feathered remains of a peacock suggestive of a meal made possibly by a Leopard *Panthera pardus*. Thrice I put up Himalayan Goral *Naemorhedus goral*, five in all, who gave remarkable displays of glissading down the cliff face and down the knife-edge of a spur at lightning speeds. A sounder of four Wild Boar *Sus scrofa*, when surprised, stood blocking my path and then in a sudden right turn disappeared inside the *bhabbar* grass, grunting their disapproving anger all the while. And one Bonelli's Eagle *Hieraeetus fasciatus* exhibited the power and grace of his steep glide-dive from far above down to its prey in the valley in the flash of an eyelid. One solitary Eurasian Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus* was seen atop a tree that was rooted in a cliff-face in sheer defiance of gravity. And quite unpredictably, every now and then a variety of butterflies – Grass Yellow *Eurema hecabe*, Great Orange Tip *Hebomoea glaucippe*, Indian Cabbage White *Pieris canidia*, Peacock Pansy *Junonia almana*, Common Mormon *Papilio polytes*, and others unknown to me – added to the charms of this two-hour walk.

Having sampled this fraction of Nature's riches of the Shivalik inside the Berwala Bird Safari, I wondered what the Shivalik Development Board (Haryana) mean by "developing" the area to make it more "attractive." They will no doubt spend crores but who has ever enhanced Nat ure's attractions?

Nesting of Western Reef-Egret *Egretta gularis* in the saltpans of G.H.C.L., Dholera

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The Gujarat Heavy Chemical Ltd. (GHCL) saltpans, located on the western coast of the Gulf of Khambhat, near Dholera ($22^0$15'N, $72^0$15'E) are well-known foraging site for both the species of Flamingos (Phoenicopteridae) during the non-breeding season (Jadhav and Parasharya 2004). Various sizes of salt works, spread over a vast area (*c.*40km^2) support a large number of waterbirds throughout the year. During winter this place becomes a heaven for birdwatchers. A large number of Great White Pelicans *Pelecanus onocrotalus*, Eurasian Spoonbills *Platalea leucorodia*, Painted Stork *Mycteria leucocephala*, waders and Gulls and Terns (Laridae) have been recorded here during winter. The Western Reef-Egret *Egretta gularis* is one of the common birds inhabiting the saltpans and the coastal mudflats. During our visit on 8.vi.2004, we found Western Reef-Egret nesting on mangroves within the saltpans.

The Western Reef-Egrets were found nesting on the top of dried mangroves *Avicennia marina* standing within the saltpans. The saltpans were filled with water up to a depth of 15-20cm. The height of the mangrove plants varied from 0.6-1.5m above the water surface. Hence, the nests were very close to water surface. The platform nests were constructed using the thin dried sticks of mangroves. The nests were built on the forked vertical branches. In all, 24 nests were observed on 20 plants (Table-1). One nest was found on a 1.5m mangrove and was close to the road. There were three light sky blue eggs in it. No chick was present in any of the nests. Both forms (Grey and White) of the Reef-Egret were present in this heronry, however the proportion of nesting birds showed dominance of grey forms (22) compared to two white forms. Along with Reef-Egrets, two nests of Little Cormorant *Phalacrocorax niger* were also recorded on the same vegetation of which one was along with nests of Reef-Egrets.

The Western Reef-Egrets are generally recorded nesting at the height of 5 to 15m or some time even at the height of about 2m from the ground, on forked vertical branches of trees. *Avicennia* is one of the plants used for building their nests in the coastal region (Parasharya & Naik, 1988, Hancock & Kushlan 1984). However, nesting at such a low height is recorded for the first time. Unlike other heronries on large trees, (Parasharya and Naik 1988) the mangroves supported less number of nests (1-4 nests per plant) due to their small canopy size.

The entire area was dominated by the mangroves *Avicennia marina* and Seepweed *Suaeda nudiflora.* No other tall plants were present in the surrounding area; hence the mangroves were the only plants available as nesting substratum. As the nests were built within the inundated saltpans, they were not approachable by any terrestrial predator. The saltpans having the heronry were close to the seacoast. Hence a large numbers of mudskippers (*Boleophthalmus* sp.) were found in the mudflats, which formed the staple food of nesting Reef-Egrets (Ali and Ripley 1983). The

Table 1. Nests of Western Reef-Egret on the *Avicennia*, in GHCL Saltpans

No.	*Avicennia*		Nests of Western Reef-Egret / *Avicennia* Plant								Other bird nesting	
	Height (m)	No.	Single		Two		Three		Four		Species	No. of nests
			G	W	G	W	G	W	G	W		
1	0.6-0.7	17	14	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
2	1.18	2	0	0	0	0	2	1	4	0	Little Cormorant	1
3	1.5	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total		20	24								2	

G = Grey form of Western Reef-Egret occupying the nest. W= White form of Western Reef-Egret occupying the nest.

Western Reef-Egret might have taken up the advantage of these factors and made the nests on the mangroves in the Saltpans at such a low height. This heronry is an addition to the known nesting sites of the Indian Western Reef-Egret (Naik and Parasharya 1988; Subramanya 1996).

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A sight record of the Cinereous Vulture *Aegypius monachus* near Mysore, Karnataka, India

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On 20.i.2002 while on a visit to the Krishnarajasagar Reservoir ($12^0$24'N, $76^0$26'E) to conduct waterfowl census, a Cinereous Vulture *Aegypius monachus* was observed at 11:00hrs near Basavapatna village close to the banks of the Lakshmanathirtha River. The Krishnarajasagar Reservoir covers an area of 125km^2 at full level and is situated 18km north of Mysore city. It is strategically located at the confluence of three rivers, the Kaveri, the Hemavathi and the Lakshmanathirtha and across the Mysore and Mandya districts of southern Karnataka.

The bird had a large wingspan, completely dark body and underwing when it was first observed in flight, and was quite distinct from the other common but smaller species of vultures that occur in the area. The White-backed Vulture *Gyps benghalensis* and the Long-billed Vulture *Gyps indicus* have contrasting flight feathers and coverts in the wing, more strikingly so in *G. benghalensis*. The King Vulture *Sarcogyps calvus* is much smaller and has a dark underwing but white on breast and on thighs along with white line on the underwing differentiates it from the larger *Aegypius monachus*.

After a while, the bird settled on a tall *Albizzia lebbeck* tree at a height of about six meters. I could then discern a completely dark brown body. Head appeared somewhat triangular, dark with pinkish naked areas on the forehead and behind the ear. A black 'ruff' was clearly visible as mentioned in the *Handbook* (Ali and Ripley 1987). The beak was slaty grey generously tipped black and feet were white in colour. The bird was thus a Cinereous Vulture, possibly a juvenile. Ali and Ripley (1987) do not give a description of the juvenile of the species but only of the immature phase whereas the description in Grimmett et al. (1998) suffices for confirming that the bird observed to be a juvenile Cinereous Vulture. The surrounding area was open, dry stony country with some dryland cultivation and a few scattered trees.

The Cinereous Vulture is recorded as a "Rare and sparse winter visitor to Sind, NW and northern India (including Nepal), Kutch, N. Gujarat and central India, south to about the latitude of Dhulia in Khandesh (*c*.21^{0}N)," (Ali and Ripley 1987). Recent reports of the birds in south India are from Andhra Pradesh (Choudhury 1990), Kerala (Kumar 1991) and Tamil Nadu (Perennou and Santharam 1990). Subramanya (2001) reports this bird from Karnataka for the first time from Harangi Dam in the Coorg district. This sighting is the second from Karnataka and the location is close to that reported for the bird by Subramanya (2001).

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[**Editors' Note:** Perennou & Santharam (1990) reported the bird from the Nelapattu Bird Sanctuary in southern Andhra Pradesh and not in Tamil Nadu.]