

All the seven island endemics in my yard have close relatives in southern India. The Red-backed Flameback *Dinopium psarodes* is a recent split from the Black-rumped *D. benghalense*. Despite the striking difference in appearance, it sounds the same. Similarly, the Black-capped Bulbul *Rubigula melanicterus* too is a recent split from the southern Indian Flame-throated Bulbul *R. gularis*. Sri Lankan Swallows have all-red underparts, unlike their closely related Red-rumped Swallows *C. daurica*. Sri Lankan Grey Hornbills look so stately compared to their counterparts, the Malabar Gray Hornbills *O. griseus* of the Western Ghats that it's a wonder they were once lumped. The Sri Lanka Hanging Parrot *Loriculus beryllinus* sounds and behaves exactly like the Vernal Hanging Parrot *Loriculus vernalis* of India, but getting to see its red forehead is a challenge because it always seems to be in a great hurry. The staccato call of the Crimson-fronted Barbet *Psilopogon rubricapillus* is reminiscent of a Coppersmith *P. haemacephalus*

on steroids. The Sri Lanka Green Pigeon *Treron pompadora* is a new split from the Pompadour pigeon complex.

The death toll worldwide nears 600,000. It is hard to shake away the blanket of sadness. During nights when I lie awake thinking of my son in faraway Arkansas, or the prospect of being stranded indefinitely in a foreign land, I try to think of one of the great birding moments I have had lately, and keep my mind on it till I fall asleep. Often this strategy works. One night it was a magnificent White-bellied Sea Eagle *Haliaeetus leucogaster* soaring over my balcony with a snake-like eel in its talons, harassed by crows and drongos; another, it was that beautiful White-tailed Tropicbird *Phaethon lepturus* drifting like a fairy over the ocean. Birding helps me get through these dark days. This hobby-turned-profession has brought me joy for four decades, but for the first time, I realize its truly therapeutic value. For that, I am grateful to the birds around us.

–Ragupathy Kannan

## Letter to the Editor

### Indian Peafowl *Pavo cristatus* in Darjeeling Hills, Eastern Himalaya, and Broom-grass harvesting practices

Thapa et al. (2020) compiled high elevation records of the Indian Peafowl *Pavo cristatus* from the Himalayas and the Western Ghats, highlighting the impact of climate change and human disturbance as drivers for the upward altitudinal migration of the species. We would like to add two additional altitudinal records from the Darjeeling Hills, Eastern Himalayas, and present a perception related to broom-grass *Thysanolaena maxima* harvesting practices.

On 14 April 2017, at 1630 h, Aditya Pradhan sighted two female Indian Peafowl perching on a *Macaranga* tree (27.04°N, 88.36°E; c.1,600 m asl), in Takdah Cantonment, Darjeeling; and on 24 March 2019, at 1102 h, Sachin Tamang sighted one male Indian Peafowl in Bagora (26.93°N, 88.33°E; c.2,200 m asl), Darjeeling.

Our interactions with the local community, on both occasions, revealed that the local lowland habitat of the species overlaps with the broom-grass cultivation areas. After the broom-grass is harvested in March-April, the fields are set on fire to maximize yield for the next season. The local community members suggested that this might be one of the reasons for the temporary upward migration of Indian Peafowl. We are grateful to them for sharing their insights and local knowledge. However, further observations are needed to validate this perception.

### Reference

Thapa, A., Singh, A., Pradhan, P. K., Joshi, B. D., Thakur, M., Sharma, L. K., & Chandra, K., 2020. Is the Indian Peafowl *Pavo cristatus* moving higher up in the mountains? *Indian BIRDS* 15 (6): 177–179.

– Aditya Pradhan & Sachin Tamang

Aditya Pradhan, Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and the Environment, Regional Office Eastern Himalaya-Northeast India, NH 10 Tadong, Gangtok 737101, Sikkim, India. E-mail: [adityazoo@live.com](mailto:adityazoo@live.com)  
Sachin Tamang, M. V. Road, Sudhapa Tol, Kurseong 734203, West Bengal, India. E-mail: [tamangsachin@gmail.com](mailto:tamangsachin@gmail.com)