

# NEWS LETTER FOR BIRD WATCHING

Volume 6-No 7 - July 1966

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NEWSLETTER.

FOR

BIRDWATCHERS

Volume 6, No. 7

July 1966

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A BIRDHOUSE NEST

By

Nandan Nilakanta

Some years ago, the Club, through the Newsletter, had asked members to make a study of sparrows. In connection with this we had built a small nest-box, about six inches cubed, made of cement-asbestos board, with a hole of two inches diameter in one side to serve as an entrance. This contraption which was obviously man-made, was fixed to the fork of a drumstick tree by tying it with wire. It was 16½ feet (4.92 metres) off the ground and it was hoped that sparrows would nest in it. However, probably because crows and squirrels could get at it, it was not used for several years.

The rain and the continuous salt wind from the sea took their toll and the birdhouse began to disintegrate. The bottom of the house fell down and lodged in the fork. We paid little heed to it until one early June morning.

At about noon on 2nd June, 1966, My father and I were casually watching a pair of Magpie Robins that boldly include our garden in their territory. We are interested in these birds because one of them has been ringed by us. However, on this particular day, I noticed that the female had an insect in her bill and then lost interest till my mother suddenly remarked: 'Oh! It's gone into the ... no! It's gone behind the birdhouse!' This aroused our interest and Father saw it disappear into the birdhouse. A closer

look showed that the birds had built a nest over the fallen bottom. We examined it with a pair of binoculars but saw nothing of interest. A few days before I had seen the male Magpie Robin dive at a crow and chase it away from the very same tree but it never occurred to me that it might have a nest there.

The fact that the female entered the nest with an insect makes me believe that there are nestlings in the box. My only worry is that a Crow-Pheasant which has been skulking in our garden may find the nest. We were worried that this had happened when, on the morning of the 4th, we found that the birds seemed to take no interest in the nest. For very long they did not approach it and we even saw the male Magpie Robin eat an insect quite close to the nest-box, with no regard for it. Father climbed the tree to investigate but could neither find nor hear anything even when he put his finger into the nest. However, a short while later, the female entered the box with an insect. I watched the entrance carefully but it had not reappeared when I left ten minutes later.

Once on the previous day, the male bird entered the nest through the hole. A few minutes later the female came with an insect. It flew to the rim of the entrance hole but hastily hopped out again, for, with the male still inside there was probably not room enough. This episode convinces me that both the male and the female look after the young.

I have noticed that before a parent Magpie Robin enters the birdhouse it goes through an elaborate safety 'check-list'. It first perches on a branch about three feet from the nest and above it. Then, if there is nothing to alarm it, it hops onto another branch about a couple of feet below the nest and waits to make sure that there is no danger before it flies to the sill of the entrance hole. If it thinks that we are observing it, it flies into the opposite compound. They always use the entrance hole.

As they invariably perch at exactly the same spots, on the same branches, during the approach ritual, it should not be too difficult to photograph them by remote control. We also want to ring the young birds.

(This pair of Magpie Robins have been seen in our garden for many years. The male was netted on 20th November 1965 and its wing was found to be 90 mm. A blue, aluminium band was put around its left leg on that day by which it has been confirmed that these are the same birds that have been in our garden for so many years. They sing beautifully: whistling tunes and also chirring noises. The chirrr, chirrr sound seems to be a sort of alarm call or a warning signal, for, though it is not conclusively certain, I have observed that this sound is made whenever cats, crows or humans venture too close. Although I have often heard and seen the male make this chirring sound I have not ever seen the female doing so. I wonder if only the male can do so. Both the male and the female often sing lustily.)

Note. The cover picture shows the broken nest box with occupant.

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## BIRDWATCHING IN MUSSOORIE

By

N.M. Mistry

Recently I spent eight enjoyable days in Mussoorie and the adjoining area and I used this opportunity to observe the birds in this region. On my first morning in Mussoorie I went for a stroll to the Gun Hill. Here I came across a small flock of Rufousbellied Babblers. They were jumping from one rock to another and hiding in the tall grass and bushes which grew in between the rocks. It was evident that they did not like the early morning intruder in their territory and they tittered harshly as they kept a close watch on my progress. On my way back from the Gun Hill I made a detour by the Camel's Back road. Here when passing through an area in which there was thick foliage on either side of the road I heard what sounded like a Tickell's Flowerpecker. The Flowerpecker was on the valley side and I was waiting for it to make its appearance, when a sky blue ball flew over my head from the hillside and settled on a rock just a few feet below me. I completely forgot the Flowerpecker and stood marvelling at the beauty of my new friend -- a Verditer Flycatcher. It was a splendid male specimen, just the size of a sparrow and it showed not the least sign of alarm at my presence. He just sat there on the rock and looked me all over. It almost seemed as if he was waiting for me to throw a crumb at him. Then he suddenly flew away out of sight and I continued on my way.

Next day, I strolled down the ghat into the Doon Valley. In the orchards, lychees were hanging in ripe red bunches from the trees and the birds must have been finding them irresistible, for in almost every tree-top a 'scarecrow' had been put up. I saw hoopoes, mynas, robins, magpie robins, jungle babblers, parakeets, bulbuls, black drongs and other common birds. Then I saw a solitary Rufousbacked Shrike. This bird was not difficult to recognise because of the conspicuous black band through the eyes and the rufous back. It was sitting in a tree by the roadside and when I approached it flew away to a more distant tree from where it kept a sharp eye on me. I went nearer and again it flew away. Finally, I gave up the chase. Nearby a pair of hoopoes were feeding on the ground in the shade of a tree. They started playing the same game with me as the shrike and flew from the shade of one tree to the next as I walked on. However, they were not so shy as the shrike and finally, they let me pass very close to them while they waited in the shade of a huge banyan tree. A little further on there was a water tap and a magpie robin was quenching its thirst in the small pool that had formed below the tap. It was very warm and both I and the magpie robin were equally thirsty. When I approached the tap the magpie robin retreated just a yard or so and then when I moved away it hopped back to have its fill.

A couple of days later I started on a trek from Mussoorie to Tehri. An early morning in a Himalayan jungle is an unforgettable experience, especially to a birdwatcher. The jungle was alive with the cooing of doves screeching of junglefowls and the calls and whistles of numerous other birds. Leading the orchestra was the ace mimic of the forests, the racket-tailed drongo, who regaled the jungles with his varied calls and songs. I identified two species of doves -- the Spotted Dove and the Ring Dove. About ten minutes after I had entered the forest I heard a commotion a little to my right on the hillside. Expecting to see some wild animals I peered intently through the undergrowth. To my pleasant surprise I saw two Red Junglefowls scratching the jungle floor and fighting it out over some juicy worm. However, they quickly took alarm at my presence and vanished in the undergrowth. A little further on, a junglefowl rushed across the road a few yards ahead

of me, in great panic. I discovered the cause of its panic as two villagers armed with sticks who were coming round a corner from the opposite direction. There was one bird whose call was very much to be heard in the jungle, but which I could neither see nor identify. I had heard the same bird in the Kulu Valley the previous year and I think it is a regular visitor to the Himalayan foothills every summer. It has a very pleasant call consisting of just two notes, which it repeats regularly at short intervals. The notes sound something like koo-kuk, as if somebody is playing the notes E-C on a descending scale - can it be a Pigmy Owlet? Perhaps some reader may be able to identify the bird although I realize that the data supplied by me is very insufficient for proper identification. When I was nearing Kaudia, the tranquility of the forest was shattered by the sharp report of a rifle shot. It was a pitiable reminder of the junglefowl's panic.

The track emerged from the forest near a village called Kapul Pani and there there was a steep descent to Tehri along a track which clung to the rockwall on one side and hugged the valley on the other. There were huge lizards and chameleons in the holes and crevices in the rockface on the left. A brahminy kite circled in the sky over the valley on the right.

I was a little surprised to see this bird here but then a little down the hill slope there were terraced fields and down into the valley were water-logged paddy fields. Possibly the kite had strayed up to this height away from the water, to hunt lizards in the rocks. In the terraced fields I saw the somewhat rare whitecheeked bulbuls. Unlike their more commonly seen counterparts the redwhiskered and redvented bulbuls, the whitecheeked bulbuls have a yellow vent instead of a red one. I also saw some more rufousbacked shrikes and now and then a Kashmir Roller (blue jay) which looked majestic in flight. Near the village of Ram Gaon I saw a splendid specimen (male) of a crested bunting. Surprisingly it made no sign of flying away even when I approached very close. Then a thunderstorm with lightening flashes broke out over the Tehri Garhwal hills and it brought my birdwatching to an abrupt end.

On my last day in Mussoorie I once again went to Gun Hill in the morning and took a stroll to Savoy in the evening. I was rewarded with the sight of two uncommon birds that day -- a kestrel nesting in a tall tree on the approach to the Gun Hill, and some scarlet minivets in a cluster of trees near the Savoy.

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#### THE STORY OF 'KOTUR'

By T.V. Jose

On 14th April 1964, my neighbour's son came running to me and said that there was a nest of a bird in the near-by Pongom tree. From the details of the nest and the bird he described, it was plain that the bird was a coppersmith (Megalaima haemacephala).

#### The nest and the nesting

I found the stump 20 ft. above the ground slightly turned upward showing a dark depression on the upper side at the jagged end, which turned out to be the mouth of the hole. The hole at its mouth measured 2 ins. across and was 6 inches in depth. That the hole should be thus open to the sky seem to me an unusual occurrence, as always observed coppersmith birds choose to excavate nest holes from the lower side of a dead branch or the side of the vertical or slanting stem.

As I approached the chick -- the only one left in the hole -- it sensed danger and instantly lay flat close to the wood motionless. It was dark-greyish in colour with incipient feather buds bordering

the wings; otherwise, it appeared naked and blind too. As soon as I put my fingers into the hole in an attempt to catch it, it withdrew to the bottom. However, I could take it out though with some difficulty.

There was no lining of cotton or any soft material used to pad the nest. The bottom of the nest was covered with the chick's almost-amber-coloured droppings. Yet the accumulated excreta did not stink. In general features the hole of a coppersmith bears a striking resemblance to that of the small green barbet (Megalaima viridis). I do not however remember whether the piled up faeces in the latter case were odorous or odourless as I came across one nest some years back. One thing seems pretty sure that what might seem to be unhygienic has evidently little to do with the health of the chicks in either case. Chicks are always spotlessly clean, and healthy.

Threatened, as it was, by its natural enemies on the one hand, for the tree had harboured many sinister-looking crow-nests, and neighbours' children on the other, I thought the chick would be safer under my care. My overwhelming desire to study the chick's growth and behaviour, was another tempting reason to kidnap it from its lawful parents. In our room I kept it on our table in a soft pad of cotton cloth, between two rows of books.

#### Life under our roof

With apparent ease the young coppersmith adapted itself to the new surroundings. On calling it, 'kotur' it would open its beak and attempt to grab the food held out to it. Seemingly, it was unable to judge the direction of food for in the nest the direction was restricted always to the open side. With the food safely in its mouth, the clamour and fuss it made at each time would fade out. Kotur's diet generally consisted of ripe plantain, grapes (peeling off skin), figs and chikku. Except for the meagre quantity of insect food that it might have got through fruits like those of banyan and peepul, provided occasionally, there was no insect food as such in its menu, since we did not know what sort of insects it would eat. Deficiency of nitrogenous food, I am afraid, had an adverse effect on its overall growth and particularly on the growth of feathers. We gave it food in small quantities, fearing indigestion. When none of us was at home, the young bird had to starve. Nevertheless, after my coming from office I used to make up the shortage by feeding it till as late as 10.30 at night.

#### Some significant activities

At this time one surprising fact came to my notice: that nature has failed to provide any marked colour in the mouth of the chick, as might be seen among a variety of birds, of which the purpose may be to help their parents to feed their offspring rightly and evenly in the confusing colour of the nest and nestlings. After a moment's thought I realized the futility of any colour, however bright, except possibly white, where the chicks have to live in dark holes.

When a meal was over not only did its agitation die out but the chick crawled quickly backward and lay flat for some time. We all know that a backward movement, whether among birds or other animals, is very uncommon and perhaps even unnatural. To understand then this peculiar habit we have to go a little deep into the household life of coppersmiths.

The depth of their nests varies from 5 to 7 inches, or a little more. Variation I think depends on the texture of the wood they choose for boring. In one nest, selected at random, the inside space somewhere in the centre, measured roughly  $2\frac{1}{2}$  inches diameter (vertical section) and mouth of the hole  $1\frac{1}{2}$  inches. The hindmost

portion of the tunnel is invariably used for depositing their droppings. The remaining portion is very much limited considering the area required by the number of chicks, usually three and rarely four; that have to live till they are full grown. Chicks of different sizes are found in a clutch. So, at feeding time, all of them cannot thrust their head and neck equally well and catch the attention of their parents to receive food. As soon as one succeeds in satisfying itself with the food offered to it, it would recede allowing the other to have its turn and the parent bird thus completes the round with no feeling of confusion, over-feeding or underfeeding. This arrangement thus helps to feed the chicks impartially from the youngest to the eldest, with the care and attention proper to them. I surmise therefore the lack of distinct colour in the younglings' mouth can be interpreted meaningfully in this context only.

Another occasion at which it would likewise crawl backward was when it wanted to evacuate its bowel. This is in order to deposit the excreta at the rear-most corner of the cavity.

As days passed we observed that the bird was capable of producing two types of sound. One was just diminutive of its adult stage from which it earned its name, Coppersmith, and heard it producing during the interval between one meal and the other calling for our attention; and the other, described roughly, was much like a faint hissing noise emitted by a hot nail dipped in cold water, a sign of satisfaction, heard only after every meal, but lost its identity when it grew into a fledgeling.

Unless it felt hungry, it would drowse most of the time. However, it was not without activities of its own when it was awake. At times soon after food taking it would run the tongue inside the beak over and over. Sometimes, as if it was dreaming or imagining the proximity of food, it would open its mouth, thrust forward head and neck and 'eat air'. This mock food taking was repeated so often and earnestly that one might think that the chick was speaking to itself (mentally): 'I will eat thus and thus, let the food come within my reach.' Sometimes I fancied it was taking planned exercise to improve the related muscles of head and neck to snatch the food next time more efficiently. Fancy apart, could that have been due to some ~~in~~ minor disorder of the digestive system caused by our faulty feeding as, for example, hiccup in humans?

Flight of Psychodas (a kind of tiny flies found on fruits) too near the chick, would sometimes tempt the chick to chase them, But never have I seen it catching any.

For some time I observed that sudden sounds make the chick instinctively silent and crouch flat on the table. But in course of time, when the chick was accustomed with disturbances of the room, it grew indifferent to such signs that otherwise called for caution. If, therefore, we want to see the life-saving instincts of the chicks well preserved and sharp enough to become of any use in later life, they should be reared, as far as possible, in secluded places, away from the hubbub of our life.

#### Further developments

On the 19th I was satisfied to see the feather stalks elongated, even their olive green tops sprouted, but not sufficiently long and spread out to cover the body completely. To my delight the day

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<sup>1</sup>E.C. Stuart Baker says in his book THE NIDIFICATION OF BIRDS OF THE INDIAN EMPIRE that three eggs are generally laid, sometimes only two and rarely four.

<sup>2</sup>This means incubation begins as soon as the first egg is laid.

day before, I saw it preening its scanty feather buds or making attempts to do so. It was learning an important lesson in personal hygiene. Now its eyes were fully open, and what was more, its eye-sight was improving day by day. Coppersmith chicks have poor eye-sight as compared with bulbul chicks, or perhaps, for that matter, any chicks of open nests. At this time, or a little earlier, came stretching exercises. Now and then it would stretch out one of its wings and the leg of that side to the extent it could. Yet another activity of far more importance was its training of wing muscles for the oncoming flight. It would lower its front portion close to the wooden plank of the table to get a grip over it and stretch out both wings and vibrate briskly. In spite of all these activities, the little one had not full control over its muscles, and, as a result, it faltered in attempts requiring skill and attention. Flapping exercises continued until at last it became a full fledged flier. How does it manage all these various activities requiring considerable space in its narrow tunnel nest?

On the 20th I cleaned its beak, cheek, brow and throat with tip of damp towel. I noticed that Kotur could straighten its knees letting the weight of its body fall on its feet. In the days that followed it learnt to hop and by and by it would hop all over the table, sometimes going into narrow spaces between rows of books that somewhat resembled its nest hole. And what was once hopping now turned to short flight. On 28th, Kotur flew a distance of about 7 ft. without stopping. It was a horizontal flight. Its flights, in this as in those that followed immediately, were aimless. They were attempts to the unknown, but repeated with verve and vigour. The thrill of new experience robbed its desire for food as its food taking in those days was found unusually irregular and far reduced. The kok, kok (not tonk, tonk; the difference between the sound of the chick and that of the parents (adults) to my ear mainly lies in the shallowness and quicker repetition of the former) noise was also very much reduced. In short, all its attention now seemed to have converged to the one task of flight.

On our shelf I fixed a dead branch with many tiny twigs. This gave opportunity to the bird to learn gripping, hopping and aiming at one twig from the other. Kotur learnt quickly ascending and horizontal flights, but seem<sup>ed</sup> unable for a time to fly downward. But by the 3rd May it could come down from the branch to the table to eat without our help. And on 5th, a Saturday, it directly flew down on the head of my brother asking for food.

Ever since Kotur was able to fly it preferred to roost on the branch of tree we fixed on the shelf. This shows, that coppersmiths can sleep on branches too, like any other birds.

However, I was eager to test the truth of the statement that Coppersmiths use their nest hole as a roost even after their parental duties are over for the year. On several nights I wriggled up the tree to examine the nest hole where Kotur's parents were supposed to roost. But always I found it empty, and unused.

I hasten to add that the finding is not sufficient to prove anything contrary to the observation made on this point by others. One of the studies I carried out later proved that Coppersmiths do roost in their nest holes, as well as on twigs. In one case both the parents spent nights in one hole with their chick or chicks in that nest. But much is yet to be known about their roosting habits and I hope my efforts in this direction will soon be rewarded.

(To be continued)

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THE ARRIVAL OF THE GOLDEN ORIOLE IN SAHARANPUR, U.P

By

E. W. Ramble

Here, in Saharanpur, the Golden Oriole is a local migrant and its arrival dates are given below:

1947	:	27 March	1953	:	4 April
1948	:	1 April	1964	:	5 April
1949	:	9 April	1965	:	12 April
1950	:	2 April	1966	:	8 April

They leave again during September. On my last home leave in the U.K. I visited the Booth Museum of British Birds at Brighton a couple of times with my little son. The exhibits, which have all been taken in the British Isles, are attractively laid out in natural 'nesting' settings and the Museum is well worth a visit. I was surprised to see a pair of Golden Orioles (no nest) there, and in conversation with the Curator was informed that there are generally one or two sightings reported by birdwatchers in the south of England every summer.

The Blackheaded Oriole

Curiously enough the Blackheaded Oriole does not visit Saharanpur. When I was stationed at Monghyr (Bihar) between 1954-1962 the opposite was the case, the Blackheaded Oriole being common and the Golden Oriole did not seem to be a visitor.

One year a Blackheaded Oriole chick was found under a banyan tree in our very large garden. We never located the nest nor found a second chick. The parent birds were considerably agitated; the chick had barely a covering of feathers and could not even stand up. As a temporary measure my wife put it into a small wicker cage and hung it under the banyan tree. You can imagine our delight and surprise to find that the parent birds began to feed it through the cage slats. Time passed, the cage was taken indoors at nights and hung under the tree during the day. Marauders such as crows and tirumtees were viciously attacked by the parents. The chick flourished and grew into a handsome youngster. The problem next was to release the bird. Obviously, with no strength in its wings, it would fall an immediate victim to the crows or merlins. At that time I maintained a large outdoor aviary about 20 ft. x 10 ft. x 8 ft. high in which I kept a variety of grain eating birds only. This aviary was at the back of the house while the banyan tree was in the front.

However, we released the young oriole into the aviary. To our great pleasure the parents soon located it and continued to feed it through the wire netting. In a week the youngster was flying about inside the aviary and a few days later we released it.

The last we saw of it was high up in a tree with the parent birds

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A NOTE ON Otus scops

By

Robert L. Fleming, Ph.D.

About twenty years ago I heard a small owl calling at dusk. I did not recognize it. 'Pluck-pak-pluck' it would repeat over and over again. Barlowganj, Mussoorie, U.P., where I heard it, is about 5000 feet in altitude and is surrounded by steep, rocky slopes dotted with bahunia trees.

In Nepal, fifteen years later, I again heard this bird in the Rapti Dun near the Narayani River. The altitude was about 1000 feet and the forest was largely sal. It was well after dark when the monotonous sound began and though I could locate the very tree, the flashlight revealed no bird.

It was in Jhapa District, the extreme south-eastern district of Nepal terai, that we camped in January, 1965. Here again, several individuals of this illusive bird, punctuated the night air. Stumbling over logs in a cut-over forest I finally glimpsed a small owl sitting on a stump in an open glade of light forest. It flew into tall trees near-by and again I could not find it. I counted 247 'pluck-pak-plucks' before it stopped.

Three weeks later we camped in the foothills on the border of Jhapa and Ilam districts, in a heavy, mixed forest at 800 feet. Again our little friend began to sound off, this time a half hour before dusk. Our son, R.L. Fleming II soon returned with a beautiful bright reddish-tan phased Otus scops. This was now a familiar sound throughout the terai and into the Nepalese foothills to about 3500 feet. We were in Kanchanpur two months later; this is the extreme south-western district of the terai. Here, across the Sarda River from Tanakpur, we collected a specimen in broad day light. It was silent but flew out of a leafy tree in front of us into a similar tree near-by.

It had taken so many years to know that 'pluck-pak-pluck' were the notes of the North Indian Scops Owl!

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UNEXPECTED BIRD

By

Lalsinh M. Raol

I was out for birdwatching in the evening on 18.3.61. There is a very good spot for waterbirds, especially waders at Rajkot in the river Aji where the city sewage water flows, a little downstream behind the Central Jail. There is also another small stream of dirty sewage water in front of the Central Jail. After a little meandering it flows into the Aji. Just where it takes a turn to the last, a group of three birds attracted my attention. Though I had never seen those birds before, I could at once identify them. They were Pied Mynas. To make sure I wrote down the description of the birds, later to compare it with the book. On referring to Whistler I found that I was correct in my identification. I was very much surprised to find Pied Mynas in Rajkot as that bird is not mentioned by R.S. Dharmakumarsinhji in his BIRDS OF SAURASHTRA. Thus my sighting the bird on 18.3.61 may perhaps be the first record of that bird from Saurashtra. The Pied Mynas were afterwards seen by K.S. Lavkumar and a student of his at different places on different occasions in Saurashtra.

Recently I was lucky enough to come across the Pied Myna again. While taking a stroll in the Darbar Baug at Jasdan on 18.4.66 at about 6.45 p.m., I saw a solitary Pied Myna. It caught my eye when it flew from the ground into a nearby tree. Then it alighted to take a bath from the running water of a small water course. I did not see it again.

Y.S. Shivraj Kumar of Jasdan is a well-known and keen birdwatcher. On my informing him about the occurrence of the Pied Myna in his own estate, he told me that he had never seen it in Jasdan.

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REVIEW

COMMON TREES. By Dr. H. Santapau. pp. 138. National Book Trust. Price Rs8.25

We Indians, (readers of the Newsletter excepted) generally know very little about our own trees and plants. Part of the reason for this is that there is no one to tell us, and that most books on the subject are expensive. The paper bound edition of Fr. Santapau's book costs only Rs5.25 -- and for this paltry sum the interested layman will have the privilege of learning, from one of our best-known authorities, the characteristics of thirty-six of the commoner trees of our country. Fr. Santapau's easy informal manner of writing makes it a pleasure to read his book. The twenty-nine line illustrations of leaf and flower are accurate and pleasing, while there are twelve coloured plates. One could have wished for more, but considering the price, twelve is a generous number. We hope that the intentions of the National Book Trust will be realized and the book will indeed find its way into the hands of every 'intelligent layman' in India.

L.F.

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CORRESPONDENCE

A Coppersmith's unusual food

While hopping about in a Gul Bohat tree (Delonix regia) a Coppersmith chose to peck its red flower. Once it battered one of the petals that it plucked, but ultimately it let it fall. The other time it gulped a good piece of it and flew away. This happened on 25th May morning.

In the morning of 24th May 1966, I saw a common house crow bringing a piece of brown-bread to a puddle of water. It dipped the piece and moved to a place where the now softened bread it began to tear and gulp. When it found some part still hard it again soaked in the same water and finished it off.

Also I noticed that the water it chose to soak was the cleanest of all the puddles spread all over there.

T.V. Jose

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Bird notes from Delhi

We had seen a pair of Lammergeier in May in Ranikhet but had failed to identify them as they did not appear to be the 4 feet in length that Whistler describes, and other visitors called them the Kumaon Golden Eagles. It was not till we were up there again in December and still trying to identify these 'golden' eagles that our ten year old daughter was fired by enthusiasm and insisted that they were Lammergeiers and we had to agree that except in size they filled the book's description and must be so.

We have not been out birdwatching so much this year as last as we have taken up sailing at the weekends, but even this sport gives one some wonderful views. The eagles are many round the river, but none of them look like Pallas's Fishing Eagles! We saw our first Avocets and Skimmers, and on a rough day we have sailed almost into swimming duck and teal before they have heard us.

Our house is not far from the Jamuna. The garden is small and mainly shrubs and inhabited largely by the three kinds of bulbuls, tailor birds, sunbirds and ashy wren warblers. Twice we saw Sirkeer Cuckoo (two years ago) but this year our only unusual visitors have been two Grey Hornbills (on two occasions), a Large Green Parbet, and a Sparrow Hawk which crushed to its death against our verandah glass door last November while chasing a Little Brown Dove (also a victim), who thought to escape into our house! I believe he is now stuffed and on display in the Bombay Natural History Museum.

A month or so ago, a pair of White-eye, with a minute baby in tow, hopped along into a bush where I was pruning. They were a delightful sight, but I never saw them again.

We are looking forward to seeing Peter Scott's film WILD WINGS about Slimbridge next week. The Zoological Study Circle is arranging it with the British Information Service, who have just received the film from London. It should be very interesting.

M.C. Robertson.

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Birdwatching in Khanewal, Pakistan:

I normally live in Khanewal (Pakistan). It is a great place for birds, however particularly in the spring and autumn seasons and one can see many Palaearctic species in full breeding plumage in late April -- such as Grey Plover, Dunlin, Bartailed Godwits, Greater Mongolian Sand Plovers, Kentish Plovers (breeding) to mention but a few.

T.J. Roberts.

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Bird notes from Rawatbahata, Rajasthan:

Much of our astonishment, an osprey is staying in the neighbourhood and seen over the river every now and then. A cuckoo (*Cuculus canorus*) rather light grey in colour as compared to what we have seen in Seden was heard and seen (indeed at 10 ft. distance). I also believe I have heard a greenshank which I presume should be ruled out. 4 kinds of kingfishers both specimens of small minivets, pied crested cuckoo, paradise flycatchers and many more are on the list we are preparing.

S.O. Nilsson.

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