

PITTA



Bulletin of the Birdwatchers' Society of Andhra Pradesh

No. 147: July 2003

Donations to the Society are exempt from tax u/s 80G(5)(vi) of I.T. Act, 1961.

PROGRAMME

FIELD OUTING: Members willing to take passengers may please contact the following: Shafaat Ulla (23353098) or Siraj Taher (55612608). Seats may be available in members' cars and will be reserved on a first-come-first-served basis. Book early to avoid disappointment.

Sunday, 27-vii-2003: Chilkur Deer Park, Rangareddi District: Route: Mehdiapatnam – Artillery Centre Golkonda – on Vikarabad road. Members are requested to reach the destination by 7.00am. This will be a half-day trip. Carry water and snacks. For further information contact Siraj Taher (55612608) or Shafaat Ulla (23353098) before 11am or after 4pm.

INDOOR MEETING: 21-vii-2003, 6pm: Talk and discussion on members' visit to Rollapadu Bustard Sanctuary, by Mr. S. Ashok Kumar. Vidyaranya High School, Opp., Secretariat, Saifabad, Hyderabad.

EDITORIAL

Two developments that occurred in May and June this year auger well for the Society. Sometimes shock therapy wakes up people as nothing else can. Well, this time it happened to the BSAP. The announcement of discontinuation of the monthly Indoor Meetings, owing to poor attendance jolted the members. There was a plethora of comments like "How sad, at least once a month we used to meet – now we cannot do that – how sad" from a very enthusiastic and regular lady member of long standing. While one member was unhappy that instead of "putting our heads together and finding a solution, we have resorted to the 'easy way out'", another was angry – "A thin bulletin (PITTA) once a month and a journal (MAYURA) once a year is not what I would like". Some took it in their stride, but two members came forward and took up the challenge, promising to do their best to put the Indoor Meetings back on the BSAP calendar of events.

The other was the way people rose to meet the challenge of the financial problems that the Society was facing. While there was a generous donation from one member, BSAP received a welcome increase in the corporate membership. In fact, it went up 20 times! The Singareni Collieries Education Society has made 17 schools and 2 colleges under them as our corporate members. The Singareni Collieries Company Ltd. (SCCL) has drawn up a plan to tie up with BSAP to impart education in nature and environmental studies to these schools. Now it is up to us to rise to the occasion and do the best that is required to educate these young people to the best of our knowledge, experience and ability. How we can do it would justify the confidence and expectations that the SCCL has placed on us.

NOTES & NEWS

HAPPENINGS OF THE SOCIETY - FIELD TRIP TO SANJIVAYYA PARK 22-06-2003

By Humayun Taher

The first cool bite of the monsoon was in the air when the members of the Birdwatchers Society of A.P. gathered at Sanjivayya Park on the morning of 22 June for the field trip. It turned out to be a fairly good one.

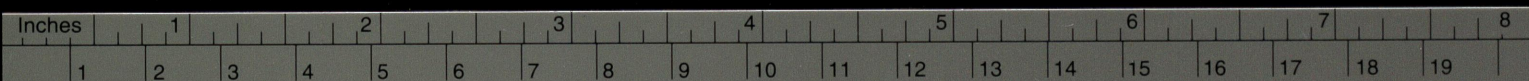
To start with, activity was low. The most conspicuous birds were the ubiquitous House Crows (*Corvus splendens*). They were in full breeding frenzy all over the park and we counted over 15 active nests. Naturally, all these nests were attractive bait for the Koels (*Eudynamys scolopacea*), which are brood

parasitic on the Crows. At several places, we observed crows chasing the koels, not without reason, I may add.

Continuing along the path, we notched up a few Coots (*Fulica atra*) and Dabchicks (*Tachybaptus ruficollis*) on the margins of the Hussain Sagar Lake. Also noticed were a few Little Cormorants (*Phalacrocorax niger*), sitting on the rocks in the water and sunning themselves. They seemed to be enjoying the warmth of the sun. No doubt they found the water a trifle too cold for their liking, augmented as it was with the monsoon showers.

In the park itself, a few Purple Sunbirds (*Nectarinia zeylonica*) attracted attention by chattering around us. And then the first Golden Oriole (*Oriolus oriolus*) appeared! What

-1-

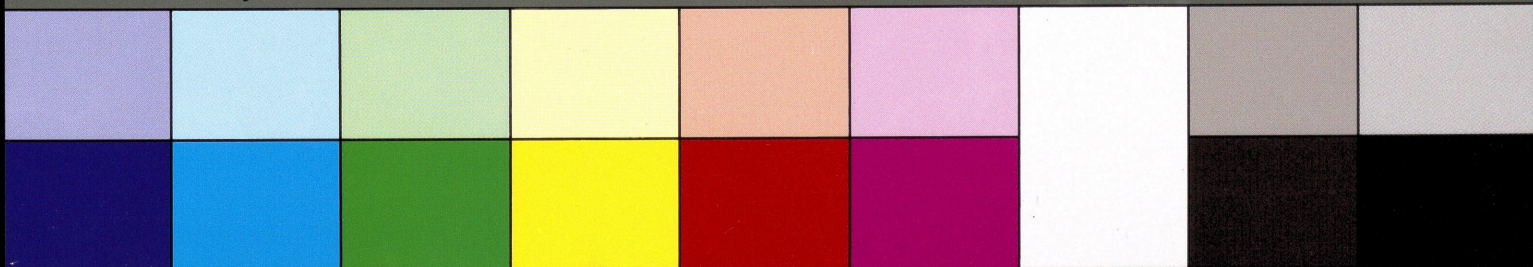


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Books & Journals received

The BSAP reading room received the following books and journals/periodicals during March-June 2003.

Books

1. Khan, M.G. Ali (No date): A Vet in Wilderness. [Complimentary].
2. The Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972 as Amended by the Wild Life (Protection) Amendment Act, 2002. Professional Book Publishers, New Delhi. [Donated by Belinda Wright].
3. Javed, Salim & Rahul Kaul (2003): Field Methods for Bird Surveys. Bombay Natural History Society. [Donated by I.B.C.N., B.N.H.S..]

Journals / Periodicals

1. *BirdLife Asia*. Vol. 1. No. 1. December 2002 [Complimentary].
2. *Birdwatcher's Digest*. Special optics issue. Vol. 25. No. 4. March/April 2003. [Donated by Aasheesh Pittie].
3. *Hornbill*. January-March 2003. [Donated by Aasheesh Pittie].
4. *Journal of the Bombay Natural History Society*. Vol. 99. No. 3. 28 February 2003. [Donated by Aasheesh Pittie].
5. *Samsad News*. Vol. 21. No. 3. March 2003. [Exchange].
6. *Vihang*. Summer 2003. [Exchange].
7. *Down to Earth*. Vol. 11. Nos. 24, 25, 26. [Donated by Aasheesh Pittie].
8. *Suara Enggang*. 2003. No. 2. March-April. [Exchange].
9. *Suara Enggang*. 2003. No. 3. May-June. [Exchange].
10. *World Birdwatch*. Vol. 25. No. 2. June 2003. [Exchange].

A MEMORABLE BIRD QUIZ

By M. Shobha

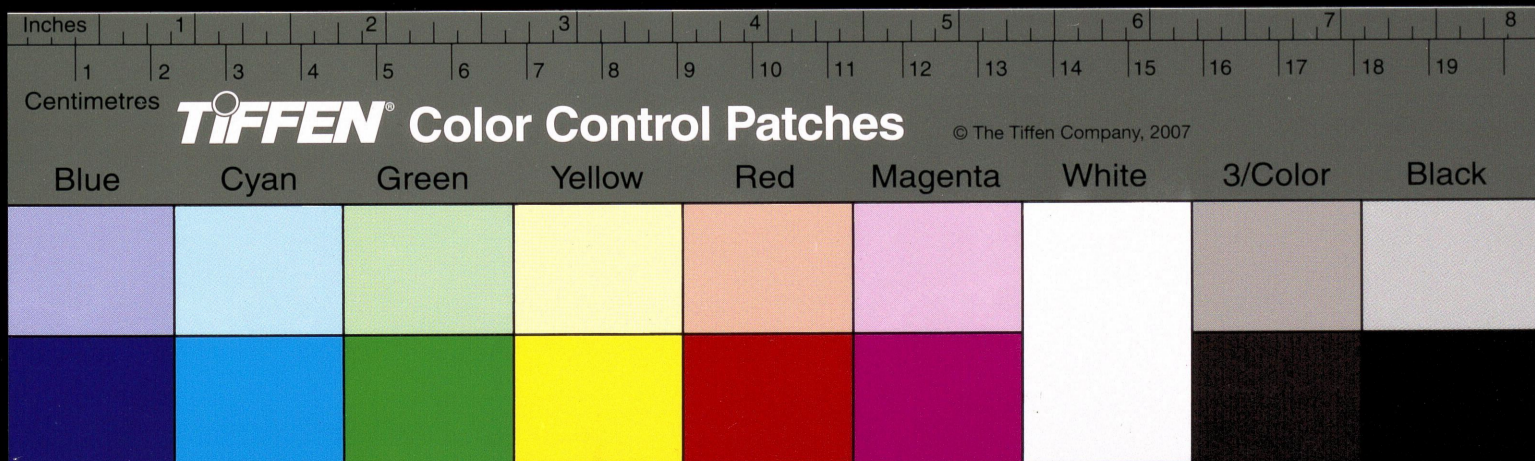
The pleasant prospect of taking a winged wildlife quiz brought 16 BSAP enthusiasts together on 16 June 2003. Our Quiz Master, Mr. Moorty, came well prepared with question cards for different categories: starters, teasers, stunners, the gamut. And what a commendable range they turned out to be, from English poetry to mythology, from philately to etymology. Mr. Moorty was obviously in his element, as it should be with twenty years of birding under his hat (*a la* his poser to us, "the female of the Pheasant-tailed Jacana species incubates its eggs ...," you guessed it, under its wings!).

And so we focussed our attention on our feathered friends. What is a gizzard? A crop? What is the name of the voice box of birds? What does the term 'nidiculous' describe? According to Mr. Salim Ali, which bird mimics the human voice closest? When does the Black Eagle breed? What is guano? Which bird finds and visits water with astounding accuracy on land?

What makes Guillemots unique among sea birds? (You simply must allow me to let on here that the colour of every clutch of eggs differs from all others, making it easier for the parent Guillemot to identify its nest from amongst a sea of nests). And staying with sea birds, what do baby Herring Gulls have to do to be fed? They have to work on the parent, er ..., tap on the red spots on the sides of the parent's beak! Talking of babies, what is a baby eagle called? 'Aiglet' says our German-speaking Quizzer. 'Eaglet' says French-speaking Kiran. A 'toffee!' – 'no, coffee!' sort of etymological tiff there, what say you? Alcyon is the Greek root for which one of our common birds? Tiercel is Latin for the male Peregrine Falcon, being derived from 'tertium' meaning 'one-third.' What is so significant about this name? The Tiercel is befittingly named, as it is one-third the size of the female Peregrine Falcon! (*Editor's Note: The Tiercel Peregrine is a third smaller than the female, and not one-third the size.*) What is a 'Lek?' 'Lek' is Scandinavian for 'play' and refers to the display ground for birds in courting time, in case you did not know. 'Aves' is Latin for 'birds'; how does the legend go? It was a firm belief in times gone by that human beings, upon death, turned into birds. The Owl belongs to the order Strigiformes and family Strigidae. Do you know why? Striges is Latin and the plural form of 'Strix' meaning 'witch.' Surely it's the bewitching eyes of the Owl that earned it its unsavoury classification! As if to make up for this misnomer, we have given it the name of not one but two Gods: 'Athena Brahma' aka Owl. Which bird is the symbol of the Aztecs? The Owl. Edward Lear immortalized a bird in his nonsense verse "... and the Pussycat went to sea/ In a beautiful pea-green boat." Which bird was it? The Owl again! Who acts as the messenger of Yama? It's the Owl once more. King Solomon, who spoke the language of the birds and beasts alike, and Queen Balkys of Sheba, also chose a bird to be their go-between messenger. Ah-ha, got you there! It is not the Owl this time, but the remarkable Hoopoe.

If bird-dog training goes against your grain, perhaps you would know which species of bird makes for a good, for lack of a better word, watchdog? The Geese – they have a keen sense of hearing and what's more, show aggression by nipping the intruder! Which birds were depicted in the engravings of the Temples of Egypt? The Egyptian Vulture and Pharaoh's Chicken. And which bird is a symbol of 'parental love?' The Indian Griffon (*Gyps fulvus*). The Griffon Vulture, also known as Nekhbet, was the guardian of the King of Egypt. What is the national bird of Guatemala? The Quetzal. Guatemalans chose to name their currency too after this beautiful bird. On the other hand, Liberia issued a stamp in 1920-21, of a 'national bird' that did not belong to Africa, leave alone Liberia. Which one, do you ask? The Great Indian Hornbill!

Pigeons produce crop milk, as do two other species of birds. Which ones? The flabbergasting answer is Flamingoes and Penguins. Painted Storks spread their wings out wide to protect their young from the sun. What else do they do to care for their little ones? They dribble water down their beaks to quench the thirst of their young. How many eggs of a hen would equal the size of one egg of an Ostrich? Two dozen. Really.



Which bird do the Vedas refer to as "one reared by others?" The Koel. And who plays the Koel's host? The Crow. What is a group of sparrows called? A host of sparrows. A flock of Jays? A party of Jays. A flock of finches? A charm of finches. A flock of Larks? An exaltation of Larks. What better way to round off this report of the quiz, than to hark back to the only question yours truly was able to answer –

Percy Bysshe Shelley wrote in high praise of which bird in this famous quote from his poem:

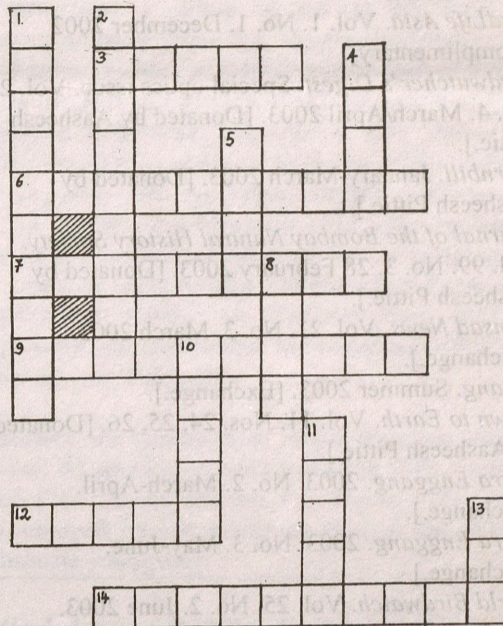
"Hail to thee, blithe spirit!
Bird thou never wert –
That from heaven or near it
Pourest thy full heart
In profuse strains of unpremeditated art."
... "To A Skylark"

BIRDWORD PUZZLE - No. 3

By M.M. Ali Khan

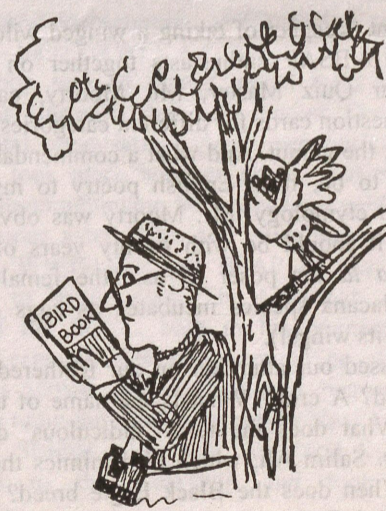
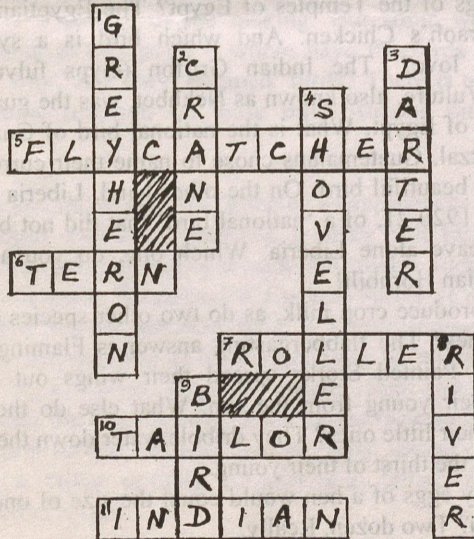
Note: Figures in Brackets denote number of alphabets
The puzzle contains bird names only
Correct solution to this puzzle will be given in the next issue of PITTA

1. Healthy man of the collar (10)
2. See 10
- 3 & 13. Vase after sunset (5, 3)
4. One may fly it on a string (4)
5. Go to New Zealand to get y our shoe-shine (4)
6. TRIED to GRASP to get a runner (10)
7. Hamelin man on the beach (4, 5)
- 8 & 11. Coconut tree that is fast (4, 5)
- 9 & 12. Baby might fall if she is not careful (4+6, 5)
- 10, 2 & 14. Tiger coloured pest slip-fielder (5, 3+5, 10)

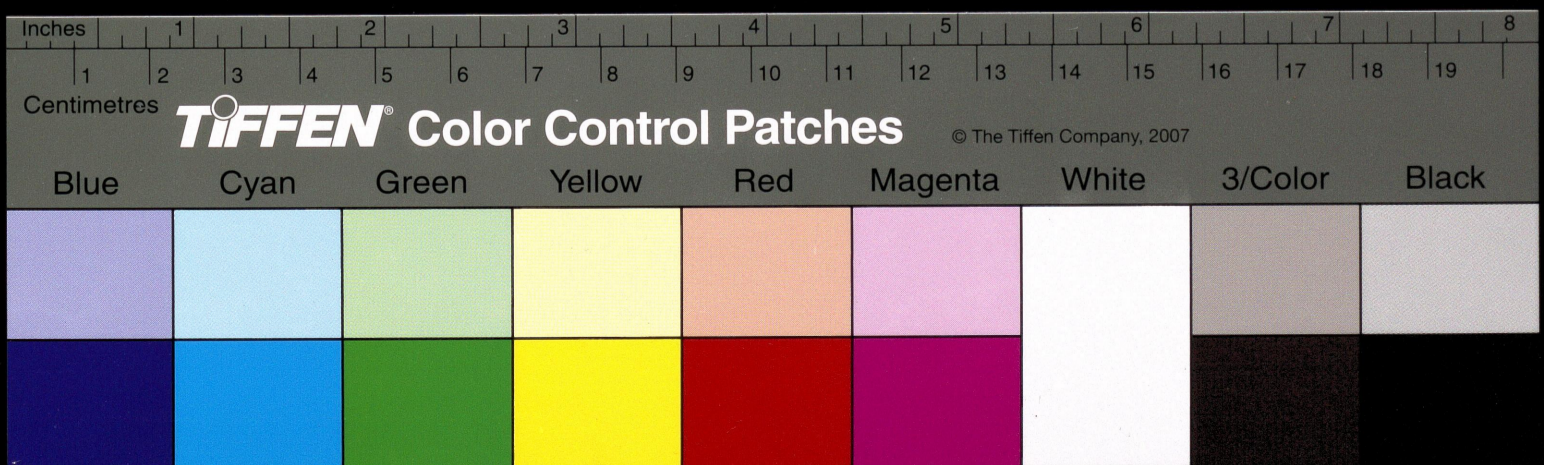


Members are requested to send their solutions to PITTA at the Society address. The correct entries will be entered for a draw. The lucky winner receives a BSAP cap, donated by Mr. M.M. Ali Khan.

Solution to Birdword Puzzle – No. 2



"Psst. Page 63."



Lister's suggestions quoted above on the methods to be employed while making bird surveys need your careful study. First classify the 'habitat' you decide to survey (suited to your time constraints), using the five major 'Groups' I documented in my last Letter with their sub-divisions. I also recommend selecting the 1° quadrants where you normally reside (or often travel to) as the 100 sq. km area you could concentrate on until you move elsewhere, if at all. Each such quadrant will have several distinct habitat sub-divisions (unless it is total desert) and offer each bird watcher plenty to do in varied ecosystems, even if limited in area. For those of you residing in the Hyderabad—Secunderabad twin-town metropolis, I had already given the basic information on this quadrant in my Letter # 56 (Pitta 139, November 2002). Instead of doing the same KBR National Park, Patancheru ICRISAT Campus, Nehru Zoological Park, etc., time and again, why don't BSAP "Field Outing" organizers check out a relief-cum-vegetation map of the Hyderabad quadrant and then target unworked habitats that fall into the sub-divisions and groups that Lister and I mentioned? A large group of birders must also be divided into smaller parties of maximum 4-5 persons who can then head towards and check out each micro-habitat in the area selected for an outing for its birds. Remember that birds and other wild animals prefer to live in, and visit, places that are generally unfrequented (or inhabited) by human beings so you have a better chance of good "twitching" (or more) if you head towards little visited countryside or jungle. Members (and readers) may also benefit by reading my quotes of Hugh Whistler in Letters # 55 & 56 (Pitta 138 & 139, October & November 2002) and then consulting those books for greater detail.

As a fine example of what Lister had recommended, there was a paper titled "Notes on the Birds of a selected area of Dehra Dun—June 1946 to July 1951" published by Mrs M.D. Wright (a rare lady birder in those days! "Ladybirds" are also beautiful little beetles of the family Coccinellidae, another special interest of mine, of which I have named and described a few new Indian species and have many more to "christen"! in the *JBNHS* (54: 627-662) in 1957 which dealt with a total of 226 species. She had also done "A Bird count in Dehra Dun" (*JBNHS* 48: 570-572A; 1949). These also have maps like Lister requested of authors and interested persons among you would do well to check out Mrs Wright's papers and model their own future surveys on them.

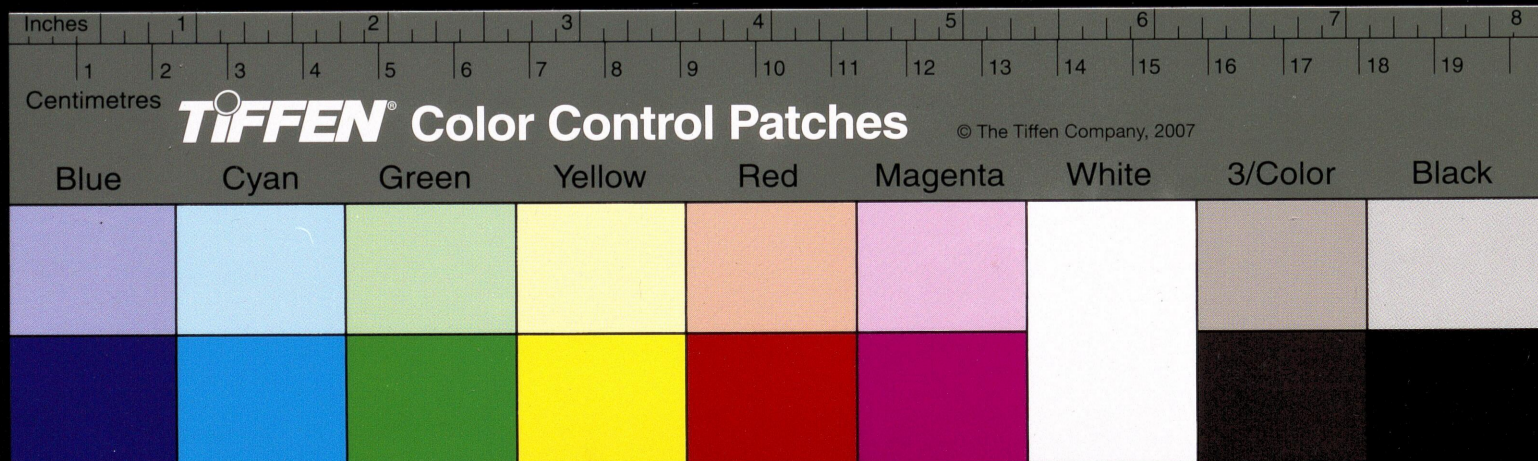
Sālim Ali's Hyderabad State Ornithological Surveys were carried out by him, with the taxidermal assistance of E. Heinrichs, of the Bombay Natural History Society, and of his "young cousin" Humayun Abdulali (when on his college vacations), from October 3rd to December 20th 1931 and March 1st to April 25th 1932. This singular amateur naturalist's initial regional bird survey was completed in a private capacity through a minimal grant of Rs 1,000 received from the then Nizam Government's "Museum Committee." His report was published in 5 parts, comprising a total of 125 pages, in the *Journal of the Bombay Natural History Society* (36: 356-390, 707-725, 898-919 and 37: 124-142, 425-454) in 1933 and 1934, with a small 3-page additional note in 1938 (*JBNHS* 40: 497-499). Reprinted and bound (paperback) copies of this report are available with the BSAP, Hyderabad and would form an excellent model for modern birders who have the gumption and drive to do such important and critical bird surveys now. For a first attempt at a faunistic survey of a delimited area, by an unemployed bird watcher in his late thirties then, this work was of top quality at a time when practically all such fieldwork was being done by Britishers and other Europeans here. One such foreigner, Hugh Whistler, an erstwhile Indian Police Officer but then retired and based in England, was undoubtedly responsible, in large part, for this Indian's guidelines and success. Sālim Ali acknowledged Whistler in print for helping him with bird specimen identifications, taxonomic comments on the subspecies (which taxon had unfortunately been given precedence over species in those Hartert years), and also for "a number of notes from the literature dealing with neighbouring areas" Sālim Ali wrote. Sālim Ali and Hugh Whistler later continued with this partnership when compiling similar reports on the regional faunistic bird surveys made in other parts of British India (mainly in Indian Princely States) by Sālim Ali and his assistants for another decade or so until Whistler died, of cancer, in 1943. These papers must be credited to "Ali & Whistler" and not just to Sālim Ali as has been incorrectly done (e.g., see the 1974 INDIAN HANDBOOK, 1989 ANDHRA PRADESH CHECKLIST, etc.) but I note with approval that the 1995 BIBLIOGRAPHIC INDEX of Aasheesh Pittie adopts the correct authorship for these regional faunistic papers of Sālim Ali and Hugh Whistler. Sālim Ali's paper on the birds of Gujarat, soon after independence (1954-1955, *JBNHS* 52: 374-458, 735-802), lacked Whistler's input and possibly all the determinations of "subspecies" were done by himself, with occasional assistance from the now notoriously infamous Colonel Richard Meinertzhagen!

Dr Kumar Ghorpadé, c/o Doddagubbi P.O., Bangalore 562 149 & indiavifauna@yahoo.co.uk

Annual General Meeting of the Birdwatchers' Society of Andhra Pradesh – First (1st) Notice dated 5th July 2003

The Annual General Meeting of the Society will be held on 15th September 2003 (15.09.2003) at Vidyaranya High School, Saifabad. The timing of the meeting is 6.00 p.m. All members are requested to attend. The tentative programme for the meeting is given below:

- 1) President's Report
- 2) Secretary's Report
- 3) Treasurer's Report
- 4) Proposed Changes to the Constitution
- 5) Appointment of Auditors
- 6) Election of Executive Committee Members (Members desirous of serving on the committee, please give their names to the Hon. Secretary)
- 7) Any other Business



SPOTLIGHT - MONTAGU'S HARRIER (*Circus pygargus*) By Siraj A. Taher

Like the males of the other two Harriers (Pallid and Hen) the male of the Montagu's (*Circus pygargus*) is also ashy-grey above and greyish white below. The two distinctive marks which make identification of this species easy are the dark primaries and a black band across the secondaries when looking from below, and the Rufous (or chestnut) coloured streaks on the belly and flanks.

Compared to the males of the other two species, the Pallid and the Hen, there are small differences in the extent of black on the primaries and the shades of grey of the body. The females of all these three species are very much more difficult to identify in the field, except with great practice. There are only minor differences in their overall brown plumage and barrings, rump widths and the bands on their tails. Immatures of *Circus pygargus* are similar to the females but deeper rufous below without streaks, which is diagnostic.

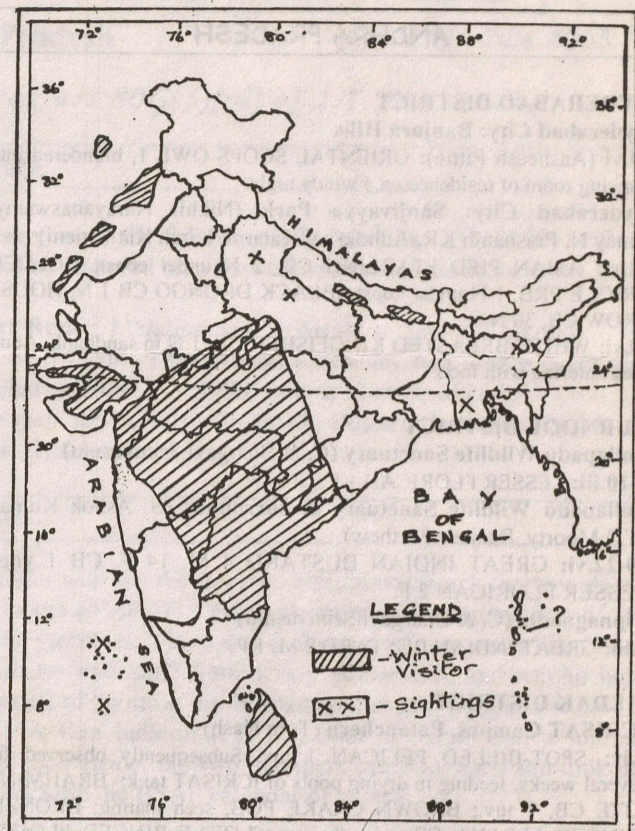
Ten species of the genus *Circus* are recognised in the world, out of which five species winter in the Indian sub-continent.

Like the other three harriers (except the Marsh), the preferred habitat of the Montagu's Harrier is open, grassy tracts, thinly cultivated fields and light scrub. They prefer to sit on the ground rather than perch in trees or bushes. Usually, they are solitary hunters, preferring to hunt by day. Usually roosts communally but has been occasionally seen in mixed groups. Mainly it is a silent bird, but has been heard to give out calls when coming in to roost, probably to identify its own specie.

Its food consists of lizards, grasshoppers, bird nestlings, small snakes and mammals and frogs. In their breeding grounds, they are seen to breed between May – July in England, Northern Europe, Western Asia (south of 57°N), Spain and Northwest Africa. The nest, made of grass and reeds is built on the ground in a field or in a bed of bulrushes near a swamp. The normal clutch is 4 – 6 plain bluish-white eggs, sometimes blotched with pale red. The female only incubates for 28 days. Both sexes take part in the care and feeding of the chicks.

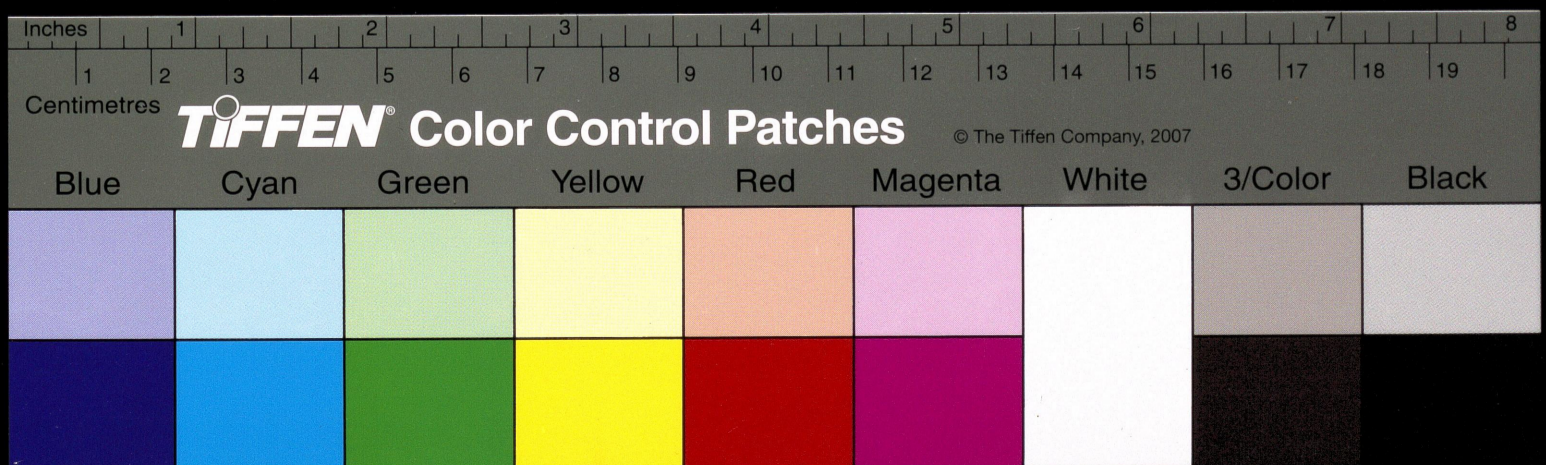
The Montagu's Harrier, like the others of its genus, is a winter visitor to the Sub-continent, Pakistan, Palestine and Southern Africa, Myanmar, Sri Lanka and the Maldives. In India, it is fairly widely distributed from the foothills of the Himalayas, Assam, rare in Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh and Orissa, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, the Andamans and Lakshadweep Islands, It is observed less frequently than the Pallid Harrier in most of India, but records show the Montagu's to be seen more often than the Pallid around Hyderabad city and surrounding areas. In Andhra Pradesh the early records are from Paloncha (Khammam Dist.), Kolair (Kolleru, W. Godavari Dist.) and Siddhout (Siddhavatam, Cuddapah Dist.). Recent records are from Medak, Ranga Reddy, Kadapa (Cuddapah) and Kurnool

Districts. In Hyderabad, the first date of arrival is 19th September and the last date of departure has been noted as 31st March.



As with most of the Harriers, fewer birds are being seen than a couple of years earlier, even in places where they were regularly seen. Loss of habitat, excessive use of pesticides and shooting down by farmers and game bird preserve managers could be the reasons for this decline in numbers. In Britain and Europe, appreciable reduction in breeding numbers has been noticed. No studies have been undertaken in any of their breeding areas, migration routes or wintering grounds to determine this population decline. This lack of data and the necessity to take proper action in various countries rather than any one makes the problem of conservation of any migratory specie very complex.

For the conservation process of the birds of the genus *Circus*, it is vital to educate the main enemies of these birds, viz. the farmers and range managers in their breeding grounds; and land developers and heavy pesticide users in their wintering quarters. No bird of prey is destructive to human interests and whether it is large or small, it never feeds exclusively on domestic stock. In fact, they are our friends in that they destroy more rats and rodents than they would the farmyard stock. Hence all hawks should command our respect.



BIRDING NOTES Compiled by Aasheesh Pittie

This column publishes notes in brief telegraphic form, from Andhra Pradesh, Delhi, Goa, Haryana, Karnataka, Kerala, Maharashtra, Punjab, Rajasthan & Tamil Nadu on interesting and significant sightings and behaviour like breeding, feeding, migration, nesting, etc. Notes on threatened birds are also welcome. Their status "*" follows BirdLife International (2001) *Threatened Birds of Asia*. English names, sequence and scientific nomenclature follow Manakadan & Pittie (2002): Standardised English and scientific names of the birds of the Indian Subcontinent. *Newsletter for Birdwatchers* 42(3): i-viii, 1-36. Unless specified, all observations are for 2002. Abbreviations, Contributors, Notes, Regional Referees, etc., are at the end. For selection of breeding criteria 'Probable, Possible, Confirmed', see *Pitta* # 82, February 1998, p. 4.

ANDHRA PRADESH

HYDERABAD DISTRICT

Hyderabad City: Banjara Hills

20.vi (Aasheesh Pittie): ORIENTAL SCOPS OWL 1, blundered into drawing room of residence on a windy night.

Hyderabad City: Sanjivayya Park (Nikhil Narayanaswamy, Vinay N, Prashanth KR, Adhokshaj Katarni, Kiran Katikaneni)

22.vi: ASIAN PIED STARLING CB, 2 N under const; GOLDEN ORIOLE PRB, 1 N under const.; BLACK DRONGO CB 1 N; HOUSE CROW CB, 30 N.

29.vi: WHITE-BREASTED KINGFISHER CB, 1 N in sandbank. Adult seen entering with food.

KURNOOL DISTRICT

Rollapadu Wildlife Sanctuary (C. & Bhargavi Srinivasulu)

9-10.iii: LESSER FLORICAN 1 F.

Rollapadu Wildlife Sanctuary & surrounds (S. Ashok Kumar, JVD Moorty, Raajeev Mathew)

20-22.vi: GREAT INDIAN BUSTARD 4 M, 14 F, CB 1 yng.; LESSER FLORICAN 2 F.

Vipnagandla (C. & Bhargavi Srinivasulu)

9.iii: GREAT INDIAN BUSTARD 2 M, 1 F.

MEDAK DISTRICT

ICRISAT Campus, Patancheru (Tom Hash)

2.iv: SPOT-BILLED PELICAN 1 juv. Subsequently observed for several weeks, feeding in drying pools of ICRISAT tank; BRAHMINY KITE CB, 1 juv.; BROWN CRAKE POB, seen mating; BRONZE-WINGED JACANA CB, ads. & imm.; LITTLE RINGED PLOVER CB, ad. & imm.; INDIAN TREEPIE robbing nest, and eating blue-shelled eggs, of Red-vented Bulbul.

13.iv: GREY FRANCOLIN CB, ads., with downy chicks; several families seen at different parts of the farm this month; CHESTNUT-BELLIED SANDGROUSE M and F; first record inside ICRISAT campus; SIRKEER MALKOHA first record inside ICRISAT campus; HOOPOE CB, one ad., passed food to another who carried it into a crack--missing mortar--between stones in the wall of the Manmool fortress.

RANGAREDDI DISTRICT

Anantgiri (Kiran Katikaneni, Vinay, Zubin)

25.v: CHANGEABLE HAWK-EAGLE CB, 1 N with yng.

GUNTUR DISTRICT

Uppalapadu Heronry (K. Mrutyumjaya Rao)

13.iii: SPOT-BILLED PELICAN CB, 550 including immatures, 120 N; BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT-HERON 300; PAINTED STORK CB 400 N, almost all with yng.; PURPLE MOORHEN CB 14 N in *Typha* sp.

VISAKHAPATNAM DISTRICT

Araku (C. & Bhargavi Srinivasulu)

3.iii: ASIAN PIED STARLING.

Damuku (C. & Bhargavi Srinivasulu)

14-16.iii: BLACK EAGLE 7; BLACK-CRESTED BULBUL 3.

Sankrametta (C. & Bhargavi Srinivasulu)

3.iii: BLACK EAGLE 1.

Tyda (C. & Bhargavi Srinivasulu)

2-4.iii: BLACK-CRESTED BULBUL 5; BLUE-HEADED ROCK THRUSH 1.

14-16.iii: CRESTED GOSHAWK 1 M.

GOA

NORTH GOA DISTRICT

Chapora Estuary (Heinz Lainer)

7.ii: WESTERN REEF-EGRET 55+; SLENDER-BILLED GULL 440+.

23.ii: SANDWICH TERN 50+.

9.iv: SLENDER-BILLED GULL 1; GULL-BILLED TERN 106 (39 in br. plm.); COMMON TERN 1 br. plm.

Tivim-Damedem (Heinz Lainer)

16.iii: BESRA SPARROWHAWK POB 1 juv.; LESSER SPOTTED EAGLE 1 juv.

Anjuna (Heinz Lainer)

5.iv: SHIKRA PRB, pair; CRIMSON SUNBIRD 1 M non-br. plm.

SOUTH GOA DISTRICT

Dudhsagar Top (Heinz Lainer)

22-25.iv: NILGIRI WOOD-PIGEON 1; BLUE-BEARDED BEE-EATER 1; WHITE-CHEEKED BARBET CB; SMALL YELLOW-NAPED WOODPECKER 4; INDIAN BLUE ROBIN 1 M; WYNAAD LAUGHINGTHRUSH 5+; INDIAN RUFIOUS BABBLER 5+.

ABBREVIATIONS: Ab-abundant; ad-adult/s; br-breeding; C-common/ly; c.-approximately; CB-confirmed breeding; CD*-conservation dependent; const-construction/ing; CR*-critical; DD*-data deficient; disp-display/ing; EN*-endangered; F-female; flt-flight; fly-family; freq-frequent/ly; hrd-heard; id-identify/ied; imm-immature; inc-include/ing; Is-Island; juv-juvenile; LM-local migrant; M-male; mat-material; N-nest/ing/s; NT*-near threatened; OH-overhead; POB-possible breeding; PRB-probable breeding; plm-plumage; RF-Reserve Forest; Resp-respectively; Tik-Taluk; vil-village; VU*-vulnerable; WL-wildlife; yng-young.

REGIONAL REFEREES: Andhra Pradesh: Aasheesh Pittie; Delhi: Suresh Chand Sharma; Goa: Heinz Lainer; Haryana: Suresh Chand Sharma; Karnataka: S. Subramanya; Kerala: P.O. Nameer; Maharashtra: Nitin Jamdar; Punjab: H.S. Sangha; Rajasthan: H.S. Sangha; Tamil Nadu: V. Santharam.

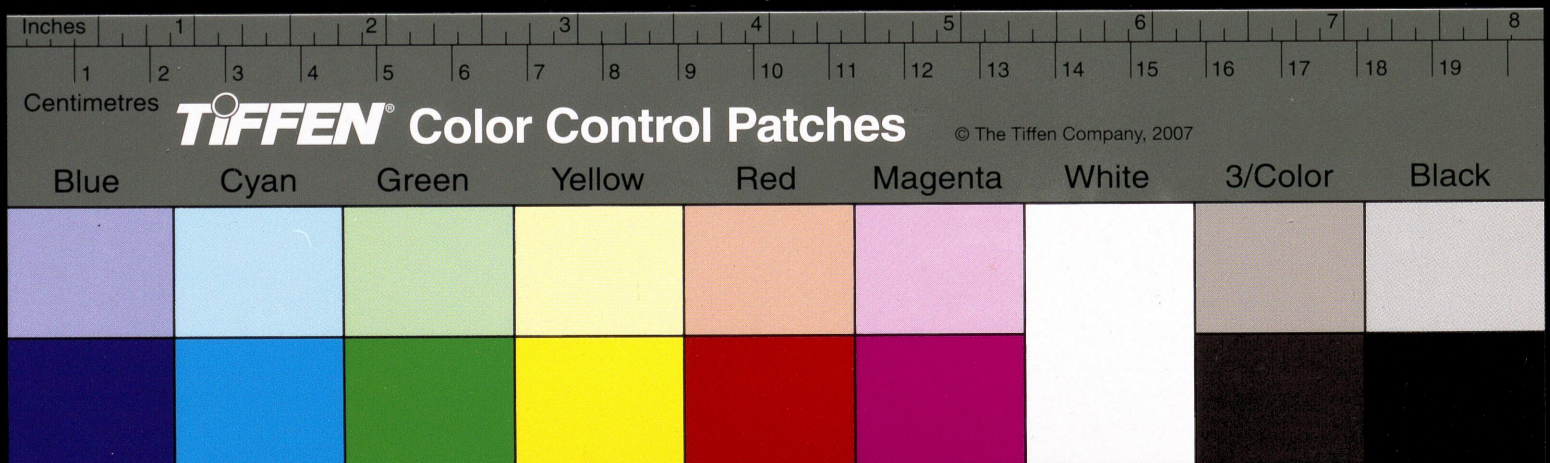
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For information, write to: Birdwatchers' Society of Andhra Pradesh, PO Box 45, Banjara Hills, Hyderabad 500034, India.

Editors: Siraj A. Taher, Humayun Taher (55612608); Raajeev Mathew (23310721)

Website: <http://www.bsaponline.org> E-mail: aasheesh@vsnl.in, humayun5@rediffmail.com

Membership (Rs): Admission=100; Annual=200; Student=100 per annum. Life=2,000. Add Rs.25/- for outstation cheques.



IP TTTA



Bulletin of the Birdwatchers' Society of Andhra Pradesh

No. 148: August 2003

Donations to the Society are exempt from tax u/s 80G(5)(vi) of I.T. Act, 1961.

PROGRAMME

FIELD OUTING: Members willing to take passengers may please contact the following: Shafaat Ulla (23353098) or Siraj Taher (55612608). Seats *may* be available in members' cars and will be reserved on a first-come-first-served basis. Book early to avoid disappointment.

Sunday, 24-viii-2003: Vanasthalipuram Deer Park, Ranga Reddy District: Route: Malakpet – Dilshuknagar – LB Nagar. Members are requested to reach the destination by 6.45am. It is anticipated that there will be some new species of birds on this trip because we will be visiting an area which has newly been added to the park. Rosy Pastors may be sighted, possibly Short-toed Eagles and Greenbilled Malkoha. This will be a half-day trip. Carry water and snacks. For further information contact Siraj Taher (55612608) or Shafaat Ulla (23353098) before 11am or after 4pm.

INDOOR MEETING: 18-viii-2002, 6pm: Talk by Raajeev Mathew on Birds of Prey, Vidyaranya High School, Opp., Secretariat, Saifabad, Hyderabad.

NOTES & NEWS

Happenings of the Society - Field Trip to Chilkur Deer Park on 27th July 2003.

Then, it was on the 24th Nov 2002, now it was on 27th July 03. We were going back to a place where we all had been united with Nature, Mrugavani National Park-Chilkur. We were here last year with Kids for tigers and are now here with BSAP.

Compared to the previous year, the park was much more beautiful due to rains. It was hard to see birds, but we managed to see a **roller**. Trying to get a closer look at it, all I was able to do was run from tree to tree. A couple of **purple rumped sunbirds**, dim due to the cloudy sky, greeted us with their remaining splendour. We saw a **Cormorant** flying overhead, probably rejoicing that the monsoons had set in. From the gates we hiked on to the watchtower. The beauty of the place enthralled us; trees were lush green and were full of leaves, if not flowers.

Bulbuls were a common sight in this park but they preferred to be unseen. At last we reached the tower. Beautiful! Enchanting! Anyone would go into a Trance at the sight. Acres and acres of green forestland stretched in front of us. From our perch we had a perfect view of a lake that was flooded with water.

Three **Spot billed ducks** and a few **River terns** encircled the area, like vultures before they disappeared from sight (It was as if the ducks were posing for a photograph). We did some climbing on the rocks and we found out that the park, true to

the words that it was among the best places for rock formation.

We saw a large number of hoof marks obviously left behind by a herd of **spotted deer**. Mr. Ravi a wild life photographer showed us how to draw tiger pugmarks. Tough to draw, I'd say. We hadn't yet recovered from the trance of the view when Kiran spotted another beauty-a **Pied cuckoo**, like a black and white television perched on a tree just above the car parking. We also saw a few insects like the **velvet mite**, the **six spotted tiger beetle**, **millipedes** and **centipedes**.

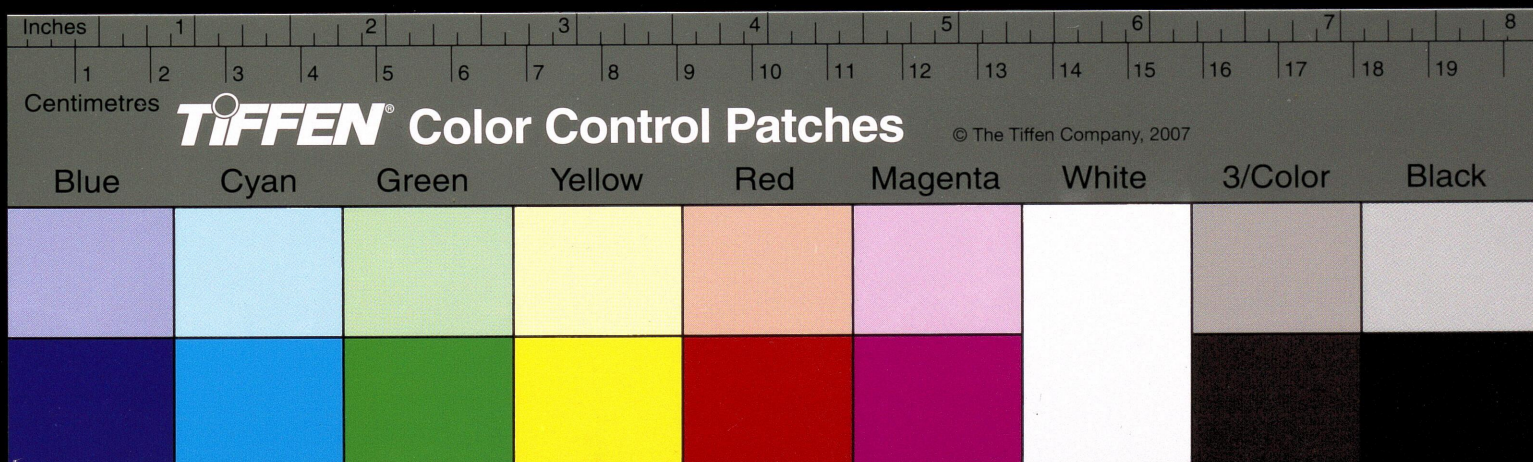
On the way back home, we saw some elegant **king fishers**, **orioles** and **weaverbirds**. I reached home at 1.30 pm praying that this National park must not be destroyed like the Forest of Ananthagiri.

NIKHIL.N

BSAP - SINGARENI COLLIERIES EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS - CAMPS AND TEACHERS TRAINING PROGRAMMES.

As part of the Singareni Collieries Company Limited (SCCL), and BSAP joint programmes for Environmental Awareness, Nature Studies and Birding Fieldwork, the Society deputed Humayun Taher to start with the Nature Study and Birdwatching trips for some of their educational institutions which were participating in camps at Chilkur Deer Park, Rangareddi Dist. along with the A.P. Forest Department. These camps were held on 28 June

-1-



and 6 July in which three schools participated in each of the programmes. On 13 July, two women's degree colleges took part in the camp. The programme consisted of taking the participants on a field walk through the park and explaining about nature, birds and animals. There were also lectures on the subject after the field trip was completed.

The next programme included Teachers Training Workshops on 17 – 19 July at Kothagudem (Khammam Dist.) and 21 – 23 July at Godavarikhani (Karimnagar Dist.) The BSAP was not involved with the third workshop conducted from 24 – 26 July at Bellampalli (Adilabad Dist.) For these workshops also Humayun Taher conducted the first day's proceedings for the participating teachers. The topics covered were Evolution and Biological Diversity. A PowerPoint presentation was specially prepared for the occasion. Response was quite good and the teachers appeared to show much enthusiasm in implementing the training at their respective schools.

The Society has prepared a special syllabus to be implemented in the educational institutions of the SCCL after their concurrence and acceptance of the subjects covered. Even though the emphasis in this syllabus will be on avifauna, it under no conditions will be restricted to birds only and will encompass all aspects of the natural world, their interactions and interdependence.

Books & Journals received

The BSAP reading room received the following books and journals/periodicals during July 2003.

Books

The Society's library was substantially enriched when we received a generous donation of 10 books from the **World Land Trust**, U.K. We would like to take this opportunity to thank all those involved in making this possible. At the World Land Trust we would like to thank Miss Kirsty Forbes (Projects Manager) and Molly St. George (Manager, NGO, Book Distribution Service). When they informed us that the books were ready and we could collect them (in London), we thought we were stuck. But our Life Member and well wisher, Mary Peacock made it all seem so easy. Christine, her daughter, collected and kept them in London. Dr Surendra Ugale, an old friend, who is keenly interested in wildlife, solved the problem of bringing them to India from London. BSAP relies heavily on the support of its members and they seldom let us down. We are indebted to Mary Peacock, Christine Peacock and Dr Surendra Ugale.

In the same league of friends are Bikram Grewal and Bill Harvey, who donated a copy of their latest book, to our library.

1. Davies, S.J.J.F. (2002): Ratites and Tinamous. Oxford University Press, London. [Donated by the World Land Trust, U.K.]
2. Fuller, Errol (2001): Extinct Birds. New ed. Oxford University Press, London. [Donated by the World Land Trust, U.K.]

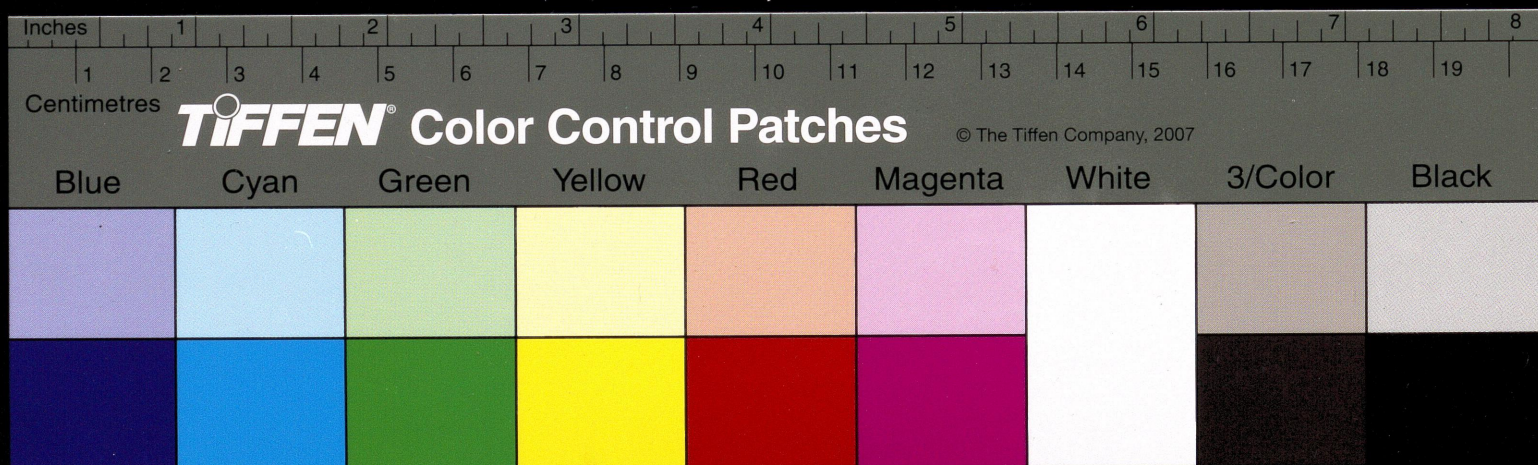
3. Gibbs, David, Eustace Barnes & John Cox (2001): Pigeons and Doves. A Guide to the Pigeons and Doves of the World. Pica Press, U.K. [Donated by the World Land Trust, U.K.]
4. Heath, M.F. & M.I. Evans (Eds.) (2001): Important Bird Areas in Europe. Priority Sites for Conservation. Southern Europe. Vol. 2 of 2 vols. Cambridge, U.K. BirdLife International. (BirdLife Conservation Series No. 8). [Donated by the World Land Trust, U.K.]
5. Inskipp, Carol (1988): A Birdwatchers' Guide to Nepal. Prion Ltd., U.K. [Donated by the World Land Trust, U.K.]
6. Mackinnon, John & Karen Phillipps (2000): A Field Guide to the Birds of China. Oxford University Press, London. [Donated by the World Land Trust, U.K.]
7. Matthiessen, Peter (2002): The Birds of Heaven. Travels with Cranes. Harvill Press, U.S.A. [Donated by the World Land Trust, U.K.]
8. National Geographic Society (????): Field Guide to the Birds of North America. 3rd ed. National Geographic, America. [Donated by the World Land Trust, U.K.]
9. Nethersole-Thompson, Desmond & Maimie (1991): Waders. Their Breeding, Haunts and Watchers. 2nd ed. T. & A.D. Poyser, U.K. [Donated by the World Land Trust, U.K.]
10. Simpson, Ken & Nicolas Day (1999): Field Guide to the Birds of Australia. Helm Publishers. [Donated by the World Land Trust, U.K.]
11. Grewal, Bikram; Bill Harvey and Otto Pfister (2002): A Photographic Guide to the Birds of India and the Indian Subcontinent, Including Pakistan, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka & the Maldives. Periplus Editions (HK) Ltd., Hong Kong. [Donated by the authors.]

Journals / Periodicals

1. Down to Earth. Vol. 12. No. 3. June 30, 2003 [Donated by Aasheesh Pittie.]
2. Down to Earth. Vol. 12. No. 4. July 15, 2003. [Donated by Aasheesh Pittie.]
3. Birdwatchers' Digest. Vol. 25. No. 6. July-August 2003. [Donated by Aasheesh Pittie.]
4. Samsad News. Vol. 21. No. 6. June 2003. [Exchange.]
5. Channel 6. July 2003. [Subscription copy.]
6. Protected Area Update. No. 43. June 2003. [Donated by Aasheesh Pittie.]

RANDOM THOUGHTS ON CONSERVATION

Birds of Prey have been significantly hit in recent times, as far as conservation is concerned. The most glaring example of this, of course, is the worldwide decline in Vulture populations, a phenomenon so alarming that special programmes have been hastily implemented to try and get to the root of the problem and find a solution. But Vultures are not the only species that have suffered. The



The point of birdwatching often gets lost. The point of birdwatching is not making lists, or seeking rarities, or becoming immensely talented, or making a contribution to science. The point of birdwatching is watching birds: and it's something that is open to all of us.

So here is my advice to anyone who likes birds and wants to enjoy them just a little bit more. Just watch them. End of advice. Oh, all right, you can look them up, put a name to them and you'll find that adds to the pleasure. Learning half-a-dozen songs from a tape will positively double your pleasure in the garden or park.

Birdwatching is not a specialised hobby, it is not necessarily an obsession. It is simply a way of living: of living with your eyes and ears open, and finding that birds enrich every day of your life. That's why everybody who is not a *good* birdwatcher should make a real effort to become a *bad* birdwatcher.

OBITUARY

CHRIS MEAD 1940 – 2003

Chris mead assured the editors (of BIRDS) that he was planning enough 'Learning about birds' features for BIRDS for several more years shortly before he died, unexpectedly, in his sleep in January 2003. His dedication and enthusiasm for birds started in his student days when he took up bird ringing – he personally caught and ringed a massive 400,000 birds. He trained and inspired dozens of others with the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) until he retired in 1994. He was head of the British national ringing scheme for many years and was largely responsible for the computerization of ringing information – making a big impact on bird conservation. He had an encyclopedic knowledge of birds and an amazing ability to recall and present facts in novel and interesting ways, so well demonstrated in his 'Learning about birds' series for BIRDS.

He was a popular spokesman for birds and was keen to share his huge knowledge via the web and his books. His *The State of the Nations' Birds* combines an analysis of abundant data with his inimitable popular touch, including glum and smiley faces and soaring and diving birds to indicate changing species' fortunes.

He was honoured with medals from the BTO, the British Ornithologists' Union and the RSPB, and will be remembered for conveying his wonder at the life of birds to so many others. A great many people will miss him.

ROY SEBASTIAN 1931 - 2003

Roy Sebastian had been a member of the BSAP for several years. His passing away has left a number of friends who would miss him at the Society outings, indoor meetings and at organizational works.

Roy was basically a soil scientist by profession, who worked initially in the Agriculture Department before joining EID Parry Fertilizer Division, from where he moved on to Godavari Fertilizers. He was an accomplished photographer and thoroughly enjoyed his pursuits in this field. Roy joined the Horticulture Society at Hyderabad, from where he used his knowledge and experience for the benefit of all those interested in gardening and horticulture. He always boasted of Late Dr. Salim Ali's visit to a friend's farm in Nizamabad and his birding trips with the great man. It was as if to tell us all that he was one-up over all the others. He even would show his Book of Indian Birds, in which Salim Ali had made notations and also marked the birds sighted at the farm.

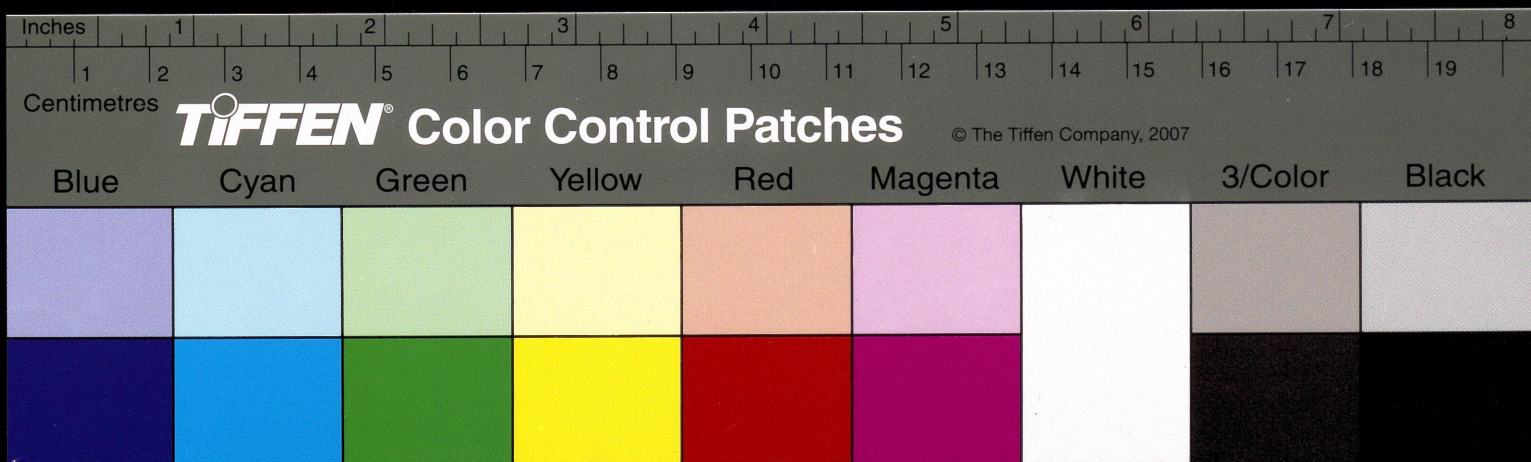
It never looked that Roy would leave us so suddenly for his heavenly abode, as he was still active with his photography and gardening advice at the Horticulture Society.

The BSAP conveys its condolences to his wife and other members of the bereaved family.

Annual General Meeting of the Birdwatchers' Society of Andhra Pradesh – Second (2nd) Notice dated 10th August 2003

The Annual General Meeting of the Society will be held on 15th September 2003 (15.09.2003) at Vidyaranya High School, Saifabad. The timing of the meeting is 6.00 p.m. All members are requested to attend. The tentative programme for the meeting is given below:

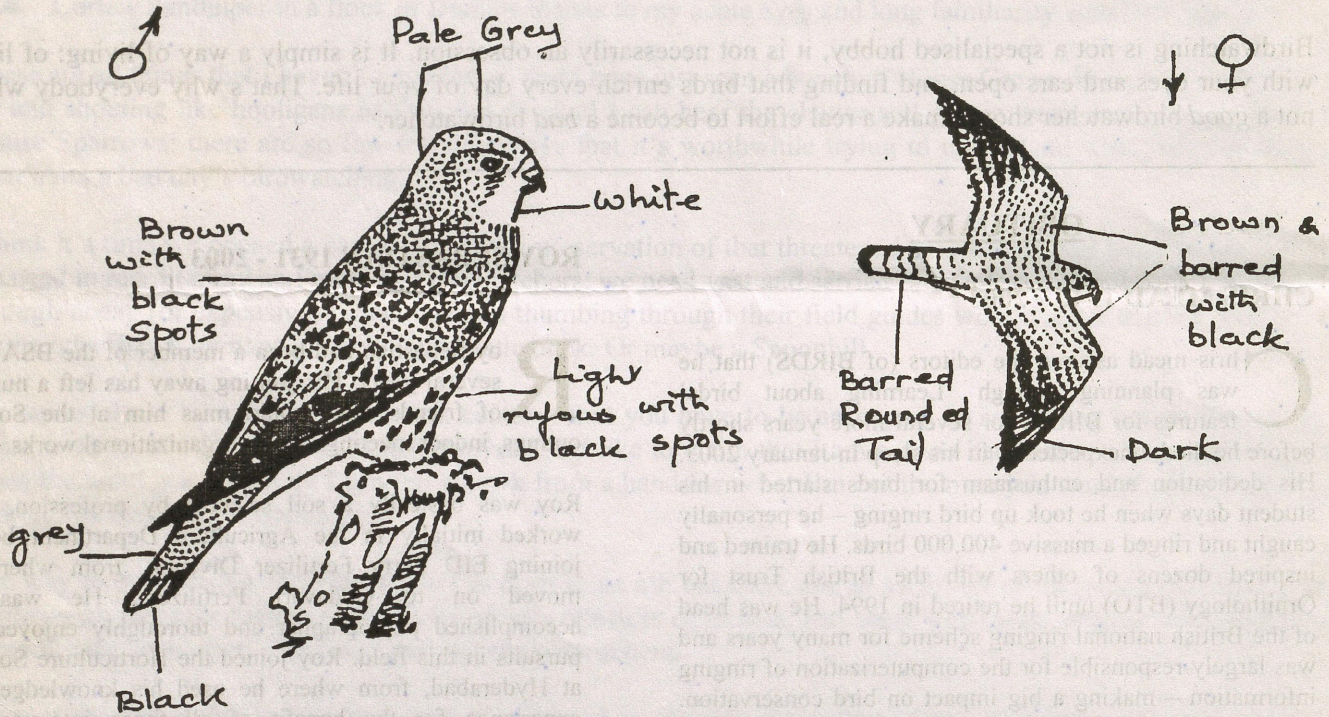
- 1) President's Report
- 2) Secretary's Report
- 3) Treasurer's Report
- 4) Proposed Changes to the Constitution
- 5) Appointment of Auditors
- 6) Election of Executive Committee Members (Members desirous of serving on the committee, please give their names to the Hon. Secretary)
- 7) Any other Business



FIELD CRAFT By Siraj A. Taher & Sachin Jaltare

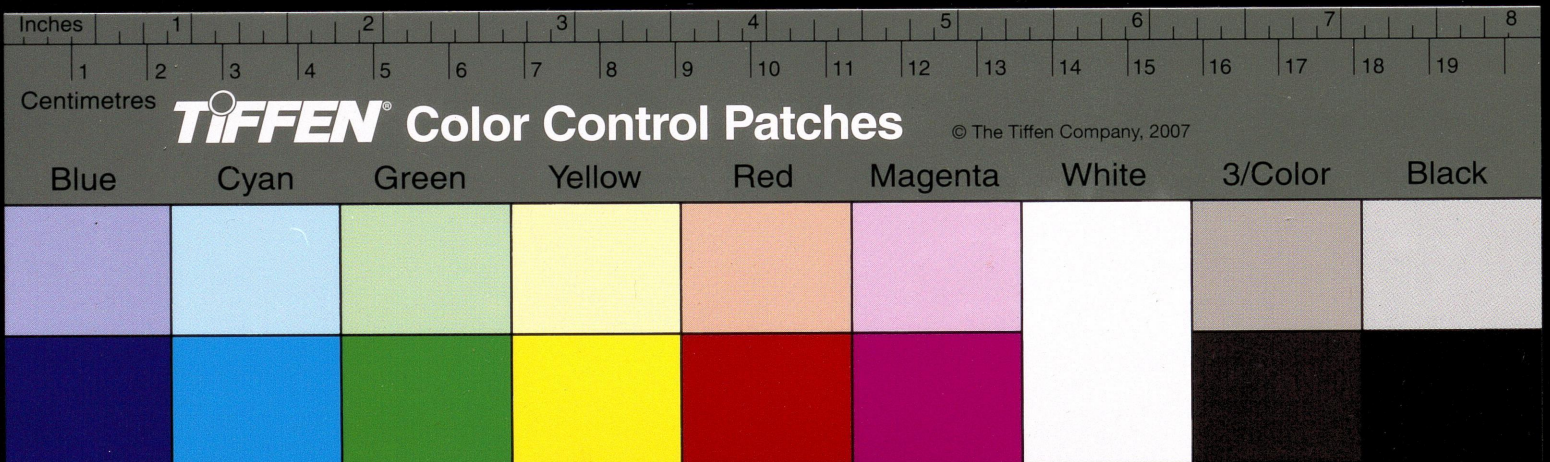
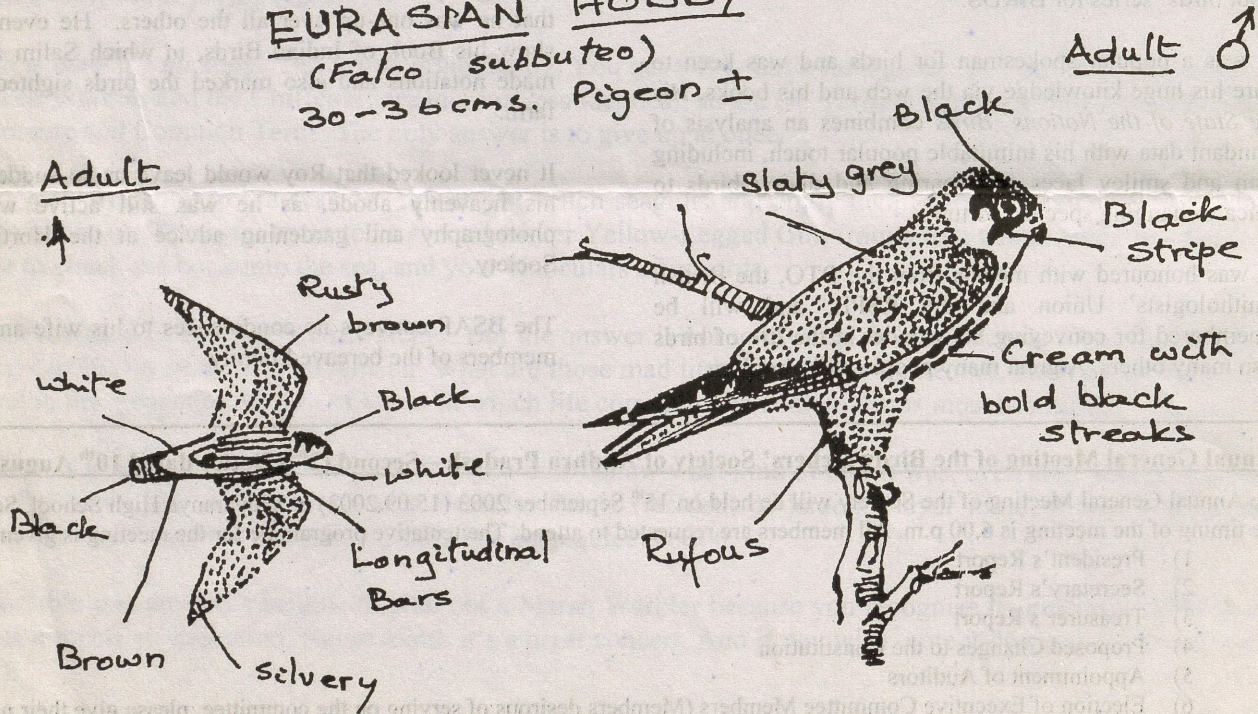
COMMON KESTREL
(*Falco tinnunculus*)

32-35mm. - Pigeon ±



EURASIAN HOBBY

(*Falco subbuteo*)
30-36cms. Pigeon ±



Where have all the Sparrows Gone - and Why?

The House Sparrow is one of our most familiar and popular birds. However, in recent years, their numbers have declined – sufficient for them now to be placed on the “Red List” of threatened birds. We need to know which areas in Andhra Pradesh (or elsewhere in India) still have House Sparrows. And that is why we are

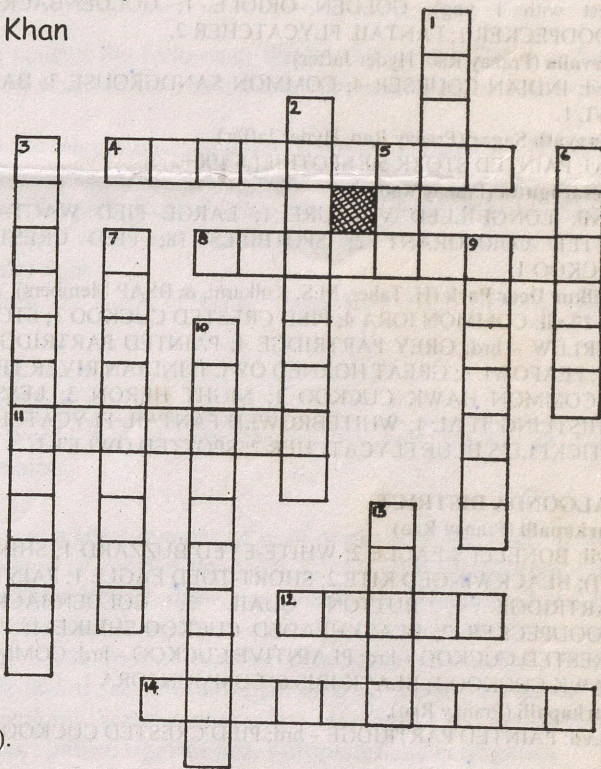
asking you to count the sparrows where you live, or wherever you see them, however small the numbers may be. This you can do on any day from 1st of September to 31st of December 2003. You can send us these counts in a simple format just giving the date, place, no. of birds, any nesting activities, young, food being taken (if noticed), any other information.

BIRDWORD PUZZLE - No. 4

By M.M. Ali Khan

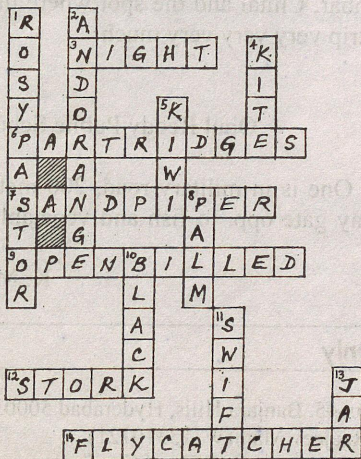
Note: Figures in Brackets denote number of alphabets
The puzzle contains bird names only
Correct solution to this puzzle will be given in the next issue of PITTA

1. Baked big plant but not to eat (4,3).
2. Silver ... feed ending with bill (9).
- 3 & 10. Has Midas touched the forest kissers back (12,10)?
4. Hamelin man on the beach (9).
5. See (1)
6. RED RAT changes (6)
7. ERR and INVERT on running water (9).
8. He excavates (9).
9. See (14).
10. See (3).
11. Wise bird watching stored straw (7).
- 12 & 13. GLARE and GREET together (5,5).
- 14 & 9. Leads danger away from nest with shrill cries (10,7).



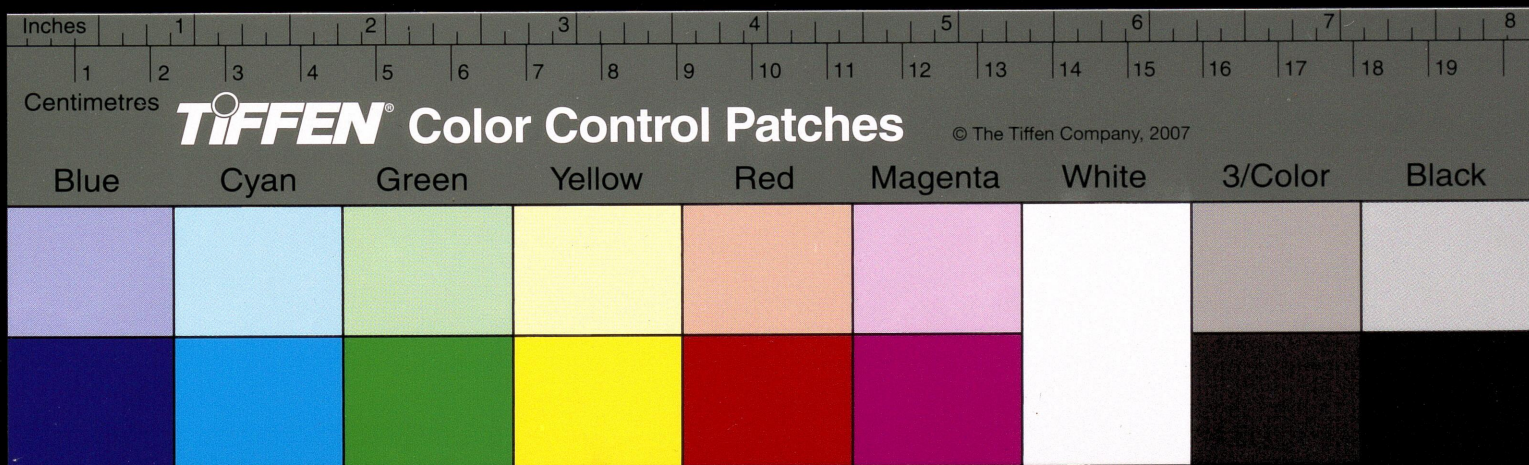
Members are requested to send their solutions to PITTA at the Society address. The correct entries will be entered for a draw. The lucky winner receives a BSAP cap, donated by Mr. M.M. Ali Khan.

Solution to Birdword Puzzle – No. 3



SOCIETY T-SHIRTS AND CAPS NOW AVAILABLE FOR SALE:

- | | |
|------------------------------|-----------------|
| Grey (With Society Logo) | |
| Sizes: XL, L, M | Rs. 150.00 each |
| White (House Sparrow design) | |
| Sizes: XL, L, M, S | Rs. 200.00 each |
| Caps (With Society Logo) | Rs. 75.00 each |



BIRDING NOTES Compiled by Aasheesh Pittie

This column publishes notes in brief telegraphic form, from Andhra Pradesh, Delhi, Goa, Haryana, Karnataka, Kerala, Maharashtra, Punjab, Rajasthan & Tamil Nadu on interesting and significant sightings and behaviour like breeding, feeding, migration, nesting, etc. Notes on threatened birds are also welcome. Their status '**' follows BirdLife International (2001) *Threatened Birds of Asia*. English names, sequence and scientific nomenclature follow Manakadan & Pittie (2002): Standardised English and scientific names of the birds of the Indian Subcontinent. *Newsletter for Birdwatchers* 42(3): i-viii, 1-36. Unless specified, all observations are for 2003. Abbreviations, Contributors, Notes, Regional Referees, etc., are at the end. For selection of breeding criteria 'Probable, Possible, Confirmed', see *Pitta* # 82, February 1998, p. 4.

ANDHRA PRADESH

RANGAREDDI DISTRICT

Vikarabad (Pranay Rao, Hyder Jaffer)

29.vi: BROWN FISH OWL 2; CRESTED SERPENT EAGLE -CB (Nest with 1 yng); GOLDEN ORIOLE 1; GOLDENBACKED WOODPECKER 1; FANTAIL FLYCATCHER 2.

Chevalla (Pranay Rao, Hyder Jaffer)

29.vi: INDIAN COURSER 4; COMMON SANDGROUSE 3; BARN OWL 1.

Himayath Sagar (Pranay Rao, Hyder Jaffer)

29.vi: PAINTED STORK 50; SPOTBILLS 100+.

Keesaragutta (Pranay Rao)

24.vii: LONGBILLED VULTURE 1; LARGE PIED WAGTAIL; LITTLE CORMORANT 2; SPOTBILLS 18; PIED CRESTED CUCKOO 1.

Chilkur Deer Park (H. Taher, M.S. Kulkarni, & BSAP Members)

26, 27.vii: COMMON IORA 4; PIED CRESTED CUCKOO 1; STONE CURLEW - hrd; GREY PARTRIDGE 4; PAINTED PARTRIDGE - hrd; PEAFOWL 6; GREAT HORNED OWL 1; INDIAN RIVER TERN 3; COMMON HAWK CUCKOO 1; NIGHT HERON 3; LESSER WHISTLING TEAL 1; WHITEBROWED FANTAIL FLYCATCHER 1; TICKELL'S BLUE FLYCATCHER 2; SPOTTED OWLET 1.

NALGONDA DISTRICT

Turkapalli (Pranay Rao)

1.vii: BONELLI'S EAGLE 2; WHITE-EYED BUZZARD 1; SHIKRA 2 (f); BLACKWINGED KITE 2; SHORT-TOED EAGLE 1; PAINTED PARTRIDGE 4; BUTTON QUAIL 2; GOLDENBACKED WOODPECKER 2; BLACKHEADED CUCKOO-SHRIKE 1; PIED CRESTED CUCKOO - hrd; PLAINTIVE CUCKOO - hrd; COMMON HAWK CUCKOO 1; BLACK IBIS 6; COMMON IORA 1.

Turkapalli (Pranay Rao)

24.vii: PAINTED PARTRIDGE - hrd; PIED CRESTED CUCKOO 1.

KHAMMAM DISTRICT

Kothagudem (Humayun Taher)

17.vii: BLACK IBIS 25; PIED MYNA 12; HOUSE SPARROW 8; LARGE PIED WAGTAIL 1; SPOTTED OWLET 2.

GUNTUR DISTRICT

Uppalapadu (K. Mrutyumjaya Rao)

1.vii: GREY PELICAN juv 19; PAINTED STORK juv 150, ad 50; COOTS 88; LITTLE EGRET br. plm. 160; NIGHT HERON 1100+; LITTLE CORMORANT 30; PURPLE HERON 1; PURPLE MOORHEN 7; BRONZEWINGED JACANA 4; JUNGLE CROW 37; OPENBILLED STORK 450+; WHITE IBIS 7.

EAST GODAVARI DISTRICT

Kakinada Town (K. Mrutyumjaya Rao)

17.vii: HOUSE SPARROW 110.

ABBREVIATIONS: Ab-abundant; ad-adult/s; br-breeding; C-common/ly; c.-approximately; CB-confirmed breeding; CD*-conservation dependent; const-construction/ing; CR*-critical; DD*-data deficient; disp-display/ing; EN*-endangered; F-female; flt-flight; fly-family; freq-frequent/ly; hrd-heard; id-identify/ied; imm-immature; inc-include/ing; Is-Island; juv-juvenile; LM-local migrant; M-male; mat-material; N-nest/ing/s; NT*-near threatened; OH-overhead; POB-possible breeding; PRB-probable breeding; plm-plumage; RF-Reserve Forest; Resp-respectively; Tlk-Taluk; vil-village; VU*-vulnerable; WL-wildlife; yng-young.

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PIGEON POST

1) I visited Mrugavani National Park, Chilkur on Saturday and Sunday along with my grandfather. In the evening I saw the Sambar and Chital deers in the bushes. For the first time I saw the Pied Crested Cuckoo, Sunbird, Jungle Crow, Drongo, Egrets, River Terns, Hoopoe, Roseringed Parakeet, Spotted Dove, Redvented Bulbul and Iora. I also heard the call of the Peafowl and the music of Koel. On the way we saw prints of Peacock, Sambar, Chital and the spot where the wild boar had dug a small pit for roots. We went up the tower to see the city. I enjoyed the trip very very very much.

R. Sreekar

Class IV

Obul Reddy Public School, Jubilee Hills

2) recently I observed two new House Sparrow roosting sites in Kakinada. One is in military road, 200 metres from Sarada Devi Temple with 70 Sparrows, and another near the RTC Complex railway gate opp. to fish and vegetable market, where there were 40 birds. Both trees are *Pongamia pinnata*.

K. Mrutyumjaya Rao

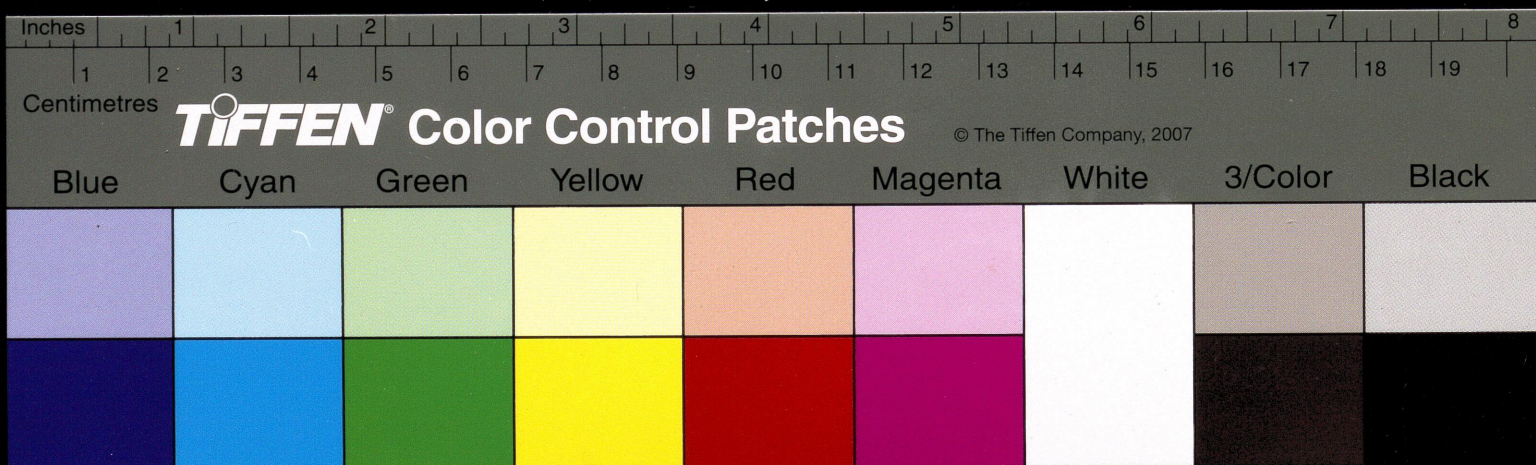
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For information, write to: Birdwatchers' Society of Andhra Pradesh, PO Box 45, Banjara Hills, Hyderabad 500034, India.

Editors: Siraj A. Taher & Humayun Taher (55612608), Raajeev Mathew (23310721)

Website: <http://www.bsaponline.org> **E-mail:** aasheesh@vsnl.in, humayun5@rediffmail.com

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IP TTTA

Bulletin of the Birdwatchers' Society of Andhra Pradesh

No. 149: September 2003

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PROGRAMME

FIELD OUTING: Members willing to take passengers may please contact the following: Shafaat Ulla (23353098) or Siraj Taher (55612608). Seats *may* be available in members' cars and will be reserved on a first-come-first-served basis. Book early to avoid disappointment.

Sunday, 21-ix-2003: Shamirpet Lake and Deer Park, Ranga Reddy District: Route: Secunderabad – Trimulgherry - Cantonment. Members are requested to reach the destination by 6.45am. Interesting sightings may include Greyheaded Buntings, possibly Peregrine Falcons and lots of woodland birds. There may also be interesting waterbirds in the Shamirpet Lake. This will be a half-day trip. Carry water and snacks. For further information contact Siraj Taher (55612608) or Shafaat Ulla (23353098) before 11am or after 4pm.

INDOOR MEETING: 15-ix-2003, 6pm: Annual General Meeting of the Society, Vidyaranya High School, Opp., Secretariat, Saifabad, Hyderabad.

NOTES & NEWS

Happenings of the Society - Field Trip to Vanasthalipuram Deer Park on 24th August 2003.

By M. Shafaat Ulla

The park, which is situated about 30 km. from the city just after Dilsukhnagar on the Vijayawada road, has a protected area of 3605 acres consisting of thorn and dry scrub forest, and grasslands typical of the Deccan Plateau. It has a considerable population of Blackbuck and Spotted Deer introduced by the Forest Department. It also has a wide variety of birds, both resident and local migrants, and winter migrants which come in from October to March.

Mr. Shankaran, Curator National Parks of the A.P. Forest Department, was kind enough to inform us that a further area of 1000 acres has been added to the park and hence it was decided to explore the place as it was a few years since the BSAP had organised an outing to the park.

We all gathered promptly at the gate, 17 members in all, and started walking into the park at 7:15 am. The first thing we noticed was the presence of hundreds of Pariah Kites and Crows, mostly on the western and northern side of the park, adjacent to the municipal garbage dump. Obviously there was a lot of food of their liking available, and a foul smell pervaded all over the park. The second aspect that we noticed was the near total absence of bird life. Initially we heard a Peafowl, the cackle of Large Grey Babblers followed by the call of a Partridge. A while later we saw a solitary male Koel

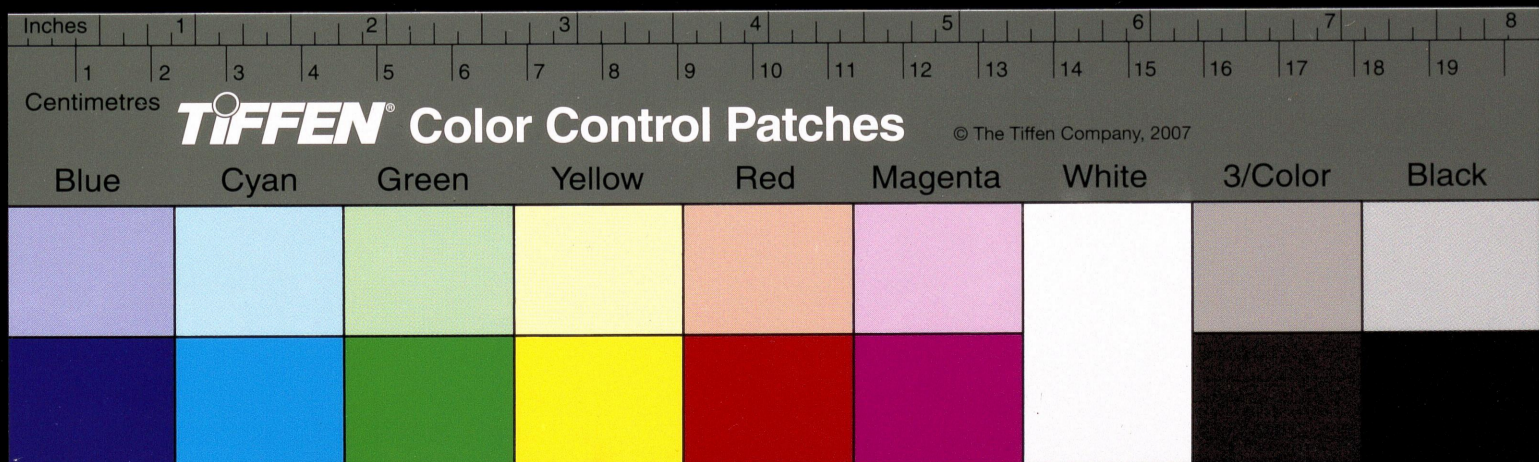
and a pair of Drongos. Later, on a side road near a bund we came upon the nest of a Peafowl with four eggs.

It was now about 9:30 a.m. and we decided to take a break for refreshments. We were hardly through when Mr. Jagdish Chandra of the Forest Department suggested that we visit the newly acquired area to the north which is more thickly forested. We all agreed instantly and set course behind Mr. Gopinath, our guide.

After a good walk of about two kilometres through thick foliage, we came to an elevated watch tower and climbed into it and had a breathtaking view of almost the entire Hyderabad city. It should be mentioned here that we were again disappointed by the lack of bird life. To be exact, we saw one juvenile Shikra, a pair of Redwattled Lapwings and a single Little Brown Dove in flight, not to forget four Mynas on a distant tall tree. In fact, the joke going around was that the birds had called a "bandh" that day, probably influenced by our politicians!

After rejuvenating ourselves with a half hour rest atop the tower platform and in the steady and cool breeze, we headed back for the gate and arrived there by about 12:30 p.m. having clocked about 8 km. and a thoroughly enjoyable, albeit exhausting, outing.

It is the opinion of many of us that a few BSAP volunteers should visit the park regularly for a few days to establish if the near absence of birds was a one time phenomenon or whether the birds are actually avoiding the park because of Kites and Crows or the smell from the dump or for any other reason.



Editor's Note: One of the reasons for not seeing many birds could be that in a thickly foliated area or a forest, instead of continuously walking and expecting to see birds all over, one has to remain in one place quietly for sometime to first hear and locate a bird or see one. The name of the game is "patience". Still it will be a good idea, as Shafaat Ulla has suggested, to regularly monitor the new area.

Taking Wing on Heads and Tails: ID-ing Birds of Prey

(Based on a talk given by Raajeev Mathew at the Indoor Meeting of the Society on 18th August)

By M. Shobha

Be-bop-a-lula, it's BOP time, folks! Oldies walking into the Vidyaranya School auditorium to attend the indoor meeting of the 18th of August may well be forgiven for presuming that they had come to the wrong venue given the number of new members gathered there! The ID idea was in the air and Raajeev Mathew, the Expert, was going to make a presentation about the nuances of identifying birds of prey. Literally sketching his way through an hour-and-a-half long presentation on 'BOP for Beginners', Raajeev held forth on the jizz of eagles, kites, hawks, falcons, buzzards, harriers and vultures.

The jizz of a bird is its general appearance; the information we gather about its shape and size that helps us label the bird right down to the species level. So, when we are on a field trip, it is the jizz of a bird that helps us swoop down on its Order and Genus, before pinning it to a species. Raajeev advised that we first take in the aspect of the bird – its proportion, shape and size. Then observe the wings and the tail: are they long, broad, tapering or rounded? The long and short of it is that you have to be Observant. And happily for us all, that calls for a lot of birding.

Raptors send us into raptures, no doubt, but how many of us pay attention to their countenance in overhead flight, head-on silhouette, wing patterns, tail patterns, wing span, stage of plumage, *et al*? It requires perhaps nothing less than the enduring enthusiasm of a Scientist, for ID-ing birds of prey willy-nilly sets apart the serious birder from the also-rans.

Tackling the Tails

The distinguishing feature of eagles (the Genus *Aquila* of the Order Falconiformes) is their moderate tail in relation to its overall size. The Greater Spotted Eagle (*Aquila clanga*) has a tail that is rounded off better at the edges and is more flayed as compared to that of the Lesser Spotted Eagle (*Aquila pomarina*). The Eastern Steppe Eagle (*Aquila rapax nipalensis*) has a tail whose outer edges are almost parallel. The Tawny Eagle (*Aquila rapax vindhiana*) has a well-rounded tail. The Imperial Eagle (*Aquila heliaca*) has a tail which is almost square-ended though it is not as "parallel" as that of the Steppe Eagle.

Going for the Heads

The nostril is round and the gape ends just underneath the eye in the Lesser Spotted Eagle. The nostril is round but the

gape ends just before the eye in the Greater Spotted Eagle. The Tawny Eagle's gape ends just beneath the eye. The gape of the Imperial Eagle, although quite narrow, ends beyond the position of the eye. The Steppe Eagle sports a wide gape that ends beyond the eye.

Sizing up the Wings

There are seven primaries in the Greater Spotted Eagle and six primaries in the Lesser Spotted Eagle. Watch out for the tapering wing of the Steppe Eagle. You will even find a triangular window with white or markings. The wing of the Imperial Eagle is relatively broader.

The Jizz of Other Raptors

Long wings and long tails typify the Harriers (Genus *Circus*). Harriers are generally slender. Buzzards (Genus *Buteo*) have wings that are long and very broad. Their tails are very broad and slightly rounded at the end. Hawks (Genus *Accipiter*) possess short, rounded wings and long tail. Kites (Genus *Milvus*) are hawks with long, forked tails. Falcons (Genus *Falco*) are smaller than kites and have long, angular, pointed wings, with a relatively short tail. Vultures (Genus *Gyps*) have very large, broad, almost rectangular wings and square or slightly rounded tails. Other vultures (Genus *Neophron*) have long, narrow, pointed wings and a wedge-shaped tail. The Egyptian or Scavenger Vulture (*Neophron percnopterus*) is an example.

Perhaps the time has come for each one of us to take a leaf out of Raajeev Mathew's feathery book to start drawing the jizz of birds of prey. A report about a presentation on field ID keys to raptors can at best be sketchy. But, one hopes that while referring to these sketches by Raajeev Mathew, you will prepare your own too.

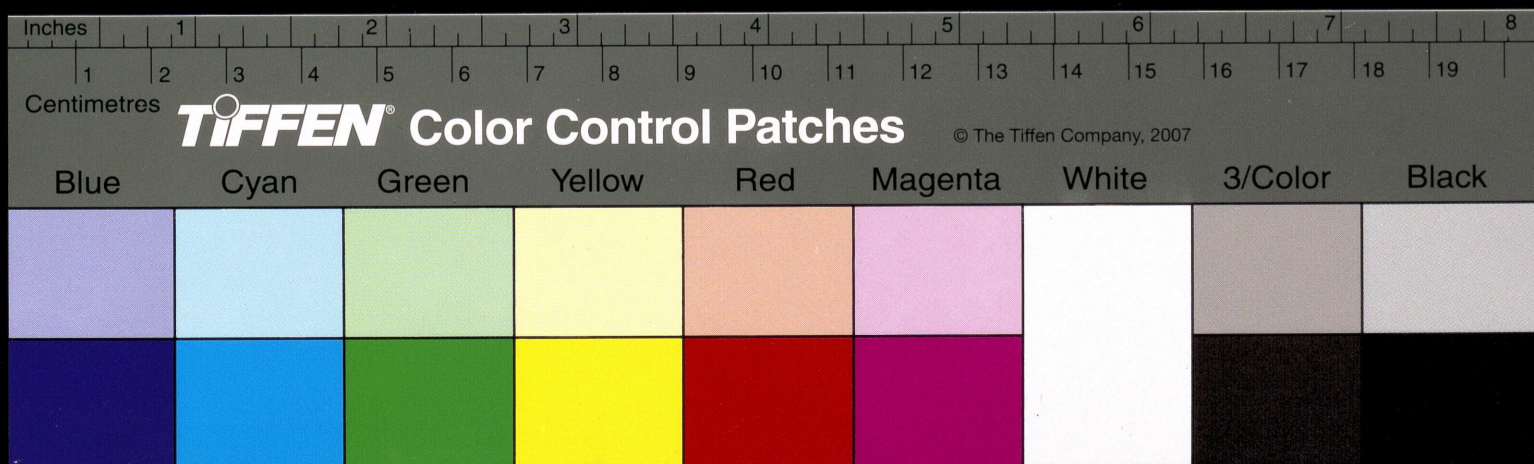
So, here's wishing that your spirits soar while you mark time with the shapes and sizes of birds of prey on the fly. May the thrill of ID-ing them pat be yours today and always. What's more, it's "heads" you win, "tails" I lose if you can make head or tail of this BOP Smart ID Challenge! Wonder how much more win-win BOP birding can get?

WHERE HAVE THE SPARROWS GONE - Some Thoughts

Humayun Taher

An article in the Times of India of India of Wednesday, 20th August 2003, regarding the disappearance of House Sparrows (*Passer domesticus*) from the environs of the city has produced a bountiful harvest. We have received lots of letters, through email, from people of all walks of life, and all eager to share their thoughts on the problem, or telling us about small populations of Sparrows from their immediate area. One gentleman has informed us about a pair breeding near his house – another has shown concern about the large number of birds he has seen being sold at the Chowk Bird Market. Yet another has suggested a captive breeding programme to try and build up the population. Interesting, and useful as these observations are,

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there is yet another aspect to them – the fact that lots of people (not necessarily concerned with bird conservation) have started to observe and show concern over the fact that House Sparrows are in danger of disappearing. This puts heart in an old birdwatcher like myself that perhaps there is some chance to get together and do something about the problem.

I remember my own childhood – we lived in a large and rambling old house in Banjara Hills, and the garden pool was a regular drinking place for dozens of the chirping critters. And it is interesting to note that, at that time, it was far more common to hurl anathemas at the birds for pecking grain, than trying to save them from extinction. If the cook had had her way in those days, it couldn't be worse than the fate which the Sparrows are facing today!

Another page from memory's book – the number of Sparrows was so large, (in *circa* 1976) that we youngsters devised a plan to imprison some of them! (I think we had heard that they make good eating!!). To that end a wire cage was liberally baited with grain and a cunning arrangement of strings was arranged from the door of the cage to the person in hiding. Although the idea was ingenious, the birds were not having any – they hopped into the cage, grabbed the grain and hopped out again with every expression of satisfaction – while the hidden *havaladar* tried in vain to make the cage door close! To no avail – the string had broken, or had snagged somewhere or something. Suffice to say that all the sparrows had a hearty feed and topped it up with a bath in the aforementioned pond and continued their nefarious activities on the grain which the cook had spread on a cloth to dry, inviting further anathemas, as before!

From that picture to the one today – it's been more than a month since I saw a Sparrow. And that was not in the city – it happened in Godavarikhani, at the Singareni Collieries Guesthouse. I saw a plump little bird sitting on a small Ashoka tree nearby and recognised it immediately. And I was amazed – because I recognised it at once in spite of the fact that it had been many a long day since I had seen one. It was a male House Sparrow, one of three hopping around, accompanied by their four wives. They made a very happy little band of birds and they can never have known that the mad human who prowled around the garden following their antics was as fascinated by them as they were by him (or his antics)!

Briefly then, it all boils down to this – that House Sparrows are presently in grave danger of disappearing from the face of the earth unless something is done, and done very quickly to save them and give them another chance at survival. Perhaps the article in the Times of India has done something in this direction – at least to the extent that it has brought to light several people interested in this cause and willing to devote time to the problem and find a possible solution. Anyone else out there who wants to come in...?

Below is a summarization of some of the letters received and mentioned above:

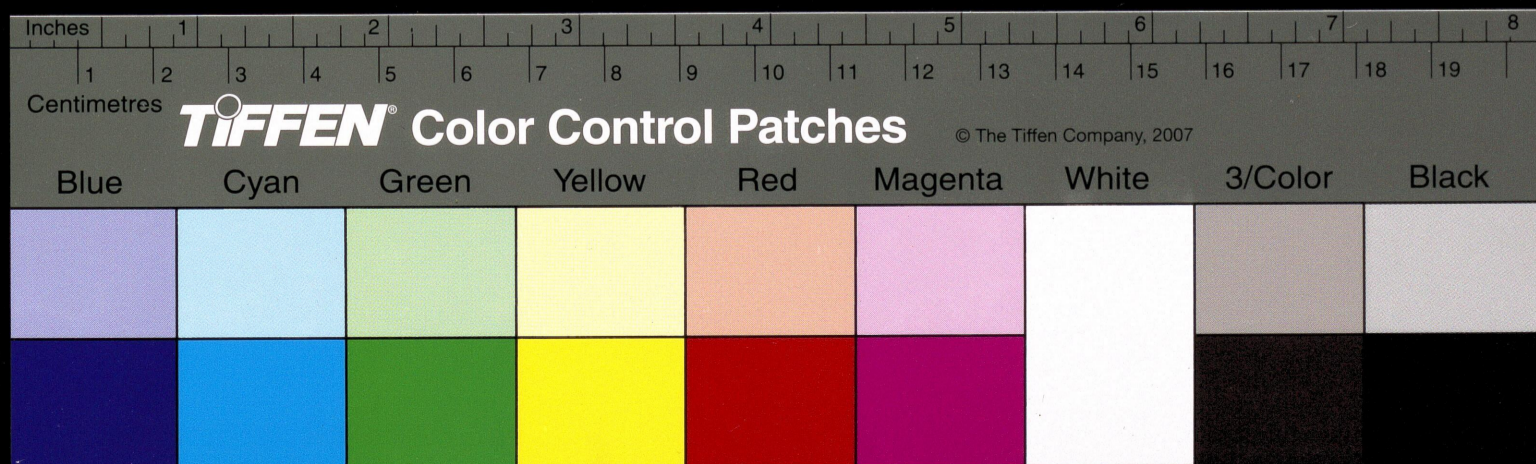
- 1) Mr. Viswanath Aisola writes that he is visited by 4 to 5 House Sparrows daily at a feeding bowl he has placed in his garden in Trimulgherry.
- 2) Mr. Jayaram Surender writes of his sighting of a flock of the birds in Coorg. He also feels strongly that a captive breeding/research programme should be initiated, with participation from Universities for the research aspect. (A good idea this, can anyone suggest a university/location for the captive breeding programme?).
- 3) Mr. Mazher Ali also cannot remember when last he has seen them in the city, but tells of a sighting from Moinabad.
- 4) Mrs. Lakshmi Krishnan, a BSAP member has given us a sighting of 6 birds on 6th and 7th of August. She also has promised to look out for the nests if they can be found and to keep an eye on them.
- 5) Mr. Fazal Ali Adil has mentioned seeing two pairs of the birds from the area between Mehdipatnam and Toli Chowki. He adds that one pair has disappeared, but one pair is nesting opposite his house and, from the signs, has raised a family. He shows great concern about the number of birds he has seen on sale at the Chowk market.

Perhaps, using these very concerned people as a nucleus, we can start some sort of campaign to pull the House Sparrow out of the hole it seems to have fallen into. What is urgently needed at the moment is to find out WHY the birds are declining so drastically. Theories are all very well; but facts are required here. Anyone listening. ...?

Annual General Meeting of the Birdwatchers' Society of Andhra Pradesh – Final Notice dated 1st September 2003

The Annual General Meeting of the Society will be held on 15th September 2003 (15.09.2003) at Vidyaranya High School, Saifabad. The timing of the meeting is 6.00 p.m. All members are requested to attend. The tentative programme for the meeting is given below:

- 1) President's Report
- 2) Secretary's Report
- 3) Treasurer's Report
- 4) Proposed Changes to the Constitution
- 5) Appointment of Auditors
- 6) Election of Executive Committee Members (Members desirous of serving on the committee, please give their names to the Hon. Secretary)
- 7) Any other Business

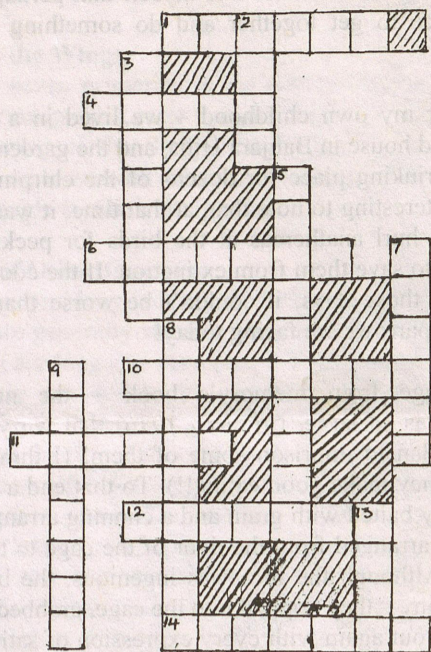


BIRDWORD PUZZLE - No. 5

By M.M. Ali Khan

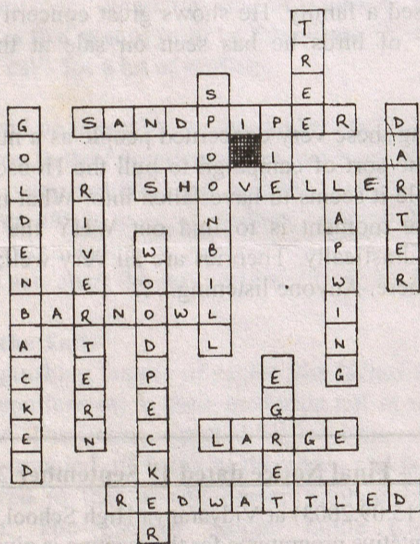
Note: Figures in Brackets denote number of alphabets
 The puzzle contains bird names only
 Correct solution to this puzzle will be given in the next issue of PITTA

1. Somewhere in Margo's prey (6).
2. See (4).
3. See (4).
- 4, 2 & 3. Digital Pager Wale (5, 4, 7)
5. Home to 'pearls' before a detective agency (10).
6. See (9).
7. Gives its young for adoption (6).
8. CROON in TIME otherwise to get the bird (9).
- 9 & 6. O'Hara - a little animal lover (7, 7).
10. Dress your hair and Duck (8).
11. Where you save cash and join MANY (8).
12. Crick between head and body (7).
13. Flightless bird (4).
14. Baked large but not to eat (7).



Members are requested to send their solutions to PITTA at the Society address. The correct entries will be entered for a draw. The lucky winner receives a BSAP cap, donated by Mr. M.M. Ali Khan.

Solution to Birdword Puzzle - No. 4



AN EXPENSIVE SHOT!

A California man was fined \$20,000 and sentenced to five years probation for shooting a California Condor, the rare bird that has been on the endangered species list since the 1960's. Cole Lewis - who pleaded guilty in May to killing the condor after an extensive investigation - was also barred from hunting in the U.S.

For Private Circulation Only

For information, write to: Birdwatchers' Society of Andhra Pradesh, PO Box 45, Banjara Hills, Hyderabad 500034, India.

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Membership (Rs): Admission=100; Annual=200; Student=100 per annum. Life=2,000. Add Rs.25/- for outstation cheques

