

Bohrod

BLACK BUCK

VOL. III

QUARTER 1



NEWSLETTER OF HYDERABAD NATURE CLUB



HYDERABAD NATURE CLUB

On the 22nd of November in 1978, Hyderabad Nature Club was born. Conceived by a small group of students of this city, Hyderabad Nature Club has grown as a conservation organisation. With active participation of members and subscribers, the club has furthered the cause of wildlife conservation and love of nature in the state.

Other than frequent field trips, the club aims to;

1. learn more about nature in all its forms—flora and fauna—and to aid in her conservation.
2. create an interest in our natural heritage amongst students,
3. inculcate in young minds a love for nature, by participating in our projects,
4. organise talks and audio-visual programmes by eminent conservationists,
5. hold film-shows on wildlife for members, and
6. bring out a quarterly newsletter for our members and subscribers and keep them informed of the club's activities, the latest local news regarding conservation and as a medium of education.

The Hyderabad Nature Club meets every first and third Thursday of the month at St. Paul's High School, Hyderguda. Meetings commence at 6 p. m. Members are informed via the engagement columns of the newspapers.

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A CHECKLIST OF BIRDS OF THE NEHRU ZOOLOGICAL PARK.

- Aashesh Pittie,
Aga Mujahid Hussain,
D. Bala Venkatesh
Varma.

Adjudged as one of the best zoos in India and even the world, the Nehru Zoological Park of Hyderabad is a veritable treasure trove for the birdwatcher. Sprawled over an area of 300 acres, the fantastic variety of its flora, and the resulting types of habitats makes it possible for us to watch different birds of differing habitats, within the zoo boundaries.

The following different habitats (bird-wise) can be isolated.

- 1) Forest Type - comprising of all the different trees, both flowering and those which are mainly fruit producers.
- 2) Marsh Type - the two ponds inside the zoo, and the innumerable moats which encircle mammal enclosures and the smaller ponds are pretty well supplied with weeds and other aquatic plants.

- 3) Scrub and Grassland Type - include the abundant lawns of the zoo and the scrub type drier area of the elephant enclosure, and the area opposite it, across the road.
- 4) Freshwater Lake - Miralam Tank, a big lake behind the zoo. There a great many ducks come in winter.

This project was conceived in December last year (see vol II no 5-6). The members took an active part and quite often one or two friends who were developing their interest in birdwatching, also joined us. Mr. B.C.Choudhury was, as always, very helpful and accompanied us as and when his rather busy schedule permitted. We would like to thank the Curator of the NZP, Mr. Kamal Naidu, for granting us permission to come at odd hours and his understanding staff for all their help. More lists will appear in subsequent newsletters.

A list of the birds follows, which we have seen in March 1981. The list is certainly not complete, and we hope to add to it.

<u>S.No.</u>	<u>Species</u>	<u>MARCH</u> <u>1 15 29</u>	<u>Remarks</u>
1	Little Cormorant (P. niger)	+ + +	An individual bird on the large pond. Sitting amidst the egrets and preening itself.
2	Pond Heron (A. grayii)	+ + +	Common in habitat 2.
3	Cattle Egret (B. ibis)	+ + +	Not very common. Only on the bare tree in the large pond.
4	Large Egret (A. alba)	+ + +	2 or 3 birds on above mentioned tree.
5	Smaller Egret (E. intermedia)	+ + +	"
6	Little Egret (E. garzetta)	+ + +	Commoner than 4 and 5
7	Lesser Whistling Teal (D. javanica)	+ + +	A regular flock of 200-250 on the Miralam Tank. Supposed to be regular migrants.
8	Pintail (A. acuta)	?	Identification not confirmed due to distance.

<u>S.No.</u>	<u>Species</u>	<u>MARCH</u>			<u>Remarks</u>
		<u>1</u>	<u>15</u>	<u>29</u>	
9	Gadwal (<i>A. strepera</i>)		?		Identification not confirmed due to distance.
10	Gargeny (<i>A. querquedula</i>)		?		"
11	Nakta (<i>S. melanotos</i>)		?		"
12	Pariah Kite (<i>M. migrans</i>)	+	+	+	Common, especially over the Crocodile Complex.
13	Tawny Eagle (<i>A. rapax</i>)	+	+	+	2 to 3 birds seen soaring over the crocodile complex.
14	Crested Hawk-Eagle (<i>S. cirrhaetus</i>)	+			Only 1 bird seen in the vicinity of the large pond, near the tiger enclosure.
15	Whitebreasted Waterhen (<i>A. phoenicurus</i>)	+	+	+	Common in habitat 2
16	Indian Moorhen (<i>G. chloropus</i>)	+	+	+	"
17	Purple Moorhen (<i>P. porphyrio</i>)	+	+	+	2 to 4 birds on the large pond.
18	Red-wattled Lapwing (<i>V. indicus</i>)	+	+	+	Common in deer enclosures and habitat 3.
19	Wood Sandpiper (<i>T. glareola</i>)		+		2 birds on the large pond and 1 in Cheetal enclosure.
20	Blue Rock Pigeon (<i>C. livia</i>)	+	+	+	Not very common. Seen only in flight.
21	Spotted Dove (<i>S. chinensis</i>)	+	+	+	Common.
22	Roseringed Parakeet (<i>P. krameri</i>)	+	+	+	"
23	Indian Cuckoo (<i>C. micropterus</i>)			+	Just 1 bird, very silent.
24	Koel (<i>E. scolopacea</i>)	+	+	+	Common. Has found its voice; in Habitat 1.
25	Crow Pheasant (<i>C. sinensis</i>)	+	+	+	Common.
26	Spotted Owlet (<i>A. brama</i>)			+	One bird near guest house, constantly mobbed by crows.

27	House Swift (<i>A. affinis</i>)	+ + +	Common.
28	Palm Swift (<i>C. parvus</i>)	+ +	Common near Guest House.
29	Pied Kingfisher (<i>C. rudis</i>)	+ +	2 to 4 birds on the large pond.
30	Small Blue Kingfisher (<i>A. atthis</i>)	+ + +	Not more than half a doz. birds, generally over moats.
31	Whitebreasted Kingfisher (<i>H. smyrnensis</i>)	+ + +	Commoner than above 2
32	Blue-tailed Bee-eater (<i>M. philippinus</i>)	+	5 to 10 birds in habitat 1 and 3.
33	Small Green Bee-eater (<i>M. orientalis</i>)	++ +	Common.
34	Hoopoe (<i>U. epops</i>)	+ + +	Seen on the lawns.
35	Crimsonbreasted Barbet (<i>M. haemacephala</i>)	+ + +	Common.
36	Goldenbacked Woodpecker (<i>D. benghalense</i>)	+	A very shy bird, thus rarely seen.
37	Dusky Crag Martin (<i>H. concolor</i>)	+	Common near guest house.
38	Common Swallow (<i>H. rustica</i>)	+	"
39	Redrumped Swallow (<i>H. daurica</i>)	+	"
40	Rufousbacked Shrike (<i>L. schach</i>)	+	1 bird in enclosure opp., elephants.
41	Golden Oriole (<i>O. oriolus</i>)	+ + +	Common.
42	Black Drongo (<i>D. adsimilis</i>)	+ + +	"
43	Brahminy Myna (<i>S. pagodarum</i>)	+	Rather secluded bird.
44	Common Myna (<i>A. tristis</i>)	+ + +	Common
45	Indian Tree Pie (<i>D. vagabunda</i>)	+ + +	Common but much reduced since January.
46	House Crow (<i>C. splendens</i>)	+ + +	Ubiquitous.
47	Common Wood-Shrike (<i>T. pondicerianus</i>)	+	Rare
48	Iora (<i>A. tiphia</i>)	+ + +	Common

49	Red-vented Bulbul (<i>P. cafer</i>)	+ + +	Common.
50	Common Babbler (<i>T. caudatus</i>)	+ + +	Common.
51	Jungle Babbler (<i>T. striatus</i>)	+ +	Their call gives them away
52	Indian Wren Warbler (<i>P. subflava</i>)	+ +	Not so common.
53	Ashy Wren Warbler (<i>P. socialis</i>)	+ + +	Common.
54	Tailor Bird (<i>O. sutorius</i>)	+ + +	"
55	Chiffchaff (<i>P. collybita</i>)	+	Very shy.
56	Magpie Robin (<i>C. saularis</i>)	+ + +	Common.
57	Black Redstart (<i>P. ochrurus</i>)	+ +	Common though reduced.
58	Indian Robin (<i>S. fulicata</i>)	+ + +	Common.
59	Large Pied Wagtail (<i>M. maderaspatensis</i>)	+ + +	"
60	Grey Wagtail (<i>M. caspica</i>)	+ +	Still around, though rare.
61	White Wagtail (<i>Motacilla alba</i>)	+	Considerably less.
62	Tickell's Flowerpecker (<i>D. erythrorhynchos</i>)	+ +	Shy.
63	Purplerumped Sunbird (<i>N. zeylonica</i>)	+ + +	Common.
64	Purple Sunbird (<i>N. asiatica</i>)	+ + +	"
65	House Sparrow (<i>P. domesticus</i>)	+ + +	Common near zoo quarters.
66	Baya (<i>P. philippinus</i>)	+	Though the nests were seen on previous visits, the birds were seen only on 29th (5-7) on large pond.

NOTE:- The ducks, who were in the center of Miralam Tank, were very difficult to identify because of the observer-subject distance.

In January a juvenile Openbilled Stork (*A. oscitans*) mysteriously appeared on the large pond, and after staying for 3 weeks, vanished.

THE CROW OF HEAVEN.

- Maj. Ahmed Abdul Aziz.

The Birds of Paradise have been well named for their plumage is gorgeous beyond description. They are also known as the Crows of Heaven.

The names of some of the Birds of Paradise are as follows:-

1. Wilson's Bird of Paradise (*Diphyllodes respublica*)
2. Magnificent Rifle Bird (*Ptiloris magnificent*)
3. Count Raggi's Bird of Paradise (*Paradisea Raggiana*)
4. Little king Bird of Paradise (*Cicinnurus regius*)
5. Lesser Bird of Paradise (*Paradesaes minor*)
6. Sickle Bill (*Epimachus fastosus*)
7. Blue Bird of Paradise (*Paradisea rudol hi*)
8. Lesser Superb Bird of Paradise (*Lophorina superba*)

The island of New Guinea is nearly 2,200km. long and is part of the Australian geological drift, that is., it has been moving northward over ages of time toward the south-eastern fringes of Asia. Echidna, an Australian toothless anteater, Kangaroos, Taipan Snake, Cassowaries (a bird found in New Guinea and related to the Emu), Birds of Paradise and their relatives, the Bower birds, are found on either side of the Torres Strait.

Numerous birds have used the island as a stopover in their migratory transition from southeast Asia. And so New Guinea is particularly rich in avian species. More than 43 species are to be found in the Australia-New Guinea region, more than half of these in New Guinea.

The Birds of Paradise, originally so called by the Spanish, are gorgeous, though they have no song. In spite of their gaudily coloured appearance, they are related to the crow.

Across the water barriers of prehistory, a drab crow-like bird made its way from Asia to New Guinea. In its new isolated home, it founded a genus which has evolved into one of nature's most spectacular wonders, the genus 'Paradisaea' or 'Birds of Paradise'. Although four species are to be found in the northern forests of Australia, New Guinea is their true home. Some like the Magnificent and Wilson's Birds of Paradise, are wide spread over the drier lowlands of the island. The dramatic Twelve-Wired Bird of Paradise frequents mangroves. Others like Sickle Bills and the King of Saxony Bird of Paradise are found in mountain forests. The majority of birds are clothed in fine feathers.

It was the early Malayan traders who gave them the name of 'God's Birds'. The Portugese called them 'Sun Birds', and the Spanish, 'Birds of Paradise'!

Some of the breeding and display habits of the Birds of Paradise and Bower Birds resemble a lot. A few Birds of Paradise also build elaborate bowers and prance around in them to attract the 'fair' (certainly not fairer than the males) sex. While most Birds of Paradise choose an empty branch to display their wares. And how they dance and twist and turn and bob and rise and fluff their feathers! Almost like rainbows in every tree! They are the Birds of Paradise.

Referances: 1) Wildlife Illustrated London.
2) The Atlas of World Wildlife London 1973-74.

THE GIFT.

- Courtesy 'MAD'.

When Nature made the Elephant
A gift she did bequeath -
A trunk which hangs down from the front,
And picks up things beneath.

The Whale was blessed with tail and fin
For swimming through the seas.
The Walrus with great folds of skin
Providing anti-freeze.

The Polar Bear was colored white:
The Skunk was filled with gases
The Hawk was blessed with wondrous sight
Without the aid of glasses.

Soft silky fur was dealt the Seal
The Kangaroo a pocket,
And to the sleek Electric Eel
A built-in D.C. socket.

And Man, as anyone can see,
With his great gift is blessed:
A mind to think up ways that he
Can kill off all the rest.

- Selected by Pranesh Badami.

VANISHING WILDLIFE OF INDIA - 7.

The Indian Elephant (*Elephas maximus*).

The elephant, one of the largest terrestrial mammals, at present exists as two species - the African and the Indian. The African Elephant (*Loxodonta africana*) is taller, heavier and has enormous ears. It is confined to the African continent. The Indian counterpart is smaller in size and extends over most of South East Asia.

The original elephant territory in India comprises the area south of Mysore along the Western Ghats. Orissa, W. Bengal, Bihar, Assam and the Himalayan foothills in U.P. The average height of an adult male is 9 feet and that of the female a foot lower. Males generally possess tusks, though tuskless males also exist. These are called 'makhurs'. These makhurs are heavier and stronger in built. Females have very short tusks which do not protrude out.

Elephants, contrary to our imagination prefer hilly and undulating terrain covered with tall forests and bamboos. They are extremely versatile and can adapt to hot and humid tropical jungles as well as cold temperate forests. Its foot prints have been seen in the snows of Sikkim.

These pachyderms are social animals and herds of 5-60 animals are seen. These herds usually keep to themselves but occasionally stray females and calves change herds. The bulls, on attaining a certain age, leave the herd and lead a solitary life. These may join the herd and leave it according to their sexual need. During the hot summer months, these keep to the dense forests. When fodder is scarce, the herd splits into smaller units and reunites with the onset of favourable conditions.

Elephants like water and keep in the vicinity of rivers or lakes. They feed in the cool hour of early morning and late evening, and take rest during midday and after midnight. They eat various grasses, leaves, bamboo-shoots, plantains, bark of certain trees and raid the crops at the periphery of forests. In all, an elephant needs 270-370Kgs. of vegetable matter daily!

Little is known about its breeding in the wild state. The period of gestation is 20 months long and the young are dropped in late autumn. Normally one calf is born at a time and it is reared by its mother and another female whi-

ch takes on the role of a guardian aunt. Its sense of smell and hearing are highly developed and these compensate for the poor sight.

Occasionally adult male elephants go into bouts of excitement called musth, during which period they are irritable and ferocious. This phenomenon has been associated with ungratified sexual desire, but the exact cause remains unknown.

Since the dawn of civilization, this gentle, intelligent and strong animal has been tamed and used for man's service. Though not yet endangered, their number in the wilds is shrinking fast. Conservation measures are being taken to ensure its survival and evolution.

- Madhukar Reddy.

LETTER TO THE EDITORS.

Dear Sir:

Thank you for the copy of your newsletter BLACK BUCK which I found very interesting indeed. I am unable to trace the names of the Chairman, Secretary, Editor, etc. of the Club from the Newsletter. Is it necessary that they should remain cryptic?

The fruit Bats referred to on page 5 (BB Vol II No 5-6) are possibly the Fulvous fruit bats Rousettus leschnaulti. Cynopterus is not usually found in caves or in substantial colonies.

signed,

J.C. Daniel
Curator,

Bombay Natural History Society.

"The butterfly will continue to hover over the field and the dew drops will still glitter upon the grass when the pyramids of Egypt are levelled and the skyscrapers of New York are no more."

- Kahlil Gibran.

NOTES FROM THE EDITORS.....

Our city has a varied bird-life and quite a few migrants also come over. Some just pass through while some spend their winters here, in more hospitable climes. The Nehru Zoological Park is an excellent place for bird-watching and recording the arrival and passage of migrants and the behaviour of residents. And being almost in the city, the birdlife of NZP is a very good index of the city's bird species and populations. A regular checklist of birds is being maintained by some birders of the club - of the zoo's aves. Their report is included.

Other places of interest being the Indira Park, the Public Gardens, and some of the lakes around our city. For serious birding however, readers can join the Birdwatcher's Club of Andhra Pradesh by contacting Dr. Tej Kumar, Dept., of Entomology, College of Agriculture, Rajendranagar, Hyd.-500030.

If any of you haven't seen a picture of any of the Birds of Paradise, well, you have missed something. Please go through a book on birds of the world and gasp at the aves of the Paradise of Birds - New Guinea. In his article, Major Aziz says something about these 'gorgeous' birds. Major Aziz is an extremely dedicated conservationist, being the member of various organisations dedicated to the world of conservation.

The Black Buck has been made a quarterly. You will now receive 4 issues in a year and any supplements brought out during that period.

We would like to remind those of our readers who have not sent in their subscriptions yet, to please send them as quickly as possible. It would make things more easier for us. Those who are interested in back issues may also write to us.

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Edited for the HYDERABAD NATURE CLUB by Aasheesh Pittie and Pranesh Badami. Contact us at 14-7-370, Begum Bazar, Hyderabad-500012.

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A DATE WITH THE HIMALAYAS (A report on the Manali Camp 1981)

- K. Madhukar Reddy.

Since 1978, WWF-India has been conducting Nature Orientation camps at Manali, in the Himalayas. These camps are exclusively for NCI members. Manali, at a height of 6,500ft. nestles in the relatively unspoilt upper reaches of the Kulu Valley in Himachal Pradesh. Surrounded by snow clad peaks, it is known for its scenic beauty.

Our camp was located 2km off Manali between a mountain and River Beas. The participants, 40 in all, were from nature clubs all over India. We were mostly students but also included were teachers, businessmen, employees and a Sub Lt. of the Navy. One thing we all had in common was a love for nature. Most of us were camping in the Himalayas for the first time and excitement ran high. The activities during our stay in the camp included trekking, rapelling, river crossing and observing the Himalayan flora and fauna. Besides these, we had interesting talks and discussions on various aspects of nature, ecology and conservation in general.

As campers trickled in, on the first day of the camp, the process of getting to know each other went on well past noon. Later we set out in small groups to explore our immediate environment. The picturesque surroundings, with the snow capped mountains clothed with lush green forests and the crystal clean Beas winding its way down the valley - enchanted us.

That day, during one of his talks, the camp director Mr. Lavkumar

Khacher impressed upon us the importance of appreciating and enjoying nature around us. He said that later this would lead to its study and conservation. Some of the reasons put forth by the campers in a discussion on the need for conservation were, i) Nature provides healthy recreation for man's emotional well being, ii) It helps in sustaining a viable environment for mankind's continued existence on this planet, and iii) Its genetic potential when tapped can provide better drugs and food for the millions.

The next day we, a group of 20 campers, set out early to climb the nearby peak - Khanpari Dibba (13,400ft). This took us through magnificent pine forests with the forest floor dotted with a variety of ferns and beautiful violet flowers - which we later came to know as Irises. Those amongst us interested in botany collected specimens of lichens, mosses, fungi and ferns for our herbariums. Profusely flowering rose bushes, white, pink and red, growing wild, hedged the numerous apple orchards. As we ascended higher and higher, the splendid view of the Kulu Valley unfolded before us. Silvery birches and rhododendrons constituted the tree-line. Crossing these we entered sprawling meadows carpeted with a variety of flowers of different colours and shades. Nine of us reached the peak after a gruelling climb and were rewarded with a spectacular panorama of the Himalayas. This beautiful and awe inspiring sight reminded us of the tremendous geological forces moulding them. We returned to camp late at night, tired but happy.

The next few days we spent learning the basic skills of mountaineering. We practised seat, shoulder and stomach rappelling under the watchful eyes of the instructor. Though climbing down those vertical faces of rock was scary, it was thrilling. We also learnt to cross streams with the help of ropes. One evening we had an informative lecture on reptiles in general and snakes in particular by Chandrakant Wakankar, the education officer of WWF-India. This talk cleared numerous doubts of campers regarding the much dreaded snakes and interesting facts about the anatomy, physiology and habits of snakes held our attention. That night a Saw-Scaled Viper (Echis carinatus) and a harmless water snake were shown to us. The lecture next day was about the unique Himalayan flora which, within a height of a few thousand feet, represents the flora extending from the tropics to the poles! We also learnt to identify different trees like Deodar, Oak, Spruce, Fir and Birch. These different species of trees exist at different altitudes where the climatic conditions are suitable for them.

We also had an opportunity to see the different species of lichens which play an important part in the formation of soil from rock. The fact that 6,000 million tonnes of top soil is being eroded in India alone, mainly due to the loss of forest cover, shocked us.

Next day we trekked to Bundi where Solang Nala, a tributary of the Beas, takes birth from a glacier. We kept to its banks all

through the trek. Crossing the rushing rivulet over slippery log bridges was exciting. The same night we took a long walk, without torches, and discovered the considerable night vision we possess! The following day we walked to a nearby village for a glimpse of a captive Monal Pheasant (Lophophorus impejanus). This beautiful bird in its irridiscent colours suppasses the Peacock (Pavo cristatus) in beauty. We were sad to note that this bird is a highly endangered species. We observed several birds like the Himalayan Whistling Thrush (Myiophonus caeruleus)?, Plumbeous Redstart (Rhyacornis fuliginosus), Whitecapped Redstart (Chaimarromnis leucocephalus), Paradise Flycatcher (Terpsiphone paradisi)?, Dipper (?), etc. The dipper was particularly interesting as it remained underwater for nearly half a minute, foraging for insects and larvae. The clear skies that night enabled us to gaze at the stars and we could identify some constellations.

For the last few days we set up a high altitude camp at a height of about 8,000ft. in an oak forest. The drive to this place took us over winding roads which clung to the near vertical mountains' sides. The day after setting up camp, all of us trekked a long way to Rohtang Pass. We passed through dew laden meadows interspersed with islands of blooming rhododendrons. We slithered down slopes of snow and inched our way up and down precarious slopes. We lunched beside a waterfall and finally reached the Pass. This Pass is at a highheight of 12,731ft. and connects the Kulu and Lahaul Valleys. We returned to camp, a tired lot, after the pleasant experience in the snow. The succeeding day we trekked upto Bhriku Lake (14,200 ft.). This is enclosed on all sides by mountains and is mostly frozen. It is a place of pilgrimage. This trek took us mostly over snow covered terrain. We spent the moonlit night around a warm campfire playing games and singing songs - enjoying ourselves thoroughly.

We reached our camp at Manali the next day, on the way to our respective destinations. We all felt heavy hearted at the thought of leaving this wonderful place for the dust and din of cities. While returning by bus we noticed the Himalayan foothills completely stripped of their forest cover.

Whether it was knowing the interesting ecological concepts or rapelling down the rock faces, tasting the absolute tiredness of the treks or a relaxing dip in the hot springs of Vashishth - we were ecstatic and absolutely thrilled by the experience.

AT HOME WITH BIRDS.

- Aasheesh Pittie.

I have made it a habit to birdwatch wherever I go. This type of birdwatching need not be done in full gear, with binoculars, note pad, reference book, etc. It is just casual watching that I indulge in. It is indeed a very good pastime when a job or assignment gets dull.

At home, I do not birdwatch seriously, I do not go out everyday, early in the morning and take down copious notes. All I do is, jot down the names of all the birds I see throughout a day. It has become a habit with me to glance at the sky every now and then, whenever I am outdoors. When a bird calls, my ears prick up, and if I do not know the caller, I take a few minutes time to go out and see who it is. If he is still camouflaged, I do not persist. I come in and wait for another day. Invariably I find out who calls and tries to stay anonymous.

This has been going on regularly for practically a year now, and I have become quite familiar with my avian friends, in Begum Bazar. I note down their names on a graph paper, and then tick off their presence each day. Each paper is for a month, at the end of which I take another sheet, and do it all over again. The result is a very interesting list of the birds which are seen regularly or heard regularly and also those which visit me occasionally, or call from afar. I have not noted some of the birds which fly over my house regularly, because birds in flight are difficult to identify. This is more so when different species of the same family are concerned. Let me take the example of the egrets. Everyday many egrets fly overhead, but I cannot differentiate between a Median Egret and a Large Egret - while they are in flight. Therefore have I desisted from recording these birds. There are also a few birds who I do not see, but whose calls I recognise - these I have included in the list. In the list, which follows, I have added notes after the name of each bird to make things clearer.

1. Neophron percnopterus - Egyptian Vulture - These are seen only in flight, soaring above my head, taking advantage of every warm air current, always circling. They come from out of the blue and disappear into the haze far away. Very rarely seen.
2. Milvus migrans - ~~Pariah~~ Kite - Very common. Every morning a few of them come skimming over the buildings, banking, turning towards some Blue Rock Pigeons, scaring them. I sometimes feel they do this just to show off their power. The sky is filled with scared pigeons, fluttering about in fright. I see these raptors every day.
3. Falco tinnunculus - Kestrel - It is seen only in flight, high overhead, occasionally hovering in mid air. Once I saw it plummet out of the sky. It fell like an arrow shot from the heavens and disappeared behind some buildings.

4. *Columba livia* - Blue Rock Pigeon - In Begum Bazar, wherever I turn my head, I see a pigeon. It is everywhere, everyday. It is one of the birds which has adapted itself very well to man-kinds' way of life.
5. *Streptopelia chinensis* - Spotted Dove - Occasionally I hear this doves' croon. It goes on and on and everything almost stands still. Doves come five to six times in a week. Most probably they inhabit the untouched graveyard near my house. In Feb. Mar. and Apr. I heard or saw them every day.
6. *Psittacula krameri* - Roseringed Parakeet - This bird flies overhead everyday, in the morning and evening. I need not be outside to see it. It screams from the heavens as it flies by and I know it. My heart screams back. I see/hear it daily.
7. *Eudynamys scolopacea* - Koel - The handsome male with that rich voice, and the shaggy female with a torn larynx, speak to each other while I listen. They started calling in March and called to each other till July. Sometimes, when the heat prevented me from sleep, I heard them call to each other at 2am! I am quite sure this was not a dream, for I got up to look at my watch.
8. *Megalaima haemacephala* - Crimson Breasted Barbet - The little green coppersmith, with his throat of red and yellow, works from the top most branch of the *Longifolia* tree in my garden. In Jan. and Feb. he did not call. But from Mar. to Jul. he has not stopped beating copper.
9. *Apus affinis* - House Swift - They nest in my house. A nest of feathers, cosy and safe. Their trilling twitter greets me so often, as they speed by a window, or gather for their occasional meetings, high above my house, pondering over unknown affairs.
10. *Halcyon smyrnensis* - Whitebreasted Kingfisher - I saw it thrice in Mar. and 2 times in Apr. Came from the river probably, and sat on a tree proclaiming itself in that shrill way it has, and showing off its clean 'shirt front'.
11. *Sturnus pagodarum* - Brahminy Myna - A very rare visitor this.
12. *Acridotheres tristis* - Common Myna - A really noisy neighbour. Imitating every conceivable sound and scolding every visible human movement - and it can see far! Seen daily. One pair is resident in the garden, while flocks fly over daily in the morning and at sunset.
13. *Corvus splendens* - House Crow - The less said the better.
14. *Pycnonotus cafer* - Red Vented Bulbul - A very playful bird. Jumping constantly from one branch to another, flicking its tail and calling in that throaty voice. Does not come often into the garden, but came daily in Mar. and Apr.
15. *Saxicola caprata* - Pied Bushchat - A pair sleeps in my house every night. I notice them in the evening when the male chases the female, or either of them hawks insects. Their call is a deep 'chuck', followed by a raising and lowering of the tail.
16. *Saxicoloides fulicata* - Indian Robin - Only the female is seen when the lawn is mowed. She is a confiding person, and likes to come close. But she is very nosy. Always probing into nooks and crannies. When searching for worms in the freshly mowed lawn, she stands erect and lowering her wings, hisses. Then suddenly she bends forward and catches the worm in her beak. She then flies off.

17. *Motacilla maderaspatensis* - Large Pied Wagtail - A pair live next door. Early in the year they are very noisy. After Mar. their banter and activity lessens considerably. They are in the habit of wagging their tails too much.
18. *Passer domesticus* - House Sparrow - Ubiquitous, quarrelsome ball of feathers.

The Tailor Bird (*Orthotomus sutorius*) drops in sometimes, to enquire of my clothes. The Sunbirds, both Purple (*Nectarinia asiatica*) and Purple Rumped (*Nectarinia zeylonica*) also come now and then, 'see-sweeping' from a nearby bough. Their visits are like lightning raids. Birding is fun. I have made many friends and am sure will make many more later in the year.

CHECKLIST OF BIRDS OF NEHRU ZOOLOGICAL PARK - 2.

- Binod C Choudhury
Aga Mujahid Hussain
D B Venkatesh Varma

The second quarter of the year was exam time for most of us. During this period, binoculars were kept aside and books taken up. As a result of this, we could birdwatch only after the exams were over. We tramped over to the zoo on the 1st of June and saw the following birds.

1. Paddy Bird - *Ardeola grayii*
2. Large Egret - *Ardea alba alba*
3. Lesser Whistling Teal - *Dendrocygna javanica*
4. Pariah Kite - *Milvus migrans govinda*
5. Whitebreasted Waterhen - *Amaurornis phoenicurus*
6. Indian Moorhen - *Gallinula chloropus*
7. Purple Moorhen - *Porphyrio porphyrio poliocephalus*
8. Redwattled Lapwing - *Vanellus indicus*
9. Spotted Dove - *Streptopelia chinensis*
10. Roseringed Parakeet - *Psittacula krameri*
11. Koel - *Eudynamys scolopacea*
12. Coucal - *Centropus sinensis parroti*
13. House Swift - *Apus affinis*
14. Palm Swift - *Cypsiurus parvus*
15. Pied Kingfisher - *Ceryle rudis*
16. Common Kingfisher - *Alcedo atthis*

17. Whitethroated Kingfisher - *Halcyon smyrnensis*
18. Small Green Bee Eater - *Merops orientalis*
19. Roller - *Coracias benghalensis*
20. Hoopoe - *Upupa epops*
21. Crimsonbreasted Barbet - *Megalaima haemacephala*
22. Goldenbacked Woodpecker - *Dinopium benghalense*
23. Golden Oriole - *Oriolus oriolus kundoo*
24. Black Drongo - *Dicrurus adsimilis*
25. Brahminy Myna - *Sturnus pagodarum*
26. Common Myna - *Acridotheres tristis*
27. Indian Tree Pie - *Dendrocitta vagabunda*
28. House Crow - *Corvus splendens*
29. Common Wood-Shrike - *Tephrodornis pondicerianus*
30. Iora - *Aegithina tiphia*
31. Redvented Bulbul - *Pycnonotus cafer*
32. Jungle Babbler - *Turdoides striatus*
33. Common Babbler - *Turdoides caudatus*
34. Indian Wren Warbler - *Prinia subflava*
35. Ashy Wren-Warbler - *Prinia socialis*
36. Tailorbird - *Orthotomus sutorius*
37. Magpie Robin - *Copsychus saularis*
38. Indian Robin - *Saxicoloides fulicata*
39. Indian Pipit - *Anthus novaeseelandiae*
40. Large Pied Wagtail - *Motacilla maderaspatensis*
41. Purplerumped Sunbird - *Nectarinia zeylonica*
42. Tickell's Flowerpecker - *Licaeum erythrorhynchos*
43. Baya - *Ploceus philippinus*

" That wildlife is merely something to shoot at or look at is the grossest of falacies. It often represents the difference between rich country and mere land."

- Aldo Leopold

THE VANISHING WILDLIFE OF INDIA - 8

Liontailed Macaque (Macaca silenus)

- Madhukar Reddy

This primate is one of the animals confined only to the Western Ghats of Penninsular India. It has been lately in the news along with the Silent Valley - the fate of both entwined intimately and still hanging in balance.

The Liontailed Macaque is a resident of dense tropical evergreen forests (sholas) of the Western Ghats. Its range includes part of Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Kerala. It is distinguished from other macaques by its great mane of grey hairs growing from its cheeks and temples and by its glossy black coat. This black coat forms a perfect camouflage in the dimly lit canopied forests. It is about a couple of feet in height with a foot long tail. Males are slightly larger.

The *Macaca silenus* are gregarious animals living in troops of 12 - 20 or more. These are arboreal and are shy and seclusive creatures and hence are rarely seen. Their call resembles the human voice. These animals mainly eat the fruit of *Cullenia excelsa* which itself is a plant on the endangered list. These fruit trees grow preferentially along the river sides and are threatened with submergence by the lakes formed by damming the rivers.

Seventeen years ago 32 troops with about 500 animals have been counted, but recent counts indicate only 11 troops with about 175 animals. These animals are highly endangered, this being the result of habitat destruction and mindless poaching.

WWF-India has opened a Data Centre for Natural Resources at Bangalore. The Centre will collect material about wildlife and habitats, and suitably index them for reference and use by interested persons, with a view to promote conservation and prevent destruction of habitat through control of environmental pollution. The functions of the Centre will thus be two fold; to collect and to disseminate information. The Centre will also collect unusual photographs, both black and white and colour, relating to the above topics. Any help would be appreciated, use tearaway sheet below to make contact.

.....cut here.....

To
The Administrator,
Data Centre for Natural Resources,
C/O Dynacraft Machine Co Ltd,
36, 7th Cross (First Floor)
Vasanthanagar,
Bangalore-560 052.

Dear Sir;

I am actively interested in control of environmental pollution and/or in conservation of plants/animals/birds/insects/fish of common/rare species. I will supply/need information on this subject from time to time, and I will contact you.

Yours faithfully

Name:
Address:

(Signature)

Place:

NOTES FROM THE EDITORS

Away from traffic-jams, screaming vehicles, dense fummy air, nose-pinching stinks and the daily human routine lies Manali, surrounded by snow clad and forested mountains. Innumerable Waterfalls descend in slow motion to drape sheer rock cliffs with plummy whiteness. The scenery is so breathtaking, so pure that one only dreams it. But how many are lucky enough to stand amidst their dreams? let Madhukar continue, for he was one of the lucky ones to visit Manali with the World Wildlife Fund - India.

WWF-India, one of the leading conservation organisations of India, holds nature camps for the members of its youth movement, the Nature Clubs of India, at different places throughout the country to enable young Indians to know and learn about nature. The general activities in these camps are nature walks, bird-watching trips, trekking, talks by prominent conservationists, hiking, insect and flora studies, etc. Apart from these functions, the camps help to bring about a greater understanding among members, a mutual feeling of brotherhood. The participants realise that what they are doing is essential. Their enthusiasm increases and they pursue their tasks with vigour. To say nothing about the healthy wholesome air and the sense of adventure.

The organisers of such nature camps believe that land is a community is a basic concept of ecology, but that land is to be loved and respected is an extension of ethics...and...we can be ethical only in relation to something we can see, feel, understand, love or otherwise have faith in. Join the nature clubs and experience for yourself.

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Edited for Hyd Nat Club by Aasheesh Pittie and Pranesh Badami.

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Indexed

BLACK BUCK

VOL. III

QUARTER 3



NEWSLETTER OF HYDERABAD NATURE CLUB



HYDERABAD NATURE CLUB

On the 22nd of November in 1978, Hyderabad Nature Club was born. Conceived by a small group of students of this city, Hyderabad Nature Club has grown as a conservation organisation. With active participation of members and subscribers, the club has furthered the cause of wildlife conservation and love of nature in the state.

Other than frequent field trips, the club aims to;

1. learn more about nature in all its forms—flora and fauna—and to aid in her conservation.
2. create an interest in our natural heritage amongst students,
3. inculcate in young minds a love for nature, by participating in our projects,
4. organise talks and audio-visual programmes by eminent conservationists,
5. hold film-shows on wildlife for members, and
6. bring out a quarterly newsletter for our members and subscribers and keep them informed of the club's activities, the latest local news regarding conservation and as a medium of education.

The Hyderabad Nature Club meets every first and third Thursday of the month at St. Paul's High School, Hyderguda. Meetings commence at 6 p. m. Members are informed via the engagement columns of the newspapers.

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TREKKING ALONG THE MUSI

- Mohd. Zaynalabidin Khan.

To wake up early on a wet, rainy day and take a ride to some place where you expect to be alone and you may find a group of men standing ankle deep in mud looking through binoculars at birds! No, they are not fools but members of the Hyderabad Nature Club. I am happy to say that from the 3rd of September I will be one of them.

My first experience of the Hyderabad Nature Club's activities was a trek along the banks of the Musi. Dhiren, Mukesh and I had been invited by the HNC Secretary to join the club on this trek. The trek was so enjoyable that we enrolled as members of HNC immediately afterwards.

After a night which made one wonder whether the trek would be possible (It rained heavily), we started off from Koti full of exuberance, but still with slight hesitation caused by the rain. The five of us, Aasheesh, Binod C. Choudhury, Dhiren, Mukesh and

I caught a bus to Malakpet and got off at the T-V tower. The trek had begun.

From then onwards for the next 10 kilometres it was only a matter of how deep the mud was that you were standing in or how wet your bsocks were.

We saw nearly 40 types of birds that live near water (see list further on). There were large numbers of Ashy Wren Warblers (Prinia socialis) and Weaver Birds (Ploceus phillippinus). Surprisingly very few Pariah Kites (Milvus migrans) were spotted, on the latter half of the trek.

It was hard walking and the only way to amuse ourselves was counting the number of times one of us fell in the slush. I was the first to fall but by the end of these 15 wet kilometers BC had an unbeatable lead, and I had the soggiest socks.

We ate a part of our packed lunches as our shoes dried and estimated the distance between where we were sitting and a water tank on the horizon. This tank was on the periphery of the Vanasthali. The estimates varied from 4kms to 12 kms!

Now the walking was much easier through dry scrub and then on the main road. The only thing that kept us going was the Vanasthali Deer Park where we were heading. About 2 kms from the Vanasthali a very sweet sardarji offered us a lift. Wow! we were sitting in a car relaxed and still the kilometers whizzed by. It is very common for many of us to sit in a car, but after 15 kms of walking one realizes what a luxury it is.

We ate lunch in a little forest shack in the Vanasthali and then went to see the deer. Plenty of snaps were shot by Aasheesh through a camera battered with mud. We left the deer park at 4.45 pm, caught a bus to Koti and came home.

The trek had been educative, amusing and an unforgettable experience. One thing I am sure of is that all of us would be ready to do it again.

A VISIT TO DINDI RESERVOIR FOR BIRD WATCHING

- D.S. Gangakhedkar, DFO
Achampet

For birdwatcher's it is essential to note down the time and season of migratory birds' arrivals and departures. Certain 'res' water lakes or reservoirs when full, do not show any appreciable increase in the bird populations of different species. When one definitely sees many bird species as the water is drying up or is released for cultivation. This creates a situation when the fish, mollusc and insect populations in the water become easy prey to the land and water birds along the periphery of the tank or lake. Rare birds including migratory ones do visit such lakes at such times.

Dindi Reservoir is across Dindi River, which is usually seasonal and gets rainwater from the catchments in Nalgonda and Mahbubnagar Districts. This reservoir can last for about two seasons of drought when water is almost 1 to 3 feet in depth in the coming 2nd dry season before the monsoons. The fresh water molluscs are plenty in this reservoir and attract many a water bird during this time.

On 3-2-1981 I accompanied Sri Pushp Kumar (I.F.S.) - Conservator of Forests, Wildlife Management, Andhra Pradesh - to Dindi reservoir. We had earlier seen a number of water birds here, when the reservoir had almost dried up. We managed to carry a telescope this time, for a clearer view of each species. Earlier we had carried a 7 X 50 binoculars.

The following is a checklist of the birds spotted along the drying Dindi Reservoir on 3rd February 1981.

<u>English/Latin name</u>	<u>Number spotted</u>	<u>Local name</u>
1. Barheaded Geese (<u>Anser indicus</u>)	2 flocks of 30 each.	Tella Bathulu
2. Openbilled Stork (<u>Anastomus oscitans</u>)	40 to 50	-
3. Painted Stork (<u>Ibis leucocephalus</u>)		

<u>English/Latin name</u>	<u>Number spotted</u>	<u>Local name</u>
4. Greater Flamingo (<u>Phoenicopterus roseus</u>)	35	Samudra Kondalu
5. Lesser Flamingo (<u>hoeniconaias minor</u>)	5	"
6. Spotbill Duck (<u>Anas p. poecilorhyncha</u>)	a few	
7. Brahmini Duck (<u>Tadorna ferruginea</u>)	40 to 45	Errabathulu
8. Spoonbill (<u>Fatalea leucorodia</u>)	above 10	
9. White Ibis (<u>Threskiornis melanocephala</u>)	above 5	
10. Lesser Whistling Teal (<u>Dendrocygna javanica</u>)	a few	
11. Grey Pelican (<u>Pelicanus philippinus</u>)	only 1	
12. White Stork (<u>Ciconia coconia</u>)	about 30	
Whitenecked Stork (<u>Ciconia episcopus</u>)	5 to 8	
14. Black Ibis (<u>Pseudibis papillosa</u>)	4	Nallamoorthi Konga
15. Avocet (<u>Recurvirostra avosetta</u>)	about 30	
16. Blackwinged Stilt (<u>Himantopus himantopus</u>)	8 to 10	
17. Shoveller (<u>Anas clypeata</u>)	1	
18. Merlin (?)		
19. Large Egret (<u>Egretta alba</u>)		
20. Little Egret (<u>Egretta garzetta</u>)		
21. Black Stork (<u>Ciconia nigra</u>)	50 to 70	Ghongadi- musi Konga
22. Night Heron (<u>Nycticorax nycticorax</u>)	few	Chintugu
23. Grey Heron (<u>Ardea cinerea</u>)	20 to 30	

It may be noted that the Common Mollusc Shells are extracted

for their calcium carbonate value after they are burned for special use. The lime from these shells, it is learnt, has a very soft, fine finish - like marbled walls. I wonder ^{if} it might have been used for the final coat of plaster on the Charminar of Hyderabad! The lasting effect is emphasised.

Among the fish available in the reservoir as prey-food for the wild birds, the following have been noted as existing;

- 1) Boccha
- 2) Vallagu
- 3) Mirgalu
- and 4) Korramatta.

While gathering information about rare birds, some of the local cultivators were shown the book "Common Birds" by Dr. Salim Ali. They immediately identified and pointed out that the Great Indian Bustard visits this reservoir and surroundings in typical seasons. This bird has been searched along Dindi's upper catchment upto Tadur village in Nagarkurnool Tq., where during last summer i.e., April 1980, there was information that the villagers of Tadur located a couple of Great Indian Bustards (Choriotis nigriceps)! We have a scheme now to survey these birds along the villages from Tadur to Dindi along the river catchment. Birdwatchers and members of Nature Clubs may also think of visiting this area in the drought periods and to see the Great Indian Bustard.

It was a very interesting and lucky visit. The Greater Flamingoes and the Barheaded Geese were the main attraction. The presence of one Great Pelican was a rare chance. The often dipping Black Storks in search of molluscs were a pleasant sight. A good amount of photography in colour was attempted. The hovering Black Storks are a good shot just when they are above the main dam from where one can snap them.

Members may take such opportunities. Another closeby spot for birdwatching is Amrabad Tank in Amrabad village at a general altitude of about 2000ft above msl. So also a visit to one small lake, east of 46th km. along Nalgonda-Deverkonda road will lead to the presence of Black Ibis, Spoonbills and Painted Storks.

In the end I must say that the visit unfolded the truth that the Greater Flamingos migrate long distances in the south even to Dindi. However, whether they breed here is to be confirmed.

BIRDS SEEN ALONG THE MUSI RIVER

- B.C. Choudhury
Zaynalabidin Khan
Dhiren
Mukesh Maheshwari
Aasheesh Pittie

1. Paddy Bird (Ardeola grayii)
2. Cattle Egret (Bubulcus ibis coromandus)
3. Little Egret (Egretta g garzetta)
4. Pariah Kite (Milvus migrans govinda)
5. Egyptian Vulture (Neophron percnopterus ginginianus)
6. Painted Partridge (Francolinus p pictus)
7. Redwattled Lapwing (Vanellus i indicus)
8. Stone Curlew (Burhinus oediconemus indicus)
9. Blue Rock Pigeon (Columba livia intermedia)
10. Ring Dove (Streptopelia d decaocto)
11. Spotted Dove (Streptopelia chinensis suratensis)
12. Roseringed Parakeet (Psittacula krameri)
13. Pied Crested Cuckoo (Clamator jacobinus serratus)
14. Koel (Eudynamys s scolopacea)
15. Coucal (Centropus sinensis parroti)
16. Common Indian Nightjar (Caprimulgus a asiaticus)
17. Palm Swift (Cypsiurus parvus batasiensis)
18. Whitebreasted Kingfisher (Halcyon s smyrnensis)
19. Small Green Bee-Eater (Merops o orientalis)
20. Roller (Coracias benghalensis indica)
21. Ashycrowned Finch Lark (Eremopterix grisea)
22. Wiretailed Swallow (Hirundo smithii filifera)
23. Redrumped Swallow (Hirundo daurica erythropygia)
24. Rufousbacked Shrike (Lanius schach erythronotus)
25. Black Drongo (Dicrurus adsimilis macrocerus)
26. Ashy Swallow-Shrike (Artamus fuscus)
27. Brahminy Myna (Sturnus pagodarum)
28. Common Myna (Acridotheres t tristis)
29. House Crow (Corvus s splendens)
30. Jungle Crow (Corvus macrorhynchus culminatus)
31. Iora (Aegithina tiphia deignani)
32. Redvented Bulbul (Pycnonotus c cafer)
33. Common Babbler (Turdoides c caudatus)
34. Jungle Babbler (Turdoides striatus orientalis)

35. Ashy Wren Warbler (Prinia s socialis)
36. Tailor Bird (Orthotomus sutorius guzurata)
37. Pied Bushchat (Saxicola caprata)
38. Indian Robin (Saxicoloides fulvicata)
39. Large Pied Wagtail (Motacilla maderaspatensis)
40. House Sparrow (Passer domesticus indicus)
41. Baya (Ploceus p philippinus)
42. Whitethroated Munia (Lonchura m malabarica)
43. Spotted Munia (Lonchura p punctulata)

CHECKLIST OF BIRDS OF NEHRU ZOOLOGICAL PARK:-3.

- Binod C Choudhury
Aga Mujahid Hussain
D.B.Venkatesh Varma

<u>SPECIES</u>	<u>23 AUG '81</u>	<u>6 SEPT '81</u>
1. Paddy Bird -Ardeola grayii	-	Present
2. Lesser Whistling Teal -Dendrocygna javanica	-	Present
3. Pariah Kite -Milvus migrans	Present	Present
4. Whitebreasted Waterhen- Amauornis phoenicurus	Present	Present
5. Indian Moorhen -Gallinula chloropus	"	Present
6. Redwattled Lapwing-Vanellus indicus	"	"
7. Stone Curlew-Burhinus oedichimus	-	"
8. Blue Rock Pigeon-Columba livia	"	"
9. Spotted Dove-Streptopelia chinensis	-	"
10. Roseringed Parakeet-Psittacula krameri	"	"
11. Indian Plaintive Cuckoo- Cacomantis merulinus	"	"
12. Koel-Eudynamys scolopacea	"	"
13. Pied Crested Cuckoo-Clamator jacobinus	"	"
14. Coucal-Centropus sinensis	"	"
15. Spotted Owlet-Athene brama	-	"
16. Small Blue Kingfisher-Alcedo atthis	-	"
17. Whitebreasted Kingfisher-Halcyon smyrnensis	"	"

TRIBALS AND NATURE

Having worked with the Koyas, Kondareddis, Gadabas and Sauras of Vishakha (E Godavari & Vishakhapatnam Dt) and the Chenchus of the Nallamalai agency (Mahboobnagar and Kurnool Dt) on their dialects, Mr Shivaramakrishnan has come in close contact with the tribal way of life. He feels that the association of tribals with nature is so total that they become inseparable. Tribal technology is indigenous and the exploitation of nature is limited to the extent of personal needs. Mr Sivaramakrishnan spoke extensively on the topography, vegetation and lifestyle of the tribals he has worked with. According to him the tribes of the Vishakha agency live (more appropriately are forced to live) in thick vegetational cover of the hills and are basically food gatherers and partly hunters. For the last few decades they have resorted to a more settled life and have gone for cultivation. Not quite adapted to the new lifestyle they leave the cleared cultivated areas after a few years and embrace their nomadic life once again. In the shrinking forest area these clearings become increasingly visible and they are blamed for forest destruction. In the Nallamalai agency the Chenchus are a lot for whom cultivation has no attraction. They are food gatherers, dependant entirely on nature, clinging to their digging stick and chasing animals in their diminishing parkland habitat. These people basically live on roots, wildgame, honey, fish etc. Only of late they have resorted to cultivating millets on small forest clearings.

Mr Sivaramakrishnan has found that every creation of nature has a meaning and role according to the tribals and as such are respected, to such an extent that places are named according to the abundance of particular flora and fauna. One even finds places named according to the type of soil, rock or water present. Mr Sivaramakrishnan has come across names such as Pasupgutta (Yellow hillock), Pittagadda (Bird Hillock) and so on. Now there are places totally devoid of vegetation or fauna but only the name remains, given by some retreating tribals. Collection of all these names may help us to find the types of flora and fauna that occurred at these points.

The tribal calendar of the Vishakha agency is also based on nature. A month is therefore named on a bird, a flower or an insect depending on the abundance of a particular creation of nature. In the Nallamalai agency the vegetation being very poor the months have been named on the kinds of honey one gets at a particular time or the types of flower that bloom for honeybees to collect honey. Again ofcourse the 3 major seasons are considered. Mr SKR plans to compile the tribal calendar for the benefit of biologists. What a wonderful way to study phenology! Mr SKr found out that tribals go for a hunt only when they need game animal and that too in the season of abundance of that particular animal! The game regulations are adhered to very religiously, unlike the modern hunters for whom any day in the jungle is a game day and any animal in the telescopic sight of the gun is good enough as a kill.

The family unit in the Vishakha agency is a joint family - a necessity in the thick jungle. Whereas in the Nallamalai agency it is a nuclear unit, in the open forest where visibility is good. Accordingly the hunting patterns are a groups activity (Vishakah agency) or an individual effort with traps (Nallamalai). The types of arrows used are also different. In the Vishakha agency the arrow is so designed that once it hits the animal the furrow present in it lets a continuous stream of blood flow from the body of the animal, thereby leaving a trail behind for the benefit of the hunters. The acquisition of forest land is forcing the tribals into a tight corner. Aren't we too cruel to do this?

NOTES FROM THE EDITOR

Any outing, be it a birdwatching trip, a walk in the evening or a trek through the country is an exhilarating experience. To me it is a dynamic phenomenon because I am taking part in the happenings of the world. I am a part of these happenings. The trees around me, the insects, the birds, the weeds, the reeds - NATURE. It is the real thing. When I travel in a car, I am in a compartment, enclosed from all sides, I feel like an alien. I feel separated from the earth.

To experience nature, to observe it work, to be a part of the process - a few of us trekked down the Musi - a river with a tumultuous past. Now this river has been damed. Man has controlled the fury of independant water. This life-blood serves humanity now. But do we know how to use it properly? Zayn writes about the trek.

Mr. Gangakhedkar, the DFO (wildlife) Achampet, writes on the birds seen in Dindi Reservoir on one of his trips. He is a most entertaining man, who loves his animals, who knows his area inside-out and who also enjoys 'Shastriya snageet'!. His jovial banter keeps one engrossed on tiresome jeep journeys. In this article he takes us through Dindi and some other neighbouring birdwatching sights.

Joining the bandwagon of todays conservationists, we of the HNC have expressed our great concern at the decline of the indegenous flora and fauna of our land. In our quest for first-hand information - usually from people working in (with) nature, we meet many nature lovers. One such person who came to us was Mr Shivaramakrishnan - a researcher in the department of linguistics of Osmania University. He works with the tribals of Vishakha and Nallamalai Agency areas. During the process of several discussions, which culminated into a major talk, he convinced us thattribals are an integral part of nature and (they) exploit nature rationally to the extent of their basic necessity. We also know that the total life-style of the tribals is so much fused with nature that they become inseparable. A gist of this talk is given by Mr B C Choudhury, our untiring advisor.

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Edited for HNC by Aasheesh Pittie and Pranesh Badami.

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To

The secretary Hyderabad Nature club.



FOREST DEPARTMENT GOVERNMENT OF ANDHRA PRADESH

*request the pleasure of your company
at the inauguration of the*

29TH VANYA PRANI SAPTAH CELEBRATIONS

and

THE WILDLIFE PHOTO & PHILATELIC EXHIBITION

by

SHRI N. T. RAMA RAO

Hon'ble Chief Minister, Andhra Pradesh

*On Monday the 3rd October, 1983 at 10-00 a. m.
at Institution of Engineers, Khairatabad Hyderabad*

SHRI K. JANA REDDY

Hon'ble Minister for Agri & Coopn.

has kindly consented to preside over the function

Chief Conservator of Forests

29TH VANYA PRANI SAPTAH INAUGURAL FUNCTION
ON 3-10-1983

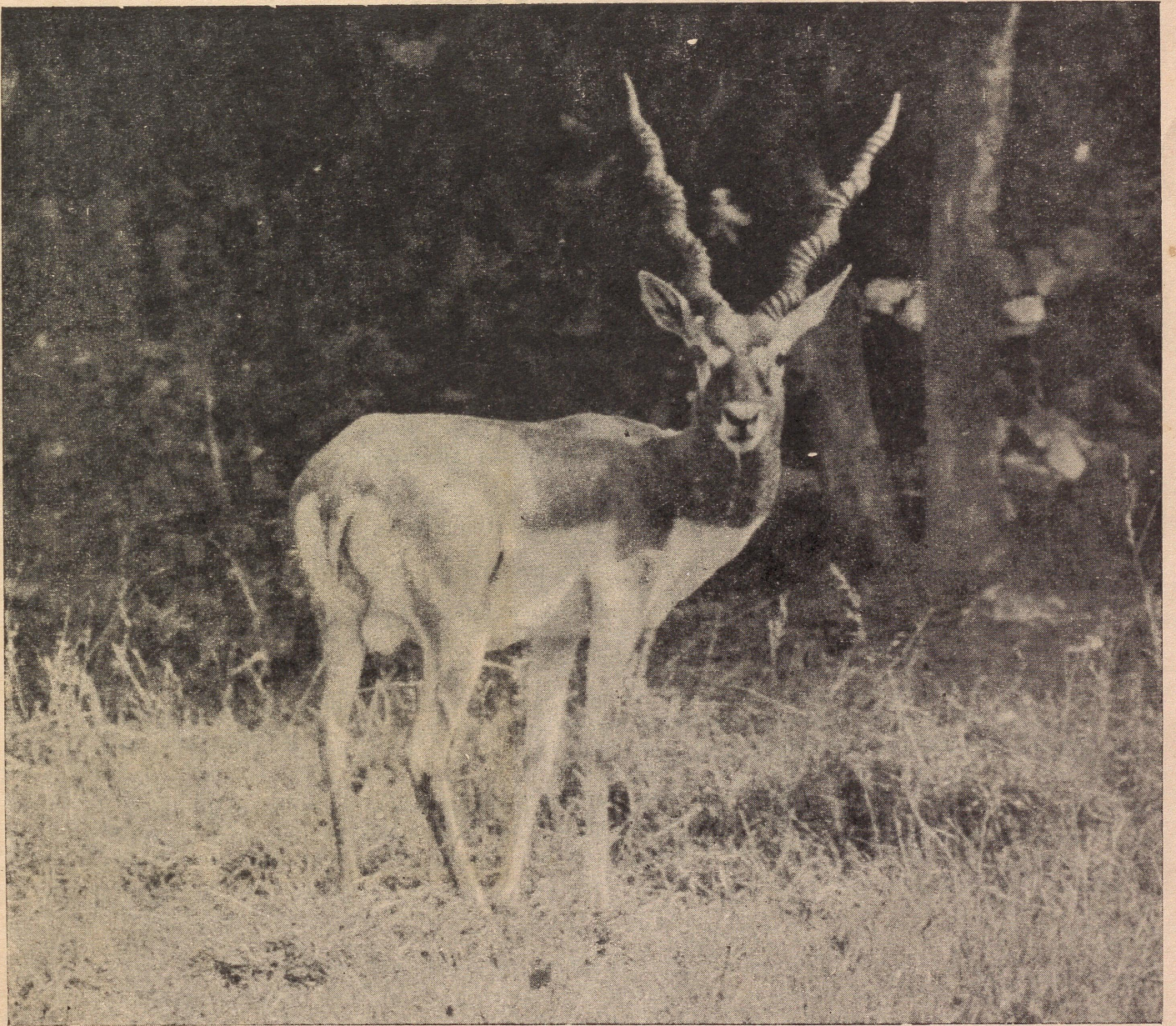
PROGRAMME

- Venue : Institution of Engineers, Khairatabad, Hyderabad
- 10-00 a.m. : Inauguration of Wildlife Photographic & Philatelic Exhibition by **Shri N. T. RAMA RAO**,
Hon'ble Chief Minister Andhra Pradesh
- 10-15 a.m. : Prayer
- 10-20 a.m. : Welcome address by **Shri A. K. MATHUR**, I. F. S.,
Chief Conservator of Forests, Andhra Pradesh, Hyderabad
- 10-25 a.m. : Presidential address by **Shri K. JANA REDDY**
Hon'ble Minister for Agriculture & Co-operation, Andhra Pradesh
- 10-35 a.m. : Inaugural address by **Shri N. T. RAMA RAO**
Hon'ble Chief Minister, Andhra Pradesh, and distribution of prizes
- 10-55 a.m. : Address and release of postal stamp and presentation
to the Chief Guest by **Shri V. J. S. Perianayagam**
Post Master General, Andhra Pradesh
- 11-00 a.m. : Vote of thanks by **Shri T. Krishna Murthy**, I. F. S.,
Addl, Chief Conservator of Forests; A.P. Hyderabad
- 11-05 a.m. : National Anthem
- 11-10 a.m. : Refreshments

BLACK BUCK

VOL. III

QUARTER 4



NEWSLETTER OF HYDERABAD NATURE CLUB



HYDERABAD NATURE CLUB

On the 22nd of November in 1978, Hyderabad Nature Club was born. Conceived by a small group of students of this city, Hyderabad Nature Club has grown as a conservation organisation. With active participation of members and subscribers, the club has furthered the cause of wildlife conservation and love of nature in the state.

Other than frequent field trips, the club aims to;

1. learn more about nature in all its forms—flora and fauna—and to aid in her conservation.
2. create an interest in our natural heritage amongst students,
3. inculcate in young minds a love for nature, by participating in our projects,
4. organise talks and audio-visual programmes by eminent conservationists,
5. hold film-shows on wildlife for members, and
6. bring out a quarterly newsletter for our members and subscribers and keep them informed of the club's activities, the latest local news regarding conservation and as a medium of education.

The Hyderabad Nature Club meets every first and third Thursday of the month at St. Paul's High School, Hyderguda. Meetings commence at 6 p. m. Members are informed via the engagement columns of the newspapers.

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ANAIMALAI NATURE ORIENTATION CAMP

- Pranesh S. Badami.

Nature Orientation Camps are organised by the World Wildlife Fund - India to create an awareness of and ^{arouse} interest in the need for conservation of natural habitat. One such camp was held in December at a place called Top Slip, in the Anaimalai Wildlife Sanctuary.

The Anaimalai Hills are about 2000 meters in altitude, and are located just south of Coimbatore and the Palghat Gap, in the Western Ghats of Tamil Nadu. The total area of the sanctuary is a thousand square kilometers, covered by thick, evergreen tropical rain forest (BLACK BUCK Vol. 2 No. 4 : HABITAT-II) and favours the survival of a large number of varied forms of wildlife such as Elephants (in Tamil, Anai = Elephant; Malai = Hill), Gaur, Tiger, Leopard, Wild Cat, Malabar Squirrel, Nilgiri Langur, etc.

Top Slip is situated between Pollachi (a Taluq headquarters, 40 km south of CBE) in Tamil Nadu and 45 km from the Perambikulam Dam in Kerala. It was formerly a Timber Depot during the days of the British, and is so named because the logs of wood were slid down a channel for easy transportation.

I was a member of the first batch (from 19 to 25 December 1981) which consisted of 20 participants; most of us were students of degree colleges, but two groups of school children accompanied by their masters, and a few employed persons had also come. My first meeting with them was at

the Pollachi Bus Station, from where we all boarded the Perambikulam Bus to Top Slip.

Once we approached the base of the Ghats, we could see the distant peaks enveloped in thick mist, which slowly rolled across them. A really fascinating sight; and the thought of having to spend the next few days there really thrilled us. The slopes were all covered with dense layer of trees, certainly refreshing change from the drab 'concrete jungles' of our city. After a 2 hour journey, we arrived at Top Slip, and were received by the organisers: Mr Chandrakant Wakankar, Education Officer of WWF-India, Mr Parvish Pandya and Mr Arun Bhatia.

The campers were accommodated in quarters built for the engineers employed at the Perambikulam Dam Project. So there was no lack of homely comforts viz., tap water, electricity, etc., but it took away the fun of roughing it out in the wilderness. The organisers stayed at the main Guest House, which was also our H.Q. as we used to meet there for food, and also to discuss or be briefed on the days' activities.

Our daily activities, which depended much on the weather, were as follows: At 6.00 am, we would set out for a short walk for about an hour and half, and try to birdwatch. But due to the heavy fog and overcast sky during the first four days, this was not much of a success. Returning around 7.30 am for breakfast, we would again set out, after finishing it, for a long walk. The mist would have cleared by now, so that quite a few birds and other arboreal life, like the Langurs and Squirrels could be spotted. We would be back for lunch around 1 pm, and the post-lunch programme consisted of either a talk or a slide show. Two such were held: one on 'Bird Behaviour' by Mr Chandrakant Wakankar and another on 'Identification of Common Birds', by Mr Parvish Pandya. Another interesting talk on the 'Indian Elephant' accompanied by a slide show was given by Dr Krishnamurthi, who is a Vet. Surgeon in the Tamil Nadu Forest Department. He has spent 16 years with them at the Elephant Camp at Kollikamattee. (These animals are used for transportation and other purposes by the Forest Department. The campers were also encouraged to sketch and paint pictures of wildlife occurring in the area; they would be later displayed in the Tourist Bungalows.

Around 4 pm, after tea, we would all set out for a place called Karian Shola which is a small clearing in the forest, with a water hole, about half an hour's walk through a leech infested, damp path, littered with decaying leaves and twigs.

We had to step carefully to avoid any of them as the slightest noise would scare away and warn the animals. On arriving at the clearing, we would spread out and conceal ourselves behind the trees and await the arrival of any thirsty animal. Unfortunately, the recent rains had filled up many other pools and streams, and did not create the necessity for the animal to come here. Still, a lone Otter and a Gaur were spotted on the final day. We would return after dark, and after dinner, discuss the days' happenings, be briefed on the next days' programme, and retire for the night.

Cheetal were very common and would come within a few meters of the window at night, and could be spotted by torchlight. A beautiful sight were their eyes which dazzled in a whole row in the light beams.

On the 23rd we set out for a really long trek, to Vargaliar which is about 40 km from Top Slip. We passed through Dr Krishnamurthy's Camp at Kollikamattee and enjoyed photographing and feeding the elephants. Another enchanting sight was the Chechali Valley which we saw from above: only trees as far as the eye could see! After a pleasant but tiring (we had to carry our bedding and rations!) walk through the quiet forest, we reached Vargaliar around 6 pm. We had an early dinner and slept. Next morning, we returned via a different route. This return journey was very exciting as we spotted two wild tuskers at two different places, only about 25 feet away! They showed the least interest in us, and we quietly came away. Later we were told that both were in a bad mood, and had been fighting for the past few days. A variety of birds were also spotted.

We were back at Top Slip by late afternoon. Being the last day of the Camp, we enjoyed a farewell dinner and a campfire. Next morning, all of us boarded the bus to Coimbatore and proceeded to our respective destinations, with the hopes of seeing the Anaimalais at least in the same state even after a few years.

A LIST OF THE WILDLIFE SEEN AT TOP SLIP:

BIRDS:

1. Grey Hornbill.
2. Great Pied Hornbill.
3. Grey Drongo.
4. Bronze Drongo.
5. Racket-tailed Drongo.
6. Scarlet Minivet.
7. Orange Minivet.
8. Redvented Bulbul.
9. Rubythroated Bulbul.
10. Green Bee Eater.
11. Chestnut-headed Bee Eater.
12. Jungle Babbler.
13. Whiteheaded Babbler.
14. Jungle Fowl.
15. Fantail Flycatcher.
16. Small Green Barbet.
17. Common Myna.
18. Hill Myna.
19. Southern Tree Pie.
20. Spotted Owlet.
21. Black Woodpecker.
22. Black Eagle.
23. Blackwinged Kite.
24. Pariah Kite.

ANIMALS:

1. Malabar Squirrel.
2. Nilgiri Langur.
3. Elephant (Indian).
4. Gaur.
5. Otter.
6. Spectacled Cobra.

"His hide was very mangy and his face was very red
And over and anon he scratched with energy his head.
His manners were not always nice, but how my spirit cried
To be an artless bandar loose upon the mountain-side."

- Rudyard Kipling in 'Divided Destinies'.

A RARE BIRD BROUGHT TO THE HYDERABAD ZOO

- Humayun Taher.

The Great Indian Bustard is a rare bird. When one was brought to the Hyderabad Zoo, was it definitely known that the G.I.B. exists in Andhra Pradesh also? Previously, it was known to exist in Rajasthan only.

The Great Indian Bustard is a bird of open grassland or brushland. Sometimes, but very rarely, it is seen in corn or jowar fields. Its normal food is locusts, lizards, grasshoppers, beetles, grains and tender shoots of crop plants. The bustard is a heavy and tall bird, the male weighing anywhere from 12-14 kgs. and one metre tall at the top of the head. The female is nearly 85 cms. tall and weighs 8-10 kgs. The neck has a blackish-grey band with white specks on the lower neck and the female has a greyish band. The male display is somewhat like that of a turkey cock, swelling the breast and spreading the tail while making a deep moaning sound. It is a strong but a very reluctant flier, taking off from the ground only when absolutely necessary.

The Great Indian Bustard which was brought to the Hyderabad Zoo was wounded under the rightwing and on the upper flank and the right side of the breast. It was seen by a police inspector in a village. The bird was with a villager who was probably taking it either to sell or to eat it himself.. It was sent to the Hyderabad Zoo, where it was kept and treated by the vets of the zoo hospital. In spite of their best efforts and care, the bustard did not survive and died on Saturday, 9-1-82 at 2 am. The bird has been sent for stuffing and afterwards is most likely to be kept in the Natural History Museum at the Nehru Zoological Park.

"No animal is innately evil; it is only human interests which ascribe moral qualities to them. Thus the otter is classified as vermin with a bounty on its head because he competes with man for food, while the men who denude the rivers with their fine mesh nets go by the name of fish contractors. The wild pig is vermin because he uproots a few saplings while digging for tubers, even though he may also serve the useful function of ventilating the soil; yet the very forest department which allows the graziers to burn whole fields of young trees is known as the plantation division whose accomplishments are read out, in the legislatures. The Hyena is vermin because he sometimes kills the young of other animals during his tour of duty as forestscavenger, but the jeep and spot light marauders are the sportsmen of the day.

Wild dogs are vermin because their hunting can be very destructive when restricted to one area; but the dam engineers and their staff, who travel from place to place laying waste vast areas of forest and marketing its wildlife, are our nation's builders. Such is our scale of values."

- Billy Arjan Singh in 'Tiger Haven'.

THE VANISHING WILDLIFE OF INDIA - 9

Great Indian Bustard (*Ardeotis nigriceps*)

- Asheesh Pittie

Local names; HINDI - Sahan, Gughunhor, Bukna; TELUGU - Bat moka.

"The flesh of the leg of some fowls, and the breast of others is excellent; the flesh of every part of the 'Kharchal' is delicious." These were the comments of Babur, the great Mogul emperor, regarding the Great Indian Bustard, in his memoirs. (Salim Ali, 1927, JBNHS 32:60).

In the order of Gruiformes there are 12 living Families, of which Otidiidae (the Bustard family) is one. Within the Otidiidae are 23 Species. The Great Indian Bustard being one of them. It differs from other Indian genera of Otidiidae by its great size, black-crested head and lengthened feathering of the throat and fore neck. Standing over a meter (upto top of head) and measuring c 122 cm (48 in) in length, the male Great Indian Bustard weighs c 30-35 lbs. The female is much smaller and lighter too. This huge ground bird is sandy buff above with a crested head and black crown. The crest feathers are c 5 cms long. It is white below, with a black band across lower breast. It has stout bare legs and carries its body horizontally. The female is distinguished by much smaller size and a greyer neck and head. The pectoral band is not as prominent as in the male.

The Great Indian Bustard is found either in pairs or groups of 5-6 birds. Sometimes droves of 25 or 30 have also been seen. Though the Great Indian Bustard is a very shy and wary bird, it can be fooled easily by approaching in a vehicle or bullock-cart. However it will not allow a man to approach within gunshot if he is on foot. With a suspicious bark 'Hook' (the usual alarm call), it advances a few steps before taking wing. Once in the air, it flies strongly, though low, with rhythmic strokes of the huge wings, and as a rule settles down only after covering a few miles. If given the choice, however, the Great Indian Bustard prefers to squat and freeze behind a bush rather than fly. It is also a swift runner.

The G.I.B. is an omnivorous bird, adjusting very well to the available food. On its menu are shoots of crop plants (the mustard is a favourite), grain, drupes, berries, locusts, grasshoppers, beetles, lizards, centipedes and snakes. Pebbles and small stones are also taken to help digestion.

Ornithologists and birdwatchers (lucky enough to have seen the G.I.B. in the breeding season) have long sung the praises of the nuptial display of a male. Between March and September the cock displays from some height, mound, etc. It inflates the special gular sac to almost grotesque proportions, so that it dangles and wobbles between its legs - while strutting and posturing to the hens. Each cock has 3-5 hens. The tail, meanwhile is erected over the back and moved up and down, rapidly. The nest is a shallow depression in the ground, generally at the base of a bush in scrub/grass country. Generally one large egg,

pale olive-brown with dark blotches, is laid. Only the hen incubates. On being disturbed on the nest, she indulges in a distraction display, feigning an injured bird - flying zigzag with dangling legs.

The Great Indian Bustard affects open scanty grassland, scrub and cultivated areas in practically semi-desert country. It is a resident bird, migrating locally when the monsoon creates new grasslands. "Once (c century ago) ranged from the present Pakistan (Sind, Punjab) east to W. Bengal and Orissa, and southward through the Peninsula to southern Madras (Tiruchirapally) Presently rare or absent over much of its former range, but still not uncommon in remote areas of Rajasthan, eg., Jaisalmer. Casually or regularly seen, and also breeding in small numbers in parts of Gujarat (Saurashtra, Kutch), and Uccan (Annamnagar District), sporadically south to Mysore." (Ali, S.A. and Ripley, S.D.; 1980; Handbook Vol. 2).

Why has the population of a bird which once ranged practically throughout India, been so drastically reduced? Basically, there are two main reasons. The most important is the destruction of its habitat. What with the blistering rate of population growth in India, land for agriculture has become a rare commodity. Every inch of arable land is being brought under the plough. Due to this reason, prime bustard habitat is being encroached upon. The reason for the bustards' continued survival to this day could be the varied diet it exists on. But for how long will it be able to hold its own? Another important reason, (much reduced now) is the decimation of this bird, by unscrupulous people, for the pot. In 1979 concerned naturalists raised a hue and cry when members of a royal family in the Middle East arrived at Jaisalmer to hunt bustards! At least this incident brought the bird to the forefront and has resulted in an awareness regarding its rare status among the local public. Village cattle and the urchins who tend them have also been responsible for destroying bustard habitat and stamping on eggs. Unlike the wild ungulates, which share bustard habitat, cattle tear the grass from its roots, thus preventing regrowth. Given these obstacles,

What is being done to ensure the continued existence of this bird in the Sub-Continent? The Indian Board for Wildlife (IBWL) placed this bird on the fully protected list of endangered birds in 1952. It is a protected species under the Game Laws and included in Schedule I (totally protected) of the Wildlife (Protection) Act of 1972. It is the only bustard listed on the Bird Red Data Book of the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN). In 1971 the International Council for Bird Preservation (ICBP) formed a Bustard Working Group to coordinate conservation programmes. To ascertain the priorities regarding active conservation of the Great Indian Bustard, an International Symposium on Bustards was organised in Jaipur from 1st to 3rd November 1980. The main objective was to draw world attention towards the need for bustard conservation. Since then, the Bustard Group has been vigorously encouraging a programme for immediate action to save the Great Indian Bustard. The Karnataka State Government has proclaimed a Black Buck - Bustard Sanctuary near Rannebennur in Dharwar district, on the recommendation of the IBWL and the Bird Wing Committee. A Bustard Sanctuary, covering an area of 7,000 sq. km., has been declared open in Maharashtra.

Eventhough the population of this intriguing bird has dropped from 1260 in 1969 (estimated by Dr. Salim Ali) to c 750 in 1972 (R.S. Dharmakumarsinhji), the actual present day population is not known. But with the dedication which is being shown by the concerned state governments, and the unceasing pressures of birdlovers, ornithologists and naturalists, there is a glimmer of hope for the continued existence of Ardeotis nigriceps.

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SARISKA : WILDLIFER'S PARADISE

- Rahul Chettri

In the summer of 1979, a rather large group of nine students set out to make a two day visit to Sariska Wildlife Sanctuary on a mere Rs 50/- a piece. I was an enthusiastic member of that group.

After a gruelling fifteen hour journey we alighted at the sanctuary complex. The fiery hues of the setting sun set the low, forested hills aflame. Imaginations ran rampant - a lithe tiger, its tawny coat blending with the colours of dusk, emerging from its lair for the nocturnal hunt; cheetal, equally well camouflaged, daintily feeding in a clearing in the forest, but alert, always alert; a solitary nilgai bull cautiously stepping upto a water hole while in the distance the jackals pay their vocal tribute to a ghostly moon. The fascination of the forest had gripped everyone.

The Sariska Wildlife Sanctuary is a comparatively small one but it has a rich cross-section of wildlife. It is located about 35 km. from Alwar, the closest railhead, and about midway on the 300 km. Delhi-Jaipur highway. In fact, a bus from Delhi would take only five hours or less to reach Sariska.

The landscape of Sariska is typical of a forested area in Rajasthan. Small stretches of grassland and shrub forest giving way to dry hardwood forest. The area lies between two ranges of low, thickly vegetated hills. Deeper in the sanctuary, there lies a stretch of verdant green

jungle, untouched by the ravages of man. Numerous freshwater streams crisscross the range, and there is even a perennial stream flowing through it.

The sanctuary harbours a diverse variety of animals ranging from large predators like tiger and leopard, to scavengers like hyena and jackal, and herbivores such as sambhar, cheetal, nilgai and wild boar. There are some smaller cat species like the caracal and desert cat, sloth bears, monkeys (rhesus and langur), hares and a variety of reptiles as well.

The tourist complex itself is at the entrance to the sanctuary and is quite isolated from other habitation. Three choices of accommodation are offered - A/C and non-A/C rooms in the modern 'Tiger Haven' bungalow - bunker type in a dormitory, and - 'Swiss Cottages' (spacious two-man tents). The latter two are ideal for students and other low-budget visitors as the charges per bed (with bedding, including blanket/razai) are only Rs 5/- per day.

By the time we'd settled in it was dark, and the pale light of the moon provided a stark illumination for the silent landscape. Not quite silent though. Cicadas and a myriad of other insects beat out an incessant rhythm and the mournful howl of jackals rent the air. While man prepared to bed down for the night, the jungle was silently coming alive, its denizens bracing themselves for the struggle for existence.

By a stroke of good luck I got separated from the rest of the group after breakfast the next day. Unfortunately, a majority of them were intent on having a good time rather than actually sighting animals. So I wasn't sorry to have been accidentally left behind. I have discovered that the best way to move through a sanctuary while on foot is in groups of three or less. Alone, I could move quietly and quickly, covering large distances while causing little disturbance.

A road runs right through the sanctuary and I stuck to it for the greater part. Once, however, I heard a tiger calling from the hills to my right and broke off from the road to follow a track leading there. The tiger was moving away (as the diminishing sound of its call told me) and the fact that the track soon became over-run with thick undergrowth, prevented me from progressing further. Thick scrub cover is hardly the place one would choose to rendezvous with a tiger, however fascinating a creature it may be!

One time I sneaked up to within thirty feet of a lone nilgai bull. It was feeding, head down behind a rather large hedge at the side of the road. I paused adjacent to it - just shoulders and back were visible above the hedge - and waited for it to sense my presence. Sure enough, it lifted its graceful head to observe the intruder. It was a magnificent animal, steel grey in colour with a muscular, sinuous neck and powerful shoulders. It gazed at me, quite unafraid, as I moved silently along the road and left it to its grazing.

Another time I waited at a bridge above a nullah, hidden from the dry watercourse by a cluster of bushes. I had the incredible good fortune of

seeing a cheetal stag with a fine spread of antlers, make its way slowly along the nullah. It kept lifting its head, alert, suspicious, as it sniffed the air. But since I was above and probably upwind, it did not detect me.

Herds of cheetal and sambhar, groups of nilgai and large sounders of wild boar were everywhere. It was impossible to walk for even five minutes without sighting a few of these species. Perhaps this tended to make me more casual and to relax. But one incident put me back on guard immediately, and thereafter I remained alert throughout. It happened like this: I had sighted a scunder of wild boar a little ahead and to the left of the road, in a grassy clearing. They were busy rooting at the grasses and didn't notice me as I sought to pass them by. Suddenly, a large male broke off from the group and approached the road, probably with an intent to cross over. When it was barely eight or ten feet away it saw me and froze. One by one, the animals lifted their heads to witness this most strange encounter, but before I had time to think of any course of action the boar abruptly whirled around and charged off into the undergrowth. The other animals, in unison, followed suit.

I saw groups of rhesus macaques, a few langurs, one caracal, one desert cat, and while the sun was setting as I returned homewards, a pair of silver-backed jackals.

Eight hours and twenty five kilometers after I had been separated from my friends, I rejoined them. The sun had sunk behind the hills leaving a glow that matched my feelings. Soon it would be dark and the great beasts would stalk out of their lairs while their prey huddled together for comfort. And then this plain would become the stage for Nature's greatest drama - Survival.

DID YOU KNOW ?

1. So sensitive are the antennae of mosquitoes that they are able to detect temperature changes of four-thousandths of a degree Fahrenheit.
 2. Around half the species, living in some dark ocean layers, emit light.
 3. If you count the number of chirps a tree cricket makes in 15 seconds and then add 39 to this figure, you will arrive at the prevailing air temperature in degrees Fahrenheit.
 4. An octopus lays eggs around half the size of a grain of rice, but in a 2 week stretch it is capable of laying as many as 3,25,000 eggs.
 5. Even seconds after they emerge from their eggs, rattlesnakes are equipped to deliver poisonous bites if molested.
 6. The seagull will die of thirst if deprived of sea water.
 7. The shark is the only animal in the world that never sleeps or rests.
 8. The dragon fly can eat its own weight in 30 minutes.
 9. An armadillo can dig faster in soft earth than several men with shovels.
 10. The land crabs on Cuba can outrun a horse.
 11. The eyeballs of a giraffe protrude to such an extent that it can see in all directions without turning its head.
 12. A new born kangaroo is only one inch high.
-

NOTES FROM THE EDITORS.

The successful conservation of a species depends to a great extent upon the safeguarding of its habitat. In creating a habitat for ourselves, we have destroyed the habitats of innumerable other creatures. Many types of life on earth have been lost due to this very reason. Human pressures on land push these creatures out of their favoured habitat into a newer one which they may not be able to adapt to successfully. Slowly a branch of the great tree of evolution snaps. The proverbial strand of the Web breaks. Another important cause which hastens extinction is the unscrupulous hunting of animals for the pot, for 'pleasure' or for commercial purposes.

Indian wildlife is facing these threats now. The Great Indian Bustard's population has been reduced to the brink of disappearance mainly due to the loss of habitat. The scheme of conservation of this bird and the resulting propaganda have placed the other Bustards found in India in its shadow. The existence of these birds - the Bengal Florican and the Likh - has also become precarious. It is heartening to know that concrete work is being done to ensure their continued existence.

Mumayn Taher is the youngest member of the IIC. Running 12 now, he has a quick eye for Birds. No wonder he is known as the Hawk among birdwatchers. His enquiring mind and cheerful banter keep up sagging spirits on nature trips. Deeply moved by the sorry sight of a dead G.I.B. in the Nehru Zoologica l Park, he writes a sort of obituary for the great bird.

The atmosphere of a camp conducted by the WIF-India is so charged with enthusiasm, wonder, activity and bonhomie, that a person, on attending one, becomes enthused with the same. His enthusiasm on returning is extremely contagious. Pranesh attended a nature orientation camp at Anaimalai recently. Anaimalai - the hill of elephants - raises visions of dense jungle, elephants, gaur, a mosaic of avifauna, a multitude of insects - a plethora of reptiles - to say nothing of the leeches! Though his group encountered sullen weather, his account of the adventure is truly fascinating.

The greatest difference between armchair naturalists and field naturalists lies in the spirit of adventure. One sits in the relative comfort of his home, mentally going through the experiences of a field naturalist. The other, experiences. He is the adventurer, the bush-walker, the believer in fresh air and a good walk, in the proximity of the environment, in the solitude of wilderness. He is the living shadow of the man who said, "Give to me the life I love,/ Let the love go by me,/ Give the jolly heaven above/ And the by-way nigh me./ Bed in the bush with stars to see/ Bread I dip in the river -/ There's the life for a man like me,/ There's the life for ever." Such a one is Rahul Chettri. He simply cannot stay put in a city for a sustained period of time. His lust for the wilderness overcomes him as his holidays approach, and away he goes - like that immortal va gabond. For the armchair naturalists he writes a tale of his visit to Sariska.

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