



BLACK BUCK

NEWSLETTER

(Published monthly for the benefit of Nature Lovers)

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JULY 1979

Andhra Pradesh Science Centre

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Hyderabad Nature Club

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Hyderabad Nature Club meets every week.

In the scorching hot Sun of the African desert, close to a hundred thousand men toiled to quench man's crave for immortality, five thousand years ago, resulting in the huge wonder pyramid of Gizah. Since then, five thousand years before now, man of all civilizations have moved the earth, trekked across the vast cold deserts of poles, trudged on the desolate sterility of the moon, and probed the cold reaches of the universe. The able and willing and in all his untiring ventures has been—the nature on our host planet earth. Yet, the major casualty in this strife and struggle for 'Progress' is the same helpful and the uncomplaining nature.

All these many long years, she has stoically withstood the relentless onslaught on her by her demanding, impetuous children—man. She is now exhibiting symptoms of weariness. What heartless monster we would be if, in her moment of dire need, we do not aid her and resuscitate her back to life.

It is with deep love for mother nature that we have set forth to create an awareness of Nature and its needs in all and to conserve the existing nature wealth. As a beginning we have ventured to acquaint the bare layman with the simple facts of nature. Soon we will reach you. Just tary awhile.

SUNIL U. GUPTAN

Chairman

OLD BOOMER TELLS HIS TALE —K. NARAYAN

The Great Grey Kangaroo occupies much of Australia's open plains. He is shy and friendly and is very docile. He travels with speed of 25 Kms/hour and jumps covering 15-20 fts.

I am writing to you from Australia. Please read carefully for I am trying to write the history of our race. I am larger than the female and I am called a Boomer.

We belong to the order Marsupialia and we lived in Europe during Eocene and we are chiefly confined to the Australian and American regions. We have many anatomical peculiarities like the presence of two marsupial bones in the shape of two small rods fused with the pubis called epibubis, etc. We are called Marsupials, because of the presence of a pouch by structure on the lower belly called Marsupium, formed by the covering of a membrane over the two epi-pubic bones in which we nurture our young ones.

We range in size from no larger than rats to the Great Grey Kangaroo who pass over 7 ft. in height and 200 lbs. in weight. We feed principally on grass and leaves. We have long hind legs, short fore feet and a long heavy round tail that act as counter balance.

My cousin, often called by the zoologist as *Macropus rufus*, is almost like me. They move in great groups called Mobs. The Wallaroo or the Rock Kangaroo (*Aspropranther robustus*) lives in rock areas. Wallabies (*Wallabies thylogals*) can be seen in captivity. They vary in size and color. The Rock Wallabies (*Petrogalesps*) in-habit rough hilly regions.

We Kangaroos are Viviparous. The young born are called Joeys, which are brought in a state of inconvenient immaturity. These young joeys, about one inch long, wriggle into the Marsupium, where they live till they are big enough, to move by themselves. Well, that's the way we are and that's the way we live. We like it that way and hope that we can stay like that. See us anytime you visit Australia.

PREDATORS: THE MISUNDERSTOOD SPECIES

—R. NAGARAJ & P. SRIDHAR REDDY

The moment you see an Eagle or a Hawk swoop down to pick a mouse or any small animal, you would jump to the conclusion that these animals live on borrowed time. Some birds of prey can scan the entire habitat of the prey in matter of minutes; and swoop down at a speed of 100 miles per hour. Owls can detect a hurrying animal by the sound it makes.

When we question as to what chance have these animals live on "borrowed time", then it is surprising to note that the odds favour the meek. Experiments done on these birds of prey show that they are not always successful. The chances of capturing a prey is hardly Five percent.

The prey have evolved defences against them, for example small animals like mouse or rabbits can dodge the predators by ducking into the burrows. When the prey has so many resources of escape

then we might wonder as why Predators do not succumb to starvation. Predators always conserve their energy and they do not waste their time and energy attacking strong and healthy animals but attack old and sick animals. Study of wolves on Alaska's mount showed that full grown wild sheep were almost immune to attack. Study of Puma, the American Mountain lion, revealed that even such fearful animals usually attack vulnerable animals.

Predators while attacking strong animals may themselves become prey. For example, a Lion that attacks a Zebra or Giraffe may be killed by the sharp hooves. The diet of a Predator varies to a very great extent. Coyotes occasionally attack deer but in absence of it they prey on rabbits and other small animals. Infact it is these small animals that comprise the bulk of the animal's food. There are some animals which steal the kill of other predators. Some Predators are known to eat huge amounts of vegetation also. It is believed that predators have cut down the number of game. Thus many Predators have been killed in the hope that this would mean more game to Man.

Predators play an important role in controlling population of prey but they do not deserve their bad reputation.

PREVENT ONSLAUGHT PRESERVE NATURE

—EDITORIAL

All creatures great and small have a fair claim to existence. Creatures should therefore be allowed to lead their lives unharmed and unmolested. One branch broken or one insect killed may not matter; but injuries add up when millions of people start plucking leaves or killing animals for no reason. You can participate in the fascinating world of conservation by not tinkering with the fine world of wild life. It is not that you should not enjoy nature. Nature is full of surprise for you with various species of birds or insects running into you. You can make conservations more meaningful than all the lectures of books. Careless match or cigarrattes or untended camp fires will reduce this beautiful world, to a barren land. A world without Nature; figure it out for yourself. Thus it is up to you to conserve the land. Why not allow Nature grow wild around you?

Let me, before I go any further, give vent to our joy that the Andhra Pradesh Science Centre has opened in Hyderabad, and that we would have the fortune to have amidst us a Science Museum soon, set up by the Andhra Pradesh Science Centre. We express our sincere gratitude to the Andhra Pradesh Science Centre for publishing the first Newsletter of the Hyderabad Nature Club. In association with an esteemed institution like the Andhra Pradesh Science Centre, Hyderabad Nature Club would be stronger in championing the cause it has chosen to foster—strive to conserve the wild.

SHEKHAR MELKOTE

EDITOR

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BLACK BUCK

NEWSLETTER

(Published monthly for the benefit of Nature Lovers)

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HYDERABAD NATURE CLUB

3-6 221, HIMAYAT NAGAR,

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MAHAVEERA HARIN VANASTHALI

—Vinod K. Kumar & Govind P. Reddy

Mahaveera Harin Vanasthali, a deer park, is situated about 13 kms. from Hyderabad, on the Hyderabad-Vijaywada National Highway. It is named after the renowned Indian saint Mahaveera Jain. This area was once a dense forest with habitat ideal for deers, panthers, tigers etc. As time grew these animals and the place began to perish, owing to the monstrous tyranny of the kings and nobles whose favourite past time was hunting. Even to this day the remains of the onslaught of the nobles can be seen when one visits this area. Fortunately today, this area is being protected by the A.P. Forests Dept. Thus Mahaveera Harin Vanasthali is more than a park—a refuge.

From the gate itself the sign of welcome begins—the emblem, the cool breeze of tall Eucalyptus, the tall grass, the shrubs, the chirping of the birds—all seeming to say "How do you do." This park is about 200 acres in area giving refuge to

many animals like the Black Buck, Cheetal (spotted deer), Porcupine and many species of birds. There are about 50 deers in the park of which 36 are black bucks. Black Buck, the past game of the royal blood, is today, an endangered animal and is well protected under the wildlife law. Chinkaras, Indian Gazelles can also be seen.

The Forest Dept. of A.P. has spent a huge amount of money in protecting these endangered species from the cruel hands of the Man. It is sad that such a beautiful place is being threatened by the establishment of an Industrial area. Unless the Govt. looks into this, this place, sooner or later, would turn barren.

Mahaveera Harin Vanasthali will be opened to the public from the 5th Aug '79.

SILENT VALLEY CRIES OUT—"S. O. S. !"

—MADHUKAR REDDY

Kerala is one of the few power excess states in India. Yet the Govt. has planned to raze to the ground the tropical rain forest in the silent valley to give way for the construction of a hydro-electric project to produce 120MV of power. This project will surely supply more power but at the cost of the last surviving rain forest in India.

The tropical rain forest has high genetic potential. An acre of these forests will hold the largest number of species of living organism than any other type of forests. Nature here has toiled incessantly to adapt conditions like sunlight, rain, warmth etc, all through the year, to evolve highly intricate and sophisticated organisms. Many species of flora and fauna are hidden here waiting to be discovered but man is bent upon destroying this forest. Who knows here may lie the answer to all crisis yet such valuable natural asset is being sold for such meagre amount of power. It is puzzling that Mr. Morarji Desai, the then Prime Minister, who himself is a nature lover, has approved the Silent Valley project.

The Lion tailed Macaque, whose life is not known, can survive only in this type of habitat. This project will drive this mammal a step further—a step nearer extinction. This project will have a profound effect on the climate and ecology of not only Kerala but the whole nation. This impending ecological horror has not been able to move the concerned people in avoiding this disaster.

The Kerala govt. has legislated to minimize trespassing in the Silent Valley. But this is hardly worth the paper it is written on. Once the core of this area is approached by laying tracks then begins the rush to collect timber and to quench the thirst of killing. These rain forest which have evolved through 4 million years have the right to occupy the place more than man himself.

We still have 'nt learnt the lesson from the calamities which we are subjected to in the shape of floods by the destruction of forest cover in the Himalayas and denudation of forests in the Eastern

ghats. The objections and protests by many conservationists has remained only a cry in the wilderness. Unless we wake up to the realisation of the ravaging of the Silent Valley, it will die a silent death.

THE WONDER OF FIREFLIES :

— PRANESH S. BADAMI

Fireflies are not true flies, but are beetles. They are generally brownishblack in colour; there is nothing remarkable about these insects during the day. But at the dusk of a Summer day, when there is optimum temperature the wonder starts to work. The light they produce is greenish blue in colour. The luminating organs are of 2 layers; of granules near the surface and a layer of crystal cells which act as reflectors. The granules contain an oxidising substance called luciferin, which combines with oxygen in presence of an enzyme called luciferase. This enzyme deoxidises luciferin forming an inexhaustable source of power. The granules start glowing when air rushes through it.

The purpose of this light has always been a mystery. A north American species, the *Pyrallis*, uses it as its mating signal. The male signals every $5\frac{3}{4}$ of a second when the female sights it and answers every 2.1 second. The intensity differs from species to species and also to the temperature and climate.

These wonderful insects are used as objects of decoration by Brazillian girls. The natives of West Indies tie them to their toes to illuminate the jungle path. When summer ends the fire flies lay eggs in rotten wood and perish, leaving behind a hope—another brilliant summer by their young.

THE GRANDEUR OF WILDLIFE IN ANDHRA PRADESH

— P. PRABHAKAR

The wildlife of Andhra Pradesh has always been an important element of her history. Andhra Pradesh has inherited a very rich legacy of wildlife but has been subjected to destruction since recently owing to enormous industrialisation. Andhra Pradesh

occupies a strategic position in the Indian sub-continent. It has a varied topography ranging from the high range of the eastern ghats and down to the thick bushy valley of Arraka in Srisailam and the Nallamalais to the shores of the Bay of Bengal. In A.P. forests area cover about 23.5% of the state area A. P., ranks fifth in the country when forest area is taken into account. The districts which have vast forests are: Srikakulam, Vishakhapatnam, East Godavari, and Khammam. The forests here are of deciduous type. All these types of forests is the abode of wild animals which include Tigers, Panthers, Hyaenas, Sloth bears, Gaurs, Black Bucks and a number of species of birds and reptiles. The Forest Dept. has put up many sanctuaries hoping to bridge the gap between man and wild-life.

Today there are 13 sanctuaries established in A.P. with a view of conserving them and increasing their population. Some of the important sanctuaries are the Nagarjuna-Srisailam, Mahaveera Harin Vanasthali, Pulicat Lanjamadugu etc. These sanctuaries besides providing the habitat for a particular animal extends its arms to many others. All life on this planet-Earth is inter-dependent; and man is on a delicately balanced web of relationship. Every time a species becomes extinct, a strand is snapped and man moves closer to his own destruction.

THE DEADLY SNAKES OF INDIA

— M. R. LAKSHMI

The moment the lay man comes across a snake he immediately jumps to the conclusion that it is time for him to say his last prayers. Actually it is not so. Wild animals are more scared of you than you are of them, and snakes are no exception. Snakes never attack human beings. They bite only when they are provoked to a great extent. 90% of the snakes are harmless. In India there are only four deadly snakes: The Cobra, the Krait, the Russell's viper and the Saw-Scaled Viper.

Snakes are without limbs and are the largest of the reptiles. Moreso snakes lack ears but are extremely sensitive to vibrations. Today more than

2700 species have been reported. Most of the species live in the tropics. Iceland and Antarctica are devoid of snakes. Many snakes have scales on their back and plates on their belly. Snakes mostly feed on insects, frogs, mice and rodents. Some snakes like the Krait and the King Cobra feed on other snakes.

Cobras are one of the most deadliest snakes. The King Cobra (Hamadryad) which grows over 18 feet is the largest and the most poisonous snake. Its poison affects the nervous system and is enough to kill an elephant. The kingcobra totally feeds on other snakes. A newly born cobra is as deadly as the adult. Cobra venom has important medicinal values, and is used in curing infantile paralysis, cancer and leprosy. The scales are smooth and deposed obliquely, the neck can be dilated to form a "hood."

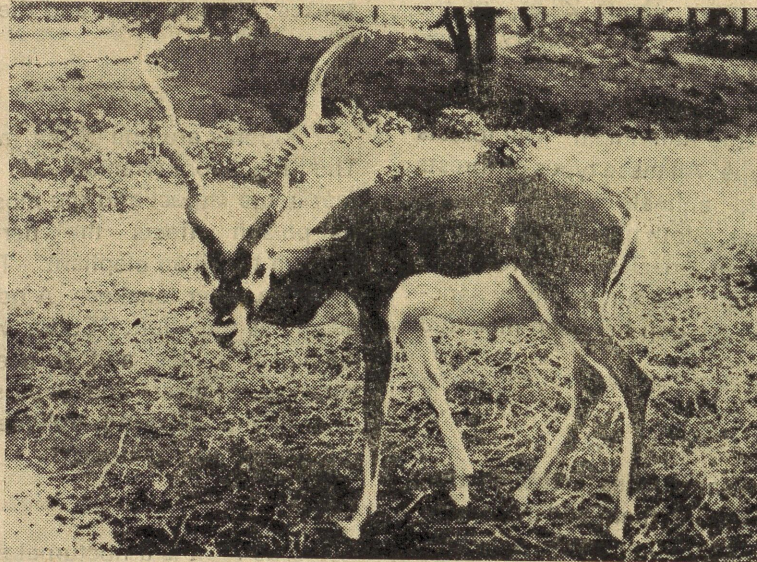
The Krait is a nocturnal reptile and its venom is toxic. A Krait never usually attacks. It attacks under extreme conditions of provocation. In India about 30,000 people die of Cobra and Krait bite a year. A Krait can be identified by the row of enlarged scales along the midline of the back.

Russell's viper is also known as Chain viper. They are abundant in thickly populated areas. Hence they are known to cause more death than any other kind of snake. Russell's viper is nocturnal and is usually never longer than four feet in length. The venom affects the blood and blood vessels. Its venom is used in treating Haemophila and is used to stop bleeding of the gums. It can be identified by its reddish brown colour and three longitudinal series of diamond-shaped white edged markings on the back.

Saw-Scaled viper is small but dangerous. This snake can strike its prey with marked accuracy. The venom is painful to man but not powerful enough to kill him immediately. Saw-Scaled vipers are found in large numbers in sandy areas.

Snakes although responsible for many human casualties has great medicinal values. Snakes are protected in all reserve forests and the export of live snakes and venom is banned. They are protected under the wildlife act.

BLACK BUCK: The Ex-Favourite of the Blue Blooded.



—Photo: Courtesy A. P. Forest Dept.

Black Buck, (*Antelope cervicapra*) an exclusive inhabitant of the subcontinent, is also known as the Indian antelope. It is about four feet long and weighs about 80 lbs. The adult turns its colour from brown to black. However the underparts remain white. The Black Buck (buck) has a pair of spirally coiled horns, adding to the charm and grace. The doe is smaller and hornless but nonetheless beautiful. They have a very short tail.

Black Buck inhabits the open Indian plains all over the country avoiding dense forest areas and hilly tracks. Usually seen in herds of 20-30 (which may exceed) the Black Buck feeds mostly on grass and various cereal crop. The Black Buck take refuge in tall grass area and shrubs, that camouflage it against predators like Tigers, Panthers, Leopards etc. It has keen eye sight and when alarmed leaps 6-7 feet in air and breaks into an effortless gallop. The animal has slender legs that enables it gallop at a speed of 65 kms./hour. Over long distances it is said to be the fastest animal.

Black Buck breeds mostly during the months of February and March. In this period the buck starts fighting for the possession of the harem. The gestation period is about 180 days. The doe gives birth to one or two young ones. The colour of the young one is yellowish fawn. As the animal grows the colour starts turning black.

The life span of the animal is about 20-25 yrs.

Black Bucks, which were once seen in very large herds have been reduced to a very small number. Black Buck had been the favourite sport of the Kings and Nobles. Today it is an endangered animal seeking protection. The wildlife act is trying to give this animal the protection it needs. Why not share the burden?

Sunil U. Guptan
Chairman,
Hyderabad Nature Club.

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This newsletter has been published with the financial assistance of Miss. A. Rajyalakshmi, Dept. of English, M. R. College, Vijayanagaram.

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20th September 1979

Mr. Binod Choudhary,
Research Scholar,
FAO, Nehru Zoological Park,
HYDERABAD.

Sir,

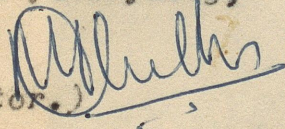
We are very happy to inform you that, HYDERABAD NATURE CLUB, a student organisation, has published the third issue of the newsletter, Black Buck, to propogate the message of conservation and importance of nature. I take pleasure in enclosing a copy to you. I earnestly hope that this newsletter would be circulated amongst the officials of your department.

Looking forward for your kind co-operation.

Thanking You,

Yours faithfully,

(Editor.)





BLACK BUCK NEWSLETTER

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HYDERABAD NATURE CLUB

3-6-221, Himayat Nagar, Hyderabad-500 029.

Tel. No. 35051

Hyderabad Nature Club Conserves the Wild.

From The Editor's Desk...

Since the dawn of civilisation; Man has been completely dependant on Nature—for his food, clothing and shelter. And nature served man, for his needs in her best possible way, evolving intricate methods of refilling the resources of air, vegetation and animal life. But, over the years, man has been carelessly exploiting these marvellous gifts of Nature, without reserving a thought for the morrow. In spite of the ruthless onslaught, Nature never lead an abstemious life.

Calamities like famine, drought, floods are very often invited by man himself. The evil hands of drought grip some innocent people not because monsoon failed to show up, but because a few years ago a forest in the vicinity, was destroyed.

Today, the need for conservation has become very important and the message of conservation is being propogated all over the world. Conservation is important because man has no right to

exterminate for all time, a species that is the end product of millions of years of evolution, and which he cannot replace. Man himself is a part of the world of wild animals and plants. If we interfere with this delicate relationship, we have to do so at our own cost. One species lost and man takes one step forward—a step towards his own doom. Tourism based on wildlife can be a valuable source of wealth. Animals and plants are of great use to man in a variety ways—some of which are still unknown.

It is wrong to say that conservation is only for the elite. Conservatoin is for every individual, all over the world. Who would'nt like to live in a rich environment of flora and fauna; give the next generation a rich natural heritage? Yes, conservation is necessary. It should become part of our daily life, part of our thinking. Let us act, for now is the time, or tomorrow, it may be too late.

SHARKS: THE LEGENDARY SOLITORIES OF SILENT REALM.—BHARADWAJ RAVADA.

The Sharks, members of the ancient class of a Elasmobranchi, have always played a particular role in man's long association with the sea, and for a particular reason. They are among the most primitive of any living vertebrates—for 350 million years, they have pursued a lonely road down the tumultuous path of evolution meeting the problems of changing conditions, by themselves changing scarcely at all. In any case, to become aware of a shark approaching from dim waters beyond the range of vision, is to experience a nightmare sense of peering down some dreadful corridor into the abysmal past.

A close look at any shark does little to allay these nameless fears. The typical Shark is one of the most beautifully streamlined of all fishes, long and graceful as it cruises through the water, torpedo-like in its whip-lash bursts of speed—but from head to tail it seems a creature of pure evil. Its mouth is grim crescent-shaped, curved backwards in an unchanging savage snare beneath its shovel-edged snout. Inside that mouth are rows upon rows of teeth for seizing, shearing, piercing or crunching teeth which renew themselves like a dragon seed, moving forwards to replace those which are worn out. The eyes, set far apart on either side of the head, are fixed in a cold stare. The paired forefins thrust out from behind the head like the vanes on a submarine—fixed and relatively inflexible they are used for steering, for the Shark is incapable of stopping short; and attacks its prey in wild swerving lunges. The tail, its long upper lobe directly supported by the spinal column, is a powerful propulsive instrument.

Sharks are devoid of the gas bladder. Some species overcome this lack in a make-shift sort of way by gulping air into their stomachs. Occasionally, when captured or seeking deeper water, they expel the trapped air forcefully in a prolonged belch—an action that may be accounted for the ancient "roaring" of Sharks.

An outstanding feature of Sharks is their extraordinary sense of smell.

A large part of the brain is given over in the function of smelling. Thus when it first picks up a trace, it may veer back and forth, establishing the direction from which the scent comes; if the

scent grows weaker on the left, it turns right and vice versa until at least, the Shark is "Zeroed-in" and follows the scent to wards its source, often a quarter of a mile away. Their ears are mostly balancing organs, which contain the semicircular canals informing the animal of the changes in direction or acceleration.

In their breeding habits, Sharks are more highly organised than most other fishes. The two sexes couple, the egg is fertilised inside the female, and in many species, the young are born active. Most Sharks are viviparous, producing their young fully formed.

All Sharks are carnivores, but the the largest species, the basking Shark and the Whale Shark, live on the smallest form of animal food in the sea, the Zooqlankton. Most of the big Sharks are primarily fish eaters, but sea-birds, turtles, small porpoises and even terrestrial animals including man, are part of their diet.

Sharks have always been considered fierce and aggressive animals, but whether this is true is debatable. Their behaviour varies greatly. They may come up in dozens to inspect a piece of bait then spend a long time circling it before one of them makes a lunge. Blood in water, however, has a maddening effect on them. A kind wild fury overtakes the Sharks, called the "feeding frenzy," when they charge regardless of all risk and against all opposition. If one of their number is wounded they even turn on their own kind, attacking with great ferocity.

What exactly stimulates a Shark to attack human beings? Human beings are not included in their normal diet; so that a Shark would probably have to be exceptionally hungry before attacking something so far off its normal diet.

About 12 kinds of Sharks are known to eat humans. The most formidable of all is the great White Shark, of wide distribution.

The hammer-head Shark is also very much feared. It is mainly a shallow water Shark, whose eyes and nostrils are carried out on wings on either side of the head, giving a sinister appearance. The Australian whaler has been accused of attacking man from time to time. The grey nurse

of Australian waters is also feared for its attacks on man.

In any case, these relics, these unpredictable carnivores, are different from any other fishes, travellers down a narrow road, who, through the long millennia have evolved and fought for their survival in their own particular way.

EXTRACTS FROM MY BIRD DIARY

—AASHEESH PITTIE.

While recently birding at Banjara Hills, my attention was arrested by a black movement in a tree—some distant from where I was seated. Thinking it to be a Koel (*Eudynamis scolopacea*), a bird whose strictly arboreal nature—makes it one of my most sought after birds, I turned my binoculars that way and settled for a rewarding find. At first only the head was visible. It almost looked like a Koel, but the bird turned out to be a Crow--pheasant or Coucal, (*Centropus Sinensis*). The fact that it was up on a tree, trying to camouflage itself, was very surprising. This was so because this is a bird which, according to Dr. Salim Ali is, "Largely terrestrial stalks along the ground, or clambers and hops with agility amongst branches of shrubs in search of food." "Even its nest says Dr. Salim Ali, is "placed in the centre of a tangled thorny shrub at moderate height." The wings—chestnut in color—showed it was a Coucal, and a shy one at that !

One day, a funny sight greeted me in my backyard. Some two-three days ago, an Indian Myna (*Acridotheres tristis*) pair had successfully raised a young one in the same place. Now what followed was this: A parent was on the ground with a young one. This fellow had just learnt how to fly, but by now it had not learnt the art of feeding itself. The parent had some insect in its beak and the youngster opened its own—wanting the tiny morsel for itself. The adult came nearer to bending, open-beaked youngster, put its own beak into the youngster's beak, and then withdrew—the insect still in its own beak! I was amazed to see this. This extraordinary process occurred more than six times. The adult would tempt the youngster, and then walk away to a short distance, knowing pretty well that the youngster would follow. The

youngster looked hurt and glanced around shamefully. I immediately sympathised with the young one and almost cursed the parent—but then I remembered, the parent was teaching the young one—the art of feeding.

NEWS...

Missing.

Jerdon's courser has been reported missing since 1900. This bird is slightly smaller than the grey partridge inhabiting open sandy or stony waste land, sallow cultivation and thin scrub jungle. This also known as Double Banded Courser; this bird is prominent with a double band it was then seen in the Godavari, Pennar vallies in A.P, Nellore, Cuddapah, Badrachalam, Anantapur and in the neighbourhood — but it may also be seen else where.

If you happen to sight this bird, report immediately to the nearest forest office or to the Bombay Natural History Society, as to the locality, date and numbers seen.

Maharaja Brings Franky !!

Don't be suprised if the traditional game hunter has turned nature lover. Franky, the gharial (Crocodile), has travelled the royal way from Frankfurt zoo in Air India to India, The 12.6 feet crocodile has come to stay at Nehru Zoological park, Hyderabad, under the care of Mr. Binod Choudhary, a research scholar.

Hyderabad Nature Club plants

On 15th August, 1979, the members of Hyderabad nature club, planted a few saplings in the premises of YMCA, Secunderabad. This was the club's third "plant the tree, project." The first project was at YMCA, Hyderabad and the second was at Mother Teresa's home for the aged, Hyderabad. The saplings are growing well under the care of, the members.

Dr. Chenna Reddy Inaugurates Vanasthali.

Dr. Chenna Reddy, Chief minister of Andhra Pradesh, inaugurated a deer park-Mahaveera Harin Vanasthali(See vol.1No.2,). The Chief minister also inaugurated "Harina Darshina", a public carrier to the inside. The state Govt. would be very soon releasing Rs.10 lakhs for the park.

AN APPEAL Donate Generously for the Cause of Wildlife,
Donations maybe sent to: The Treasurer, **HYDERABAD NATURE CLUB**

BROW-ANTLERED RAISES BROWS

Brow-antlered deer (*Cervus eldi*), mostly found in exotic places like Manipal, Burma and Malay peninsula, is also known as the Thamin, Sangai or the Dancing deer. This rare species is on the throes of extinction. The Thamin is 4 feet high and 45 inches in length. The hinds are smaller. The coat is dark brown in color and is coarse and sparse. The hinds are light fawn in color, while the young ones are spotted. The color of the coat varies from being dark brown in the cold season to yellowish brown in the hot season.

This animal derives its name from the 'C' shaped horns. An unique form of antler is carried by the stags in which the brow line curves down over the forehead to form a continuous sweep with the beam. The beam is curved first backwards and outwards then slightly forwards, after which it divides into a short fork of which the two prongs may split into as many as eight or ten points. There are one or more prominent snags at the junction of the brow line with the beam. An average set of antlers measures about 40 inches from the tip of the brow line along the curve to the extremity. Such beautiful horns have turned out to be its worst enemy, attracting poachers. The stag acquires its horns in the second year attaining its prime at the age of seven.

Thamins move in small herds and prefer open scrub jungles and flat land between river and hill ranges. They come out to graze after nightfall and usually raid the crops in the vicinity. The Thamins relish water plants.

Stags shed their antlers in mid-August and are clear of velvet by the end of December when the horns are at its best. The rut develops between March and April. The fawns, usually one, are dropped off mostly in October. The period of gestation is about 258 days.

Today the Dancing deer is not in a position to dance. The animal in its entirety is an allurements for the poachers. It is killed for its meat and horns which adorn the drawing rooms. At present it is found mostly in the swampy Keibul Lamijao National park, where their no. is fast dwindling. Once again, its traditional enemy, man is the root cause for its danger. It is being demanded to reduce the area of the park and utilise for cultivation by the villagers around. A part of forests and the houses were raised to ashes by the villagers for which they were fined collectively. The inept handling of the bureaucrats and fishermen have also contributed to its decline.

But all is not lost. The silver lining in the dark clouds, is the firm determination of the Chief minister, not to accede to the demands of the villagers. Nature lovers all over the world, including International Conservation of Wildlife Society have expressed their concern. Let every nature lover protest _____ protest against the onslaught and the cruel nature of man.

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Editor.

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BLACK BUCK NEWSLETTER

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Hyderabad Nature Club helps nature perpetuate itself

.... AND THUS SHE RETURNS TO HER SILENT REALM

The silent valley which roused one of the most animated controversies in the history of hydel power and irrigation of the county is situated in the southern reaches of western ghats. It is in the Mannarghat taluk of Palghat district of Kerala. This valley houses the last of the remaining evergreen tropical rainforests of India. The Kuntipuzha a tributary of the Bharatpuzha, originates here.

As any other rainforest this is a treasure house of flora and fauna and is the result of the evolutionary changes spread over billions of years. This valley is conspicuous by the absence of the noisy Cicadas and hence the name. It is unique since it has never been inhabited due to its remoteness and inaccessibility. The forests in the valleys and grasslands higher on the hills teem with wildlife. The forests shelter half the world's population of lion-tailed macaque, an endangered species whose only habitat in the world is the south western ghates. It also abounds in tigers, bears, civets etc. Five rare species of fish are also stated to be thriving in the rivulets and streams of this valley.

Man with immense faith in his technological ingenuity nearly succeeded in throttling this paradise forever. This project was proposed in 1940 and was given final shape in 60's and was forwarded to the centre's Department of Science and Technology for approval. This 60 crore project was to produce 120 MV of power and irrigated 10,000 hectares. The Department after discussing the pros and cons were convinced that the destruction of this priceless greenery did more harm than good, decided against it. But the then Prime Minister under pressure from the Kerala Government brushed aside scientific opinion okayed it after the then Kerala Chief Minister Mr. Vasudevan Nair agreed to introduce prohibition in the State in return. The safeguards which the Kerala Government agreed to enforce to protect the forests around the project from poachers, landgrabbers, hunters etc.. were not worth the paper they were written on. The Government started the preliminary works and approach roads were laid and all trees with a girth of over 160 cm. were felled. The Kerala Government was keen on going ahead with the project.

It was at this stage that the nature lovers, scientists and naturalists took over. The Geological Survey of India sent a multi-disciplinary team consisting of scientists to study the forest areas. This team after a study of the area said that the silent valley should be left untouched. The Bombay Natural History Society, Friends of Trees Association, Kerala Natural History Society and the like protested vehemently against the project and also drew public support. The silent valley also received support from abroad. A directive was forwarded to the Government of India from IUCN to preserve its rainforests better, perhaps hinting at silent valley, after its last conference.

The timber lobby and KSEB were pressuring the Kerala Government to go ahead with the project and already 2 crores were spent on it. In return to the hue and cry raised by the naturalists the then Chief Minister of Kerala said that a poor country like India cannot afford environmental luxuries and put forth slogans like "Don't put monkey before man". This indicates the utter lack of knowledge regarding ecology amongst our politicians. The Friends of Trees Associations in a last ditch effort managed to get a Court Order staying the project for a fortnight. The KSEB later got a Court Injunction barring all discussions on silent valley for a specified time. This was to stop a seminar which was to be attended by noted scientists and environmentalists including Dr. Salim Ali.

The Government at the centre then changed hands and the Government headed by Mr. Charan Singh in a rare and uncharacteristic display of concern for the environment, after reviewing the project decided to ask the Kerala Government to abandon the project. The centre agreed to make good the two crores spent on the project and sanction thermal and nuclear project instead of this controversial silent valley project. This would not hinder the development of the Malbar region for which the silent valley project was to be implemented. The timber lobby of Kerala assembly and KSEB who had vested interests in the execution of the project were adamant saying that the development of Malbar region was at stake and in the process gaining the sympathy of the people of that region.

Thus after so many ups and downs and four decades there is a bright ray of hope for silent valley's survival. The declaration of silent valley's forests as a national biosphere will ensure the survival of these forests. Kudos to all those who have fought for its cause and have extended their support for it. This success story of the silent valley may be a prelude to a more ecologically and environmentally conscious nation.

Inside the Indira Park

Indira Park. The name is not at all appropriate for that paradise of birds. As the monsoon was over, everything was lush and colourful when I first went to the park in September.

An artificial pond has been constructed in such a way that it divides the park in two. On one side, hundreds of flowers bloomed in the dawn and everywhere was nature, arranged by man to please his eyes. The flowers were in plots, rectangular, circular, and diamond shaped. The trees were at measured distances so that their shade be spread over the well cut lawn. The lawns were dotted with rock gardens which over flowed with decorative creepers and plants.

On the other side everything was wild. It seemed as though nature had decided not to allow the steps of humanity to approach her. She had seen what he had done to her adjacent half. There is always a challenging beauty in things which are left wild. Wild places are arrogant and imposing. Man calls wilderness—virgin lands. Some come to these virgin areas to beat and whip and cut the arrogance out of it. Some come here to watch the virgin lands as they are, and to observe what grows and thrives and what can be sustained by such lands. And such a one wonders at the marvels and finds pleasure in the little sounds which nature makes in her daily business of existence.

It was toward this wild and as yet untamed area of the park that I went and sat down in a comfortable place from where I could see and hear and note my surroundings, trying not to disturb them. My aim was to watch the bird life in this area and though I tried to concentrate on watching birds, I was aware of the continued work of nature towards the insurance of her existence.

Everything had become silent, wary and scared at my intrusion in to the solitude. But as the sun rose majestically and time flew past and I did not stir, the birds and insects accepted me as a part of the surrounding. From my seat, I could see across the pond to the other side. I watched saw many birds. The Kingfishers looked extremely businesslike. There were two types near the pond. One was the Whitebreasted Kingfisher (*Halcyon senyrensis*) and the other the pied Kingfisher (*Ceryle rudis*) The latter were more active than the former. There were two of them and both fished in the pond. They would hover at a height of 20-30 feet above the surface of the water and when a slight movement by a fish under the surface caught their eye they plunged. Tightly curling their wings

to minimise the drag and pointing their dagger like beaks, they plummeted on to the fish in the water. At the last moment the wings were spread and the impact on water broken. The beak was immersed in to the water, the fish grabbed and, up and away the conqueror flew to devour the vanquished. All this happened in the blinking of an eye. The whitebreasted Kingfisher generally sat on a pole or rock, surveying everything philosophically and took off when prey was sighted. It did not hover like its cousin, but it did not miss much. As it flew six inches above the water, suddenly it dipped, and lo! there was a fish in its beak. This was devoured on a rock.

While this went on around them, the Little Grebe or Dabchicks were enacting their own little skit in the pond. There were eighteen of these *Podiceps ruficollis*, swimming in the water. They had no tails worth mentioning, but they swam and dived better than professionals. Indeed they dive so fast and vanish below the surface with such astounding rapidity, that they leave scarcely a ripple behind. Dr. Salim Aii says "when fired at with a shot gun, the bird has often dived before the charge can reach it." Throughout the early morning, the just dived for food or chased each other around by half flying half swimming over the water.

Then There were the predators. What majesty and what control had they on them selves in flight. I almost started singing 'Eagle' (by ABBA) when I saw a Blackwinged Kite lazily winging its way towards me. There was a large twig in its powerfully curved beak. A nest! it was building a nest. Later I found out that the nest was on a small tree a little behind me. I did not turn as the bird flew over me for I had spotted something. It was Kestrel (*Falco tinnunculus*) - "and what beauty and what art....." I could not distinguish whether it was our winter visitor or our own native. But it was there sitting in all its splendor upon a low branch of a tree on my right. A small falcon, a bit larger than a pigeon. The common pariah kite too was building its nest. In fact an adult was sitting on the nest and flew away when I approached it. The other was perched on a nearby coconut tree, and give the warning cry when it saw me approach, a shrill, almost musical whistling ewe-wir-wir. The nest was an untidy platform of twigs, iron wire, rags and rubbish of every description.

There is a bridge over the pond - at the end of it - which helps people like me to cross over from conquered half to the independent half of nature. While crossing, on the left hand side is the pond, on to right is a jheel. In this jheel there is ankle deep water - may be more - and it is overgrown with reeds. In this watery place and through a screen of reeds, I beheld a pair of Purple Moorhen (*Porphyrio porphyrio*) awkwardly moving through the thalush in

in search of food. This is beautiful but very clumsy purplish blue rail, with long red legs and toes. It has a stump tail which is flicked at each step. Here I could see how well nature can exist without man. And how well she can conceal her creations from him. The Purple Moorhen was practically invisible behind the reeds. Only its flicking tail and movement give it away.

While returning from the wilderness to civilization, I saw a beautiful Golden backed Woodpecker (*Oinopium benghalense*). It was perched in the character posturist of its race upon a solitary trunk still projecting from the ground. God only knows where the foliage of this tree had gone. But the beauty which might have been was again recreated by the woodpecker's golden-back. It really mixed well with the environment. It wore a flaming crest and a golden coat fit for kings. Its beak was sharp and pointed like a lance-head. Almost disgustedly it turned away from my gaze and hopped round to the other side of the trunk.

I think these were all the 'new' birds which I new that day. New because I had seen them for the first time. I remembered Keats tribute to the Nightingale.

Thou wast not born for death, immortal Bird.
No hungry generations tread thee down,
The voice I hear this passing night was heard
In ancient days by emperor and clown.

These lines hold good for these birds too and also for all those which come to our gardens - and I saw at the park. I saw the pied wagtail (*Motacilla maderaspatensis*) and heard its musical trilling. The doves crooned all around and the small green bee eater (*Merops orientalis*) flittered and caught bees and then battered them on rocks to be devoured more easily. I saw the Hoopoe and the shy crow pheasant and many pairs of sunbirds, the males flashing their yellows in the trees and among their green world. The Indian robin cocked its tail and strutted around the brown female. And then there were those ebony feathered and ruby eyed male koels silently flying around and their spotted and rufous females following them. The Indian Mynas, the red-vented Bulbuls and the common Babbler were seen everywhere and heard so often. They abounded here as well as they do in our gardens.

On the whole, it seemed as though the birds had very philosophically and logically decided that both they and man must exist together. So if man will not change and continue to encroach, it is they who have to adjust and bear. But when man goes beyond his limits, then adjustments are impossible and the inevitable happens. Due to the carelessness of one child of mother nature another is killed and its laughter is not heard any more in the places it used to visit. Another strand is broken off from the web of life and all the children of nature come a step closer to their extinction.

AASHEESH PITTIE.

The Club

Editorial

"A year has passed
Many a mile have we trekked,
Yet, so far to go
So much to do --"

So much to do, to alleviate the pressing burden on our beloved mother nature. The pressing burden of a never-ending, ever-present onslaught on her by man. At every step of his way man has always received and used the companionship and the benefits of nature. And yet in his most characteristic and ungrateful style bites the hand that feeds him. And now, in the time of her greatest need, he is turning away from the plight of her sorrowful state of a slow dying.

It is to prevent this ruthless and painful mistake that the Hyderabad Nature Club was formed. The Hyderabad Nature Club is a group whose most common interest is an ardent love for nature and her existence and a firm conviction that nature should be conserved and its destruction prevented. It is with this love, this conviction, that every member endeavours to resuscitate nature back to life.

Once every fortnight, the first and third Thursday of every month, the members of the Club gather at a common meeting place, -- St. Paul's High School, Hyderguda—to share their experiences and adventures and to plan further ventures - a study trip to a new sanctuary, an ornithological expedition, a nature study camp or the like. Combining the pleasures of outing with the job of working towards a better understanding between man and nature can produce such exhilarating joy as never experienced before.

By helping the layman understand nature, by introducing children to the joy of nature, by learning more about nature ourselves we strive to conserve the wild. And any one of whatsoever community or part of the country he or she may come from, is welcome to help us in our endeavour—the only necessity being a love for nature.

"All are but a part of one stupendous whole, whose body nature is and God the soul."

— Alexander Pope'

(Endangered animals of India No. 3 Will appear in the next Issue)

This newsletter is Published by Hyderabad Nature Club. For copies, write to Hyderabad Nature Club.

Edited by BHARADWAJ RAVADA.
