

ZAFAR FUTEHALLY

17/1
196

2205, Oakwood Apartments,
Jakkasandra Layout,
Koramangala 3rd Block,
8th Main,
BANGALORE - 560 034.

Tel : 553 3684

January 16, 1996

Mr. Aasheesh Pittie,
8-2-545,
"Prem Parvat",
Road No 7,
Banjara Hills,
HYDERABAD 500 034.

My dear Aasheesh,

I am sending you Volume XVIII of 1978 of the Newsletter for Bird Watchers to enable you to make the index. After this is returned to me I will send you further issues. It is wonderful that you have undertaken to do this.

With best wishes,

Yours sincerely,

ظفر فتح کلی

ZAFAR FUTEHALLY

M.O. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

M.O.N.

Date

To (Sender's Name & Address)

Newsletter for Birdwatchers



11/2/96

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AASHEESH PITTIE

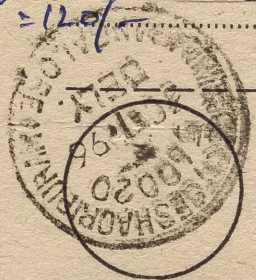
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Zafar Futehally

2205 Oakwood, 8th Main,
3rd Block, Koramangala,
BANGALORE - 560 034

A
24/3
86

Tele.No: 5533684

15th March 1996

Mr. Aasheesh Pittie,
8-2-545 "Prem Parvat",
Road No.7,
Banjara Hills,
HYDERABAD - 500 034

My dear Aasheesh,

I have sent you the 1970 bound volume of the Newsletters today by courier. I am afraid a couple of issues are missing.

When I get back this volume I will send you another one. I am passing the word around to some of my friends to get the missing numbers, and I hope I will be successful.

Yours sincerely,

B. Sharan
for Zafar Futehally

20 March, 1996

Mr. Zafar Futehally
2205 Oakwood Apartments
Jakkasandra Layout
Koramangala
3rd Block 8th Main
Bangalore 560034

Dear Mr. Futehally,

I have just received vol. 36 no. 1 (1996) of the *Newsletter* and would like to make a small clarification about the note **Red data book for the birds of Asia**, on page 17. I would be glad if you could publish the following text in the next issue of the *Newsletter*.

“ This is a clarification on the note published on p. 17 of vol. 36 no. 1 of this *Newsletter*, regarding the Red-data book for the birds of Asia. For this work, the Indian region has been divided into various zones and persons given the responsibility of collecting data on candidate species from these zones. These data will be sent to a national coordinator (here SACON) where they will be compiled for further action. Dr. S. Subramanya (Bangalore) and I have been assigned the Deccan Peninsula region. We have already mailed a set of questionnaires, list of candidate-birds, etc., to all subscribers of the *Newsletter* and have received replies from a few of them. Persons wishing to contribute for the Deccan Peninsula region are welcome to write to me for forms. Those with notes from the other zones eg., coasts, N.E. India, etc., should write to **The Director, SACON, Kalampalayam P.O., Coimbatore 641010** for forms / directions. Needless to say, total cooperation and a quick response are essential for the success of this gigantic project. The first reports are to be filed with the National Coordinators in November 1996 !”

With best wishes to you and Mrs. Futehally,

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'S. Subramanya', written in a cursive style.

Aasheesh Pittie
8-2-545 "Prem Parvat", Road No. 7, Banjara Hills, Hyderabad 500034. India.
Phone: Off: 040-3320269 Fax: 040-314064 Res: 040-315683

8 May, 1996

Mr Zafar Futehally
2205 Oakwood Apartments
Jakkasandra Layout
3rd Block, 8th Main
Bangalore 560034

Dear Mr. Futehally,

The modus-operandi for collecting information on candidate species for the Asian Red Data Book project has changed slightly. Now, instead of Zonal-coordinators, species-compilers have been appointed to compile data on selected species.

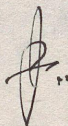
I will compile notes for the following six species.

1. Sykes's Crested Lark *Galerida deva*.
2. Malabar Crested Lark *Galerida malabarica*.
3. Forest Owlet *Athene blewitti*.
4. Broadtailed Grassbird *Schoenicola platyura*.
5. Brownwinged Kingfisher *Pelargopsis amauropterus*.
6. Brownbreasted Flycatcher *Muscicapa muttui*.

I request readers of the Newsletter to send me their notes and observations on these species as soon as possible, since a first draft has to be submitted in November 1996. Needless to say, all contributions will be acknowledged in the final printed volume.

Thanking You,

Yours sincerely



Aasheesh Pittie
8-2-545 "Prem Parvat", Road No. 7, Banjara Hills, Hyderabad 500034. India.
Phone: Off: 040-314064 Res: 040-315683

11 June, 1996

Mr. Zafar Futehally
2205 Oakwood Apartments
Jakkasandra Layout
Koramangala
3rd Block 8th Main
Bangalore 560034

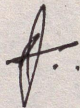
Dear Mr. Futehally,

I would be extremely grateful if the following could be published under the "Announcement" column of the *Newsletter*, if thought fit.

"Copies of the recently published A BIBLIOGRAPHIC INDEX TO THE ORNITHOLOGY OF THE INDIAN REGION, PART I, compiled by Aasheesh Pittie, are available for sale with the author at the following address. Aasheesh Pittie, 8-2-545 Road No. 7, Banjara Hills, Hyderabad 500034. This publication covers *Stray Feathers* (1873-1881), volumes 1-10 and *Journal of the Bombay Natural History Society* (1886-1993), volumes 1-90. Price in India, Rs. 150 plus Rs. 13 for postage (Registered Parcel). Mode of payment M.O., D.D. (payable at Hyderabad) or Cheque (Rs. 10 extra for outstation cheques)."

Thanking You,

Yours sincerely



14 September, 1996

Mr. Zafar Futehally
2205 Oakwood
Jakkasandra, 8th Main
Koramangala
BANGALORE 560034

Dear Mr. Futehally,

As per your request over the phone, enclosed are photocopies of 5 papers/notes pertaining to the Munnar region. There is one more citation which you might be interested in, for which I do not have the relevant *Journal*, 40(3): 500-507.

There must surely be more references for the area, but their titles may not contain the word 'Munnar' and so they have not been indexed.

If there is anything more I can do, please do not hesitate - do let me know.

With best wishes,

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Zafar Futehally', written in a cursive style.

encl : 9/9

Zafar Futehally

2205 Oakwood, 8th Main,
3rd Block, Koramangala,
BANGALORE - 560 034

J
3/9
8

Tele.No: 5533684

25th September 1996

Mr. Aasheesh Pittie,
8-2-545 "Prem Parvat",
Road No.7,
Banjara Hills,
HYDERABAD - 500 034

My dear Aasheesh,

Many thanks for your letter of
14th September 1996. I will make use
of the enclosures.

Yours sincerely,

BS Rosario
J Zafar Futehally

Zafar Futehally

2205 Oakwood, 8th Main,
3rd Block, Koramangala,
BANGALORE - 560 034

Tele.No: 5533684

7th October 1996

Mr. Aasheesh Pittie,
8-2-545 "Prem Parvat",
Road No.7,
Banjara Hills,
HYDERABAD - 500 034

Dear Aasheesh,

We had a nice Seminar in Munnar
and thank you again for the information
you sent. I enclose a bibliography which
may be of use to you.

Yours sincerely,

B. Futehally
Zafar Futehally

Encl: Bibliography.

27 October, 1996

Mr. Zafar Futehally
2205 Oakwood Apartments
Jakkasandra Layout
Koramangala
3rd Block, 8th Main
Bangalore 560034

Dear Mr. Futehally,

I am enclosing the review on the Sultanpur book, as requested. Since it is the first review I have ever written, it is bound to have 'things' in it which shouldn't be there. I have not seen references appended to a review earlier (though I have done it in mine), but I do not know how else I could substantiate the records which I quote in the text. If necessary, please do use the editor's prerogative !

Also enclosed is the latest volume of our newsletter *Mayura* (vol. 11 1994) for your perusal. Please let me have your comments and observations and is it appropriate to, either review it or make a mention of it, in the *Newsletter*?

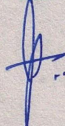
I will send a note shortly, on the Blackbreasted Weaver *Ploceus benghalensis* nesting in Hyderabad area, for the *Newsletter*. The interesting point about this note is not just the nesting of the birds (which extends their breeding range), but the plumage of the males. They have got white faces (to put it crudely) vis-à-vis the brown-faced birds illustrated and described in our reference books ! Some preliminary research has revealed that a couple of authors, Jerdon and also Oates (over a hundred years ago!) have described this plumage. But why have subsequent works (the Handbook and also the Fauna!) ignored it completely ? Exciting possibilities tempt us! New sub-species (!?) being the most fantastic. Perhaps it is just a forgotten plumage. It will take some time before any conclusion can be reached. (Specimens have been sent to the bird room at BNHS and have been seen by Mr. Abdulali). In the meantime, birdwatchers in the country can keep their binoculars handy !

Since a week, there is suddenly, an influx of birds in the garden. Paradise flycatchers, a flashy blueheaded rock thrush (!), the ethereal music of Tickell's blue flycatchers, grey and whitebellied drongos, and just now, as I write and glance out of the window, a booted eagle, riding thermals between here and the airport, parrying dives by a pariah kite, miraculous and enigmatic in its appearance, spreading gladness in the heart that the world still ticks to a mysterious clock, the rhythm of whose pendulum is unfathomable ! I would that 'conferences' were made of these more than anything else.

Tried to convince Sridhar to come too, in the larger interest of things, but without success. I can very well imagine his chagrin at being dumped so unceremoniously by Vijayan. Rather ironic isn't it, the conference is supposed to coalesce into a cooperative organization between various 'factions' of the birding community of India - a BirdLife International 'Partner', if you please. Shades of things to come ? It might be prudent to wait and watch what emerges. Hope to meet you at Coimbatore !

With best wishes,

Yours sincerely



encl. mss. of review of Kalpavriksh's Sultanpur book and a copy of *Mayura* vol. 11.

REVIEW - SMALL AND BEAUTIFUL: SULTANPUR NATIONAL PARK

PUBLISHED BY KALPAVRIKSH, NEW DELHI

Price : Rs. 40/- Paperback

Aasheesh Pittie

In today's world, bent upon the chimera of economic development at all costs, residents of cities with wilderness areas within a stone's throw, are indeed blessed and lucky. Blessed because of the proximity of Nature's bounty. Blessed because of the role which such an area plays as a unit of the universe, within the 'local' ecology, benefiting them in mysterious incomprehensible ways (very few people appreciate this fact or even realize it exists). Blessed because they have the special responsibility of nurturing and safeguarding (against 'enlightened' development) an open universal university for future generations where can be found *Tongues in trees, books in the running brooks, sermons in stone, and good in everything*. Lucky because many city dwellers do not have a wilderness area 'attached' to their cities. Lucky because of the opportunities which such areas open up for recreation, education, tourism, etc. In this sense, the residents of Delhi are twice-blessed. They have the Ridge and they have Sultanpur *Jheel*.

The book under review, is published by Kalpavriksh, with an aim to make the reader realize that even tiny 'protected' areas like Sultanpur, harbor a bewildering and fragile diversity of life which "need to be sensibly managed and treated with respect by the visiting public." It comprises of 69 pages of text (including 5 Appendices and a Fact Sheet), a contents page, a title page, 3 maps, 19 black and white photographs and numerous delightful line drawings by Pratibha Pande. Several people are credited for having helped with this book, but the main work has been done by Ghazala Shahabuddin, Ranjit Lal and Pratibha Pande.

Though the book is heavily weighted with bird-related data, there are chapters on Sultanpur's flora, other animals found in the area (mammals, reptiles, fish, amphibians and insects), and one devoted to the future of the *jheel*, mainly dealing with management aspects relating to internal as well as external phenomena and problems. The Appendices comprise of lists of plants (Appendix 1), mammals (App. 2), birds (App. 3), reptiles and amphibians (App. 4) and butterflies (App. 5). As a general reference work on the ecology of the *jheel*, aimed at a target audience of the lay 'uninformed' public, the information given in the book is ample and well presented. The write-ups are snappy, descriptive and lyrical (almost like a film commentary at times !), creating exquisite verbal vignettes of the ecology of this area. The line drawings (what good are such books without pictures!) enliven the text on almost every page. Three cheers for Pratibha Pande's artwork ! (Indeed the *Newsletter* could benefit from her skills if she is approached by the editor, to sketch birds for future issues !) The photographs however, are of poor quality. Sharper pictures with better contrast should have been used (perhaps keeping the sale price as low as possible was the constraint on the publishers). A set of three habitat shots (pps. 10,

19, 21), depicting the change of seasons, is a good idea. The year of publication is not mentioned. The weakest link of the book is its binding which gives way no sooner the book is opened !

It is perhaps a fitting tribute to the diversity, beauty and visibility of our avian friends, and their resulting popularity among humans, that data and text of the bird sections comprises almost half of the book ! A chapter called 'Birds of the Season' describes a full bird-year in the national park, with many anthropomorphic (please note that this is what the general public likes to read!) observations of bird behavior. Some (rare) liberties (poetic license?) have also been taken with (a) bird descriptions, e.g., Lesser Whitethroats are "small off-white birds, with light gray caps" (p. 12), and (b) bird behavior, e.g., feeding behavior of Shovellers, "they share their time between foraging comically (bottoms up and twirling slowly!)...." (p. 12), vis-à-vis the commoner method of dabbling and sifting in shallow water, swinging bill from side to side on the surface. Another chapter, "Sultanpur Specialities" deals with 5 species of birds, Flamingo, Blacknecked Stork, Sarus Crane, Osprey and Sirkeer Cuckoo. The authors lament the decline in the number of the flamingos over the years, confessing that "the exact reasons for this are not known" (p. 24). Perhaps the answer lies in the following quote, recording the changes which have taken place after 'active management' of the *jheel* commenced by maintaining water levels artificially with the help of pumped water from bore wells. "The result of this activity has been to convert a seasonal saline wetland into a perennial fresh one. There has been a corresponding alteration in the avifauna, with a reduction in use by flamingos *Phoenicopterus* and an increase in pelicans *Pelecanus*. Use of the area by ducks has switched from mainly roosting, towards use for feeding. Cormorants *Phalacrocorax* and egrets use the trees for breeding (egrets used to breed in one of the other *jheels*, but that colony was abandoned after drainage). On the other hand, the long grass that extends right to the water precludes the use of the water for drinking by sandgrouse *Pterocles* and the large flights seen formerly no longer appear. Shorebirds of open shorelines (e.g. Temminck's Stint *Calidris temminckii*) have been replaced by those of wet meadows (e.g. Green Sandpiper *Tringa ochropus*)." (Gaston 1994, cautioning against 'active management', resulting in the loss of indigenous ecosystems.).

The list of birds observed in and around the *jheel* in the National Park, during a monthly census by Kalpavriksh members, over a period of 9 years, is an impressive tally of 247 species, listed in Appendix 3 (pps. 49-63), along with their status and frequency of sightings. A review of literature reveals that in the past various authors have reported lists of more than 250 species (Kothari 1988) and around 300 species (Lal 1991) from here. The value and veracity of the present list notwithstanding, inclusion of sightings over the years by other observers would have made the exercise more complete and comprehensive. It would also have served as a litmus of change in the avifauna and environmental status of the *jheel's* area under development pressures (which should be a useful tool for administration and management decisions). Sightings like Whitetailed Sea Eagle on 12-12-1974 (Slater 1974), Whitebellied Heron on 4-4-1976 (Futehally 1976), and Rednecked Phalarope on 6-12-1980 (Jay 1981)

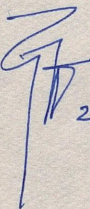
Checklist of The Birds of Delhi,

↳ *Agra and Bharatpur* by Humayun Abdulali and Jamshed D. Panday (1978) (A & P), though not strictly pertinent to the area, reveals some interesting statistics. A & P compiled a list of 434 species and sub-species for the Delhi area, of which 111 were reported from Delhi only (not Agra and Bharatpur). Of these latter, 28 were doubtful and required further confirmation. Of these 111 birds, the present work records 23 from Sultanpur. Some 'observations' on the list are: The Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus* is missing. However Lesser Kestrel *F. naumanni* is reported as a migrant. A & P's checklist does not list the latter. So is the case with Spotted Sandgrouse *Pterocles senegallus*, which is listed as a migrant and was seen thrice by the authors. Does *P. exustus* really not exist in the area? It is rather surprising that nightjars *Caprimulgus* have not been recorded and neither has been the Iora *Aegithina tiphia*. A couple of prominent typos are a repetition of "Family *Pelecanidae*: Pelicans" on p. 62, amidst the wagtails, and, the caption for the first sketch on p. 20, which should read "Blackwinged Stilt....".

All in all, besides being the information-packed, low-priced booklet that it is, it carries an important message for 'informed' readers. It illustrates what can be achieved by the long-term study of an ecosystem. Diligence, persistence and cooperation among bird-watchers and wildlifers (mainly amateurs) has produced a substantial 'first' document of the ecology of a 'local' area, the Sultanpur National Park. A document which will be useful in every future study of the *jheel* and its vicinity. A document which shows how such studies could be done by birdwatchers individually or organised as 'societies' throughout the country, willing to shoulder the special responsibility of nurturing and safeguarding (against 'enlightened' development) an open universal university for future generations.

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- Futehally, S. (1976): A day at Sultanpur. NLBW 16(7): 1-3.
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Lal, Ranjit (1991): Sultanpur: jheel of many parts. SANCTUARY 11(2): 34-39.
Slater, R.E. (1978): An additional record of the Whitetailed Sea Eagle *Haliaeetus albiilla* (Linnaeus) in north-western India. JBNHS 74(3): 526.

 28-X-1996

approximately 1500 words.

Address for correspondence: 8-2-545 Road No. 7, Banjara Hills, Hyderabad 500034.

2205 OAKWOOD
Bangalore 560034

13-11-96

Dear Rashid,

Many thanks for the Review of
Sultampur. It is very good, but
I hope you don't mind if I cut-out
the first para. This will make the piece
more effective.

Thank you also for Myura. I
will refer to it in the Nov/Dec issue.

Can you write me a note
on PASOC for the Jan/Feb 97 issue
of NHBW. Plenty of time.

Good health to your family
in 1977

Zohar
yohk
eb