

observation is the only confirmed documentation of Black-faced Bunting from the region between Nepal and Ladakh and the first record from Punjab, India.

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On the breeding of the Indian Thick-knee *Burhinus indicus* in Aravalli Biodiversity Park, Delhi, India

The Indian Thick-knee *Burhinus indicus* is a widely distributed bird species across the Indian subcontinent, typically inhabiting open dry fields, grasslands, thorn forest, scrubby riverbeds, often favouring chalky soil, bare ground or grasslands for breeding (Grimmett et al. 2011; Rasmussen & Anderton 2012). It is characterized by its prominent yellow eyes, long yellowish legs, and a stout, slightly upturned yellow and black bill and a cryptic brownish plumage with streaks providing effective camouflage. Existing literature has described key elements of its breeding behaviour such as nest site selection, often in open ground or under sparse cover (Stuart Baker 1935; Ali & Ripley 1987; Sangha 2021), typical clutch sizes and egg morphology (Stuart Baker 1935), and the biparental nature of chick rearing (Ali & Ripley 1987), while Stuart Baker (1935) reported only female incubates. However, despite these contributions, detailed accounts of the full breeding cycle of the Indian Thick-knee, particularly the incubation period, remain conspicuously absent from documented studies. However, the Indian Thick-knee apparently shares several aspects of its breeding behaviour with the Eurasian Thick-knee *B. oedicnemus* (Hume & Kirwan 2020), with which it was once considered conspecific (Rasmussen & Anderton 2012). The species is a resident in the Delhi region, found in a variety of open habitats, including semi-arid areas, scrubland, and even within urban limits (Vyas 2019).

We documented the breeding of Indian Thick-knee at Aravalli Biodiversity Park (28.539°–28.573° N, 77.143°–77.165° E), Delhi, a restoration site in a city, c.2.8 sq. km in size, situated between urban centres of Vasant Vihar and Vasant Kunj in Delhi. This area was once mined, and its barren landscape was dominated by invasive flora such as *Prosopis juliflora*, *Lantana camara*, and *Leucaena leucocephala*, with some remnant native Aravalli species like *Acacia leucophloea*, *Capparis decidua*, *C. sepiaria*, and *Adhatoda vasica*. In 2004, the Centre for Environmental Management of Degraded Ecosystems (CEMDE), University of Delhi, initiated a significant ecological restoration drive of the area under a collaborative program with the Delhi Development Authority (DDA). Subsequently, more diverse vegetation types, including scrub forest, dry deciduous forest, grassland, and shrubland, were established.

MRK photo-documented the breeding of the Indian Thick-knee. Utmost care was taken to ensure the safety and well-being of the birds, following the *Indian BIRDS* nesting biology guidelines (Barve et al. 2020). All applicable guidelines and ethical considerations for wildlife photography were strictly adhered to throughout the study. Observations and photographs were captured from a safe distance (9–10 m) using binoculars and a telephoto lens, without causing undue disturbance to the nesting birds, their nest, or eggs. Morning and evening times were also avoided as feeding was maximum at these times. Most of the observations took place during 1100–1130 h and 1500–1530 h. The nest location was clearly marked and monitored periodically (every 4–5 days) [186]. Nest characteristics, including dimensions and surrounding vegetation within a 5 m radius, were documented, and the dimensions of the nest were estimated visually from a distance of 9–10 m. Observations on parental behaviour, incubation period, hatching, chick development, and post-hatching movements were recorded. The ambient temperature of the area during our study was around 44°C. The exact coordinates of the nest location are not mentioned here.



186. Nesting site of Indian Thick-knee at Aravalli Biodiversity Park, Delhi.

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The first Indian Thick-knee was observed on 05 May 2024, while its nest was found on 06 May 2024 under an *Acacia leucophloea* tree located in an undisturbed corner of the park [187]. The nesting site also included sparse *Carissa spinarum* and *Capparis sepiaria* shrubs. The nest was a scrape on the ground, lined with a thin layer of humus, leaves, dry flowers, and small twigs, after the bird, apparently, cleared c.1.5 cm of leaf litter. The nest measured c.25–30 cm in length, 15–20 cm in width, and a few centimetres in depth.

Two pale white eggs with irregular dark brown patches, providing effective camouflage against the nest background,

were observed in the nest [188]. The eggs were broad at one end and pointed at the other, consistent with descriptions in Ali & Ripley (1987). Even upon approaching the nest to c.10m, the bird tends to leave the nest and move 8–12 m away to join its mate or move in the opposite direction, displaying distraction behaviour by sometimes pretending to sit at a different spot. Conversely, when the observer remained still at a distance, the mate would approach and sit on the nest, indicating shared incubation duties by both parents.



187. Incubating eggs by one of the parents.



188. Two eggs of Indian Thick-knee.

The first chick hatched on 30 May, and the second on 31 May 2024, indicating an incubation period of c.25 days, which aligns with the 24–27 days range reported for the Eurasian Thick-knee (Nadeem et al. 2014). The hatchlings were initially underdeveloped with minimal feathering [189]. The first chick appeared to develop feathers slightly faster than the second. The bird stayed with the chicks in the nest for the first two days post-hatching before relocating themselves c.12 m away under a *Carissa spinarum* plant within the same area. Both parents were observed monitoring the chicks from c.4 m. Three days later, the family moved again to the adjacent forest area, c.100 m away from the nest site within the park. The family was not monitored after they moved into the forest to avoid disturbing the parenting.

The observed parental care, with both parents participating in incubation and chick-rearing, is a characteristic behaviour of the species. The vegetation surrounding the nesting site, including species like *Flueggea leucopyrus*, *Capparis sepriaria*, *Ziziphus nummularia*, *Carissa spinarum*, *Ehretia laevis*, *Grewia tenax*, *Calotropis procera*, and various herbs and grasses, is relatively similar to its well-documented nesting habitats (Sangha 2021). Incubation period of the Indian Thick-knee has not been reported yet and, unsurprisingly, we found it to be similar to that of the Eurasian Thick-knee.



189. Chicks of Indian Thick-knee.

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An Icterine Warbler *Hippolais icterina* from the Union Territory of Ladakh: An addition to the South Asian avifauna

In the middle of September 2025, I accompanied a small group of birders including Sheela Panwar, Harshil Sharma, Milind Gogte, Jyotsna Gogte and Sunil Unni to explore passage migrants in Ladakh. Rigzin, Nubu and Nawang Gyatso were also accompanying us as guides cum drivers.

On 13 September 2025, we set out for Kakstet (33.767°N, 78.600°E) for our target birds, the Tibetan Partridge *Perdix*