

131. Oriental White-eye *Z. palpebrosus*: Hatton.
132. White-rumped Munia *Lonchura striata*: Sinharaja.
133. Black-throated Munia *L. kelaarti*: Sinharaja.
134. Spotted Munia *L. punctulata*: Nuwara Eliya.
135. House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*: Negombo.
136. Sri Lanka Starling *Sturnus albofrontatus*: Sinharaja.
137. Common Myna *Acridotheres tristis*: Countrywide.
138. Sri Lanka Myna *Gracula ptilogenys*: Sinharaja.
139. Southern Hill-Myna *G. indica*: Kitulgala.
140. Black-headed Oriole *Oriolus xanthornus*: Sigiriya.
141. White-bellied Drongo *Dicrurus leucophaeus*: Countrywide.
142. Sri Lanka Crested Drongo *D. lophorhinus**: Sinharaja.
143. Ashy Woodswallow *Artamus fuscus*: Countrywide.
144. Sri Lanka Blue Magpie *Urocissa ornata*: Sinharaja.
145. House Crow *Corvus splendens*: Negombo.
146. Indian Jungle Crow *C. culminatus**: Negombo.

Trip list 2: Butterflies (from Sinharaja)

1. Plum judy *Abisara echerius*.
2. Common albatross *Appias albina*.
3. Angled pierrot *Caleta decidia*.
4. Common tiger *Danaus genutia*.
5. Common crow *Euploea core*.
6. Great crow *E. phaenareta*.
7. Three spot grass yellow *Eurema blanda*.
8. Tailed jay *Graphium agamemnon*.
9. Common bluebottle *G. sarpedon*.
10. Ceylon tree nymph *Idea iasonia*.
11. Common cerulean *Jamides celeno*.
12. Chocolate soldier *Junonia iphita*.
13. Blue oakleaf *Kallima philarchus*.
14. Commander *Moduza procris*.
15. Common bushbrown *Mycalesis perseus*.
16. Common sailor *Neptis hylas*.
17. Gladeye bushbrown *Nissanga patnia*.
18. Common rose *Pachliopta aristolochiae*.
19. Crimson rose *Pachliopta hector*.
20. Red helen *Papilio helenus*.
21. Blue mormon *Papilio polymnestor*.
22. Clipper *Parthenos sylvia*.

23. Red pierrot *Talica nyseus*.
24. Tawny coster *Telchinia violae*.
25. White four-ring *Ypthima ceylonica*.

Trip list 3: Reptiles

1. Green vine snake *Ahaetulla nasuta*: Sinharaja.
2. Green garden lizard *Calotes calotes*: Sinharaja.
3. Painted-lip lizard *Calotes ceylonensis*: Minneriya National Park. Endemic.
4. Common garden lizard *Calotes versicolor*: Sigiriya.
5. Rhino-horned lizard *Ceratophora stoddartii*: Nuwara Eliya. Endemic.
6. Oliver's bronzeback *Dendrelaphis oliveri*: Sinharaja. Endemic.
7. Corrugated water frog *Limnonectes corrugatus*: Sinharaja.
8. Kangaroo lizard *Octocryptis wiegmanni*: Sinharaja. Endemic.
9. Land monitor *Varanus bengalensis*: Sigiriya.
10. Water monitor *Varanus salvator*: Sinharaja.

Trip list 4: Mammals

1. Sri Lanka grey langur *Semnopithecus priam*: Sigiriya. Endemic.
2. Purple-faced leaf monkey *Trachypithecus vetulus*: Sinharaja. Endemic.
3. Toque macaque *Macaca sinica*: Sigiriya. Endemic.
4. Sambar *Cervus unicolor*: Horton Plains.
5. Muntjac *Muntiacus muntjak*: Horton Plains.
6. Ruddy mongoose *Herpestes smithii*: Sinharaja.
7. Fishing cat *Felis viverrina*: Sigiriya.
8. Golden jackal *Canis aureus*: Sigiriya.
9. Indian flying fox *Pteropus giganteus*: Kandy.
10. Ceylon giant squirrel *Ratufa macroura*: Sinharaja/Dry Zone.
11. Dusky striped squirrel *Funambulus sublineatus*: Horton Plains.
12. Layard's squirrel *Funambulus layardi*: Sinharaja.
13. Three-striped palm squirrel *Funambulus palmarum*: Negombo.
14. Indian pipistrelle *Pipistrellus cormandra*: Sigiriya.
15. Leopard *Panthera pardus*: Horton Plains: Scat on road.

Sewree birds

Badruddin Ali

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Badruddin Ali, 1-Amir Apartments, 1st Floor, Opp. Telecom Factory, Deonar, Mumbai 400088, Maharashtra, India. Email: badruddin.ali@gmail.com

As the rains recede and the onslaught of October's heat begins in Mumbai (Maharashtra, India), an amazing change over occurs at Sewree.

Another, buzzing, metropolis starts taking shape. The vast emptiness of algae-covered slush beach starts getting dotted with winged visitors. Flamingos and waders invade the busy metro of Mumbai.

Known initially to a small coterie of birdwatchers and now to an ever-growing number of non-birders, Sewree has gained popularity as a 'flamingo destination'. The Bombay Natural History Society has conducted here a few popular "flamingo watch" camps for the citizens of the city for the past couple of years—a visual treat even to the uninitiated. The label of "Flamingo Bay" though, does no justice to this immensely diverse metro of birds.

Sewree is a cove of marshland protected from the direct lashing of the Arabian Sea. It is partly covered by mangrove and a large expanse of open marsh leading into the sea. The viewing gallery for this splendid gathering of waders is the pier, used by small fisher folk and boats needing repair, also areas near the Colgate factory. Its approach is a turn off the Port Trust road, which comes from Wadala IMAX and goes past the eastern side of Sewree station towards south Mumbai.

The cove receives a lot of effluent from the various factories that surround it. Probably a contributing factor to the algal growth required by the Lesser Flamingoes.

There are mussel collectors at low tide, skiers of the marshes, pushing their marsh boards, searching for their prized commodity.

I have been a regular visitor to Sewree, gazing at the vast marsh in sublime respect and enthusiasm. Over the years there have been fluctuations in the number of species and individuals.

This is a feeding ground for masses of migrants. Some stay, while others use it as a staging ground. Waves of passage migrants coming or leaving on the way to their wintering or breeding areas.

Each species is a character playing its part in the cycle of life on the mudflats.

Lesser Flamingoes *Phoenicopterus minor*, dressed in pink, can at times give the cove a pinkish appearance, balanced on dainty long legs, necks stretched out, beaks filtering the shallow waters for food. Once we watched the bunched group of flamingoes in a tight circle, heads held high, beaks pointed towards the sky, legs tip-toeing to an unheard flamingo beat, in breeding display. On another occasion we were privy to some tender moments, watching a sub-adult who seemed to have his beak locked with an adult's and wouldn't let go; we figured the younger bird was being fed. A number of questions about flamingo behavior arose in our minds. [This is not a question but a statement.]

A few Greater Flamingoes *P. ruber* can be seen taller and whiter than the Lesser, filtering out their preferred food of crustaceans.

Black-tailed Godwits *Limosa limosa*: large birds with long legs and long bill. Clumsy as they move along probing for food in the mangroves or along the waterfront of the receding, oncoming tide or the little rivulets carrying the oozing water back to the sea. Their head and neck jerking like a pneumatic drill as they pull out food from the depths of the squelch. Their formations in the air a treat to watch, striking wing patterns, black tail, and legs in tow extended beyond the tail. Jet planes in formation, zipping across the expanse.

Sand plovers *Charadrius* sp., represented by Lesser *C. mongolus* and Greater *C. leschenaultii*. The stance of a wrestler, head extended wings akimbo, body held parallel to the ground poised to charge their prey; their daintier relatives, the Little Ringed Plovers *C. dubius* will stir the ground with a little shake of the leg and tempt their victim's curiosity.

Little Ringed and Kentish Plover *C. alexandrinus* seem to be passage migrants here, using these grounds as halts on their journeys. The Little Ringed are smartly dressed in their black aprons, white forehead and black hair band. Kentish have white neck collars and a snow-white underbelly, looking like small snowy fluff balls.

Curlew Sandpipers *Calidris ferruginea* and Broad-billed Sandpipers *Limicola falcinellus*, with their down-curved bills, are busily digging on their left and right. With the coming of March, as they ready to take off to their breeding grounds, Curlew Sandpipers blush to a deep brick red, while Broad-billed acquire a crown of stripes.

Terek Sandpipers *Xenus cinereus*, with beaks that are funnily up-curved, pink if the muck allows a glimpse, have yellow legs seemingly uncomfortably placed in the hind part of the body giving their gait a funny waddle.

Curlews *Numenius arquata* and Whimbrels *N. phaeopus*, closely related species, find this squelchy feeding ground paradise. Large birds with long down curved unwieldy beaks that are coordinated dexterously to pull out juicy worms, polychaetes and other arthropods from the depths of the marsh.

Little Stints *Calidris minuta*, perhaps the most numerous of all the waders here and smaller than most, are hunched close to the ground picking away at food at a rapid pace.

Redshanks *Tringa totanus* are usually in good numbers; daddy long legs in bright red, go about their business in a jumpy flirty way. Straight dainty beaks on a well proportioned body.

Greenshanks *T. nebulria*, with green legs and stout dagger like beaks, are slightly bigger than the redshanks. Once I witnessed their unique feeding behavior. Three to four birds lined up near the water line, with heads held low and beaks parallel to the ground, and then they ran a short distance with beaks skimming the surface for food. One of the birds got its beak caught in the muck and tripped head over heels, tumbling a couple of times before recovering.

Grey Plovers *Pluvialis squatarola* and Golden Plovers *P. fulva*, larger denizens of the plover family, are seen in moderate numbers. They are Identified by their black armpits while Golden look more like bright-eyed chickens of nervous temperament.

Avocets *Recurvirostra avosetta* too come here attractively dressed in black and white, dainty up curved beaks scan left and right, skimming the surface to pick off food.

Pintails *Anas acuta* float on the shallow calm waters feeding at will.

Hérons and egrets too find this place attractive, a number of species abound each with their unique wait-and-stab feeding method. The more visible Large *Casmerodius albus*, Intermediate *Mesophoyx intermedia*, Little *Egretta grazetta*, and Reef Herons *E. gularis* sometimes can be caught a mixed feeding community. There are also numerous Green Herons *Butorides striatus* slinking from pool to pool, in their quest for food. Grey Herons *Ardea cinerea* and Purple Herons *A. purpurea* are regular fixtures with their wait-and-watch technique, or seen lazily flying with heavy wing beats. There are many Pond Herons adding to the heron family's numbers.

Then there are the aerial acrobats like the gulls and terns.

The gulls found here are usually Brown- *Larus brunnicephalus* and Black-headed *L. ridibundus*, told apart by the white markings on the 'hands' of the former. They become easier to tell apart as they adorn breeding plumages. The adult black headed in breeding plumage has a very uniform dark brown hood compared to a lighter uneven brownish hood of the brown headed.

Terns are numerous. The small Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybridus* is dainty in flight and fishing habits. Gull-billed Terns *Gelochelidon nilotica* arrive in large numbers. They sometimes have a few Lesser Crested Terns (*Sterna bengalensis*) with them. Then there is the beautiful Caspian Tern *Sterna caspia* with its dagger like stout red bill, perceptibly larger than the rest.

There are always the aerobatic kites looking for that dropped morsel. Handsome Brahminy Kites *Haliastur Indus* in their rufous attire and white aprons do regular rounds.

Ospreys *Pandion haliaetus*, with amazing fishing ability and powerful flight are constant companions. Picking up fish at will from the shallow waters and then sitting on a distant outpost, devouring it in peace.

Lurking on the transmission towers, Peregrine Falcons *Falco peregrinus* bide their time before swooping down on some unfortunate victim. The grace and speed compel you to follow their flight whatever your sensibilities.

As winter fades into summer and temperatures rise, it's time for these migrants to leave for their breeding grounds. Another change is in the offing as all ready themselves for the journey.

There is a sudden urgency in flight. Large groups take to the air zigzagging around the mudflats in a united frenzy. Individuals are seen stretching their wings and performing sudden leaps in the air. Mock battles ensue for territory.

Costumes undergo change.

Lesser Sand Plovers smarten up in a red wash on their breast bordered by a black band. The godwits also turn up in a splash of red. The gulls and terns too undergo changes to their plumages.

So one is witness to breeding plumages and their intermediary stages.

Then slowly as March warmth raises into April heat these colonizers start departing.

Another season seems to be ending leaving behind stragglers, residents and the flamingoes that stay on till the monsoon.

As of now there is a veil of uncertainty hanging over the existence of Sewree bay. The state government has planned a sea link between Sewree and Uran, which is to start where the jetty and marsh are today. How will it affect the bay life? Will the flamingoes still come here? Will the passage migrants get affected? Will the cycle of life on the bay continue unaltered? Questions abound.

P.S: The flamingoes have been late this year (2006) and are still to arrive in numbers though a few have been sighted. This could be due to late breeding in Kachchh, though we have no confirmation on their breeding status this year.

The Sarus Crane *Grus antigone* is on its way out

Lavkumar Khacher

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Lavkumar Khacher, [Please fill in your postal address.] Email: lavkumarkhacher@yahoo.com

In the first International Crane Workshop at Bharatpur, I had been the odd man out, demanding that the Sarus Crane *Grus antigone* should be accorded top priority, where conservation action would be initiated. At that time, everyone else was top beat since there had been the largest ever concentration of nesting pairs in the Keoladeo Ghana National Park (Rajasthan, India). To me this was something not to be exulting about; rather the red lights were blinking to warn of problems ahead. Such large birds as Sarus just cannot nest successfully in close communities since there would be tensions between the adults for space and between the young birds for food to sustain the physical growth needed to reach a height of near six feet within a matter of three months. This concentration would not have mattered had the pairs been nesting successfully and uniformly throughout Sarus country, as they were wont in the mid-1900s. This was unfortunately not happening and the large concentration in the protected wetland was due to the high degree of disturbance outside. Road-side ditches, which until the 1950s invariably had pairs nesting, were being encroached by cultivation, and pairs that traditionally enjoyed total protection in agriculture were denied that secure niche. A farmer-crane interaction with negative overtones had started and the cranes were retreating. I suspect more and more pairs were raising either one chick or

none at all. That they continued to be visible and confiding through the second half of the last century was entirely because Sarus are long lived and no one molested the adult birds—so most birdwatchers were lulled into a false sense of security. However, nesting pairs were interfered with and each year fewer and fewer young birds were being added to the crane population. Few can honestly say they were prepared for the sudden crash. I am not sure there is sufficient concern even today. We have here a repeat of what happened to the vultures.

In Gujarat, there are several areas where, during rains, the highest numbers of nesting pairs have been identified. We are lucky to have keen scientists and amateurs pursuing the fate of the magnificent birds. Unhappily and to the best of my knowledge, apart from much-publicized censuses, the managers of our wildlife do not have any blueprint for future action. What is very urgently needed is to have a very concerted drive to ensure that as many of the nesting pairs as possible are fully protected. Native farmers, on whose lands the pairs nest, should be associated with the entire exercise and, if need be, some form of compensation should be paid for potential and real damage to crops and in appreciation for extending hospitality to the nesting pairs. The large band of enthusiastic amateur birdwatchers in the state too should be