

NEWSLETTER

FOR BIRDWATCHERS

Volume 4-1964 February

Indexed
10/4
194



1964 2
No



NEWSLETTER
FOR
BIRDWATCHERS

Vol. 4, No. 2

February 1964

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ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION

Annual subscription for membership of the Birdwatchers' Field Club of India from 1 January 1964 to 31 December 1964 is now due. Please send a cheque for Rs5/- or money order for this amount to:

Zafar Futehally
32A Juhu Lane
Andheri, Bombay 58.

Membership of the Club entitles you to get the Newsletter for Birdwatchers free of cost. Members outside India will have to bear the cost of postage, which is Rs5/- per year for the U.K. and Commonwealth countries for sending 12 copies of the Newsletter by surface mail, and Rs4/- for the United States of America.

Please note that if your subscription is not received by the 20th of February it will be presumed that you are not interested in receiving the Newsletter, and it will not be sent to you from March onwards.

Members who have already sent in their subscription may please disregard this notice.

(Mrs.) Leelavati Nilakanta
Honorary Treasurer,
Zafar Futehally
Honorary Secretary

Birdwatchers' Field Club of India.

A TOPSY TURVY NEST

Although the Tailor Bird, Orthotomus sutorius, is very common, and its nest is not unfamiliar in many gardens, the successful nest building and raising of a brood in my compound in Juhu, Bombay, gave me and my family immense pleasure and at times we were totally astonished.

Some months back my youngest child Sumedha had built a "nest" in the fork of a Drumstick Tree about 3 feet from the ground. The nest consisted of a lot of paper straw with a central pad of cotton wool in which two abandoned and addled sparrow's eggs were placed in the hope of them being adopted by some passing bird. The child was not disillusioned by us. The nest was left undisturbed.

On the morning of Wednesday 2nd Oct. (a holiday everywhere) we found a Tailor Bird, shouting at the top of its voice, on the Drumstick Tree. Very often he descended to the fork and selecting a suitable wad of cotton wool would fly off in the direction of my garage, only 20 yards away.

My clumsy efforts to track the bird, only resulted in the bird misleading me to a number of trees, some in my neighbour's compound. Therefore, Sumedha was deputed to remain in the garage and watch the bird. Very soon, the bird was located stuffing cotton wool into its nest.

The nest was a single leaf of the Indian Almond Tree (Terminalia catappa), stitched into a funnel shape: Not only, was the leaf growing about 12 feet from the ground, the most astonishing fact was that the open mouth of the funnel was downwards and the apex upwards.

Any object like an egg placed in the nest was bound to drop out of it. Even the cotton wool was secured by perforating the leaf surface and forcing some of the wool through these perforations in the manner of rivetting.

There were heavy thunder showers on the 12th Oct. By the 15th Oct. it was noticed that the leaf had assumed a reasonably pendant position. This was after the growth of two additional leaves in the same bunch. Now the mouth of the funnel was upwards and the apex towards the ground.

The bird had chosen a leaf which:-

- a) was tender enough for the edges to be drawn together and stitched,
- b) had grown to full area,
- c) could be predicted to grow to the correct pendant position in a given time,
- d) could become more inconspicuous with the growth of additional leaves,
- e) could be guaranteed to remain strong and firm till nesting was completed.

On Sunday 27th Oct. two Tailor Birds could be seen, taking insects in their bills, to the nest, to feed their young. A camera was set up to photograph them. They raised their usual alarm cry of "pip, pip, pip, etc." and tried to lead us away from the nest. They were frightened of the person standing near the camera and showed no fear in entering the nest, when camera, with tripod was left unattended.

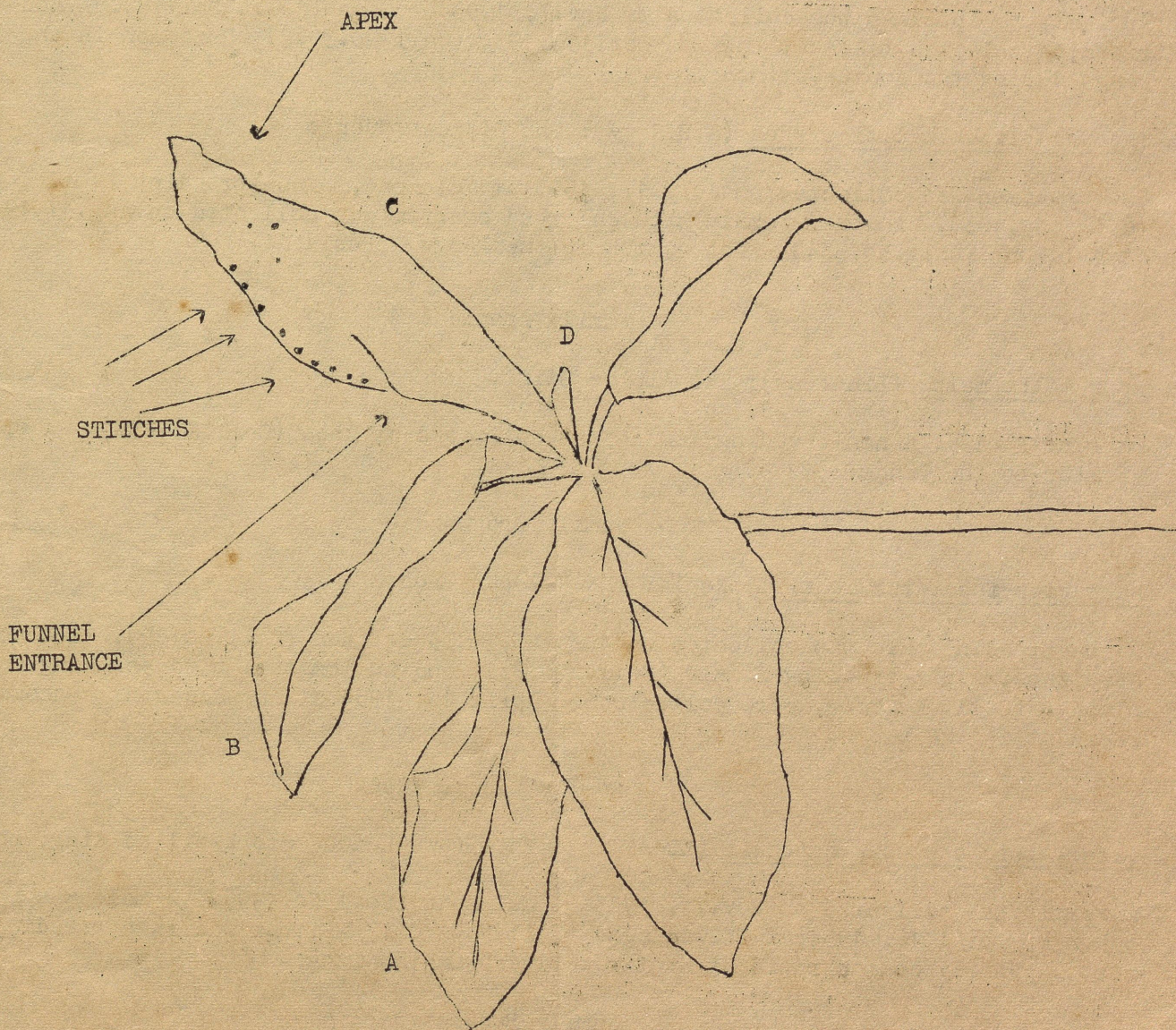
On the 9th Nov. the fledgelings had left the nest and were perching in various other trees and bushes in the compound.

On Sunday, 1st Dec. the nest was removed from the tree. The leaf was still strong and healthy and measured 14" x 7". Many of the older leaves were also strong but were perforated where insects had had their fill.

The tension required to draw the edges together of a full grown mature leaf was measured to be over 20 grammes, and of a full grown tender leaf only 9 grammes. A Tailor Bird weighs less than 6 grammes. Without doubt a tender leaf is easier for stitching.

From what we know of birds, the selection of a suitable leaf is not based on intelligence as the bird brain has no reasoning power. This follows that the bird must have selected the leaf through inherited instinct to do the right thing. Moreover, birds are supposed to be incapable of quickly adapting their behaviour to changed circumstances. Although other trees were available this bird chose to build in this tree. From this it appears that Tailor Birds do build in the Indian Almond Tree. The leaf has to be tender enough and as such leaves generally grow slightly upwards, the nest has to be constructed upside down.

This is an extremely rash conclusion to arrive at after a single isolated observation. May I, therefore, request other readers of the "Newsletter" to watch for corroborative evidence.



- A = OLD TOUGH LEAF
- B = YOUNGER TOUGH LEAF
- C = FULL GROWN TENDER LEAF
- D = NEW LEAF - JUST SPROUTING.

When 'D' grows, C descends to the position of B.

MORE BIRD RECORDS FROM THE SURAT DANGS
(Gujarat State)

In the NEWSLETTER FOR BIRDWATCHERS, Vol.2, No.10, 1962, pp. 8-10, I reported some of the uncommon and rare birds collected in the Surat Dangs, Gujarat State.

It is the purpose of this paper to report a few more of the uncommon birds from the Dangs. With the exception of two species (sight records) the following birds were identified by ornithologists in the American Museum of Natural History in New York and by Dr. B. Biswas of the Zoological Survey of India, Calcutta. The scientific names used by these authorities concur with those used by Dr. Ripley in A SYNOPSIS OF THE BIRDS OF INDIA AND PAKISTAN, and the distribution ranges also check with Ripley's.

Family Cuculidae

Clamator jacobinus serratus (Sparrman): The Pied Crested Cuckoo

An immature specimen was collected on Nov.7, 1953 at Ahwa (Coll. No.172). A non-breeding male was taken at Ahwa on Oct.19, 1954 (Coll No.354). Uncommon in the Dangs during the southwest monsoon.

Taccouca leschenaulti sirkee (J.E.Gray): The Sirkeer Cuckoo

One specimen was collected on July 17, 1953 at Mulchond, a non-breeding female (Coll. No.103). Another female with enlarged ovaries was collected on Aug.17, 1954 at Mulchond (Coll.No.334). Not common in the Dangs. Resident.

Family Apodidae

Apus melba melba (Linnaeus): The Alpine Swift

On Feb.13, 1954 a non-breeding female was collected at Ahwa (Coll.No.237). A sparse visitor to the Dangs.

Family Trogonidae

Harpactes fasciatus legerli Koelz: The Malabar Trogon.

A non-breeding male was collected on June 27, 1953 at Ahwa (Coll.No.89). Two more specimens, a non-breeding female (Coll. No.271) and an immature bird assuming male plumage (Coll. No.272), were collected on April 16, 1954 at Bhawandagad. Uncommon resident in the Dangs.

Family Alcedinidae

Pelargopsis capensis capensis (Linnaeus): The Brown-headed Stork-billed Kingfisher

A female was collected on Nov.13, 1953 at Mulchond (Coll.No.179). A male was taken on April 16, 1954 at Bhawandagad (Coll.No.270). Neither was in a breeding state. Fairly common resident at large rivers in the Dangs.

Family Bucerotidae

Tockus birostris (Scopoli): The Common Gray Hornbill

A non-breeding male was collected at Mahal on Feb.10, 1954 (Coll.No.231). The fact that the Dangs hill tribes eat the hornbill may be a contributing factor in its decrease in the Dangs. Resident.

Family Picidae

Picus chlorolophus chlorigaster Jerdon: The South Indian Small Yellownaped Woodpecker

On Feb.6, 1955 while waiting on a machan for a tiger to come over its kill at Bhusda, I first saw this little woodpecker. On Jan.23, 1956 I collected a female with slightly enlarged ovaries, at Ahwa (Coll. No.422). Uncommon in the Dangs. Resident.

Chrysocolaptes lucidus (chersonesus?) Kloss: The Malherbe's Golden-backed Woodpecker

As I only have sight records of this species at Mulchond, Pimpri, and Malegaon, I have put a question mark after the subspecies. Dr.Salim Ali, however, has collected this race in the Dangs. This crimson-rumped woodpecker is an uncommon resident in the Dangs.

Family Muscicapidae

Pellorneum ruficeps ruficeps Swainson: The Spotted Babbler

I collected a non-breeding female on April 3, 1956 at Bhusda (Coll. No.441). Not common in the Dangs. Resident.

Dumetia hyperythra albogularis (Blyth): The Small White-throated Babbler

An immature specimen was collected on June 27, 1953 at Mulchond (Coll. No.91). A male in non-breeding condition was taken on July 10, 1953 at Mulchond (Coll. No.99). Fairly common resident in the Dangs.

Musicapa latirostris Raffles: The Brown Flycatcher

I have two sight records for this little flycatcher: Oct. 31, 1955 at Mheskatri and March 15, 1961 at Ahwa. Apparently a rare resident in the Dangs.

Musicapa thalassina thalassina Swainson: The Verditir Flycatcher

On Nov.9, 1953 a non-breeding male was collected at Mulchond (Coll. No.174). An immature specimen was taken on Feb.25, 1955 at Mulchond (Coll. No. 380). Winter visitor to the Dangs.

Rhipidura aureola aureola Lesson: The White-browed Fantail Flycatcher

On Nov.20, 1953 a young specimen with its skull still not ossified was collected at Mahal (Coll. No.184). On Jan.28, 1955 a non-breeding female was collected at Mulchond (Coll. No.373). Sparsely scattered resident in the Dangs.

Terpsiphone paradisi leucogaster (Swainson): The Paradise Flycatcher

A male in non-breeding condition was collected at Bhusda on Mar.27, 1956 (Coll.No.438). Winter visitor to the Dangs. Uncommon.

Terpsiphone paradisi paradisi (Linnaeus): The Paradise Flycatcher

On Jan.22, 1954 a non-breeding male was collected at Mulchond (Coll.No.217). Uncommon resident in the Dangs.

Acrocephalus dumetorum Blyth: The Blyth's Reed Warbler

On Nov.5, 1953 a non-breeding female was collected at Ahwa (Coll.No.170). On March 26, 1955 a non-breeding male was collected at Ahwa (Coll.No.382). Uncommon winter visitor in the Dangs.

Erithacus svecicus pallidogularis (Zarudny): The Eastern Redspotted Bluethroat

On Feb.1, 1954 a female was collected at Ahwa (Coll.No.225). Uncommon winter visitor in the Dangs.

Phoenicurus ochrurus phoenicuroides (Moore): The Kashmir Redstart

On Jan.14, 1955 an immature redstart of this race was collected at Mulchond (Coll.No.371). It is a winter visitor to the Dangs.

Monticola cinclorhynchus (Vigors): The Blue-headed Rock Thrush

On Feb.2, 1963 a dead male was found in Ahwa. I have only a few sight records for this species. Uncommon winter visitor in the Dangs.

Monticola solitarius pandoo (Sykes): The Blue Rock Thrush

On Dec.24, 1954 a non-breeding female was collected at Ahwa (Coll.No.369). Uncommon winter visitor in the Dangs.

Turdus merula nigropileus (Lafresnaye): The Black-capped Blackbird

A non-breeding female was collected on Nov.18, 1953 at Mahal (Coll.No.181). On Jan.15, 1954 a non-breeding male was collected at Mulchond (Coll.No.206). Again a non-breeding female was collected on Feb.27, 1956 at Ahwa (Coll.No.434). Uncommon in the Dangs in winter.

The Surat Dangs in south Gujarat with its tropical semi-evergreen and moist deciduous forest has a rich avifauna.

Ernest M. Shull
Ahwa, Dangs Dist., Gujarat State.

* * * * *

EARLY BREEDING RECORD OF THE LITTLE RINGED PLOVER IN BOMBAY
Charadrius dubius

On New Years day of 1964, I had been out with a few friends for shell collections to Aksa Beach, near Madh Island, Bombay. While collecting shells one of the party picked up a small egg on the sand. It was rather flat on the broad side, but oval shaped, with fine texture without much gloss. The base colour of the egg shell was coloured like sand, it was sandy brown, with a few dark brown irregular lines. It was small, about 30 mm long; it could not be measured correctly as it was already broken in handling and the embryo was visible.

The birds seen on the shore were of only three species. Larus bruniceps - The Brown-headed Gull, Charadrius alexandrinus - The Kentish Plover and C.dubius - The Little Ringed Plover. From the literature available this egg appears to be of the last species C.dubius as it agrees with the description of the eggs by Stuart-Baker (Nidification of Birds of The Indian Empire pp.391-93).

'Burgess found the eggs in the month of December in Deccan.' This statement is presented rather hesitatingly by Oats (Humes' Nests and Eggs of Indian Birds p.338; 2nd Edition). Stuart-Baker also has mentioned it the same way (loc;cit pp.391-93).

The new record of the egg on the 1st of January with partly developed embryo appears to be of interest. The only surprising thing was to find the egg on a sandy beach within the intertidal Zone of the shore.

P.W.SOMAN
Bombay.

* * * * *

A PRELIMINARY LIST OF THE BIRDS OF THE KEOLADEO GHANA
SANCTUARY, RAJASTHAN

The fabulous Keoladeo Ghana Breeding Waterbird Sanctuary in Bharatpur has been the focus of an intensive bird ringing effort, and is becoming an increasingly popular tourist attraction.

To stimulate interest in the sanctuary, the Bombay Natural History Society has published a little booklet entitled BREEDING WATERBIRD SANCTUARY : KEOLADEO GHANA, BHARATPUR. This booklet, illustrated with several colour and black-and-white photographs by Dr. Salim Ali, includes a list of some birds recorded from the sanctuary, along with a more detailed description of the breeding waterbirds.

Other published articles about the Ghana include:

'Are livestock overgrazing the Keoladeo Ghana Sanctuary in Rajasthan?', in the Journal of the Bombay Natural History Society 59:645-649 (1962), by the author (reprints are available on request);

and, in this Newsletter, the following articles have appeared:

'The search for migratory bird roosts in Delhi and Bharatpur'. 2(6):1-4 June, 1962), by the author;

'Recoveries of ringed birds'. 2(9):1-2 (September, 1962), and 3(6):1-2 (June, 1963), by Salim Ali;

'A visit to Bharatpur, Rajasthan'. 2(10):295 (Oct., 1962), by Yuvraj Shivraj Kumar; and

'A weekend at Keoladeo'. 3(8):8-9 (August, 1963), by Shankar Ranganathan.

In the last article mentioned, Mr. Ranganathan added several birds to the list published in the Bombay Natural History Society's booklet.

In the present article I have incorporated the records published in the booklet and Ranganathan's article, to which I have added 38 additional species observed by me at the Ghana in 1962. The resulting list contains a total of 163 species, which is a fair beginning for a complete list of birds known to occur in the sanctuary. Now it will be possible for other readers of this Newsletter to consult their notes and perhaps add to our list.

Some of the records in this list need confirmation, such as Rosy Pelican, Ringed Plover, Stint, and perhaps the Common Iora. I have seen no records of nightjars in the area.

I visited the sanctuary twice in 1962: from February 27th to March 1st (a trip I made to see the Siberian Cranes), and from April 1st to April 5th (when I helped Dr. Salim Ali and his assistants with the bird ringing project).

In the list of species below, an asterisk (*) indicates species which have not been previously reported as occurring in the sanctuary. The number in parentheses after my records indicates the date(s) I observed these new birds. The birds are listed in the order presented by S. Dillon Ripley in his A SYNOPSIS OF THE BIRDS OF INDIA AND PAKISTAN (1961).

I wish to especially thank Dr. Ali for introducing me to several 'life listers' at the sanctuary, including Marshall's Iora and the Spotted Grey Creeper.

List of Species

Key: (B) = first recorded in the Keoladeo Ghana booklet (undated)
(R) = first recorded by Shankar Ranganathan 3(8):8-9 (1963)
* = first reported by me in this paper

(1) = seen by me between February 27th and March 1st, 1962
 (2) = seen by me between April 1st and 5th, 1962

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (B) Little Grebe (Dabchick) (B) Large Cormorant (B) Indian Shag (B) Darter (R) Purple Heron * Cattle Egret (2) (B) Small Egret (<u>Egretta intermedia</u>) (B) Night Heron (B) Openbill Stork * Blacknecked Stork (1 & 2) * Glossy Ibis (1) (B) Greylag Goose (R) Brahminy Duck (Ruddy Shelduck) * Common Teal (1) * Mallard (1) * Widgeon (1) * Shoveller (1 & 2) * European (Common) Pochard (1) * Tufted Pochard (1) (B) Nukta (R) Honey Buzzard (B) Shikra (R) Tawny Eagle (B) King (Black) Vulture (B) Whitebacked Vulture (B) Pale Harrier * Short-toed Eagle (2) (B) Oriental Hobby (<u>Falco severus</u>) (B) Grey Partridge (B) Sarus Crane (B) Whitebreasted Waterhen (B) Purple Moorhen (B) Pheasant-tailed Jacana * Redwattled Lapwing (1 & 2) * Green Sandpiper (2) (R) Common Sandpiper (R) Painted Snipe (B) Indian (Common) Sandgrouse (B) Blue Rock Pigeon (B) Red Turtle Dove (B) Roseringed Parakeet (B) Koel (B) Crow-Pheasant (B) Dusky Horned Owl (B) Spotted Owlet (B) House Swift (R) Pied Kingfisher (B) Bluecheeked Bee-eater (<u>M. superciliosus</u>) (B) Hoopoe * Large Green Barbet (2) * Wryneck (1) (B) Goldenbacked Woodpecker (B) Redwinged Bush Lark * Rufoustailed Finch-Lark (1 & 2) (B) Short-toed Lark * Common Swallow (1) (B) Baybacked Shrike (B) Black Drongo (B) Rosy Pastor (B) Common Myna (B) Indian Tree Pie | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (B) Pelican (? species, Ranganathan identified the Rosy Pelican) (B) Little Cormorant (B) Grey Heron (B) Pond Heron (B) Large Egret (B) Little Egret (B) Painted Stork * Whitenecked Stork (1 & 2) (B) White Ibis (B) Spoonbill (R) Barheaded Goose * Pintail (1) (R) Spotbill Duck * Gadwall (1) * Garganey (1 & 2) * Redcrested Pochard (1) * White-eyed Pochard (1) * Cotton Teal (1 & 2) * Blackwinged Kite (2) (B) Pariah Kite (B) White-eyed Buzzard (B) Pallas's (Ringtailed) Fishing Eagle (B) White Scavenger Vulture * Marsh Harrier (1 & 2) * Osprey (1 & 2) (B) Black Partridge (B) Common Peafowl (B) Siberian Crane (B) Moorhen (R) Coot * Whitetailed Lapwing (1) (R) Ringed Plover (? species) * Wood Sandpiper (1 & 2) (R) Stint (? species) (R) Stone Curlew (B) Common Green Pigeon (B) Indian Ring Dove (B) Little Brown Dove * Common Hawk-Cuckoo (<u>Cuculus varius</u>) (2) * Collared Scops Owl (<u>Otus bakkamoena</u>) (2) ✓ NIGHTJARS ?? No records yet published ✓ (B) Common Kingfisher (B) Whitebreasted Kingfisher (B) Green Bee-eater (B) Indian Roller (B) Common Grey Hornbill (B) Crimsonbreasted Barbet (Coppersmith) (R) Mahratta Woodpecker (R) Blackbellied (Ashycrowned) Finch-Lark (R) Indian (Eastern) Skylark (B) Striated Swallow (B) Rufousbacked Shrike (R) Blackheaded (Brahminy) Myna (R) Pied Myna (B) Bank Myna (B) House Crow |
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- | | |
|--|---|
| (B) Jungle Crow | (B) Common Wood Shrike |
| * Shortbilled Minivet (1) | (B) Small Minivet |
| (R) Common Iora (could it have
been Marshall's ?) | * Marshall's Iora (2) |
| (B) Redvented Bulbul | (B) Whitecheeked Bulbul |
| (B) Common Babbler | (R) Yelloweyed Babbler |
| (B) Jungle Babbler | (B) Large Grey Babbler |
| (B) Greyheaded Flycatcher | (B) Redbreasted Flycatcher |
| (R) Paradise Flycatcher | (B) Whitebrowed Fantail Flycatcher |
| (B) Tailor Bird | (B) Rufousfronted Wren-Warbler |
| (B) Booted Warbler | (B) Great Reed Warbler |
| (B) Dull Green Leaf-Warbler | (B) Lesser Whitethroat |
| (<u>Phylloscopus trochiloides</u>) | (B) Bluethroat |
| (B) Black Redstart | * Magpie-Robin (1 & 2) |
| * Collared Bush Chat (Stonechat)
(2) | (B) Brown Rock Chat |
| * Chestnutbellied Nuthatch (2) | (R) Pied Bush Chat |
| (R) Indian (Paddyfield) Pipit | (B) Indian Robin |
| (B) Yellowheaded Wagtail | (B) Spotted Grey Creeper |
| * Grey Wagtail (2) (one male in
breeding plumage) | * Yellow Wagtail (2) (most common spe-
cies ringed) |
| (B) Purple Sunbird | * White Wagtail (1 & 2) |
| (B) House Sparrow | (B) Tickell's Flowerpecker |
| (B) Yellowthroated Sparrow | (B) White-eye |
| (R) Red Munia | (R) Spanish Sparrow |
| | (R) Baya Weaver Bird |
| | (B) Whitethroated Munia (<u>Lonchura malaba-</u>
<u>ria</u>) |
| (R) Redheaded Bunting | (R) Crested Bunting |

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In the articles listed in the third paragraph of this paper, Mr. Donahue has omitted reference to one by Dr. Salim Ali entitled 'The Keoladeo Ghana of Bharatpur (Rajasthan)' which appeared at pages 531-6 of Vol. 51(3) of the J. Bombay nat. Hist. Soc. -- Ed./

BRIEF NOTES ON OBSERVATIONS MADE DURING THE PAST THREE MONTHS
Extracts from Bulletin No.9, January 1964, of the Nature
Study Club of Guñtur, Andhra Pradesh

October 1963. The Common Swallow and the Common Green Bee-eater arrived in numbers; later, in the course of a few days they began spreading out widely.

The Booted Warbler, which was first noticed by us during the previous winter, was found to have returned on the 28th. Yellow-brown Warbler too had returned; this bird we noticed during the previous winter also.

Towards the end of the month the male Purple Sunbird was found in its full breeding plumage, which struck us as rather unusual.

November and December 1963. The Short-toed Eagle, hitherto totally unfamiliar to us, has been identified; the bird made its appearance in the town a few times sailing magnificently high up in the sky.

We used to see the Eastern Grey Wagtail as well as the White Wagtail flying in a definite direction, from southwest to northeast, as they returned every evening to their roosting places. Our attention was attracted by the fact that they continued to fly in much the same direction throughout this period.

Early in December the Purple Sunbird disappeared from our surroundings and has been absent since then. This made us realise that even residents may not be seen the year round in a particular locality as they may keep moving about in the same region depending on the availability of food.

Observations by various members of the Nature
Study Club

REVIEW

BULLETIN OF THE INTERNATIONAL UNION FOR THE PROTECTION OF NATURE.

The International Union for the Protection of Nature issues periodically bulletins giving information about the activities of various member states in the cause of Nature Conservation. This body plays the same role for safe-guarding the interests of birds and animals as the United Nations does for the interests of the human race. The following extracts are reproduced from the issue of Vol. 2, No. 4, July 1953:

WHERE NATURE IS PROTECTED

The re-discovered bird. -- The Takahe (Notornis hochstetteri) 'archaic bird, wonderful living fossil' is just a relic as far as Science is concerned. A native of New Zealand, where up to the arrival of Captain Cook, birds formed the principal class of vertebræ, it suffered, as did other birds from the introduction of predatory mammals. Some Europeans saw the first specimen in 1849, and promptly killed and ate it! In 1898 a dog caught a young female Takahe. The remains of this specimen, as well as those of three other specimens taken before, were for half a century the only traces of this bird preserved in Museums. In 1948 Dr. G.B. Orbell aroused the emotion of naturalists all over the world, when he discovered on the left bank of Lake Te Anau, in the South Island of New Zealand, first the foot prints, and later on, on 21st November, a colony of the very birds themselves. Naturally the New Zealand Government forbade all approach, except to certain accredited scientists, to the birds habitat, a region of some 1.800 square metres. The last expedition organized by the Museum of Canterbury succeeded in seeing two colonies of Notornis, at some little distance from the spot where Dr. Orbell discovered the first specimens in 1948. One colony consisted of six birds and included a pair with small chick (Information Bulletin of Pacific Science Association, February 1953).

The curious outline of the Takahe resembles that of other flightless birds of New Zealand, such as the weka, or kiwi, but the Takahe is larger and weighs about seven pounds. His plumage is sumptuous, indigo blue, irridescent on shoulders, head, neck and breast, then of a green metallic colour along back, belly and thighs passing into dark purple, while beak and feet are of startling bright red. These birds, which have escaped the attention of men for so long, owe their survival to the inaccessibility of their habitat.

Birds of prey in Morocco. Thanks to the action of M.J.B. Panouse of the 'Institut Scientifique Cherifien' and to the foresight and intelligence of the 'Direction des Eaux et Forêts' of Morocco, the 'Conseil supérieur de la Chasse' of the Protectorat, has ordained that all birds of prey which up to the present have figured on list of injurious animals, shall be taken off that list, and that hunting and shooting them in future, shall be authorized only on same conditions as apply to non-migratory game. How appropriate the law is will be seen from the fact that the number of birds of prey killed in Morocco in 1952 reached a total of 3.000 of which 1.500 were hawks. It must be remembered that the balance between birds of prey and the animals they prey on, cannot be assessed by simple mathematical figures, except in cases of one type of bird of prey and one type of animal preyed on. In reality it is rare for a prey to be attacked by a single predatory animal, and also human intervention adds to the difficulty of forming an exact balance. Thus birds of prey destroy a great amount of rats; the destruction of the former increases the amount of the latter, who in their turn bring havoc on the partridge of Oued Cherrat, for instance, so that what is gained by the destruction of birds of prey injurious to game, is rapidly lost by the injuries caused to this same game by the increase of other types of predatory animals, exposed in the same way to attacks of birds of prey.

Extracts from other bulletins of the International Union for the Protection of Nature relating to birds will be reproduced in future issues of our Newsletter from time to time.

(Z.F.)

CORRESPONDENCE

House Sparrow

In response to Dr. Salim Ali's countrywide appeal we started making observations on the House Sparrow since January 1963. Our constant and careful watch has yielded a lot of interesting material. We have published some of this already and shall bring out the rest in instalments.

V. Ravi,
President, Nature Study Club,
Guntur, Andhra Pradesh

Koel and Crows

Yesterday the January issue of the Newsletter arrived, and proved interesting, as usual. I hope to see in the next issue a list of members of the club, in hopes that there may be others in this region with whom to compare notes. Bird-catching is fascinating in this particular spot, where there are shore-birds, water-birds, and land birds in profusion, including some Ceylon species.

The incident of 'Koel, Crows and a Dog' reminded me of an event that happened here on July 19, 1963. It was during working hours, so my observations were not as complete as they should have been, being confined to walks between building in this spacious portia tree shaded compound.

At that time our trees harboured many nesting crows, and busy koels. That morning at 10.45 the crows set up a terrific din, and as I walked to a class I observed about 50 of them sitting screaming on the roof of a school building, or flapping excitedly around a near-by tree. There wasn't time to do more than wonder what was exciting them so much that the crow population from the whole neighbourhood seemed to be gathering in agitated protest about something.

My class was out of sight and sound of the riot, and when I returned forty minutes later the mob had dispersed, although there were still a few crows sitting about in the trees watching one particular spot. There a crow, on a broad branch of a tree, was tearing and eating the corpse of a female koel.

All the rest of the day and for several days thereafter a male koel flew around the compound calling loudly the regular mating call. It was so noticeable that a neighbour asked me next day if I had noticed how disturbed that koel was. We wondered if this event was the execution of a koel caught invading a crow's nest in order to lay an egg. Are there other records of such drastic punishment? Or am I reading too much into an inadequately observed incident?

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