

Bangalore 560034

25/7/06

Dear Rasheesh

I have been reading old classics again - surprising how much more pleasure they provide now than when one is young and all knowing

Since you are an ALDO LEOPOLD Fan, I thought you may like to enjoy, or enjoy again, the paras from Frank Fraser Darling's 'A Pelican in the Wilderness'

Zafar

Chicago and Wisconsin

This was where one changed from one river system to the other, carrying canoes and gear across. Now it is a happy and apparently prosperous little town in a network of good roads, its rivers only pleasures and sporting amenities. Next day I was in it again, for Fred and Frances Hamerstrom wanted me to see the prairie chicken marshes on the flat lands around, where these two had done so much work.

The history of the prairie chicken in Wisconsin is a matter of much biological interest. There is no doubt it is the very edge of this bird's habitat, and it is on edges that one can look for differences in behaviour. The prairie chicken is a bird which indulges in an elaborate social display, accompanied by a booming note made by the cocks inflating and deflating the air sacs in their necks. In the heart of the prairie chicken habitat—as in Missouri and which I shall describe later—booming and the display occurs in both spring and autumn, but here on the edge of its range, it booms and displays only in spring. The prairie chicken is losing out in Wisconsin. The prairie-making activities of buffalo Indians allowed the spread of the bird; the era of the plough in the State maintained it, but now the prairie has almost gone in Wisconsin and the forest is coming back by degrees, even if it is only jack pine as yet. The prairie chicken, therefore, is receding.

That night I was back at the Hickey's in Madison, with Fred and Frances along to dinner. A thousand miles of a trip we had had, making 2,000 in all in Wisconsin. When Joe laid on a seminar for his graduate students after dinner, with me as figurehead, I found myself in a much easier situation than I would have been ten days before. I was at least able to be intelligent and not just a stuffed shirt. But, of course, the leader of a seminar can learn as much and more than he gives.

Next morning I was picked up by the Leopolds and taken the 50 miles out to the Shack in the Wisconsin river bottoms. Aldo Leopold was the man above all others in America who reduced an immense body of sentiment and goodwill for conservation to reasoned, documented, scientific reality. Aldo had a very scientific mind, doubtless, and I am sure he rather prided himself on having it, but Aldo was equally the philosopher and

Pelican in the Wilderness

visionary and, finally, he could set down his facts, his conclusions, and his dreams in most felicitous English. I believe he was pure German of the old 1848 stock which emigrated to America for freedom's sake, as Englishmen had done 200 years earlier. Aldo was that rare creature, a naturally wise man who had the intellectual capacity and the continuing simplicity to become a good deal wiser. He was always seeing and learning and so easily seeing earlier mistakes. Many scientists loathe giving up either their own theories or those they have imbibed and accepted. Aldo could chuck out misconceptions immediately without feeling he was losing face. He never lost his way in the new science of wildlife management which he codified.

I never met Aldo Leopold, yet I know him well and he knew me. Of that I was proud. It never occurred to me that I would never meet him, and I was dumbfounded when I heard of his sudden death in 1948 while he was helping a neighbour subdue a marsh fire in the river bottoms near the Shack. He was only fifty-eight and his intellectual calibre was still increasing.

Aldo Leopold was Professor at Madison and spent a quarter of a century there almost, giving his five children something of the old self-sufficient frontier life by buying 80 acres of bottom land along the Wisconsin River and setting up this shack, from which week-end and holiday home he practised a good deal of conservation method, planting and regenerating white pine forest, until now the site is ecologically a place of beauty. Not only his own gifted children but generations of wildlife students owe much to Aldo's institution of the Shack. There it is now with Aldo gone in body, but it will go on as a dynamic entity. His influence is all about.

Aldo Leopold was led by fortune to work as a forest officer in New Mexico when he was a young man, and by fortune and wisdom he married a gentlewoman of old Spanish aristocratic descent. Estella was his match and his complement.

Mrs. Leopold carries in her presence all that Spain might have given to the world, graciousness, gravity, pride, devoutness, perfection of hospitality, and a quite amazing gaiety, the impact of which in its sudden unexpectedness makes her one of the most

Chicago and Wisconsin

adored of women. As for me, I loved hearing her speak, for she used a slow, beautiful English purer than that which the English speak.

This week-end was for me something in the nature of a pilgrimage. I was asked to plant a burr oak at a chosen place, near where my friend and countryman Charles Elton had planted one eleven years earlier. As I looked at his, now a thriving sapling 5 feet high, I was proud of the honour and the company.

That evening we sat around the fire outside the Shack enjoying the good talk, and then young Estella brought her guitar and sang: Spanish songs with terrific gusto, and for me some Scottish ones, all with a slightly Spanish character which made them new and quite delightful. Then Mrs. Leopold asked for a particular song, and Estella hesitated a little shyly; Mrs. Leopold continued, 'A little improper, perhaps, but so amusing; please, Estella.' So Estella launched forth with a smashing chord into a rollicking song of a dame who couldn't say no in twenty-seven languages.

Next day we wandered round the estate, looking at the habitats of swamp, marsh, scrub, and forest which Aldo and his family had created; an expression of mutual love indeed and ecologically the estate sang. We bathed in the warm water of the Wisconsin River and watched the spotted and solitary sandpipers on the sandbanks. We did everything leisurely, even the ultimate packing up and coming away. Some Americans may run on the clock, but most of those I have met and had to do with are remarkably uncaring of time. The Hamerstoms were either indifferent to it or unknowing of its conventional linear quality. The Leopolds would think it was robbing life of its grace and savour to bother seriously about time at the Shack.

Back to Joe Hickey's again and the pleasure of taking Peggy and him out to dinner at the University Union. It gave me a glimpse of what might almost be called the university industry in America. There were 27,000 students at Madison and we were in one of four restaurants in the Union.

Joe had invited three members of the faculty to his house for

Pelican in the Wilderness

coffee—a botanist, an agronomist, and a forester. The agronomist enlightened me on the grass situation in Wisconsin. 'We must not graze too short here or we lose our grass, and it doesn't matter leaving a good depth of it, for the grass cures naturally and does not lose nutritive value as does foggage in Britain.'

The forester alluded to a British Association paper of mine in which I had outlined the dismal history of Scottish forests and the role of our oak trees and their defoliating insects in the circulation of energy. The trees and the insects were necessary for the raising of basic material from the sub-soil to the surface layers. The forester said that in Wisconsin they found that many of their grasses were more effective 'calcium pumps' from the basic layer than many of their trees. Further, their oaks were not defoliated by any caterpillars in spring, and the young oak leaves here have not the high calcium content that they have in Britain.

This was my last night in Wisconsin. I was beginning to feel something of the tragedy of the true nomad, a rare bird indeed in our world, but tragedy there is in constant stimulus of scene, the warmth of friendships, the beauty of seasons, and on you must go, as doomed as the Wandering Jew. It was only the beginning, indeed, for I have now had years of it, leaving my wife and young children time after time, making some of the most rewarding friendships of my life on the American continent, but on and on always. The happier one's life, the more exquisite the hurt.

Of feathered kinds

ZAFAR FUTEHALLY
looks at the National Birds and how they became the chosen ones.

Sometime in the 1920s, the then International Council for the Preservation of Birds, (ICPB), which later became the International Ornithological Congress suggested that all countries should select one species as their National Bird.

Apart from creating an interest in their avifauna, such a move could result in drawing attention to a critically endangered bird and lead to conservation policies for its survival. Following upon this resolution of the ICPB, Salim Ali suggested that India should designate the Great Indian Bustard (*Ardeotis Nigriceps*) as its National Bird. It eminently fitted the role because it was an endemic species, an endangered one, and very dignified in appearance.

But unfortunately our politicians have the last word even in matters in which they are no expert, so they voted for the Indian peacock (*pavo cristatis*). There is no denying that our male peacock is an exceptionally attractive bird, except for its unusually unpleasant voice but it is in no danger of extinction.

I remember an outing in my school days in Gujarat on a duck shoot, being confronted by a group of villagers who made it plain that we would be the hunted if we killed any peafowl. Of course we had no intention of doing so.

Unfortunately the GIB has no such cultural security cover and continues to be killed for its meat in spite of the Wildlife (Protection) Act of 1972. Its fate would have been better if it was the National Bird.

Peafowl facts

In the 1960s, the famous George Schaller studying tigers in the Kanha National Park found time to look at peafowl as well, and I quote a para from his article in the *Newsletter for Birdwatchers* relating to their territorialism: "After an initial period of wandering, each adult cock chose by late January or early February, a certain limited area, roughly 400 to 600 feet in diameter that represented

his exclusive territory from which other adult cocks were apparently excluded...Within this territory each cock had a small area, often only about 50 feet in diameter with the following attributes: 1) A prominent place



Common peafowl.

like a rock or a termite mound on which to stand. 2) A tree providing shade and a roost for the night. 3) An open area such as a road or patch of short grass on which to court.

Cocks spent most of the day within this small area, often giving their raucous, two toned scream, with which they appeared to proclaim their territory to other males, and perhaps to advertise their presence to distant hens. Calls were given throughout the day, and sometimes at night, at the height of the breeding season, and a call by one cock frequently brought a response from all others in the vicinity."

Celebrity birds

While on the subject of National Birds, let us see which birds have been selected by some of our neighbours and others. Burma selected her own Peacock (*Polyplectron*



Great Indian Bustard.

border. Bangladesh seems to have been charmed by the song of the Orien-

tal Magpie Robin (*Copsychus Saularis*, the common garden bird of our country with which even non birders are familiar.

Sri Lanka has the Ceylon Jungle Fowl (*Gallus Llafayettii*) a fascinating bird whose account in G M Henrys, *Birds of Ceylon* is most entertaining."

Although the cocks are very pugnacious, evidence of actual fighting is rare, crowing being normally sufficient for the maintenance

of territorial rights." This bird is very similar to our Red Jungle Fowl (*Gallus gallus*) famous for being the ancestor of all domestic breeds of fowl.

Curiously our Red Jungle Fowl occupies the northern part of our country, and one would have thought that the Ceylon bird would have greater morphological affinity with our Grey Jungle Fowl (*Gallus sonnerati*), but this is not so. Nepal has the Impeyan Pheas-

“Our politicians have the last word in matters in which they are no experts, so they voted the Indian peacock as the National Bird.”

ant, more commonly known as the Himalayan Monal (*Lophoropus impejanus*) and they could not have chosen a more glamorous creature, or one which needed to be saved. I must now run through the list quickly though the National Birds of each country deserve to be described in some detail.

Australia has the Emu, 5 feet tall, with its wings hanging loose due to non-use. It is a flightless bird, and incubation is done mainly by the male in Newzealand it had to be the Kiwi, an endemic, the size of a domestic hen, with poor eyesight but compensated by a keen sense of smell. Like the Emu it is the male which incubates the eggs.

The English are very sentimental about their birds, particularly

those which are around their doorsteps and he European Robin (*Erithacus rubecula*) was their choice. This is a bird which has been studied threadbare by David Lack. In the *Life of the Robin*, he explains why this was possible. "...the Robin (is) ideally suited for an intimate study for it took only a short time to trap every individual resident in the twenty acres of ground under investigation.

No other British bird can be trapped so easily..... When incubating, this bird was so tame that she allowed me to lift her off the eggs with my hand put rings round her legs, and replace her on the nest.." Belgium has nominated the Common Kestrel (*Falco Tinnuncu-*

lus). This is the same species which comes to India, and in fact as I write this on Oct 24, I see from the Internet that several birders have seen large numbers over our countryside.

To see the kestrel hovering on "stationary" wings when the wind is right makes your day, and so it was one hot morning on Kankeshwar hill in Raigad in Maharashtra. It is difficult to believe that a bird high up in the air, can so overcome the force of gravity by just the clever manoeuvring of its flight feathers and leaving the wind to do the rest. That is why the Kestrel is known as 'the Winnower of Winds, the Sky Rider'.

The Kestrel unlike most birds of prey can be easily identified by its chestnut back and grey head and tail. Norway, a country of deep gorges and fast flowing rivers has selected the Dipper (*Cinclus Cinclus*). This is the same bird trekkers see in Himalayas, plunging into the ice cold water and remaining stationery on the bed of the turbulent stream. This incidentally is "the only true aquatic passerine...whose habitat and mode of life is shared by no other bird."

Let us end with the Bald Eagle of America (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*). A very impressive bird with its snow white head and neck almost akin in colour to our Brahomy kite (*Haliaeetus Indus*). Till recently the Bald Eagle was, considered an endangered species, but strict protection is now ensuring its survival.

Zafar Futehally

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8-12-06

Aasheesh

Looking over my old files
I find this effort by the tireless Serrao
I thought you may be interested as
an untiring bibliographer

Zafar.

January 8, 1998

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My dear Zafarbhai

t /
I have just received your letter of 26th Dec. 1997 directed from BNHS. Thank you for your Good Wishes for the New Year. I heartily reciprocate them. Let us hope that 1998 will be Birdy and Prosperous.

ok
Permit me to reply to your letter commencing from its last paragraph -- ' internal jealousies and rivalries ' in the Institute we loved and continue to love. I have been a witness to this ' rape ' until mid-October 1993. Thereafter I stopped going to the Society, and have avoided entering its portals since then. The only two occasions I entered it are: on 20/21.3.1995 at BNHS's request and cost to help in discussion with Dr Ripley's representative; also on 31.3.95 to return some material which was lying with me concerning HANDBOOK Revision work.

There were always from its inception ' internal jealousies and rivalries ' at the Society. This I learnt from Dr Salim Ali when we in our leisure hours talking this, that and the other. But the Governance of the Society was of a calibre, and could put down such tendencies with a strong hand.

Please don't be scandalized when I say ' calibre '. Just recall your Hon. Sec. days in 1962. You telephoned me from Dyncrafts one morning, and instructed to search amidst your papers at the Society an item, and put it before you when you arrive at the Society. While searching for it, I stumbled on a report my officer had then put up for your processing. In the report I was accused of every devilry the hell could hold.

When you were through with your day's work, I walked up to you, pointed you out to the said report, and asked you why my superior was so cowardly so as not to give me a copy of the report in order to enable me to reply to the charges framed. Your reaction to the query was a broad smile with the remarks: ' Let a thousand reports be put against you. It is the malaise the country suffers from '. With these remarks of yours, the whole episode was yawned into one's personal history. Such were the qualities which were aplenty in Dr Salim Ali, Mr Abdulali, Mr D.E.Reuben, and yourself. Please, Sir, point me out to one individual amongst the current Governance of the Society with such a calibre.

currently /
Who is it, you seem to be questioning me, that let this Genii of ' internal jealousies and rivalries ' at the BNHS. My reply is the present-day Governance of the Society. Ulhas Rane's and Meena Haribal's Hon. Secretaryships passed off peacefully. They were followed by Mr J.C. Daniel. To settle some score with him, the Governance of BNHS made him to sign along the dotted line, accepting that he is subject to the orders of the then Director. The most sacrosanct Rule 62 of BNHS Memorandum which lays down that " salaried employees of the Society, from the Curator down to the lowest with their relevant duties are subject to the orders of the Committee." The empowering of a salaried employee over an elected ex-officio was brought about even without a referral, ~~asxix~~

are /
Serrao
The massacre of the sacrosanct Rule 62 turned that premier institute of Natural History, into the Backwaters of Evolution. And this is the reason why ~~find~~ the claws and teeth of the staff there, red with blood of ' internal jealousies and rivalries '. It is the Governance which has to be blamed.

January 8, 1998

Mr Zafar Futehally
Bangalore

And what was the outcome of the insult heaped upon an elected Mr Daniel by his elected compatriots. The Administrative Officer at BNHS, a Tamilian Brahmin, expressed his regional distress to me another South Indian and resigned from the retirement service of his at the Society. And me, completed that HANDBOOK Revision work I had on hand, and discontinued stepping into Hornbill House from mid-October 1993. You may brand this as Regionalism. But is not Regionalism the lingering of sweet memories we have had in the region of our birth?

Result of

And what was the elevation of the Director over the Hon. Sec. The Director who was passing on to me to reply to the bird enquiries BNHS used to receive, and which I used to sign up personally as from 'Revision, HANDBOOK Birds' he began insisting that I put up for his signature. I was not in the BNHS salary he knew. So I could ask him to go to fish, and tell him what I write is my opinion and I have a right to let go my opinion over my signature. How small minds. Even the Great Master would ask Serrao to draft a reply and put up for his approval. He would go over it, amend and add to the draft and sign at the top of the left-hand side of the draft, call Serrao and may ask to fair it up, sign and post. Once in a similar matter when an honorary asked him whether he has to take instructions from Serrao, Dr SA's magnanimity was such to say that one day he had to teach Serrao, but now he has often learn from him.

Birds

If BNHS hopes to recruit university graduates with a smattering of Zoology and hold that glorious fort of BNHS, it is sadly mistaken. It is this mistaken assumption that makes us read that 600 species of visit the Sewree mudflats, whereas Mumbai has only c. 442 species of them; we are told that the Strangler Fig is a Banyan (Ficus benghalensis) and not Ficus arnottiana; that the Dolphin visits the Rajbhavan waters, when what you, Mr Daniel and myself have witness for two to three years the Sea Cow, Dugong dugong feeds in these waters, so on and so forth

red is

our

And where is our Swadeshi Jagran gone? The latest item the of US Dollar ornithology that is being shoved down throats is the rediscovery of Forest Spotted Owllet Athene blewitti, based on a photograph made by US Ornithologists in the Satpuras. It completely ignores what Dr SA in collaboration with SDR says at pp. 4-6 of Hornbill, Jan.-Mar. 1978. I have written to Mr Abdulali to ram some sense in the US Ornithologists as India's senior ornithologist. A copy of the said note and letter is enclosed with this.

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which

Certainly Sir, it is impossible to restore the pristine glory of the Society with our current way of thinking and acting. As an example I came across a note on the Magpie Robin in the Nilgiris, in the Newsletter. The author had given the address of the village where I was born, bred, schooled and urchined. In the note he had said that the Nilgiri bird is distinct, and as such has to be named. Again the regionalism in me took the better off. Rather than confront him through Newsletter pages, I wrote to him a letter telling him that currently the Nilgiri bird has a name, erimelas christened so by Oberholser in 1923. But the basis for this is the amount of black in the rectrices of the bird, and is an inconsistent criteria all over the country. So when he gets the 10th Vol of HANDBOOK revised, he would find erimelas relegated to nominate saularis. He wrote back telling me that birds is not his strong point. He was selected at the BNHS to be Director before Sawant. But since the salary was not attractive, so he refused the offer. He also told me that he had given a seminary in BNHS and personalities who attended it were named. God saved the Society by his refusal to join up. When he wrote that 6 line note in the MLBW he was not aware what happened in his grandfather's time in 1923; there must have been thousand bloomers in his seminary. And these bloomers must have gone over the heads of his judges.

Serrao

January 8, 1998

Mr Zafar Futehally
Bangalore.

ef
I have still to add a bunch of papers wherefrom you will acquaint yourself of the methods and morals prevailing currently at the BNHS. They concern the renewal of the Revision Project. Included with this packet they would add to the postal weight. Therefore they are going to you separately.

What better things could we expect than ' internal jealousies and rivalries ' under the existing circumstances?

Now regarding History of Conservation Movement in India. Conservation started with Ashoka in the country. I will send you a reproduction of the 14th edict of Ashoka found in the Surkhhab Valley in Pakistan. 14th is the last edict of Ashoka. T.J. Roberts had projected it at British Council on 14 Nov. 1992.

In his first Dr Salim Ali Memorial lecture, Dr Ripley says that in 1943 when he met Dr Salim Ali ' ... conservation was virtually unknown, not only in India, but most places in the world. Occasional fanatic people, " Little old ladies in sneakers " were going around trying to say " Save everything " and we thought they were mad. '

I feel Conservation was there much before 1943 in India, And what else it is in the BNHS act of bringing in close season for hunting in the last ~~xxxxx~~ years of 1800s or early 1900s. Believablely this is the first act of conservation in our modern times, and its details are contained in BNHS journal of the period mentioned.

I would cooperate with you in the project you would undertake. But I have made up my mind at least for the present not to enter BNHS either for love or for money.

Once again wishing you all the best for 1998

Yours sincerely

Serrao
(J.S. Serrao)

Enc: Papers on A. blewitti

PRESIDENT'S LETTER

'MYSTERY' BIRDS OF INDIA—3

Blewitt's Owl or Forest Spotted Owlet

Blewitt's Owl was first described in 1873 by A. O. Hume from a specimen shot by his friend F. R. Blewitt in December 1872 at Busnah in 'Phuljan' State (=Phuljhar, now in Madhya Pradesh c. 21°N., 83°E.). Another example was procured several years later by Valentine Ball, a government geologist, on the banks of the Udet river in Karial, c. 240 km south of the original type locality. Between 1879 and 1881. J. Davidson of the Bombay Civil Service obtained 3 specimens in heavy jungle below the Satpuras in western Khandesh, c. 900 km west of the type locality. He described the bird as 'not uncommon' in such habitats there. The last example of this enigmatic owl to be collected was in October 1914, 64 years ago, by Col. R. Meinertzhagen at Mandvi on the Tapti river in the Surat Dangs area of Gujarat, c. 21°16' N., 73°32' E. at the western extremity of the Satpura mountains. Thus the known distributional range of *Athene blewitti* extends over some 1000 km of the Satpura trend, from the Surat Dangs and Khandesh in the west to E. Madhya Pradesh and the Sambalpur area of Orissa in the east. Little is recorded about the ecology of Blewitt's Owl. Less than a dozen specimens, all told, exist in the museums of the world—in Europe and America. All seem to have been procured in heavy moist-deciduous forest and groves of wild mango lining the banks of streams.

The bird is described as having the habit of sitting singly on exposed tree-tops and sunning itself till late in the morning. Although, in size and plumage it is confusingly similar to—almost identical with the Spotted Owlet, as the illustration on page 6 shows, the dense jungle habitat and the predilection for exposed tree-tops seems characteristic and very different from those of the latter which affects opener country around cultivation and villages. Thus, in effect, Blewitt's may be considered the forest counterpart of the Spotted owlet.

Since 1914 several attempts have been made to rediscover Blewitt's owl, without success. The latest of these were in February 1975 and March/April 1976 by Dr. Dillon Ripley and myself, aided by some of the Society's field staff and local personnel of the Forest Departments, in northern and western Orissa—at the eastern end of the bird's known range—and in the Melghat Tiger Reserve in Vidarbha (Maharashtra). Ten days each of fairly intensive exploration of likely forest localities with the help of play-back of tape recordings of various owl calls failed to produce results though in the appropriate habitat Spotted owl calls drew prompt response from that species. The several suspected specimens of possible *A. blewitti* we collected all proved to be Spotted owlets and raised some doubts



Athene blewitti
Forest Spotted Owlet



Athene brama
Spotted Owlet

in my mind as to whether Blewitt's was in fact a distinct and recognisable species at all! For the answer Dr. Ripley, on his return to Washington, brought together all the available material of *A. blewitti* for critical reconsideration—3 from the British Museum, London, one from the Museum of Comparative Zoology, Harvard, and one from the American Museum of Natural History, New York. His findings confirm that *blewitti* is indeed a valid species but so exceedingly similar in appearance to the Spotted owl as to be easily confusable with it in the field, and casually even in the hand. Blewitt's is smaller in wing and tail length than the Spotted (*A. brama indica*) but has a consistently larger bill, legs and feet, and there is no overlap in these measurements in the two species. The crown in Blewitt's is unspotted or only faintly, whereas in *A. brama* it is distinctly so. There are minor differences also in the markings in the plumage and in the wing formulae of the two, not however, of a nature to be detectable with confidence in the field. Thus the only leading clue remains the habitat preference of the two co-occurring species—*blewitti* dense jungle, *bra-*

ma open country, cultivation and human habitations.

Observers must keep a sharp lookout for any spotted type of owl in forested country, especially within the known range of Blewitt's, and report to the Society about the exact location of the sighting and other details. Unfortunately forests are vanishing fast everywhere in the Satpuras, as elsewhere in the country, and with them Blewitt's owl may be getting rarer, more and more endangered and restricted to shrinking patches of suitable biotope here and there. However, re-discovering the bird is a standing challenge which must be accepted by birdwatchers and conservationists, especially those living in the relevant areas. Mr. S. A. Hussain of our research staff who visited Mandvi in April 1976 to scan the locality where the last specimen of Blewitt's owl was taken in 1914, found no trace of the heavy forest habitat existing then, but reported that patches of such forest still remained farther east and northeast near the Mahanadi river which would repay exploration.

SALIM ALI

FIELDGUIDE TO THE BIRDS OF THE EASTERN HIMALAYAS

by
SALIM ALI

Copies are available for members at a 15% discount on the published price of Rs. 80/-

The Bombay Samachar
30 dec 1997

૧૮૮૪ થી અદ્રશ્ય પક્ષી ભારતમાં દેખાયું

વોશિંગ્ટન, તા. ૨૯મી ડિસેમ્બર. (ડી. પી. એ.)

એક નાનકડું પક્ષી એકસો વર્ષથી વધુ સમયથી દેખાયું ન હતું. આ પક્ષી લુપ્ત થઈ ગયું હોવાનું મનાતું હતું. કીંતુ ભારતના જંગલમાં આ ઘુવડ પક્ષી દેખાયું હોવાના ગઈકાલે અહેવાલ હતા.

ભારતમાંના મુંબઈથી ઉત્તરે આવેલા સાતપુડા પર્વતમાં અમેરિકાના સંશોધકોની ટુકડીએ ૨૫મી નવેમ્બરે આ જંગલના નાના કદના ઘુવડ પક્ષી (એથીની બ્લીવીટી)ની તસવીર ખેંચી હતી, એમ 'વોશિંગ્ટન પોસ્ટ'ના અહેવાલમાં જણાવ્યું હતું.

વર્ષ ૧૮૭૨માં આ પ્રકારના નાનકડા ઘુવડ દેખાયા હતા. પરંતુ ૧૮૮૪ થી આ પક્ષી દેખાવા અંગે કોઈપણ લેખિત કે દસ્તાવેજ માહિતી ઉપલબ્ધ ન હતી.

J. S. Serrao

NATURE RAMBLES

-Bombay Natural History Society

Co-ordinator, Bombay Mid-Town Botany Club's N.J.

January 1, 1998

A/002, SHEETAL
Behind Avinash, Vaswani Marg
7 Bungalows, Andheri (W)
Mumbai 400 053 Phone: 6366227 (current)

Mr Humayun Abdulali
3, New Reshma Apartment
13, Pali Hill, Bandra (W), Mumbai 400 050

Dear Sir

In my telephonic conversation with you on 1st January, I got the impression that you could not grasp what I was telling you about the Forest Spotted Owlet, Athene blewitti. As such to make myself clear I write this to you, with two exhibits:

(1) On 30th December 1997, The Bombay Samachar carries a laconic press note that American Ornithologists have rediscovered the ~~Spotted~~ Forest Spotted Owlet, Athene blewitti in the Satpuras and possess a photograph of the bird in the wild. My query to you was, is a photograph, however clear, sufficient to proclaim rediscovery of A. blewitti? The answer I get to myself is an emphatic NO. Why?

(2) Because in 1975 and 1976 Dr Salim Ali and Dr Ripley surveyed the Satpuras and came across individuals of the Spotted Owlet which could be mistaken for the Forest Spotted Owlet. Subsequent to this Mr S.A. Hussain scoured this area and failed to come across the bird. In the meanwhile Dr Ripley was studying the dozen or so specimens of A. blewitti available in the world museum. His findings were: it is difficult to separate A. blewitti from A. brama in the bush. In the hand, ~~however~~ however, A. blewitti's smaller wing and tail lengths, and larger bill, legs and feet are discernible. Dr Salim Ali has set out these findings in 'President's Letter' at pp.4-6, with an illustration of both these birds, in Hornbill, Jan.-Mar., 1978. It is apparent that American Ornithologists have overlooked these findings, for there is no entry of this note in the Bibliography of Ornithology of the Indian Subcontinent. The reason may be as Prof. J.B.S. Haldane during his sojourn in India informed Indian workers of natural sciences that among the nations of the world, Americans are the least read.

(As a digression may I tell you that in the Bibliography referred to above there are 121 entries against SA's name from 1926-1986; you have 162 entries from 1931 to 1987). (is to tell you)

The purpose of the digression above is to tell you that no dent would be made on American Ornithologists Ornithologists minor (apud) write and point out where they have stumbled, because they are just out to shove US Dollar Ornithology our poor Indian throats. It is only big guns in Ornithology like you who could ram sense in them. In case you are inclined to do so, the two encloses to this letter (the press note and Dr SA's note) should be of help to you.

Kindest of regards

Yours sincerely

Serrao.

J.S. Serrao

Enc: Press Note and Dr SA's comments on A. blewitti

name * Ornithologist minor is my Zoological Ornithologist for modern-day Ornithologist among us. (apud) that follows the Zoological name is 'on my part' in Latin, or 'name' from so.

Aasheesh Pittie

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July 29, 2000

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

Dear Mr Futehally,

I trust this finds you and your family in good health.

I am planning a one week trip to Kodaikanal in end August / beginning September 2000 along with my in-laws from Bangalore.

I think you are quite familiar with the place and would be grateful if you could point me towards some interesting birding trails or short half day or one full day trekking routes. Is there someone resident in Kodaikanal whom I can speak to and perhaps go birding with? I'll be extremely obliged for your help.

Thanking You,

With best wishes and regards,

Yours truly,

