

# NEWSLETTER

## FOR BIRDWATCHERS

Volume 3-1963 April

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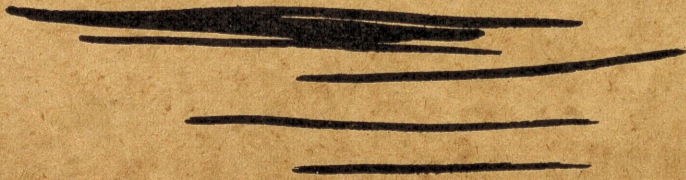
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FOR  
BIRDPWATCHERS

Vol. 3, No. 4

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BIRDS AROUND BOMBAY : A VISITOR'S IMPRESSIONS

For a birdwatcher coming from England, to step off a boat at Bombay is twice as exciting as it must be for an ordinary visitor. Not only has one entered a completely new human world, but also a complete new world full of wonderful new birds.

At first all one can do is to sink low in the scale of ornithologists to become what we call a 'tick hunter' or maniac tally-list increaser. And this is what happened to me.

Just for the record, the first bird I saw was completely new to me was your redoubtable House Crow. After that I saw only Pariah Kites and Blackheaded Gulls, both of which we have in Europe, until I reached Andheri, where I saw about ten new species without moving from a comfortable chair in the editor's garden. In the heat (your winter is hot to us) I fell asleep for a few minutes, to be awoken by a Koel with its loud and abruptly rising call. I rose abruptly too, and stared at this no doubt to you a common garden bird, with great interest as it moved through the branches of a mango tree, and then ticked it on my list. Among the ten birds I saw were the Whitebacked Vulture and the Magpie Robin, which was tuning up for its summer song.

The first full day in this country produced 47 new species. We went north of the city into the fertile vegetable-growing area, where there was a great variety of habitat ranging from aquatic

to heavy scrubland. Near the water we saw Large Egrets, Pond Herons, and the Gullbilled Tern, a species that occurs occasionally in England, is known to have bred once, and is otherwise quite widely distributed in Europe. A most interesting and beautiful water bird is the Whitebreasted Kingfisher, which at first I could only hear calling, but later I caught a glimpse as it flashed past us. We only have one species of kingfisher in Europe, the Common Kingfisher (Alcedo atthis) which apart from being a larger race, is identical to the Common Kingfisher here. Our Kingfisher is well known at home as England's most colourful bird. That is a notable difference between the Indian avifauna and ours: there are far more species of very brightly coloured birds here. Besides the Kingfisher there is not one other brightly coloured bird that is at all common. Such colourful birds as the Hoopoe, Bee-eater, Golden Oriole, and the Roller are only rare visitors, or at the best scarce annually occurring species.

Moving off from the water's edge we walked through small fields and amongst thick scrub. We had soon seen a fair variety of species: both the Bay- and Rufousbacked Shrikes, the former was already singing well. There were numerous small birds skulking about in the cover, and amongst those identified were Franklin's Wren Warbler and the Whitebacked Munia.

In the open country we saw several species of the type of bird that one invariably sees on the ground, moving about between the grass and stones and which usually present quite a problem to the uninitiated because as well as frequently vanishing from sight behind some object, they are nearly always very similarly plumaged, being a nondescript collection of brown and grey streaks and mottles. But notwithstanding these obstacles we managed to see two species of larks, and the more easily identified Blackbellied Finch-Lark.

In the trees of the thicker part of the cover, we picked out half a dozen or so species of small birds that quickly became members of unfortunate clan on my life-list. Amongst them were Flower-peckers of two species, two more wren-warblers, the beautiful Iora and some bulbuls. Unfortunately, I only managed to see the Redvented clearly, but a few days later I saw the Whitebrowed and Redwhiskered in the jungle around the lakes in the National Park.

A morning at the National Park was a great success. We saw an Osprey, some Blackwinged Stilts, a Greenshank, some Common Sandpipers, endless Little Cormorants, which were new to me, and several species of egret and heron.

In the jungle round the lake we saw over twenty species, among the more interesting ones new to me were the Tree Pie, Large Cuckoo-Shrike, Wood Shrike, and the fabulous Racket-tailed Drongo. My first meeting with this wonderful and exotic bird will certainly remain amongst the gallery of more significant experiences in my bird-watching life, in the company of such beautiful birds as the Avocet and such striking birds as our Eagle Owl.

But the editor's garden still had treats in store for me. There I saw two birds which for a visitor are most interesting, and they were the superb Paradise Flycatcher, which even though a female was wonderful to see, and the Crimsonbreasted Barbet sitting in a tree, singing its coppersmith's song.

The total of over 60 new species that I saw in less than a week round Bombay are a mere nothing in terms of the numbers of new

birds that I hope to see while at the migration camp at Bharatpur and in the far north, where I hope to go before returning to our drab, but nevertheless rewarding collection of European birds.

Jasper Newsome

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### THE CALLS OF YOUNG CUCKOOS

Young cuckoos of four different species were seen in New Forest, Dehra Dun, every summer. They were the Koel, the Common Hawk-Cuckoo, the Pied Crested Cuckoo, and the Indian Cuckoo. Crows were the fosterers for the first, and Jungle Babblers for the second and third. The calls of the fledgeling cuckoos, as they followed their foster parents, were a poor imitation of the calls of the latter. The calls were also similar to, but distinguishable from the calls of the legitimate young of the fosterers themselves.

The Black Drongo was the only bird seen fostering the Indian Cuckoo for several years. In 1960 and again in 1961 one young bird was seen fostered by Golden Orioles while two or three others were, as usual, fostered by Black Drongos. The call of the Drong-reared Indian Cuckoo was, as was to be expected, more or less the same as the call of young Drongos. But contrary to what might have been expected, the Oriole-reared Indian Cuckoos also called the same call as Drongo-reared Indian Cuckoos. The only noticeable difference was that the 'Oriole Indian Cuckoos' sounded more musical than 'Drongo Indian Cuckoos'. Their calls were not similar to the calls of either adult or young Orioles. Because there were young Orioles and both Drong- and Oriole-reared Indian Cuckoos not far from each other at the same time in New Forest, it was possible to go from one to another and compare the calls within a few minutes of each other. Nevertheless, I should like my observations to be confirmed by birdwatchers in Dehra Dun and other suitable places.

If I am not mistaken in my observations, they raise some interesting questions. Were the 'Oriole Indian Cuckoos' really the descendants of 'Drongo Indian Cuckoos' who laid their eggs in Orioles' nests because suitable nests of Drongos were not available? Do young Indian Cuckoos 'know' their fledgeling calls and do not have to learn from their foster parents? [Obviously all cuckoos 'know' their adult calls without being taught.] Are the calls of young birds influenced by the sounds around them, for instance their foster parents' calls? Are the Orioles not particularly how 'their' young one called? How did they recognize the young Indian Cuckoo as 'theirs' even after it had left their nest? And so on.

Perhaps the answers are already known for some of these questions.

Joseph George

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Roorkee, U.P.

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THE GREAT INDIAN BUSTARD IN RAJASTHAN DESERT

Some more information has been gathered regarding the occurrence of the godawan or the Great Indian Bustard, Choriotes nigriceps, in the desert area of south-western Rajasthan, between Jaisalmer and Barmer, since our last report on this bird in the October 1962 issue of the Newsletter.

During our survey, we were told about a century-old proverb, viz. godawan-ka-god (the repentance of the Great Indian Bustard) prevalent in the Pokaran-Jaisalmer area. The proverb owes its origin to the commonly held belief that extreme thirst in the hot summer months in the desert leads these birds to break open their own eggs, usually laid in May-June, and to drink the contents only to repent later in the rainy season that with so much water all around, they had to destroy their own eggs for quenching thirst. Its deep, doleful hooons during the monsoon rend the desert air and the villagers fondly take it as an expression of their self-pity. We have not got any evidence of the birds actually consuming their egg-contents, but the widespread popularity of the proverb makes one inclined to check the truth behind it, because if the proverb were found to be backed by facts then self-destruction of eggs might be the one single major factor in the great reduction of population of this species.

There has been some criticism (Newsletter 3(1):3-4) about our mentioning the names of localities where the godawans are seen in numbers on the plea that poachers are likely to take advantage of this information printed in the Newsletter. Educated shikaris who are likely to take advantage of the reports in the Newsletter are invariably conscious of the dwindling population of this bird and of the necessity to preserve as many of them as possible. Moreover, it is extremely difficult for anyone to search for this bird in the difficult terrain of the desert. It is the illiterate poachers who are a real menace to these birds. In any case, the information given by us would be superfluous for the illiterate poacher who is a keen naturalist and knows a good deal about the local fauna. What allures him to go for the godawan is the amount of meat he gets from the bird per shot he fires. Being a man of slender means, he would hesitate to try his gun powder and shots on a partridge, or a sandgrouse, or even on a hare. It nicely suits him to bag a chinkara, or a blackbuck, or a godawan with one shot of his muzzle-loader. Such illiterate poachers are plentiful in the desert and they roam about in their search for game, completely unmindful of the damage they are doing to the animal and bird wealth of our country by their indiscriminate shooting. It is not rare to come across a poacher in the heart of the desert who claims a bag of a score of godawans to his credit. It is our misfortune that our illiterate masses are completely unaware of the necessity of preserving at least our vanishing wildlife.

Ishwar Prakash, and  
Pulak K. Ghosh

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EXTRAORDINARY COURTSHIP (?) OF THE HOUSE SPARROW

Noting in the February 1963 Newsletter for Birdwatchers -- your request for information on the House Sparrow -- I send you the following notes on unusual behaviour observed at Pine Orchard, Connecticut, April 22, 1962.

At 8 a.m. in a small tree just outside my house, I noted a female Passer d. domesticus, a common bird hereabouts, on a branchlet 10 feet above the ground, holding something quite large in her beak. I thought it was a mouse, but on looking more closely, saw that she held a male House Sparrow by one or two feathers of the crown of its head, the male dangling down quite limply. I thought the male was dead, and watched the almost motionless scene for over a minute. Some weak movements of the male were seen, and I thought it had been injured. For another full minute the birds remained thus, and my curiosity overcame my desire to wait out the performance. When I got about 6 feet away, the male suddenly 'came to life' and flew off, followed by the female.

By April 22, sparrows are commonly observed courting, and possibly this was a courtship performance, which by some unusual fluke developed into an unusual variation.

Dr. Wilbur G. Downs

10 Halstead Lane, Pine Orchard,  
Conn., U.S.A.

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THE WRYNECK, JYNX TORQUILLA

I am grateful to Mr. Reeves of Surrey for trying to throw some light on the racial differences of Jynx torquilla mentioned in my article of the same name.

Jynx torquilla himalayana is mentioned in Ripley's A SYNOPSIS OF THE BIRDS OF INDIA AND PAKISTAN in the Addenda as '797a. Jynx torquilla himalayana Vaurie (1959, Amer. Mus. Novit. No. No. 1963:9). (Inshan Wardwan Valley, Kashmir.). Range: Breeds in W. Pakistan and India from Kurram Valley (?) to Chitral, Gilgit and Kashmir; Ladakh (rare).'

My young friend Julian Donahue has just sent me a copy of Vaurie's original paper mentioned above in which he describes all the seven subspecies of Jynx torquilla together with photographs. I realise that the points of difference which appeared significant were really unimportant.

I am quoting Vaurie for his description. of Jynx torquilla himalayana a new subspecies.

'Diagnoses: Differs from all other races of the species by being more vermiculated, rather than spotted on the lower breast, abdomen and flanks. The markings are broader, less sagittate in shape, and ten to coalesce with the result that the abdomen appears to be barred rather than spotted.

'Measurements: Wing length - adult males 81 (type), 82, 84, 86. Adult females, 80, 83.

'Discussion - 'himalayana' resembles 'chinensis' in coloration above, being greyish as in the latter, less rufous than 'japonica' but is somewhat more boldly marked with black on the nape, back, scapulars and inner secondaries than 'chinensis'. The

ground colour of the under parts averages slightly darker than in 'japonica' and is more uniform than in the latter or in the other races, showing less contrast between the color of the throat and that of the abdomen.'

Julian, who collected a specimen in Delhi, should be able to say if it belonged to this subspecies.

Incidentally, I may correct a statement in that article. I claimed that 17th April was the latest date for Jynx torquilla in Delhi. I found later that Sir N.F. Frome had seen one on 23rd April. His earliest date for it was 8th August (N.F. Frome, Birds of Delhi and District, J. Bombay nat. Hist. Soc. 47(2), December 1947.

(Mrs.) Usha Ganguli

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#### THE BIRDS OF RATNAGIRI DISTRICT, MAHARASHTRA

Ratnagiri District is a hilly country lying between Bombay and Goa on the west coast of India, with a heavy rainfall. To its east stand the Western Ghats, and the Arabian Sea is its western boundary. The Arabian Sea has many tidal creeks intercepting this District at many points forming a network of waterways. The forest of this District is of a semi-evergreen type with scrub jungles on the open tops of the rocky hills, interspersed by villages and cultivated fields at many places. Betel and coconut palms, jak fruit trees, mango orchards, cashew trees, etc. are the main plantations. 'Ain' (Terminalia tomentosa), 'Kinjal' (T. paniculata), 'Khair' (Acacia catechu), 'Kuda' (Holarrhena antidysenterica), 'Kajra' (Strychnos nuxvomica), 'Karvanda' (Carissa carandas), etc. are the naturally growing trees and shrubs in the jungles, while the sides of the creeks are covered with mangrove patches. The geographical situation, the natural vegetation, and plantations make this District attractive for birds of many types.

During my 12 days' stay in the area I could see as many as 130 species of birds within a radius of 15 miles. They are listed below with their common English and Marathi names, together with their status wherever possible.

- Corvus splendens: House Crow. Mar. son káwlá. Common in and around villages  
Corvus macrorhyncus: Jungle Crow. Mar. dom káwlá. Status as above.  
Dendrocitta vagabunda: Tree Pie. Mar. ? . Pairs in betel and coconut plantations, and mango orchards.  
Parus xanthogenys: Yellowcheeked Tit. Often seen near jungles and houses.  
Turdoides striatus: Jungle Babbler. Mar. chambar. Common all over in flocks of 5 to 30.  
Dumetia hyperithra: Rufousbellied Babbler. Occasionally seen in flocks of 5 to 10 in jungles only.  
Aegithinia tiphia: Indian Iora. Mar. shil pakhru. Common all over, jumping from branch to branch collecting insects.  
Chloropsis aurifrons: Goldfronted Chloropsis. Common on the flowering trees feeding on insects too  
Pycnonotus cafer: Redvented Bulbul. Mar. kálá bolándá. Common throughout the area  
Pycnonotus jocosus: Redwhiskered Bulbul. Mar. Bolándá. As above.

- Pycnonotus luteolus: Whitebrowed Bulbul. Seen twice near the village.
- Phoenicurus ochruros: Redstart. Winter visitor; seen once.
- Saxicoloides fulicata: Indian Robin. Very common on hills; mostly in pairs
- Copsychus saularis: Magpie Robin. Very common all over; always in pairs
- Erithacus svecicus: Bluethroat. Common in mangrove patches
- Turdus merula: Blackbird. Common in the orchards; very tame
- Zoothera citrina: Whitethroated Ground Thrush. Common in shady orchards; 3 to 5 per orchard
- Monticola solitaria: Blue Rock Thrush. Seen once by the side of ~~freshwater~~ of the seashore.
- Myiophonus horsfieldi: Malabar Whistling Thrush. Seen once by the side of a freshwater stream.
- Muscicapa tickelliae: Tickell's Blue Flycatcher. Very common in the shady places and heard commonly amongst bushes.
- Terpsiphone paradisi: Paradise Flycatcher: Commoner than House Sparrow around houses. Both phases seen together.
- Muscicapa parva: Redbreasted Flycatcher. Seen often but isolated.
- Monarcha azurea: Blacknaped Blue Flycatcher. Common in the jungle but isolated in this season.
- Rhipidura albogularis: Whitespotted Fantail Flycatcher: Mar. nhavi (meaning barbar) known so for its chap-chap call. Common all over in thick bushes and mangroves.
- Lanius vitatus: Baybacked Shrike. Common but lesser than schach.
- Lanius collurio: Redbacked Shrike. Seen only one tailless individual in a bamboo clump.
- Lanius schach: Rufousbacked Shrike. Common in the open country or harvested fields sitting on a stump
- Tephrodornis pondicerianus: Common Wood Shrike. Met often in the high mango trees or jak fruit trees
- Pericrocotus flammeus: Scarlet Minivet. Met often but lesser than cinnamomeus
- Pericrocotus cinnamomeus: Large Cuckoo Shrike. Mar. rani pakhru. Common all over in a flock of five to eight.
- Coracina novaehollandiae: Large Cuckoo Shrike. Visitor moving isolated; seen and heard many times near the villages and jungles.
- Dicrurus adsimilis: King Crow or Black Drongo. Mar. govind. Common and the only drongo seen in the area.
- Orthotomus sutorius: Tailor Bird. Mar. shimpi pakshi. Common like all over the other parts
- Prinia gracilis: Franklin's Wren Warbler. Only Wren Warbler seen commonly in the open fields and jungles.
- Oriolus oriolus: Golden Oriole. Mar. haldya. Rare to find; seen only thrice.
- Oriolus xanthornus: Blackheaded Oriole. Mar. káládok haldya. Very common all over the area.
- Acridotheres fuscus: Jungle Myna. Mar. sálunki. As common as common myna in the city, the only myna seen in the area.
- Ploceus philippinus: Common Weaver Bird. Mar. sugrin. Seen in flocks in winter plumage, nests on coconut palms are common sight.
- Lonchura striata: Whitebacked Munia. Mar. káli chimni. Commonly seen in flocks of five to ten; found feeding on ground near houses.
- Petronia xanthocollis: Yellowthroated Sparrow. Restricted to areas in flocks of 5 to 10. (House Sparrow not met.)
- Hirundo daurica: Redrumped Swallow. Common near water and on the creeks
- Hirundo smithi: Wiretailed Swallow. Same as above

Motacilla caspica: Grey Wagtail. Mar. Dhobi. Isolated birds on open grounds and in the harvested fields near water or in the summer crop fields..

Motacilla citreola: Yellowheaded Wagtail. Mar. dhobi. Common in the summer crop fields.

Motacilla alba: White Wagtail. Mar. dhobi. Singular birds seen near water and in open patches near water.

Anthus campestris: Tawny Pipit. Common on the rocky open tops of the hills.

Galerida malabarica: Malabar Crested Lark. Mar. bhátuk. Very common in the open country alone with pipits.

Ammomanes phoenicurus: Rufoustailed Finch Lark. ~~xxxxxxx~~  
Seen occasionally by the seaside and on the dusty roads.

Eremopterix grisea: Blackbellied Finch Lark. Mar. kálá bhátuk. Common on the sea shores and in the open country, or in harvested fields.

Nectarinia asiatica: Purple Sunbird. Mar. madh pakshi. Occasionally seen on drumstick, and cashew trees which were in flower.

Nectarinia zeylanica: Purplerumped Sunbird. Mar. madh pakhrú. The most common sunbird of the area often seen on flowering trees.

Nectarinia lotenia: Loten's Sunbird. Mar. same as above. Often seen feeding on spiders and flying insects, as well as on nectar.

Dicaeum erythrorhynchos: Tickell's Flowerpecker. Very common bird on the mango trees feeding on the nectar and berries of Loranthus.

Dicaeum agile: Thickbilled Flowerpecker. Common on fig trees feeding on the smaller berries, and insects, in it.

Dendrocopos mahrattensis: Mahrata Woodpecker. Mar. sutár. Common in mango orchards and bamboo clumps.

Dinopium brachyalansis: Golden Woodpecker. Mar. soneri sutár. Common on coconut palms having holes in series on a tree.

Micropternus brachyurus: Rufous Woodpecker. Mar. kharba sutár. As common as the Mahrata Woodpecker in the jungles, plantations, and near the villages too. Very tame to observe at a few feet distance..

Megalaima haemacephala: Coppersmith. Mar. támbat. Very common on the fig, banyan, pipul or such fruiting trees, along with the following, in company with Koels.

Megalaima zeylonica: Large Green Barbet. Mar. cuckda. Very common in the company of all ~~xxxxxxx~~ mentioned in the preceding species.

Eudynamys scolopacea: Koel. Mar. kokil. As like the barbets in a pair or two at a time in a tree. One young one being fed by House Crows was also seen.

- Centropus sinensis: Crow-Pheasant. Mar. tupia, or bharadwaj.  
Commonly seen in a pair in the bushes but not more than two  
pairs in the area.
- Psittacula krameri: Roseringed Parakeet. Mar. popat. Common on  
fruiting trees, in flocks of four to ten.
- Psittacula cyanocephala: Blossomheaded Parakeet. Mar. kártá  
popat. Status same as above.
- Loriculus vernalis: Lorikeet. More common than the two preced-  
ing species. Seen everywhere.
- Coracias benghalensis: Roller, or Blue Jay. One seen often at  
the same place on a dry tree amongst the harvested fields.  
Not seen anywhere else.
- Merops orientalis: Common Green Bee-eater. Mar. páchuk. Common  
all over the country in open or jungles. In open on rocks  
suddenly rising for insects and on the tops of trees in the  
jungles or mangroves.
- Ceryle rudis: Pied Kingfisher. Mar. pándhrá dichá. Occasionally  
seen on the creeks.
- Alcedo atthis: Common Kingfisher. Mar. dichá. The commonest  
kingfisher of the area near water; one occasion seen it  
catch a Skipper Frog and bang it on the stone on which it was  
sitting till it was dead, then swallowed it head first.
- Ramphalcyon capensis: Brownheaded Storkbilled Kingfisher. Seen  
occasionally by the side of water but not very common.
- Halcyon smyrnensis: Whitebreasted Kingfisher. Mar. lál dichá.  
Very common but wherever seen was away from water.
- Halcyon pileata: Blackcapped Kingfisher. Not very common but  
seen many times on the mangrove stumps by the side of the  
creeks.
- Sauropatis chloris: Whitecollared Kingfisher. Seen only twice  
on the open sea shore; very fast flier.
- Anthracoceros coronatus: Malabar Pied Hornbill. Mar. garud.  
Very common in flocks of five to fifteen. Feeding on fruits  
of banyan, pipul, and Nux-vomica.
- Upupa epops: Hoopoe. Common in the open country in flocks of  
4 to 9.
- Hemiprocne coronata: Crested Swift. Seen only once, a pair in  
flight.
- Caprimulgus indicus: Indian Jungle Nightjar. Very common on  
the open tops of the rocky hills at night. Calling the pecu-  
liar call chuk-chuk-chuk-chekur-rr-rr-rr in the evenings.
- Glaucidium radiatum: Jungle Owlet. Mar. ghubad. Very commonly  
found in pairs, heard during the day as well night.
- Ninox scutulata: Brown Hawk Owl. Seen only once; nothing more  
known.
- Sarcogyps calvus: King Vulture. Mar. kala gidhád. Occasionally  
found with the other species.

Gyps indicus: Longbilled Vulture. Mar. gidhad. Common with the next feeding together.

Pseudogyps benghalensis: Whitebacked Vulture. Mar. Same as above. Common in the company of the preceding species.

Neophron percnopterus: Scavenger Vulture. Mar. pándhri ghár. Seen many times but only on the seaside; not seen on the creeks.

Falco chicquera: Redheaded Merlin. Very common in the area. The Common Drongo very commonly immitates its call.

Falco tinnunculus: Kestrel. Only once seen in the area, perched on a bamboo.

Aquila rapax: Tawny Eagle. A doubtful record, seen once at a distance.

Spizaetus cirrhatus: Crested Hawk Eagle. Mar. kural. Occasionally seen near the village; well known to the people as lifter of their fowls.

Spilornis cheela: Crested Serpent Eagle. Commonly met with in the thicker parts of the jungle.

Butastur teesa: White-eyed Buzzard. Only once seen in the open country.

Haliaetus leucogaster: Whitebellied Sea Eagle. Commonly met with on the creeks and on the sea shores.

Haliastur indus: Brahminy Kite. The most common kite of the area. Found on nest at one place on a tall mangrove tree.

Milvus migrans lineatus: Large Indian Kite. Mar. ghár. More commoner than the next; fishing near water.

Milvus migrans govinda: Common Pariah Kite. Mar. ghár. Not so common as in the cities like Bombay.

Circus macrorus: Pale Harrier. See occasionally in the open country.

Astur badius: Shikra. Common like the Merlin, heard many times, and found in pairs in this season.

Crocopus phoenicopterus: The Southern Green Pigeon. Mar. pusáwá. Met with occasionally on banyan or fig trees which were in fruit.

Chalcophaps indica: Emerald Dove. Mar. bhil-kavda. Commonly met with in the jungles. Found feeding on the ground many times.

Columba livia: Blue Rock Pigeon. Mar. parva. In flocks but very alert when on the ground; rarely seen near the villages.

Streptopelia orientalis: Rufous Turtle Dove. Mar. ghati kavda. Rare in the area; seen only once.

Streptopelia chinensis: Spotted Dove. Mar. kavda. Very common in the area, flocks of five to ten feeding in the harvested paddy fields.

Pavo cristatus: Common Peafowl. Mar. o Mor and Landor or. Common in the thickets in flocks of five to ten maximum. Very wary in behaviour.

Galloperdix spadicea: Red Spurfowl. Mar. ran kombadi. Common in the thickets and ravines; not so wary as the peafowl.

Perdicula asiatica: Jungle Bush-Quail. Mar. lavi. Common in flocks varying from 8-10 to 20. One big flock with 12 chicks of two broods together were seen.

Francolinus pictus: Painted Partridge. Heard only once.

Amaurornis phoenicurus: Whitebreasted Waterhen. Mar. kuwakarin. Common near water streams and in the mangrove patches.

Fulica atra: Coot. Mar. kamla. Two passing migrants stayed only two days in the area in the creek.

Cursorius coromandelicus: Cream-coloured Courser. Occasionally seen in flocks of three to five all standing still and straight on the leg more over in a line, in the open country.

Glareola maldivarum: Indian Large Swallow Plover. Seen in flocks flying on the creeks.

Larus ichthyæetus: Great Blackheaded Gull. Doubtful sight record.

Larus ridibundus: Blackheaded Gull. Very common near fishing boats.

- Larus brunicephalus: Brownheaded Gull. Occasionally seen mixed in the flocks of the preceding species.
- Leucopoliuss alexandrinus: Kentish Plover. Very very common on the rocks on the shores. In big flocks of ten to hundred.
- Charadrius dubius jerdoni: Jerdon's Ringed Plover. Very common on open grass patches and near the shore on sandy beaches.
- Pluvialis apricarius: Golden Plover. Very common on the marshy patches after the tides are over.
- Lobivanellus indicus: Redwattled Lapwing. Mar. titvi. Common as everywhere.
- Himantopus himantopus: Blackwinged Stilt. Met occasionally with Greenshanks by the side of the creeks in low water.
- Numenius arquata: Curlew. Met occasionally in the company of Intermediate Egrets and Green Bitterns, feeding in the marshy patches.
- Limosa limosa limosa: Blacktailed Godwit. Mar. tiwla -- this name is commonly used for all waders including sandpipers and stint, and Red- and Green Shank. Occasionally seen singly or in pairs along with sandpipers.
- Tringa ochropus: Green Sandpiper. Commonly met all over the creeks flying suddenly with a call.
- Tringa stagnatilis: Marsh Sandpiper. Rare in the area; seen 2 flocks in the mud.
- Tringa hypoleucos: Common Sandpiper. Common as its name suggests.
- Tringa totanus: Redshank. Only one in the area was moving for many days.
- Glottis nebularia: Greenshank. Commoner than Redshank; in flocks of 5 to 10.
- Erolia minuta: Little Stint. Common flocks of five to 30-40 along the creeks.
- Capella gallinago: Common Fantail Snipe. Mar. isnipe. Common in the marshes.
- Phalacrocorax niger: Little Cormorant. Mar. pán-kávlá. Common in the creek waters.
- Anhinga melanogaster: Darter. Only one seen many times in the area.
- Egretta intermedia: Smaller Egret. Mar. balái. Isolated birds in the fields flying away on human approach with a call.
- Egretta garzetta: Little Egret. Mar. baglá. Common flocks by the side of water or in the fields mixed in the company of cattle and smaller egrets.
- Bubulcus ibis: Cattle Egret. Mar. Same as above. Common as mentioned above.
- Demiegretta asha: Reef Heron. Mar. kala dhok. Commonly seen at water but only single birds.
- Ardeola grayii: Pond Heron. Mar. jakitwala. Common everywhere.
- Butorides striatus: Green Heron. Resting in the mangrove patches during day time and active by dusk.

These observations were made from 7th to 19th January, this year. This note will testify to the uniqueness of the district for birdwatchers.

P.W. Soman

Bombay Natural History Society

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#### BIRD NOTES FROM SAURASHTRA

The aftermaths of a very lean monsoon are influencing us. Water is rather low and most of our lakes and other water supplies are dwindling. It is quite hot too and there appears to be signs of an early summer.

The birds are proclaiming summer's advent, and the loud chirrup of the Tailorbird is heard more and more frequently. The little Coppersmith is really quite vociferous, and quite a few birds are tonking away in the trees in the compound.

Sparrows have started collecting grass and exploring cavities and cornices under the eaves. However, this is all still in the exploratory stage. Whitethroated Munias seem to have no fixed time for breeding for there is a pair already at it in a thick clump of bougainville.

All the resident birds, however are not as optimistic as the barbets and the sparrows, and the Koel is very subdued, while the Redvented Bulbuls seem to be quite furtive in their ways.

Purple Sunbirds are of course very gay and are carolling everywhere, but then this is their normal breeding season and in a month or so they will be raising their last broods of the year. How wonderfully they synchronise their breeding with the flowering of most of our trees in this dry part of the country, for March and April deck the trees with blooms and make them the festive places for insects.

Talking of flowering trees, the Red Silk Cotton is in flower, and its blossom covered branches are the favourite haunt of Sunbirds, Common Mynas, and squirrels. Goats feast on the fallen blooms. The drumstick trees are also about to flush into inflorescence, and then they will be alive with Sunbirds after spiders and other insects and droning bumble bees.

Green Bee-eaters are still in flocks, and we have a tall tree in which a small flock comes to roost. It is interesting to note how they all huddle onto the outer thin branches just at sundown, and sleep closely packed side by side along a twig facing the opposite side of the tree, from which side, incidently, the prevailing wind also blows -- NE. wind.

No Rosy Pastors have come to town, though they are around in small scattered flocks in the countryside, but then the Ficus are not fruiting. We shall soon have the revellers among us though.

The Peacocks have started growing new trains, but they still look leggy and very unprepossessing. What a pity they shed their trains for many months of the year. They do not appear more proud because of the recognition by the nation.

The crows have started to be amourosly inclined, and they are really most attentive and delicate in their advances, something not to be seen in the love life of many a more attractive bird.

K.S. Lavkumar

Rajkot, February 10, 1963

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REVIEW

THE CRY OF A BIRD. By Dorothy Yglesias. William Kimber. Price 25 sh.

This book is the story of the Wild Bird Hospital started by the authoress and her sister in the village of Mousehole in Cornwall more than thirty years ago. The sisters began their

venture, which has now become something of a national institution, without special funds or knowledge of bird life and with only the amateur assistance of the local villagers, but of the 4000 injured birds which passed through their hands most were apparently successfully returned to conditions of wild life.

Miss Yglesias does not claim to be a trained ornithologist and is modest about the conclusions which she draws from her wide experience. Her fascinating story does however suggest that wild birds may have greater individuality and richer emotional life than it is at present fashionable to admit. As a record of sympathetic understanding between human beings and birds it must be almost unique.

H.M. Wake

NOTES AND COMMENTS

Studying the House Sparrow

Our project for studying the life history of House Sparrows (Newsletter, February 1963) is we hope being taken seriously by our readers. If we cannot collect all the vital statistics of this bird before the end of the year it will reflect poorly on our capacity to observe purposefully -- for sparrows are everywhere and are not particularly secretive.

So far only two notes have come in, one published in this issue and another by Sumeda Nilakanta (aged 9) who complained that a part of her knitting wool was used by a sparrow as nesting material.

Movements of Rosy Pastors

Rosy Pastors which come annually to the western suburbs of Bombay about the middle of January as soon as the Erythrina and bombax trees start to flower, have now completely disappeared from here. They are still seen further inland where there is more diversity of food. Most of these birds must now be contemplating the return journey to their homelands. Will readers look up their note books and send their reports about the dates and place where they have seen these birds? We would like to collate the data that has been recorded so far.

Field Identification of Birds

Requests come in occasionally from readers asking for help in identifying birds which they have seen. To track down a species from a description given by somebody else is not at all easy. Those who have sent requests of this nature -- and indeed all of us -- will profit by reading again the excellent note by H. G. Alexander reproduced in Newsletter Vol. 1, December 1960.

A competent psychologist says that half of any new matter presented is forgotten after the first half hour, two thirds after nine hours, three fourths after six days and four fifths after a month. The importance of taking down notes on the spot or within a few minutes of observation is therefore quite essential.

National Bird

The Peacock has been designated our National Bird. There is little point now in continuing the controversy but as a matter of interest readers might refer to an earlier issue of the Newsletter where a case was made for the selection of the Great

Indian Bustard for this honour. Anyway, the peafowl will multiply and strut even more arrogantly than they do now, while the Bustard is quietly extinguished from the face of the earth.

The Crow:

CORRESPONDENCE

Mr. Mohd Ishaq Siddiqi of Lucknow has sent this extract: "It is firmly believed, and there is more ground for the belief than usual, that crows hold punchayats, caste-councils or committees, and inflict summary punishments on offenders. It is at least certain that in India, as elsewhere, a maimed or disabled bird, unable to escape or hide himself, is set upon by his kind and killed. This habit is reported to have suggested a strategem by which omnivorous gypsy folk catch crows. A live crow is spread-eagled on his back, with forked pegs holding down his pinions. He flutters and cries and other crows come to investigate his case and presently attack him. With claws and beak he seizes an assailant and holds him fast. The gypsy steps from hiding, and secures and pinions the second crow. These two catch two more, the four catch four more, and so on, until there are enough for dinner, or to take into a town, where the crow-catcher stands before some respectable Hindu's shop and threatens to kill the bird he holds in his hand. The Hindu pays a rason of a pice or two and the crow is released." -- John Lockwood Kipling in BEAST AND MAN IN INDIA (London 1904) pp. 28-29.

Perhaps some reader may be in a position to try out this method or to tell us whether it is still in vogue in any part of the country and as successful as the account leads one to believe. On the face of it it would seem that the crow is far too cunning a bird to be taken in by this simple device. He may try it once, but that other crows seeing the predicament of the victim should allow themselves to be taken in in the same way seems difficult to believe. -- Ed. 7

Abstracts section in the Newsletter

As regards the Abstracts Section to be opened in the Newsletter I think it has to be a cooperative effort. First of all, we have to find out who gets the various journals on birds. Next we have to find out whether they can devote the necessary time to abstract interesting articles for publication in the Newsletter. Even if all the journals were available here, I couldnt do the abstracting of all the articles. It will be too much work! Too much for the time at my disposal, I mean! At present I am getting only one journal, the Audubon Magazine, which contains articles on birds. I can take up the responsibility for abstracting papers from this. The Avian Biology Department of the Baroda University should be able to do much in this task, I should imagine. There is no better way of studying a paper than by preparing an abstract of it.

Joseph George, Roorkee

[Any offers? - Ed. 7]

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Reminder

Readers are requested to send in their subscriptions by check, bank draft, or money order to the above address.