

are scattered records almost throughout India, and these have been collated in the Asian Red Data Book (BirdLife International 2001). There have been several records since 1950 from States neighbouring Andhra Pradesh (Orissa, 2 records; Madhya Pradesh, 1 record; Maharashtra, 5-6 records; Karnataka, 1 record; see also Grimmett et al. 1999, Kazmierczak 2000). In addition, there are two (apparently hitherto overlooked) records from coastal Andhra Pradesh (Rajahmundry and Vishakhapatnam; Kumar 1984).

As a species, the Lesser Kestrel is classified as Vulnerable, having suffered declines in western Europe of about 46% in each decade since 1950, and on its wintering grounds in South Africa of about 25% in each decade since 1971 (BirdLife International 2001). These declines are thought to be caused mainly by habitat change, loss of roost sites, and an increase in the use of pesticides.

Because the two kestrels are easily confused with one another, the number of Lesser Kestrels reported from the Indian subcontinent may be a serious underestimate. If birdwatchers looked more closely at every kestrel they saw, we may be able to form an accurate picture of the abundance of Lesser Kestrels in the region, and of change in their numbers over time.

The Lesser Kestrel we saw, and those seen the previous day, spent most of their time perched on any one of a series of bare concrete poles (c.5 m high) running alongside the jeep track, with

an occasional brief flight away. Visitors to Rollapadu in the winter may wish to spend some time watching these (very distinctive) poles to check whether Lesser Kestrels are regular visitors to the area.

References

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[**Editors' Note:** A picture of the Lesser Kestrel, taken by the author, can be seen on the *New. Ornis.* website. For URL see inside front cover.]

Abnormal nest of the Black-breasted Weaver *Ploceus benghalensis*

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On a Sunday morning in July 1997, a photographer colleague and I planned to go on the Shobhan road (outer area of Kanpur, Uttar Pradesh), in search of birds. We chose this area because an irrigation sub-canal from the Ganges passes through it, making the area rich in vegetation and attracting a variety of birds.

This was the season for nesting so we rode our scooter, searching for birds and their nests. Birds usually drop anchor at the time of nesting, and so they are easily approachable. Luckily we found a warbler's nest containing three eggs. We planned to shoot it after a week, after they had hatched. Further ahead, we saw a boy, staring at the spectacle of two strangers searching for something in bushes; this aroused his curiosity. We rode up to him and inquired whether he had seen any birds' nests nearby, recently? He told us that there were some Baya's nests near the canal, and on

our request he took us to the spot.

On the opposite bank were nests of Black-breasted Weavers *Ploceus benghalensis*. They had amazingly long entrance tubes. It was difficult to get closer to the hanging nests as they stood in water. As soon as the birds saw us, they flew away in a flock, to our great disappointment. We discussed the unusual size and shape of the nests, which we had never seen before. The entrance tube was about a meter in length. This prompted us to wonder as to what could be the reason behind making such long entrance. Perhaps the birds make long entrance tubes to prevent enemies like snakes from entering the nests. We took some shots and moved on.

[**Editors' Note:** A picture of the Lesser Kestrel, taken by the author, can be seen on the *New. Ornis.* website. For URL see inside front cover.]

Recently published

This column contains citations of ornithological publications from around the world, for the political areas of Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Burma, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and Tibet.

PAPERS

FLAMINGO

Bird Conservation Society Gujarat, B-8, Veterinary Staff Quarters, Nr. Jagnath, Anand 388001, Gujarat, India.

ANON. 2003. Flamingos count by the participants of AWC in January

2003. 1 (3&4): 6.

—. 2003. Records of Mallards. 1 (3&4): 7.

—. 2003. Nesting of Caspian Tern at Charakla salt pans. 1 (3&4): 9.

DAVE, Ruchi, Pravinsinh Dodiya, and Jaidev Dhadhal. 2003. Bluefooted Booby on Mahuva coast: A first record for the