

making our observations. We used binoculars to observe the swallow colony from a distance of 10–12 meters.

We observed House Crows hunting Streak-throated Swallows [271] by ambushing them as the swallows flew back and forth from their nests, rushing after them to catch them. Crows ambushed swallows by perching on pillars of the bridge, a power line, or sometimes on the ground near the colony. We also observed crows hunting swallows in groups as a “pack”, particularly when the swallows were distracted by nest building or repairing. Additionally, House Crows also waited for the adult swallows to leave the nest to feed on the eggs or nestlings. Crows also “trapped” adults in the nest and then use their beaks to injure the swallow or force it to leave, exposing the nest to predation.



271. A House Crow attacking a Streak-throated Swallow nest.

Streak-throated Swallows defend their nests largely by placing them in inaccessible places, along horizontal or vertical walls of bridges and canals. We also observed swallows mob predators by flying around them, making loud noises and dive-bombing them. Documenting these predation strategies and defense mechanisms helps us better appreciate the complex behaviors and survival strategies of birds.

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## Scaly-breasted Munias *Lonchura punctulata* extracting material from feral dog scat

On 14 September 2023, while birding at Silsako Beel wetland (26.14°N, 91.81°E) in Assam, India, we observed a pair of Scaly-breasted Munias *Lonchura punctulata* foraging on the ground. Upon closer examination, we discovered that they were engaged in an unusual behaviour—extracting and nibbling on feral dog scat. We documented our observations using a Nikon D7200 with a 200–500mm telephoto lens and a Canon Powershot SX 540. Initially, both birds were observed delicately nibbling on different pieces of dog scat. The subsequent events were captured on video and can be found in Abraham (2023). One of the birds was observed pulling out a string-like material from the scat [272] after which the pair flew away.



272. Scaly-breasted Munia (left) pulls out a stringy material from the dog scat.

The Scaly-breasted Munia is a granivore with a varied diet such as grass seeds, weeds, algae *Spirogyra*, *Lantana* berries, insects, and even household scraps (Payne 2020). The species uses grassy material as lining of its ball-shaped nest made from grass heads, strips of leaves, and twigs (Payne 2020). Schutez (2005) describes Common Waxbills *Estrilda astrild*, an African Estrildid finch, using carnivore scats as non-structural nesting material, possibly serving as an olfactory deterrent against rodents and other predators. In that study, an in-situ experiment demonstrated an increased success rate of hatchlings in nests where scats were used. It was clear from our observation that the munias were not feeding on the scat but were trying to extract materials from it. We cannot confirm it, but it is our conjecture that the stringy material from the dog scat may have been used as nest material.

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