally protected at present. The extent of protection enjoyed by the birds is evident in the shortness of flushing distances recorded for most of the waterbirds found at the site. During evenings when the nursery area is free of human movements, birds like Purple Moorhens have been observed to wander all over the grounds.

Given the diversity of species at Puttanhalli and its attractions for the nesting and roosting of a large number of waterbirds like herons, egrets, cormorants and storks, the site holds a great potential of being developed as a "Bird Refuge". There is an urgent need to preserve the area without altering its ecological structure and value. If properly developed and maintained, Puttanahalli can become an important site for education and research.

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Appendix

Checklist of the birds recorded at Puttanahalli Tank*:

Species observed breeding at Puttanahalli: Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis,* Little Cormorant *Phalacrocorax niger,* Indian Shag *Phalacrocorax fuscicollis* (?), Great Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo,* Darter *Anhinga melanogaster,* Little Egret *Egretta garzetta,* Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea,* Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea,* Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis,* Indian Pond-Heron *Ardeola grayii,* Black-crowned Night-Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax,* Painted Stork *Mycteria leucocephala,* Lesser Whistling-Duck *Dendrocygna javanica,* White-breasted Waterhen *Amaurornis phoenicurus,* Purple Moorhen *Porphyrio porphyrio,* Common Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus,* Common Coot *Fulica atra ,* Red-wattled Lapwing *Vanellus indicus,* Red-vented Bulbul *Pycnonotus cafer,* Streaked Fantail-Warbler *Cisticola juncidis,* Ashy Prinia *Prinia socialis,* Red Munia *Amandava amandava,* Spotted Munia *Lonchura punctulata.*

Residents:** Spot-billed Pelican *Pelecanus philipensis*, Large Egret *Casmerodius albus*, Median Egret *Mesophoyx intermedia*, Chestnut Bittern *Ixobrychus cinnamomeus*, Asian Openbill-Stork *Anastomus oscitans,* Oriental White Ibis *Threskiornis melanocephalus,* Black Ibis *Pseudibis papillosa,* Spot-billed Duck *Anas poecilorhyncha*, Black-shouldered Kite *Elanus caeruleus*, Black Kite *Milvus migrans,* Brahminy Kite *Haliastur indus,* Egyptian Vulture *Neophron percnopterus,* Shikra *Accipiter badius,* Red-headed Falcon *Falco chicquera,* Blue-breasted Rail *Gallirallus striatus,* Bronze-winged Jacana *Metopidius indicus*, Greater Painted-Snipe *Rostratula benghalensis,* River Tern *Sterna aurantia,* Blue Rock Pigeon *Columba livia,* Spotted Dove *Streptopelia chinensis,* Rose-ringed Parakeet *Psittacula krameri*, Brainfever Bird *Hierococcyx varius,* Asian Koel *Eudynamys scolopacea*, Greater Coucal *Centropus sinensis,* Spotted Owlet *Athene brama*, Asian Palm-Swift *Cypsiurus balasiensis,* House Swift *Apus affinis*, Small Blue Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis,* White-breasted Kingfisher *Halcyon smyrnensis,* Lesser Pied Kingfisher *Ceryle rudis*, Small Bee-eater *Merops orientalis,* Indian Roller *Coracias benghalensis*, Common Hoopoe *Upupa epops,* White-cheeked Barbet *Megalaima viridis,* Coppersmith Barbet *Megalaima haemacephala*, Black-shouldered Woodpecker *Chrysocolaptes festivus*, Singing Bush-Lark *Mirafra cantillans,* Skylark *Alauda gulgula,* Wire-tailed Swallow *Hirundo smithii,* Red-rumped Swallow *Hirundo daurica*, Large Pied Wagtail *Motacilla maderaspatensis,* Black-headed Cuckoo-Shrike *Coracina melanoptera*, Red-whiskered Bulbul *Pycnonotus jocosus*, White-browed Bulbul *Pycnonotus luteolus*, Common Iora *Aegithina tiphia*, Rufous-backed Shrike *Lanius schach*, Indian Robin *Saxicoloides fulicata*, Pied Bushchat *Saxicola caprata*, White-headed Babbler *Turdoides affinis*, Plain Prinia *Prinia inornata*, Common Tailorbird *Orthotomus sutorius*, Asian Paradise-Flycatcher *Terpsiphone paradisi*, Great Tit *Parus major*, Tickell's Flowerpecker *Dicaeum erythrorhynchos*, Purple-rumped Sunbird *Nectarinia zeylonica*, Purple Sunbird *Nectarinia asiatica*, Loten's Sunbird *Nectarinia lotenia*, White-throated Munia *Lonchura malabarica*, White-rumped Munia *Lonchura striata*, Spotted Munia *Lonchura punctulata*, Black-headed Munia *Lonchura malacca*, House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*, Streaked Weaver *Ploceus manyar*, Baya Weaver *Ploceus philippinus*, Brahminy Starling *Sturnus pagodarum*, Common Myna *Acridotheres tristis*, Jungle Myna *Acridotheres fuscus*, Black Drongo *Dicrurus macrocercus*, Indian

Treepie *Dendrocitta vagabunda*, House Crow *Corvus splendens*, Jungle Crow *Corvus macrorhynchos*

Migrants:** Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus,* Northern Shoveller *Anas clypeata,* Northern Pintail *Anas acuta,* Garganey *Anas querquedula,* Common Teal *Anas crecca*, Western Marsh-Harrier *Circus aeruginosus,* Common Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*, Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius,* Pintail Snipe *Gallinago stenura,* Common Snipe *Gallinago gallinago,* Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa,* Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis,* Common Greenshank *Tringa nebularia,* Green Sandpiper *Tringa ochropus,* Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola,* Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos,* Little Stint *Calidris minuta,* Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus,* Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybridus,* Indian Pitta *Pitta brachyuran,* Common Swallow *Hirundo rustica,* Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea*, Brown Shrike *Lanius cristatus*, Blyth's Reed-Warbler *Acrocephalus dumetorum*, Booted Warbler *Hippolais caligata*, Greenish Leaf-Warbler *Phylloscopus trochiloides*, Brown Flycatcher *Muscicapa dauurica*, Eurasian Golden Oriole *Oriolus oriolus*, Ashy Drongo *Dicrurus leucophaeus*.

*The names and order of listing follow Manakadan and Pittie (2001);

**Species considered to be residents or migrants in Bangalore area as per George (1994).

Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea* breeding in Kerala, India

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Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea* is found in small numbers in almost all the large wetlands of Kerala. Up to 25 birds have been seen at a time at Kattampally, a major wetland in north Kerala. But here, they are seldom seen during the monsoon, June to August, which is the season when the heronries of the area become active. Ali (1969) states that there is no breeding record of Grey Heron in Kerala, neither are there any recent reports of it breeding here. Grimmet, et al (1998) and Kazmierczak (2000) have given the breeding range of the species only in Andhra Pradesh in south India and Gujarat on the west coast; in the rest of south India, it is a winter visitor. C. P. Sethumadhavan recovered a bird, ringed at Pune (Dr S. Balachandran *pers. comm*.), Maharashtra, at Punnayoorkulam (Thrissur District, Kerala) in 2002.

On 5.vii.2004, while surveying the heronries around Kannur as part of the Common Bird Monitoring Programme of the Malabar Natural History Society, Kozhikode, we chanced upon a breeding colony of the Grey Heron at Koduvally near Thalassery. There were five nests, placed on mangrove trees at the edge of a small islet east of the railway line. The nests were about 3m above the ground, about 0.6m in diameter and 0.3m thick, made of thick twigs. Two chicks each, probably more than two weeks old, were seen in four nests; the contents of the fifth nest were not clearly visible. One adult bird was sitting on guard at each of the nests. Change over of the adult birds was observed a few times; the birds were found foraging in the shallow lagoon around the islet. There was a heronry consisting of 231 nests of Little Cormorant *Phalacrocorax niger* and Indian Pond-Heron *Ardeola grayii* on eight Rain Trees *Samanea saman* and one Gulmohar *Delonix regia* beside NH 17, about 500m from the islet. But none of these birds nested on the mangrove islet.

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Sighting Of Thick-billed Warbler *Phragmaticola aedon*[1] near Panchgani, Maharashtra, India.

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On 30.i.1998, at 10:00hrs, we were bird watching at the Pasarani Ghat near Panchgani. We had stopped to watch raptors, and paid scant attention to the various hard "*tek*" sounds made by scrubland passerines in the low bushes and grasses on the hillside. One sound, however, did seem a little different. It was a loud, solid and low-pitched "*tchak*" coming from low bushes immediately by the roadside. We quickly located the bird, which was hopping confidently through the bushes close to us. Its general shape reminded us of a wren-warbler, mainly because of its short wings and long tail, though it was clearly much larger, about the size of a bulbul. Also the tail was not waved from side to side in the characteristic manner of a *Prinia* species, but was held out straight as the bird made its way steadily along the hillside. We watched it for over 5 minutes at close range. At no time did it fly or show itself for a clear view. Instead, it skulked through the bushes giving partial views in a manner typical of *Acrocephalus* warblers.

In general the bird appeared uniform brown above with a hint of rufous, and with a striking pale brown patch between eye and bill, reaching above the level of the eye but terminating in front of the eye, so that no supercilium as such was formed. There was no wing-bar. Apart from the patch on the lores, the entire upper parts appeared uniform in colour. The breast appeared brownish, though paler than the upper parts. The throat, belly and vent were whitish.

The bill was of medium length and thickness for a warbler, contributing to the overall impression of an outsize wren-warbler rather than the typical long and pointed bill of *Acrocephalus* species. The lower mandible was pale and, the upper appeared mainly dark.