

# *Newsletter for Birdwatchers*

Vol. 36

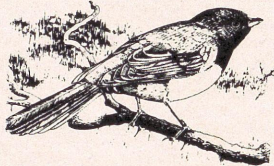
No. 2

March/April 1996



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## Editorial

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### The Aligarh Birdwatchers

The Centre for Wildlife and Ornithology of the Aligarh Muslim University seem to be doing a lot of interesting field work. Several Scientists from the AMU came to the OSI Meeting at Pusa, Delhi in November 1995. The article by Ms Orus Illyas reminds us what a delightful place Corbett is for birding and I hope the author is certain about the identification of the birds listed. Birds of the genus *Phylloscopus* have led to quarrels among experts and all we can do is to accept these records in good faith - recalling what I said in the January Newsletter that to make a mistake is not a great sin - provided one is prepared to be corrected.

### Asian Wetland News

From the message from Faizal Parish, the Executive Director of AWB, in the Sept 95 issue of Asian Wetland News, reported in the issue, it appears that with its new connections this organisation is likely to play an even more important role in saving the wetlands of the world. I hope India too can profit from its operations.

Reported from AWN is a note on 'Mystery Marked Waterbirds' by Taej Mundkur. I was also interested in the article on the Pong Dam Lake by Sanjeeva Pandey of the WLI of India, Dehra Dun 248 001. In the Newsletter for Birdwatchers July/August issue of 1989 (Vol.XXIX) the author had written a shorter article on the rich bird life of this area.

**M. Krishnan**

When I became Honorary Secretary of the Bombay Natural History Society in the early sixties, I had much to do with M. Krishnan who was a Member of the Advisory Committee of the BNHS. I had not met him personally till then, but his well written letters and caustic comments on the misdeeds of the Forest Department and others in destroying India's natural resources, and to use his own words 'its special quiddity' were always a pleasure to receive.

During one of my visits to Delhi I met Miss Padmaja Naidu, who was then the Chairman of the Jawaharlal Nehru Trust, and I suggested to her that Krishnan should be given a Nehru Fellowship to write about India's wildlife. She accepted the idea immediately and asked me to process it through the BNHS. As a result Krishnan started work on "India's Wildlife" and the book remains a valuable addition on the subject.

Later I was in touch with him on the Steering Committee of Project Tiger. I thought that his insistence on the incompatibility between even limited tourism in natural areas and the existence of wildlife, was taking things a bit too far, but Krishnan was not a man to compromise on his principles.

We invited him to spend some time with us in Bombay and then took him to Kihim where Salim Ali was also present. Both of them being strong-willed, and people with pre-determined views on many aspects of conservation and natural history, did not get on too well I thought. But Krishnan loved Kihim and in the family visitors' book he made a beautiful sketch of the seascape with coconut palms in the foreground. He also managed to take an excellent photograph of the brown wood owl which was hooting high up on a casuarina tree. On returning to Bombay I took Krishnan to meet Sumant Moolgaokar in his lovely house in Lonavala. Sumant was himself a highly skilled photographer and had expressed a desire to meet Krishnan. As soon as we entered the gate Sumant got into a technical discussion

about black and white photography and Krishnan responded by saying "not so fast, not so fast". That was a signal for Sumant to change the subject and we spent a very pleasant morning. Krishnan's matchless writing on natural history, particularly his fortnightly column in the Statesman, will be greatly missed by present and future generations.

**Whistling Teal**

It is very creditable that Kaushid Deuti and his companions were able to identify four greater whistling teal in a flock of 6000 lesser whistling teal.

I see from A New Dictionary of Birds by Sir Landsborough Thomson that Teal is a substantive name, unchanged in plural. I also learn that the Dendrocygni are confined to the tropics, show no sexual dimorphism, both sexes incubate the eggs, dive freely for food and indulge in mutual preening.

About the larger whistling teal (formerly known as Dendrocygna fulva) Hugh Whistler in his Popular Handbook of Indian Birds, says "The larger whistling teal has a remarkable distribution in India, Burma and Ceylon, Africa and Central and South America. In our area it seems to be common only in India and Ceylon. Strange that the lesser whistling teal so abundant in India and South East Asia, is absent from Africa and Central and South America where its larger cousin thrives".

Though I am not a good spotter, I have seen the lesser whistling teal in many areas. The most vivid memory is in the Kihim pond with hardly an acre of water, but with an abundant growth of weeds and vegetation of the type the birds relish.

It would be interesting to note if any lesser WT were located during this year's annual waterfowl census. There is no mention of this bird in the note by Dr JC Uttangi.



**Birding in Bramhananda Reddy National Park and the Neighbouring Wetlands**

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**S**prawling over an area of about 400 acres, the Bramhananda Reddy National Park, Jubilee Hills, Hyderabad is the remnant of a denotified forest. Since the former princely ruler occupied the area fortifying it with a long enclosed stone wall, it could retain its original character of an open scrub and light deciduous forest. Today it is an island in the midst of feverish urbanisation in its surroundings. It was saved from hungry land sharks by baptising it as a National Park.

The park encloses two small ponds, mainly rainfed serving as drinking water reservoirs for the animals and

birds. The water fowl is sparse perhaps due to lack of adequate food. The hillocks and undulating dales present a dry, deciduous and mixed type of jungle. The wildlife consists of deer, foxes, rabbits, pythons and a variety of birds. The birds identified in a part of the park area are listed below.

**Family : Podicipedidae**

Little grebe or Dabchick

*Podiceps ruficollis*

**Family : Phalacrocoracidae**

Little cormorant

*Phalacrocorax niger*

**Family : Ardeidae**

Pond heron or Paddy bird	<i>Ardeola grayii</i>
Cattle egret	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>

**Family : Accipitridae**

Pale harrier	<i>Circus macrourus</i>
Blackwinged kite	<i>Elanus caeruleus</i>
Brahminy kite	<i>Haliastur indus</i>
Shikra	<i>Accipiter badius</i>

**Family : Phasianidae**

Grey partridge	<i>Francolinus pondicerianus</i>
Common peafowl	<i>Pavo cristatus</i>

**Family : Charadriidae**

Redwattled lapwing	<i>Vanellus indicus</i>
Yellowwattled lapwing	<i>Vanellus malabaricus</i>

**Family : Columbidae**

Little brown dove	<i>Streptopelia senegalensis</i>
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**Family : Cuculidae**

Pied crested cuckoo	<i>Clamator jacobinus</i>
Common hawk-cuckoo or Brain fever bird	<i>Cuculus varius</i>
Crow-pheasant or coucal	<i>Centropus sinensis</i>
Koel	<i>Eudynamys scolopacea</i>

**Family : Alcedinidae**

Common kingfisher	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>
Whitebreasted kingfisher	<i>Halcyon smymensis</i>
Storkbilled kingfisher	<i>Pelargopsis capensis</i>

**Family : Meropidae**

Common green bee-eater	<i>Merops orientalis</i>
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**Family : Coraciidae**

Indian roller or blue jay	<i>Coracias benghalensis</i>
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**Family : Laniidae**

Grey shrike	<i>Lanius schach</i>
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**Family : Dicruridae**

Black drongo or king crow	<i>Dicrurus adsimillus</i>
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**Family : Sturnidae**

Common myna	<i>Acridotheres tristis</i>
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**Family : Corvidae**

House crow	<i>Corvus splendens</i>
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**Family : Irenidae**

Goldmantled or Jerdon's chloropsis	<i>Chloropsis cochinchinensis</i>
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**PYCNONOTIDAE : (BULBULS)**

Redvented bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus cafer</i>
Redwhiskered bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus jocosus</i>

**Family : MUSCICAIDAE****Sub Family : Timalinae**

Common babbler	<i>Turdoides caudatus</i>
Whiteheaded babbler	<i>Turdoides affinis</i>
Jungle babbler	<i>Turdoides striatus</i>

**Subfamily : Sylviinae**

Ashy wren warbler	<i>Prinia socialis</i>
Tailor bird	<i>Orthotomus sutorius</i>

**Subfamily : Turdinae**

Pied bushchat	<i>Saxicola caprata</i>
Indian robin	<i>Saxicoloides fulicata</i>

**Family : Motacillidae**

Grey wagtail	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>
Large pied wagtail	<i>Motacilla maderaspatensis</i>

**Family : PLOCEIDAE****Subfamily : Passerinae**

Yellowthroated sparrow	<i>Petronia xanthocollis</i>
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West of the park, about three kilometers away is a wetland locally called Durgamma tank. Sandwiched between two elongated hillocks and bounded on the north, the tank lies in a flat valley close to Madhapur village. Serving as an irrigation tank under the control of revenue department it has three sluices and an ayacut of 30 acres in Darga village. Virtually there is no vegetation on the eastern and western shores and the waterspread extends right upto the base of the hillocks. Acacia nilotica trees dominate the south-western foreshore beyond which lie few paddy fields irrigated by wells. There is a sprinkling of Neem (*Azadiracta indica*) and Tamarind (*Tamarindus indicus*) trees along the periphery of the foreshore. The lone *Butea monosperma* and the young neem tree at the edge of a paddy field are the favourite roosting places of cattle egrets. The scattered boulders in the waterspread serve as a safe haven for egrets, herons and cormorants. The village officer informed me that poaching is rare and that the fishing rights are leased to a cooperative society. The cattle grazing in the harvested fields, drongos, mynas having a piggy-back ride, cattle egrets, mynas foraging in the fields under harvest, swallows, kingfishers and rollers commanding a view from the overhead telegraphic wires is a familiar sight. The following are the birds observed in the wetland and its surroundings.

**Family : Phalacrocoracidae**

Large cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>
Little cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax niger</i>

**Family : Ardeidae**

Grey heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>
Pond heron or paddy bird	<i>Ardeola grayii</i>
Cattle egret	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>



Little egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>
Large egret	<i>Ardea alba</i>
<b>Family : Anatidae</b>	
Cotton teal	<i>Nettapus coromandelianus</i>
<b>Family : Accipitridae</b>	
Marsh harrier	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>
<b>Family : Phasianidae</b>	
Common peafowl	<i>Pavo cristatus</i>
<b>Family : Charadriidae</b>	
Redwattled lapwing	<i>Vanellus indicus</i>
Little ringed plover	<i>Charadrius dubius</i>
Common sandpiper	<i>Tringa hypoleucos</i>
Little stint	<i>Calidris minuta</i>
<b>Family : Columbidae</b>	
Red turtle dove	<i>Streptopelia tranquebarica</i>
Spotted dove	<i>Streptopelia chinensis</i>
Little brown dove	<i>Streptopelia senegalensis</i>
<b>Family : Psittacidae</b>	
Alaxandrine or the large parakeet	<i>Psittacula eupatria</i>
Roseringed parakeet	<i>Psittacula krameri</i>
<b>Family : Cuculidae</b>	
Crow pheasant or coucal	<i>Centropus sinensis</i>
<b>Family : Alcedinidae</b>	
Common kingfisher	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>
Lesser pied kingfisher	<i>Ceryle rudis</i>
Whitebreasted kingfisher	<i>Halcyon smyrnensis</i>
<b>Family : Meropidae</b>	
Common green bee-eater	<i>Merops orientalis</i>
Blue-tailed bee-eater	<i>Merops philippinus</i>
<b>Family : Coraciidae</b>	
Indian roller or b luejay	<i>Coracias benghalensis</i>
<b>Family : Upupidae</b>	
Hoopoe	<i>Upupa epops</i>
<b>Family : Picidae</b>	
Lesser goldenbacked woodpecker	<i>Dinopium benghalensis</i>
<b>Family : Hirundinidae</b>	
Common swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>
<b>Family : Oriolidae</b>	
Golden oriole	<i>Oriolus oriolus</i>
<b>Family : Dicruridae</b>	
Black drongo	<i>Dicrurus adsimilis</i>
<b>Family : Sturnidae</b>	
Common myna	<i>Acridotheres tristis</i>



<b>Family : Pycnonotidae</b>	
Redvented bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus cafer</i>
<b>Family : MUSCICAPIDAE</b>	
<b>Subfamily : Timalinae</b>	
Common babbler	<i>Turdoides caudatus</i>
<b>Subfamily : Rurdinae</b>	
Indian robiñ	<i>Saxicoloides fulicata</i>
<b>Family : Motacillidae</b>	
Grey wagtail	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>
Large pied wagtail	<i>Motacilla maderaspatensis</i>

It is painful to note that almost all the paddy fields abutting the foreshore are under active conversion into residential plots and roads. Rock blasting, bull dozing, plying of trucks, and labour activity are instances of biotic interference. It is feared that the lake foreshore may gradually be encroached upon affecting the lake ecosystem.

Hardly a kilometer away is a small wetland called Tummadi tank of Khanamet village, with an ayacut of 30 acres. It also serves as drinking water pond for cattle. On the western foreshore is a wide growth of reeds which provides roosting and nesting place for purple moorhens. Areawise this wetland is smaller and therefore has sparse waterfowl. Since it is away from the busy road, the birds are not disturbed. The birds found in this wetland are detailed below:

<b>Family : Podicipedidae</b>	
Little grebe or dabchick	<i>Podiceps ruficollis</i>
<b>Family : Phalacrocoracidae</b>	
Little cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax niger</i>
<b>Family : Ardeidae</b>	
Cattle egret	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>
Little egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>
<b>Family : Anatidae</b>	
Cotton teal	<i>Nettapus coromandelianus</i>
<b>Family : Accipitridae</b>	
Marsh harrier	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>
<b>Family : Rallidae</b>	
Purple moorhen	<i>Porphyrio porphyrio</i>
Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i>
Whitebreasted waterhen	<i>Amaurornis phoenicurus</i>
<b>Family : Charadriidae</b>	
Redwattled lapwing	<i>Vanellus indicus</i>
<b>Family : Alcedinidae</b>	
Common kingfisher	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>
<b>Family : Hirundinidae</b>	
Common swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>

After cruising 8 kilometers west, I reached Maipur village on N.H.9. Lying close to the highway on the eastern side is a large fresh water lake. On the western foreshore are a few Eucalyptus trees on which were found a large flock of common babblers. On the northern side there is habitation while on the southern side is the surplus weir of the tank. The far northern side is covered by reeds and floating vegetation amidst which flocks of ducks were found. The rock projections in the midst of the tank serve as roosting and nesting ground for cormorants, herons and duck. The sound of crackers heralding the Telugu New Year disturbed the waterfowl which often took to wing, circle overhead, land and again get air borne. The following birds were found in the above wet land.

**Family : Podicipedidae**

Dabchick

**Family : Phalacrocoracidae**

Little cormorant

**Family : Ardeidae**

Pond heron

Little egret

**Family : Anatidae**

Pintail

Cotton teal

Shoveller

Garganey teal

Redcrested pochard

**Family : Accipitridae**

Marsh harrier

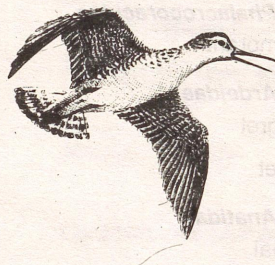
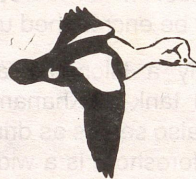
**Family : Rallidae**

Coot

Whitebreasted waterhen

**Family : Recurvirostridae**

Blackwinged stilt



**Family : Charadriidae**

Redwattled lapwing

Six kilometers north of Miapur is a fresh water lake known as Bachpalli tank. It is crescent shaped and encircled on three sides by hillocks. The wetland is bounded on the west by Medchal road. On the eastern side is the tank bund dotted by Tamarind and Acacia trees. Hemming the southern shore is a boundary stone wall separating the cultivated fields from the tank. Being in the interior it provides a safe haven for the waterfowl. Enquiries revealed that occasional duck shooting by outsiders takes place and that fishing is moderate. The waterfowl seen in this wetland are given below:

**Family : Podicipedidae**

Little grebe or Dabchick

**Family : Phalacrocoracidae**

Little cormorant

**Family : Ardeidae**

Cattle egret

**Little egret Egretta garzetta**

Large egret

**Family : Anatidae**

Pintail

Cotton teal

**Family : Rallidae**

Purple moorhen

Coot

**Family : Recurvirostridae**

Blackwinged stilt

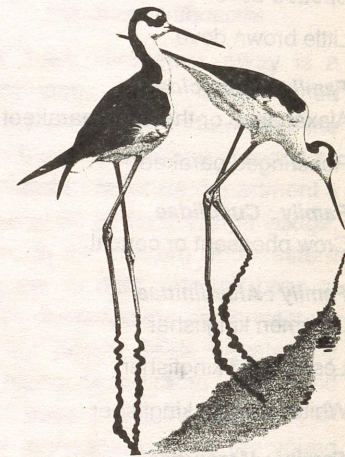
**Family : Charadriidae**

Redwattled lapwing

Common sandpiper

**Family : Hirundinidae**

Common swallow



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**B**irds always fascinate me. It was a great day for me when I got an invitation to participate in "World Birdwatch-95".

World Birdwatch-95 was a global event meant to publicize the need for conservation of birds and their habitat. It was organised by the UK based organisation "Birdlife International" on 7th and 8th October 1995. The aim of this birdwatching programme was to make people aware about the need for conservation.

## World Birdwatch - 95

The Corbett Tiger Reserve (CTR) was one of the sites where Birdwatch-95 was organised. The programme was coordinated by officials of the UP Forest Department and supported by private resorts located near CTR.

The organisers extended invitations to several interested birdwatchers. A team of five persons participated from our Centre. Our team divided itself into two groups. One group operated at Kaladhungi and the other was given the area

around Nainital. We covered Kilbary, Hanuman Garhi, Bheemtal and Sattal of Nainital district of UP.

Kilbary is an Oak dominated area with good undergrowth. Bheemtal and Sattal are riverain scrubland. We covered an area of about 22 sq km in two days.

The checklist of the birds of the above mentioned area is given below :

S.No.	Common Name	Scientific Name
<b>Family - Podicipedidae</b>		
1	Little grebe	<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>
<b>Family - Ardeidae</b>		
2	Pond heron	<i>Ardeola grayii</i>
<b>Family - Accipitridae</b>		
3	Black kite	<i>Milvus migrans</i>
4	Black eagle	<i>Ictinaetus malayensis</i>
5	King vulture	<i>Sarcogyps calvus</i>
6	Himalayan griffon	<i>Gyps himalayensis</i>
7	Lammergeier	<i>Gypaetus barbatus</i>
<b>Family - Phasianidae</b>		
8	Black partridge	<i>Francolinus francolinus</i>
9	Kaleej pheasant	<i>Lophura leucomelanos</i>
10	Koklas pheasant	<i>Pucrasia macrolopha</i>
<b>Family - Rallidae</b>		
11	Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>
12	Purple moorhen	<i>Porphyrio porphyrio</i>
<b>Family - Charadriidae</b>		
13	Redwattled lapwing	<i>Vanellus indicus</i>
<b>Family - Columbidae</b>		
14	Wood pigeon	<i>Columba elphinstonii</i>
15	Wedge tailed green pigeon	<i>Treron sphenura</i>
16	Blue rock pigeon	<i>Columba livia</i>
17	Rufous turtle dove	<i>Streptopelia orientalis</i>
<b>Family - Psittacidae</b>		
18	Roseringed parakeet	<i>Psittacula krameri</i>
19	Slatyheaded parakeet	<i>Psittacula himalayana</i>
<b>Family - Cuculidae</b>		
20	Koel	<i>Eudynamys scolopacea</i>
<b>Family - Strigidae</b>		
21	Barred owl	<i>Glaucidium cuculoides</i>
<b>Family - Apodidae</b>		
22	House swift	<i>Apus affinis</i>
<b>Family - Alcedinidae</b>		
23	Lesser pied kingfisher	<i>Ceryle rudis</i>
24	Common kingfisher	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>
25	White breasted kingfisher	<i>Halcyon smymensis</i>
<b>Family - Meropidae</b>		
26	Green bee-eater	<i>Merops orientalis</i>

**Family - Upupidae**

27 Hoopoe *Upupa epops*

**Family - Capitonidae**

28 Great hill barbet *Megalaima virens*

29 Large green barbet *Megalaima zeylanica*

**Family - Picidae**

30 Little scalybellied woodpecker *Picus myrmecophoneus*

31 Blacknaped green woodpecker *Picus canus*

32 Large yellownaped woodpecker *Picus flavinucha*

33 Small yellownaped woodpecker *Picus chlorolophus*

34 Brown fronted pied woodpecker *Picoides auriceps*

35 Yellow fronted pied woodpecker *Picoides mahrattensis*

**Family - Hirudinidae**

36 Swallow *Hirundo rustica*

**Family - Laniidae**

37 Rufousbacked shrike *Lanius schach*

**Family - Sturnidae**

38 Common myna *Acridotheres tristis*

**Family - Corvidae**

39 Red crowned jay *Garulus glandarius*

40 Blackthroated jay *Garrulus lanceolatus*

41 Yellow billed blue magpie *Cissa flavirostris*

42 Red billed blue magpie *Cissa erythrorhyncha*

43 Himalayan tree pie *Dendrocitta formosae*

44 House crow *Corvus splendens*

45 Jungle crow *Corvus macrorhynchos*

**Family - Campephagidae**

46 Pied flycatcher shrike *Hemipus picatus*

47 Longtailed minivet *Pericrocotus ethologus*

**Family - Irenidae**

48 Common iora *Aegithina tiphia*

**Family - Pycnonotidae**

49 Whitecheeked bulbul *Pycnonotus leucogenys*

50 Redvented bulbul *Pycnonotus cafer*

51 Black bulbul *Hypsipetes madagascariensis*

**Family - Muscipidae**

52 Whitethroated laughing thrush *Garrulax albogularis*

53 Streaked laughing thrush *Garrulax lineatus*

54 Plaincoloured laughing thrush *Garrulax subunicolor*

55 Blackcapped sibia *Heterophasis capistrata*

56 Sooty flycatcher *Muscicapa sibirica*

57 Little pied flycatcher *Muscicapa westermanni*

58 Whitebrowed blue flycatcher *Muscicapa supercilialis*

59 Verditer flycatcher *Muscicapa thalassina*

60 Greyheaded flycatcher *Culicicapa ceylonensis*

61 Whitethroated fantail flycatcher *Rhipidura albicollis*

62	Lesser whitethroat	<i>Sylvia curruca</i>
63	Yellowbrowed leaf warbler	<i>Phylloscopus inornatus</i>
64	Greyfaced leaf warbler	<i>Phylloscopus maculipennis</i>
65	Largecrowned leaf warbler	<i>Phylloscopus occipitalis</i>
66	Blyth's leaf warbler	<i>Phylloscopus reguloides</i>
67	Greyheaded flycatcher warbler	<i>Seicercus xanthoschistos</i>

**Family - Turnidae**

68	Magpie robin	<i>Copsychus saularis</i>
69	Stone chat	<i>Saxicola torquata</i>
70	Whitecapped redstart	<i>Chaimarromis leucocephalus</i>
71	Blue whistling thrush	<i>Myiophonus caeruleus</i>
72	Greywinged blackbird	<i>Turdus boulboul</i>

**Family - Paridae**

73	Grey tit	<i>Parus major</i>
74	Greenbacked tit	<i>Parus monticolus</i>
75	Black tit	<i>Parus rufonuchalis</i>
76	Yellowcheeked tit	<i>Parus xanthogenys</i>
77	Redheaded tit	<i>Aegithalos concinnus</i>

**Family - Sittidae**

78	Chestnutbellied nuthatch	<i>Sitta castanea</i>
79	Velvetfronted nuthatch	<i>Sitta frontalis</i>
80	Himalayan tree creeper	<i>Crethia himalayna</i>

**Family - Motacillidae**

81	Yellow wagtail	<i>Motacilla flava</i>
82	Grey wagtail	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>
83	White wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>

**Family - Zosteropidae**

84	White eye	<i>Zosterops palpebrosa</i>
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**Family - Ploceidae**

85	House sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>
86	Cinnamon tree sparrow	<i>Passer rutilans</i>
87	Spotted munia	<i>Lonchura punctulata</i>

**Family - Fringillidae**

88	Common rosefinch	<i>Carpodacus erythrinus</i>
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## World Birdwatch – Nainital and Corbett Tiger Reserve

G. MAHESWARAN, Centre for Wildlife and Ornithology, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh 202 002, India

The main aim of the BIRDWATCH festival was to get maximum number of people out birdwatching over one weekend and to record as many bird species as possible. The Director divided the participants into many groups in order to cover all the areas inside the CTR and Naini Tal jungle areas. On 7th morning we walked to "Skillbury" area of Naini Tal.

Naini Tal (29° 24'N and 79° 28'E; Elev, 1938 m) with an area of 11.37 km<sup>2</sup>, is situated in a valley of the Gagar Range extending NW-SW on the flanks of the Pear-shaped lake basin of Kumaon region being easily accessible from the plains. Though the place is associated with earlier settlements (particularly religious), it was recommended by Barron in 1841 as a suitable site for summer resort. Later in 1862 the place developed to become the summer headquarters of the provincial government. The rapid development of the cultural landscape took place in late 19th century. Houses, shops, schools and many hotels of Indian and International standard came up and this disturbed the ecosystem of this hill region. Apart from the man-made damage, this region of Kumaon faced a great catastrophe in 1880 when a huge landslide destroyed most of the settlements on the northeast of the lake. Yet the same earthquake provided a fresh site on the upper end of the lake, now named as 'Flats'.

This area of Kumaon region has become totally barren after trees were cut down in order to build houses and hotels to accommodate the tourists and foreign diplomats who visit

India during summer. During our stay in Naini Tal we had been to Bhim Tal and Sat Tal areas. These areas still have certain pockets which are good for birds. Especially the Sat Tal area is good for birds such as tits, warblers and nuthatches (see list). We could not see any ducks and waders in these tals. Some illegal fish trapping was going on in Sat Tal which is famous for Masheer fish. Apart from precipitation these tals get their water from the river called Kali. About one-fourth of the Kumaon region is drained by this river covering the districts of Pithorgarh and the eastern parts of the Almora and Naini Tal districts.

A major part of the region is covered with forest. Sal is the important species. These forests are commonly found up to about 750 m on the southern and 1,200 m on the northern slopes. Other important species are Kanju (*Holoptelea integrifolia*), Semal (*Bombax malabarica*), and Khair (*Acacia catechu*). Places around Bhim Tal and Sat Tal are dominated by Sal trees which support a good number of birds. A considerable area is occupied by sub-alpine forests. The chief trees, mostly of the higher sub-alpine zone, are Silver fir (*Abies pindrow*), Blue pine (*Pinus excelsa*), Spruce (*Picea morinda*), Cypress (*Cupressus torulosa*), Deodar (*Cedrus deodara*) and birch (*Betula utilis*). Most of the area still has good forest cover and disturbance level appears to be low. On the evening of 7 October we went to another area called "Lands end". There too we saw many species and most of them were new to us.

On 8th morning we went to another place slightly above Bhimtaal, full of scrub and bird diversity was more. On 9th

morning we returned to Corbett and visited nearby places especially Dhangarhi.

Totally we saw 90 species of birds both in Nainital and CTR. The family wise bird list is given below :

<b>Family : Phalacrocoracidae</b>		<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>
1	Indian shag <i>Phalacrocoax fuscicollis</i>	+	-
<b>Family : Ardeidae</b>			
2	Pond heron <i>Ardeola grayii</i>	+	+
3	Cattle egret <i>Bubulcus ibis</i>	-	+
<b>Family : Accipiridae</b>			
4	Pariah kite <i>Milvus migrans govinda</i>	+	+
5	Egyption vulture <i>Neophron percnopterus</i>	+	-
6	Redheaded vulture <i>Sarcogyps calvus</i>	+	-
7	Himalayan griffon <i>Gyps himalayensis</i>	+	-
8	Lammergeier <i>Gypaetus barbatus</i>	+	-
9	Black eagle <i>Ictinaetus malayensis</i>	+	-
<b>Family : Phasianidae</b>			
10	Black partridge <i>Francolinus francolinus</i>	+	-
<b>Family : Phasianidae</b>			
11	Common peafowl <i>Pavo cristatus</i>	-	+
12	Koklas pheasant <i>Pucrasia macrolopha</i>	+	-
13	Red jungle fowl <i>Gallus gallus</i>	-	+
<b>Family : Rallidae</b>			
14	Moorhen <i>Gallinula chloropus</i>	+	-
<b>Family : Charadriidae</b>			
15	Redwattled lapwing <i>Vanellus indicus</i>	+	+
16	Spurwinged lapwing <i>V. spinosus</i>	-	+
<b>Family : Calidridinae</b>			
17	Common sandpiper <i>Tringa hypoleucos</i>	-	+
<b>Family : Columbidae</b>			
18	Blue rock pigeon <i>Columba livia</i>	-	+
19	Spotted dove <i>Streptopelia chinensis</i>	-	+
20	Rufous turtle dove <i>S. orientalis</i>	+	-
<b>Family : Psittacidae</b>			
21	Roseringed parakeet <i>Psittacula krameri</i>	+	+
22	Slatyheaded parakeet <i>Psittacula himalayana</i>	+	-
<b>Family : Strigidae</b>			
23	Barred owl <i>Glaucidium cuculoides</i>	+	-
<b>Family : Caprimulgidae</b>			
24	Longtailed nightjar <i>Caprimulgus macrurus</i>	+	-
<b>Family : Meropidae</b>			
25	Chestnutheaded bee-eater <i>Merops leschenaulti</i>	-	+
26	Green bee-eater <i>Merops orientalis</i>	+	+
<b>Family : Coraciidae</b>			
27	Indian Roller <i>Coracias benghalensis</i>	-	+
<b>Family : Alcedinidae</b>			
28	Lesser pied kingfisher <i>Ceryle rudis</i>	+	-
29	Himalaya pied kingfisher <i>C. lugubris</i>	-	+

30	Whitebreasted kingfisher <i>Halcyon smyrnensis</i>	+	-
31	Small blue kingfisher <i>Alcedo atthis</i>	+	-
<b>Family : Upupidae</b>			
32	Hoopoe <i>Upupa epops</i>	+	-
<b>Family : Bucerotidae</b>			
33	Great pied hornbill <i>Buceros bicornis</i>	-	+
<b>Family : Capitonidae</b>			
34	Large green barbet <i>Megalaima zeylanica</i>	+	+
35	Coppersmith <i>M. haemacephala</i>	-	+
<b>Family : Picidae</b>			
36	Grey crowned pigmy woodpecker <i>Picoides canicapillus</i>	-	+
37	Rufusbellied woodpecker <i>Dendrocopus hyperythrus</i>	-	+
38	Brownfronted pied woodpecker <i>Picoides auriceps</i>	+	-
39	Scallybellied green woodpecker <i>Picus squamatus</i>	+	-
40	Himalayan great slaty woodpecker <i>Muleripicus pulverulentus</i>	-	+
<b>Family : Oriolidae</b>			
41	Blackheaded oriole <i>Oriolus xanthornus</i>	-	+
42	Golden oriole <i>O. oriolus</i>	-	+
<b>Family : Campephagidae</b>			
43	Common woodshrike <i>Lanius senator</i>	-	+
44	Pied flycatcher shrike <i>Hemipus picatus</i>	+	-
<b>Family : Irenidae</b>			
45	Common lora <i>Aegithina tipia</i>	-	+
<b>Family : Pycnonotidae</b>			
46	Redvented bulbul <i>Pycnonotus cafer</i>	+	+
47	Redwhiskered bulbul <i>P. jocosus</i>	+	+
48	Whitecheeked bulbul <i>P. leucogenys leucogenys</i>	+	-
49	Black bulbul <i>Hypsipetes madagascariensis</i>	+	-
<b>Family : Irenidae</b>			
50	Fairy blue bird <i>Irena puella</i>	+	-
<b>Family : Dicruridae</b>			
51	Black drongo <i>Dicrurus adsimilis</i>	-	+
<b>Family : Corvidae</b>			
52	Yellowbilled blue magpie <i>Cissa flavirostris</i>	+	-
53	Redbilled blue magpie <i>Cissa erythrorhyncha</i>	+	-
54	Indian tree pie <i>Dendrocitta vagabunda</i>	-	+
55	Himalayan tree pie <i>D. formosae</i>	+	-
56	Jungle crow <i>Corvus macrorhynchos</i>	+	+
<b>Family : Paridae</b>			
57	Redheaded tit <i>Aegithalos concinnus</i>	+	-
58	Black tit <i>Parus rufonuchalis</i>	+	-
59	Grey tit <i>P. major</i>	+	+
60	Yellowcheeked tit <i>P. xanthogenys</i>	+	-
61	Greenbacked tit <i>P. monticolus</i>	+	-

**Family : Sittidae**

62 Chestnutbellied nuthatch	<i>Sitta castanea</i>	+	-
63 Velvetfronted nuthatch	<i>S. frontalis</i>	+	-

**Family : MUSCICAPIDAE****Sub Family : Timalinae**

64 Jungle babbler	<i>Turdoides striatus</i>	-	+
65 Blackcapped sibia	<i>Copsychus sularis</i>	+	-

**Sub Family : Turnidae**

66 Whitecapped redstart or river chat	<i>Chaimarromis leucocephalus</i>	+	-
67 Magpie robin	<i>Copsychus saularis</i>	-	+
68 Blue whistling thrush	<i>Myiophonus caeruleus</i>	+	-
69 Stone chat	<i>Saxicola torquata</i>	+	-
70 Desert wheatear	<i>Oenanthe deserti</i>	+	-
71 Greywinged blackbird	<i>Turdus boulboul</i>	+	-

**Sub Family : Sylviinae**

72 Blyth's leaf warbler	<i>Phylloscopus reguloides</i>	+	-
73 Tailor bird	<i>Orthotomus sutoris</i>	-	+
74 Lesser whitethroat	<i>Sylvia curruca</i>	-	+

**Sub Family : Muscicapinae**

75 Sooty flycatcher	<i>Muscicapa sibirica</i>	+	-
76 Verditer flycatcher	<i>M. thalassina</i>	+	-
77 Whitethroated faintail flycatcher	<i>Rhipidura albicollis</i>	+	-
78 Paradise flycatcher	<i>Terpsiphone paradisi</i>	-	+

**Family : Lanidae**

79 Rufousbacked shrike	<i>Lanius schach</i>	+	-
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**Family : Motacillidae**

80 Paddyfield pipit	<i>Anthus novaeseelandiae</i>	-	+
81 Large pied wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>	+	+
82 Yellow wagtail	<i>M. flava</i>	+	+
83 Grey wagtail	<i>M. cinerea</i>	+	+

**Family : Sturnidae**

84 Common myna	<i>Acridotheres tristis</i>	-	+
85 Brahminy myna	<i>Stumus pagodarum</i>	-	+
86 Bank myna	<i>Acridotheres ginginianus</i>	+	+

**Family : Zosteropidae**

87 White eye	<i>Zosterops palpebrosa</i>	+	-
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**Family : Ploceidae**

88 Spotted munia	<i>Lonchura punctulata</i>	+	-
89 House sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	+	+
90 Purple cochoa	<i>Cochoa purpurea</i>	+	+

A - NAINI TAL

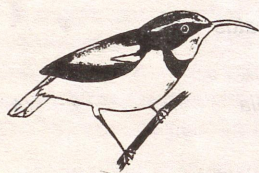
B - CORBETT TIGER RESERVE

+ - Sighted

- - Not Sighted

**Acknowledgement**

I am grateful to Dr Asad R Rahmani, Chairman for his help and encouragement.



## Breeding behaviour of *Nectarinia zeylonica* at two latitudes in the Indian Peninsula

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I observed four pairs of the purple-rumped sunbird, *Nectarinia zeylonica*, between December 1964 and March 1964 at Palayamkottai, 8.7°N 77.7°E, and ten pairs of the species between April 1986 and January 1994 at Tiruchirapalli, 10.8°N 78.7°E, for clutch size, hatching time, incubation period and nestling period, the two sets of observations separated specially by 2°N, and in time by 2-3 decades.

**Study Area**

At Palayamkottai the nests were equally distributed between citrus trees and prosopis bushes. Those at Tiruchirapalli were mostly in the prosopis, with one in a cluster of mango leaves. At the former place the ground was level, hard and lateritious hardly having any chance of being inundated during the rainy season and the nests were suspended over the water. In the second there were disturbances caused by people - young and old - trying to fish in the area, with the water level dropping through evaporation from an average depth of 2' of it covering an area of about 25000 sq.ft. The area had been with water from before the time of the nestings; 16 March, 1986; 3 August, 1986; 8 July, 1988; 10th March, 1990; 5 December, 1990; 4 August, 1991; 14 September, 1992 and 16 October, 1993.

**Observation and Discussion****Pre-laying-nest-occupation**

The female parent of nest 5 occupied the nest for three nights - 27 - 29 March 1986 - previous to the deposition of the eggs; that of nest. 6 did so for two nights, 21 and 22 November 1986; that of nest. 7 for two nights of 19 and 20 July, 1988. Those of nests 8 and 14 did not occupy the nests in the nights previous to laying. The nests 9-13 were not checked for this behaviour. The criterion for the bird to decide on the suitability and readiness of the nests to receive the eggs is hard to know. At least two days had to pass before laying. Besides, this may be crucial in assessing the safety factor in the environment for the successful ontogeny of the progeny involved. In this light, the extra day taken for clutch 5 may have been due to the disturbance the bird experienced from the investigator himself.

**Egg-laying time**

Except for clutches 2,5,9,10 and 12 whose exact laying times were not recorded, the other had their eggs deposited in the forenoon hours as is characteristic of most passerines (Skutch, 1952).

### Clutch size

Without exception all nests had 2-egg clutches that appears to have become firmly fixed in the heredity of the populations of the species in the two geographic locations under consideration. Other congeneric species have 1 to 3 - egg clutches (Ali, S & Ripley, 1987). Moreau (1940) and Frith (1957) have shown that the clutch-size in the tropical latitudes is smaller than that in the northern temperate zones with longer day length hours for foraging. A constant and small clutch-size may indicate a stable environment for the species and the populations have approached the carrying capacity in the respective apparently identical environments (Cody, 1966).

### Incubation period

The incubation period for *N. zeylonica* ranged between 14 and 16 days. 83.3% of the clutches hatching on the 16th day. It might be that the lowest value reflects a much stressed environment and the highest a stress-free one. The lone uncertain case of clutch.5, no egg being in the nest by 3.10 p.m. on 29 March, 1965 and the clutch assumed to have been completed on 31 March, 1965, would fall within the majority. Whether or not a higher value, in effect, means a smaller population needs to be verified. If found true, the population of the species at Calcutta, 22.5°N 88.4° E, with 17-day incubation period (Ganguli, 1986) must be smaller than that of the southern Peninsular India.

### Hatching

The eggs of clutches, 5,9,10 and 11 hatched in each case on two consecutive days. If this is determined by the genotypes of the individual eggs, it entails that those that hatched on the same day, though at varying intervals, ought to have had differential treatments from the parent, the first eggs receiving improper or no incubation at all on the laying day. However, in that latter case the difference in hatching time must be due to the one being warmed for a night more than the other.

### Nestling Period

The nestling period ranged between 14 and 17 days, the lowest and the highest being observed in the northern of the two latitudes. Notwithstanding the complete hatching success, the survival value of the breeding process should rest heavily on the fledging success and must be more

environment oriented. The circumstances under which the particular Tiruchirapalli-population of the bird survived does offer an explanation that involves a 'decision making' by the parent bird. Longer nestling periods of 16-17 days were correlated with copious water in the area. The shorter periods for clutches 6 and 10 respectively were, it is argued, because, in one, a nestling had died portending danger and the parent was calling the other out; and, in the other, the area, going dry was being thoroughly searched for fish by people. Longer nestling period should be a disadvantage in that it would involve greater strain on the parents in providing food for the young. Shorter period on the other hand would enable more broods being raised. Nestling period would move back and forth, the incubation period fixed apparently at 15 days or whatever. More data on the population at 8.7° N are required to be collected.

### Conclusion

*Nectarinia zeylonica* occurring in the Peninsular India at 8.7°N and 10.8° N have similar breeding behaviours. The clutch size is 2 eggs with a 15 day incubation period capable of being shortened or increased as per the genepool. More than the incubation period, the nestling period is variable being under the 'will' of the parent depending on the environmental situation. The species must have a steady population unlike those with variable clutch-size. Should the environment be altered the species might become endangered, the restoration to a larger clutch-size improbable.

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## Reporting on the 1996 Asian Waterfowl Census Conducted in areas of Dharwad District on 21st January 1996



A team consisting of birders and naturalists namely, Dr Devadhar from Haveri, Dr Arora from the Dental College, Dharwad, Sri C.S. Nagendra from Navalur (Dharwad), Sri Ashok Mansur from Dharwad and myself the author of this

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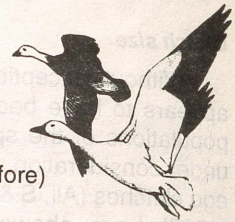
report visited this year a few important minor irrigation tank habitats occurring in the western flank of Dharwad district on 21st January 1996 to take a count of waterfowl. The team adopted a course of action by which it was possible to keep

the counting process going continuously without a break so that a maximum number of sites were covered including those that were studied during the last 7- 8 years. They are listed below. The counting work started at 7 am in the morning ended at 6 pm in the evening. A jeep belonging to the Department of Forest & Wild Life Preservation, Sub-dvn. Dharwad, was spared for the purpose. We express our gratitude to Sri Hosmani, ACF Dharwad, for his kind cooperation.

#### List of Tank-sites covered

- A Gotgodikere (counted before)  
B Heggerikere "

- C Naregalkere "  
D Havanagikere "  
E Akkialurkere "  
F Hangalkere (not counted before)  
G Konankere "  
H Somapurkere "  
I Tadas Tank "



The following Table shows bird counts from each of the above listed nine Tanks in serial order.

BIRD SPECIES	TANK SITES VISITED								
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
Little grebe	2	-	3	2	10	3	1	-	5
Indian pond heron	2	2	12	-	-	3	2	-	10
Great egret	1	10	2	1	-	-	1	2	1
Lesser whistling teal	20	-	-	-	-	-	-	30	-
Indian cotton teal	10	-	100	-	-	10	-	200	10
Garganey teal	5	-	20	100	-	-	3	50	-
Little egret	-	50	5	-	-	4	-	5	-
Grey heron	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-
White ibis	-	10	15	-	-	-	-	-	-
Blackwinged stilt	-	10	10	-	-	-	2	-	-
Little pratincole	-	2	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Indian river tern	-	14	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Sanderlings	-	20	2	-	-	-	-	-	-
Wooly-necked stork	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Glossy ibis	-	-	4	10	-	-	-	-	-
Barheaded goose	-	-	2000	-	300	-	-	-	-
Wigeon	-	-	50	-	40	-	-	-	-
Spotbilled duck	-	-	60	30	100	-	-	2	-
Northern shoveler	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-
Baer's pochard	-	-	20	-	-	-	-	-	-
Purple swamphen	-	-	30	-	-	-	8	-	2
Common coot	-	-	800	-	200	10	100	-	50
Pheasant tailed jacana	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Bronzwinged jacana	-	-	3	-	-	4	-	6	5
Redwattle lapwing	-	-	4	1	-	-	-	-	-
Blacktailed godwit	-	-	10	-	-	-	-	-	-
Little cormorant	-	-	43	-	2	3	-	-	-
Common sandpiper	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	2
Northern pintail duck	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
Painted stork	-	5	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Asian open-bill stork	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	-
Common pochard	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	6	-
Demoiselle crane	-	-	1000	-	-	-	-	-	-

## Conclusions

In all about 33 different waterfowl species were identified and recorded from 9 wetland sites in the district of which as many as 25 were found in only one tank, namely Naregal Tank (C) which is perennial. It had also a maximum population of nearly 4208 birds resting there. Ducks, geese, teal and cranes formed the majority. It has great conservation value and deserves to be designated a Protected Area for Waterfowl, especially for safeguarding the migratory species that use this site for roosting and resting regularly each winter. The lowest population was in Gotgodi (A) and Konankere (G) tanks. The remaining 5-6 tanks supported an average population of 8-12 birds. A special

feature of this year's census was that in one or two tanks, such as Havanagi (D) and Akkialur (E) large congregations of comb-duck and spot-billed duck were seen. This may be due to scarcity of water in other tanks nearby. Another striking difference observed was a fall in the number of garganey teal in the area. Similarly curlews, cormorants and godwits were in meagre numbers. The large Heggeri (B) Tank which had dried up this year attracted a small group of 4 white ibises which had very close resemblance to the Australian species because their rump feathers were distinctly jet black and not grey as found in the Oriental species. It needs investigation before they are confirmed as such. Other specialities were a few members of Baer's pochard found associated with other unidentified ducks.

## Observations on Mixed Species Flocks of Birds in the Palani Hills

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During April to June of 1991, I often observed birds of different species foraging together in coffee plantations and semi-evergreen forest in the Middle Palani Hills (altitude 900-1800 metres a.m.s.l). It was difficult to miss these flocks. Frequently, the empty silence of the forest would be broken by the arrival of such a group which would then feed noisily and actively for some time, before abruptly taking off again.

Later, I found out that this was a phenomenon known as mixed species foraging behaviour in which birds belonging to several different species forage together in a group for food. In some areas, birds have been found to be faithful to a particular group which forages regularly in a defined territory. There is a possibility that in some cases member-birds even roost together. The common theory to explain this behaviour is that birds, by feeding together in a flock, spend less time individually, on looking out for predators and consequently have higher foraging efficiency (Vijayan 1989).

The most commonly seen members of such groups in the Palni Hills were scarlet minivets (*Pericrocotus flammeus*), white-eyes (*Zosterops palpebrosa*), bronzed drongos (*Dicrurus aeneus*), blacknaped flycatchers (*Hypothymis azurea*), velvet-fronted nuthatches (*Sitta frontalis*), Tickell's blue flycatchers (*Muscicapa tickelliae*), goldenbacked woodpeckers (*Dinopium benghalense*) and jungle babblers (*Turdoides striatus*). It is interesting to note that all these species are primarily insectivorous, besides the white-eye which also feeds on nectar and small-sized fruits. This could mean that there are other benefits from being in a flock; birds may gain from increased abundance of insects which are flushed out due to movement and foraging by the other birds. This has been observed in some temperate systems (Morse, 1970).

The different species seen in flocks were seen to occupy different feeding niches in the forest. The scarlet minivets took insects in sallying flight from the top canopy while white-eyes fed from leaves and flowers inside the trees. Bronzed drongos, blacknaped flycatchers and Tickell's blue

flycatcher utilised the middle storey of the canopy to catch insects in flight white tree-trunk gleaners like the woodpeckers and nuthatches foraged on insects from bark. The jungle babbler foraged mainly in the understory. This partitioning of feeding niches amongst species is thought to be instrumental in increasing insect capture rates. In addition, in hetero-specific flocks, antipredator vigilance may be enhanced, with various species using different ways of looking for predators (pers. comm. Madhusudan Katti).

I cannot confirm that all these species were associated since I did not take down detailed notes, but it seems highly likely. Species occupying similar niches have been seen foraging together in Sri Lanka such as yellow-eared bulbuls (*Pycnonotus penicillatus*) Ceylon hill white-eyes (*Zosterops ceylonensis*), grey-headed flycatchers (*Culicicapa ceylonensis*), velvet-fronted nuthatches (*Sitta frontalis*), scimitar babblers (*Pomatorhinus horsfieldii*) and grey tits (*Parus major*) (Partridge and Ashcroft 1976).

It would be worthwhile to check if these flocks have a territory that they utilise on a regular basis or if they are loose, opportunistic aggregations of birds that come together for some time during the day. It would also be interesting to see if such locking behaviour is consistent across forest and man-modified habitats such as coffee plantations. It is possible that changes in seasonal availability and predictability of insects in man-modified habitats may affect flock formation. Though such groups have been studied in detail in several spaces in the Indian subcontinent (Kotagama et al 1986, MacDonald and Henderson 1977, Vijayan 1989) we are still far from understanding the complex interplay of ecological and behavioural factors that drive this interesting phenomenon in our forests.

## Acknowledgements

I am grateful to Madhusudan Katti, Priyantha Wijesinghe, Raghupathy Kannan and others on the Indian Natural History List (on the internet) for delving out references and supplying ideas for this piece.

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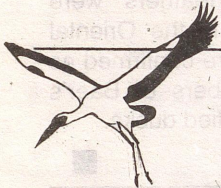
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## Eastern White Storks visit West Bengal

ANANTA MITRA, *Calcutta Nature Society, 611, Prince Anwar Shah Road, Calcutta 700 033*

On 05-02-1996 a Bengali Daily of Calcutta published a report that a number of an unknown migrant birds have arrived in the marsh of GUMAR JOLA in P.S. Maheshtola in South 24-Parganas, West Bengal.

To verify the report and to identify the migrants, I reached the site on 6-2-96. A few local youths were there.

The Marsh is about 150 acres in area and its depth is about four to twelve inches. It is covered with grass and aquatic vegetation.

From the eastern end of the swamp, with the sun behind I started observing the birds with binoculars. The birds were in the middle of the swamp gathering food from its bed. To my surprise I found them to be a species of white storks, *Ciconia ciconia ciconia*.

Size more than 3 feet. Long red legs. Bills blackish, sharp and pointed, with no gap between the mandibles. Head, neck, breast and back all white. Tail portion black. Number about 140. In flight legs and necks outstretched like storks. Wings span large.

I watched them for more than an hour and checked my notes with the local youths.

When some people came to the meadow to graze their cattle, the flock took to their wings, magnificently soared for a while and left for another swamp in the South-West.

On getting back to Calcutta to confirm my identification, I formed a team with my fellow bird-watchers Sarbasree Pramotha Sen, Ajoy Chatterjee, Siba Prosad Chakkaborty, Suprio Ghosh, myself and Satya Sree Banerjee and started for the site on 11-02-96, with zoom and Video Cameras.

The birds were still there. We observed them and took pictures and films which are being processed. The results, so far, have corroborated that the birds are eastern white storks, *Ciconia ciconia Boyciana*, as per Synopsis No. 64, Page 102, 2nd edition, Volume I, Handbook of the Birds of India and Pakistan by Dr. Salim Ali. They are a Sub-species of *Ciconia ciconia ciconia* (Synopsis No.64. q.v.).

The Handbook has found (P-100) that the distribution of this subspecies as per "records from the eastern side of the subcontinent - Bengal, E.Pakistan, Assam, etc. probably relate to the next subspecies (*Boyciana*)."

The local people are very enthusiastic about these uncommon lovely migrants and are rendering them all possible protection. They, along with us, draw the attention of the Centre and the State to establish a Bird Sanctuary of this unique swamp, without any loss of time. The swamp contains various other water fowl and other species of fauna and flora.



## First record of greylag goose of Kanha National Park (M.P.)

RAVISHANKAR KANOJE, *Forest ranger, (Kanha Tiger Reserve), At and Post Mukki, Via Baihar, District Balaghat, (M.P.) 481 111.*

In winter I look for migratory birds. Mohammad Turab Khan game guard in the Kanha National Park informed me that he saw a new type of duck. On 26th December he took me to the Naya Talab (22° 11 N and 80°38 E) at Sondhar meadows. There were 30 grayish brown geese with bright pink bill. On close observation with 7x50 binoculars its pink legs were seen while paddling. Thus I confirmed them to be greylag geese (*Anser anser*).

The grey lag geese is a common winter visitor to North India but rare in Madhya Pradesh (Ali and Ripley 1989). This bird has not been recorded so far in Kanha. Therefore this is the first record of greylag geese in the Kanha National Park.

I am grateful to Mohd. Turab Khan for his cooperation and assistance.

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### Common Myna Flying with Biscuit Wrapper in Kanha National Park (M.P.)

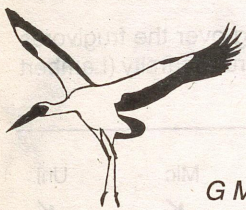
On 27th April 1995 at 4.00 P.M. I was going to Kanha from Kisli by scooter in the Kanha National Park. Near Kisli (22° 11 N and 81° 56 E) I saw a common Myna (*Acridotheres tristis*) pick up a glittering object from the roadside and was immediately up in the air. To my curiosity I at once turned back my scooter. The myna dropped the shining material, it

toppled down on the ground. To my surprise it was the piece of a biscuit wrapper 8x10 cms in size, one side was bright yellow and another side silver bright, littered by some careless tourist on the road.

Common myna breeds from April to August (Ali 1979). Its nest often includes tin foil (Ali and Ripley 1989). Was it taking that shining paper for nest building ?

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## Blacknecked Storks' (*Ephippiorhynchus asiaticus*) Sympathy Look Towards Injured Whitenecked Stork (Boddaert) *Ciconia episcopus*

G MAHESWARAN, Stork Ecology Project, Centre for Wildlife & Ornithology, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh 202 002, India

On 28 December 1994 at 11.40 hrs I saw a greyheaded fishing eagle (*Ichthyophaga ichthyaetus*) feeding on fish near a flock of whitenecked storks in Banketaal of Dudwa National Park. Suddenly, one of the whitenecked storks tried to chase away the raptor and thereby both engaged in fight and finally the whitenecked suffered an injury in its left wing.

After that it could not fold its wing properly and walked slowly to the place where other whitenecked storks and blacknecked storks were foraging. All the storks started

coming towards the injured bird and had a "sympathetic" look. After a few minutes the injured WNS moved to an isolated place followed by a female blacknecked stork. She remained there for about 15 minutes, intently watching the WNS at close range (3 meters), and then left the injured bird.

The next day also the same blacknecked stork visited the injured WNS and the later was still there without feeding on anything. Since it could not fly it restricted its movements within the wetland even after all its companions flew away.



## Human Disturbance - A Major Factor for Nest Desertion

C. VENKATARAMAN, Salim Ali Centre for Ornithology and Natural History, Coimbatore 641 010

During February 1993, 152 spotbilled pelicans arrived at Vedanthangal Waterbirds Sanctuary (VBS). It was the highest in the history of VBS. After some days a few started nesting when the water level started receding slowly. Human beings begin using the lake when water level recedes, for grazing cattle, fire wood collection and as a foot path. The nest nearest to the path was 50 m away. Later I saw a nest with two eggs on an Acacia tree, which I could clearly view from the watch tower. The parent birds did not come back throughout the season and the nest was deserted.

On 12th March 1994, when I was going on my usual round along the lake bund a redwattled lapwing flew suddenly from a place. By checking that area I found 4 eggs. After 15 days I went to check whether the eggs had hatched and I found the 4 eggs still there. The nest was deserted. This particular portion of the lake is frequently used by cattle for grazing. I guess that the bird might have laid the egg on a

platform surrounded by water and as the water level went down the human activities increased leading to the desertion of the nest.

It is clear in both cases that the nest desertion was due to human disturbance. On another occasion in 1994 I found a bird nest in a newly constructed house, which we had occupied, as our hostel, on a shelf in the kitchen. After repeated checking, we identified it as a large pied wagtail.

It came to the nest for two days after our possession and later used to sit on top of the house and also fly over our hostel, but did not come back to the nest. It was clear that the nest desertion was due to our disturbance. Similar observations have been reported by many authors (Anderson and Keith, 1980; Yorio and Boersma 1992, 1994). Nest desertion is a common behaviour in birds. In addition to

human disturbances many other factors that cause desertion are lack of food, extreme weather etc.

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## List of Avian frugivores Recorded at Four Species of Fruiting Strangler figs at Karian Shola Wildlife Sanctuary, Western Ghats, India

VIDYA R. ATHREYA, NCRA, Post Bag #3, Ganeshkhind, Pune 411 007

**A**mong the different fruit resources available in tropical forests, the *Ficus* genus is one of the most important. It is well known that strangler figs when found in high densities are

a keystone resource necessary for tiding over the frugivores requirement for fruit during the period of fruit scarcity (Lambert & Marshall, 1991).

### The list of frugivores observed feeding on four *Ficus* species

		Amp	Dru	Mic	Uni
496	Greyfronted green pigeon	✓	✓	✓	✓
511	Jerdon's imperial pigeon	✓	✓	x	x
558	Blossomheaded parakeet	✓	✓	✓	x
564	Bluwinged parakeet	✓	✓	✓	✓
566	Lorikeet	✓	✓	✓	✓
768	Malabar grey hornbill	✓	✓	✓	✓
776	Great pied hornbill	x	✓	✓	x
785	Small green barbet	✓	✓	✓	✓
790	Crimsonthroated barbet	✓	✓	✓	✓
819	Goldenbacked woodpecker	✓	✓	✓	x
953	Golden Oriole	✓	✓	✓	✓
1006	Common myna	x	✓	x	✓
1015	Hill myna	✓	✓	✓	✓
1032	Indian treepie	✓	✓	✓	✓
1036	Whitebellied treepie	✓	✓	✓	✓
1057	Jungle crow	✓	✓	✓	x
1072	Large cuckoo - shrike	✓	x	✓	x
1109	Fairy bluebird	✓	✓	✓	✓
1103	Goldfronted chloropsis	✓	✓	✓	✓
1116	Rubythroated bulbul	✓	✓	✓	✓
1121	Redwhiskered bulbul	x	✓	✓	✓
1144	Yellowbrowed bulbul	✓	✓	✓	✓
1265	Jungle babbler	x	x	✓	x
1390	Quaker babbler	x	x	✓	x
1723	Blueheaded rock thrush	x	x	x	✓
1728	Malabar whistling thrush	x	x	✓	✓
1734	Whitethroated ground thrush	x	✓	✓	✓
1753	Blackcapped blackbird	x	✓	✓	x
1794	Grey tit	x	x	✓	x
1892	Thickbilled flowerpecker	x	✓	✓	✓
	Total	19	24	26	19

Key to the symbols :

Amp : *F. amplissima*

The numbers are from Ali & Ripley (1986).

✓ - Observed on

Dru : *F. drupacea*

x - Not observed on

Mic : *F. microcarpa*

Uni : Unidentified

Fruiting strangler figs attract a wide range of avian frugivores which flock to these trees in large numbers, and have resulted in many studies dealing with the frugivore composition and their fruit use (eg. Jordano 1983, Lambert 1989a). However no systematic studies on frugivores at fruiting strangler figs have been conducted in India (see Athreya 1993).

The list of frugivores presented below was compiled during a four month study (January to May 1993) on temporal variation in visitation of avian frugivores at fruiting strangler figs in Karian Shola National Park in Indira Gandhi Wildlife Sanctuary, Pollachi district, Tamilnadu. A total of 127 hours of observations was conducted between 7.00 am and 5.00 pm at *F. drupacea* (67 hr), *F. micorcarpa* (40 hr), *F. amplissima* (16 hr) and at an unidentified strangler fig (4 hr).

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## Salim Ali Centenary Seminar on Conservation of Avifauna of Wetlands and Grasslands : A Report

Dr.A. JAMIL URFI, Centre for Environment Education, Thaltej Tekra, Ahmedabad, 380 054

This being the centenary of Salim Ali several ornithological organisations have paid tributes to the memory of the grand old man of Indian Ornithology who passed away in 1987. For instance the **Oriental Bird Club** has dedicated its 'special India issue' (No.22, December, 1995) to the Centenary of Dr. Salim Ali. Its guest editorial is headed as follows : True to its traditions and culture Asia always has its wise men and women. Whether it is art, culture, religion, philosophy, morality, or statecraft there was a Confucius or a Mahatma to shape and guide the destinies of generations. Asian Ornithology too has its share of men of destiny - Yamashina of Japan, Boonsong of Thailand, Cheng of China and **Salim Ali** of India - whose contributions not only enriched our knowledge but also inspired a new generation of ornithologists and bird enthusiasts. Back home the 'Bombay Natural History Society' - with which Salim Ali was deeply involved throughout his career - chose to remember this historical personality by organising a seminar. The **Salim Ali Centenary Seminar on conservation of avifauna of wetlands and grasslands**, which was held in Bombay during 12 - 15 Feb, 1996 was well attended by delegates from India and abroad. The theme of this seminar i.e. conservation of avifauna of grasslands and wetlands was also well chosen : both these habitats are basic life support systems yet are gravely threatened in our country. Field work on the avifauna of these habitats was a major thrust area at the BNHS under the stewardship of Dr. Salim Ali.

The representative groups of wetland and grassland birds are the cranes, waterfowl and waders, and the bustards and floricans respectively. Raptors are an important component of the birdscape of both these habitats. The papers presented at this seminar revolved around the ecology and conservation of these birds and their endangered habitat. Some of the old work of BNHS scientists, accomplished during the 'US Fish & Wildlife

sponsored projects on wetland and grassland birds' was retold but several papers covered new ground as well. Since it is not possible to report each and every paper in detail I will try to give an idea of what happened briefly.

The first technical session i.e. on cranes began with an excellent presentation on the status of cranes worldwide, by George Archibald from the **International Crane Foundation**. This was followed by the presentations of Prakash Gole, another crane authority (crane conservation in India : need to reshape the whole effort), Dr. Lalitha Vijayan (Ecology of the Siberian Crane at Bharathpur during 1992-93), J.K. Tiwari (Common Cranes in Kutch), Rakesh Vyas (habitat utilization by Sarus at man made wetlands), and A.S. Brar (captive bred Siberian Cranes at Bharatpur). The highlight of this session, perhaps, was Mini Nagendran's interesting account of some of her recent experiments on tracking cranes by satellite and radio-telemetry.

The second technical session was on 'conservation of ducks and geese' and perhaps its highlight was Taej Mundkur's exposition of the 'Asian migratory waterbirds flyways'. Some other interesting papers in this session were by E.V. Rogacheva (central Asian-Indian flyway), M.A. Khan (Conservation of Anatidae in Bangladesh), S. Bhupathy (Spatial use pattern of waterfowl at Bharatpur) and Elena Mukhina (Status overview of waterbirds and wetlands in Uzbekistan).

The session on 'conservation of waders, storks and herons' started by a presentation by the **IUCN-Stork, Ibis, Spoonbill** group's chairman, Dr. Malcolm Coulter (conservation status report of this group throughout the world). Dr.S. Subramanya, spoke about the progress he is making on his ambitious and significant project i.e. compiling

a directory of the heronries of India. This session had some other interesting presentations viz. impact of pesticides on fish eating birds (S. Murlidharan), status of Painted Stork in Gujarat (B.M. Parasharya), breeding pelicans in captivity (S. Subramanya) etc. The technical sessions on bustard and floricans were chaired by two authorities on this group of birds - Dr's Paul Goriup and A.R. Rahmani. A number of very interesting papers were presented in this session as well as on the one on raptors. On the final day several papers discussed the conservation problems of grasslands and wetlands.

Certain issues discussed in this seminar will perhaps be remembered because of the very lively/forceful manner in which they were presented. For instance, whereas the

illegal trade in wildbirds is a neglected area of mainstream conservation activity, Rajat Bhargava managed to attract our attention towards this subject quite successfully. Masquerading as 'Abrar Ahmed' - a certain (fictitious) bird trader - he told us all that we wanted to know about the illegal bird trade. But I think he forgot to extract a promise from us not to divulge his real identity to the underworld dons of illegal wildbird trade. Similarly, Anwaruddin Chaudhury bombarded us with three impressive status surveys: of floricans, cranes and white-winged woodduck from the Brahmaputra valley, Assam. Given that this part of the country is ornithologically very important, yet quite poorly explored, his efforts (and of Prof. Bhattacharjee and his group) are a valuable addition to our knowledge.

### Correspondence

**FOREST WAGTAIL WINTERING IN TAMILNADU. H. DANIEL WESLEY, 126, Ramalinganagar South, Tiruchirapalli 620 017**

I observed a bird for the first time at about 3 pm on the road to Anaikuthi Solai in the Annamalai Wildlife sanctuary on 4 March 1989. It was foraging on the ground and took to the wing on being approached. Later, on 16 October 1993, I saw two birds by my house at Tiruchirapalli. The birds had been there, on and off, since 6 am till they winged their way eastward at 3.30 pm. On 12 February 1996 I was informed that a forest wagtail had been seen at Pullambadi about 35 km east of Tiruchirapalli.

The birds observed on 16 October 1993, both swayed their hind quarters side by side. The forehead to rump was ashy green, the underparts from chin to undertail coverts were uniformly dirty white. The bib in the upper breast was black and triangular, the base facing up, with the angles drawn out. A little behind on either side was a black stripe the left one of which joined the median back extension of the bib. On the wings were three distinct white bars, the middle one of which, in one bird, met dorsally, forming a band. The bill and tarsi were light flesh. The inner rectrices were ashy-brown with the lateral white ones showing slightly. The tail itself presented a slight median dent. There was much variation from the known description of the bird (Ali, S. and Dillon Ripley, 1987).

In Tamilnadu the Winter distribution is "Western Tamilnadu (east to Madurai district and south to the southern-most part of the Peninsula)" and "Eastern Tamilnadu (Madras, Chingalput) Sept and Oct". Badshah has reported it as being usually found at Singampatti. Sugathan (1982) has recorded it at Point Calimere as "seen on passage" from September 1980 to January 1981 and believes that the bird takes "a different route on return migration".

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**WHITENECKED STORKS. KUMARAN SATHASIVAM, 20, Jadamuni Koil Street, Madurai 625 001**

I have received the November/December 1995 issue of the Newsletter recently. Regarding your comments on the whitenecked storks (*Ciconia episcopus*), I would like to point out that the *Birds of Kerala* Salim Ali records "an exceptionally large flock of 15 birds" observed on a mudspit in the Peechi Reservoir near Trichur, in February 1964. More recently, in February 1992, V. Santharam (*pers. comm.*) saw 16 whitenecked storks near Vazhani, at the Western end of the Peechi sanctuary.

On the 29th December 1995, I was travelling from Coimbatore to Ernakulam. Ottapalam station had been passed and the railway track followed the course of a river which I guessed must be the Bharatapuzha, for the station of that name was marked next on the railway timetable. A group of whitenecked storks standing at the water's edge came into view, and I counted 15 or 16 birds in that group as the train proceeded. This location would not have been far from Trichur.

These records seem to suggest that at least one population of about 15 whitenecked storks has been maintained around Trichur for more than 30 years.



**SIGHTING OF WOOLY-NECKED STORK AT PANIDIHING, ASSAM.** D. BAROOAH, Dass Pharmacy, Temple Road, Sibsagar 785 640

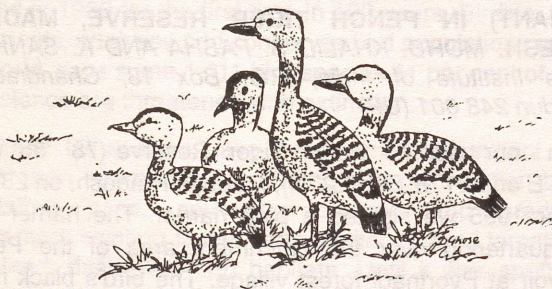
With reference to the Short Note "Status of the Woolly-necked Stork in Assam, India" by Dr Anwaruddin Choudhury appearing in the Newsletter Vol.35, No.6, I would like to add that 7 nos. of wooly-necked stork were sighted and counted by our census team on 21.1.1995 at the wetlands of Panidihing between Barpathar and Kandhulijan Beel. The sky was overcast and chilly wind blew all the time, as a result the place was almost desolate. The birds were placed isolately at least 50 meters apart from one another. We didn't see them feeding nor preening. They just stood solitarily as adjutants usually do. At 4.30 pm we saw one bird lifting off and flying straight towards the North across the Brahmaputra with slow wing beats and periodic gliding.

This was the first time the wooly-necked stork (*Ciconia episcopus*) sighted in Sibsagar district, Assam.



**REDISCOVERY OF GREATER WHISTLING TEAL AT SANTRAGACHI, HOWRAH DISTRICT, W.B.** KAUSHIK DEUTI, DIPANKAR GHOSE and DEBASISH SEN, Prakriti Samsad, 146, Rashbehari Avenue, Calcutta 700 029

The Santragachi lake renamed South-eastern Railway Centenary Sanctuary for migratory waterfowl in Howrah district, West Bengal has long been a major wintering ground for waterbirds near Calcutta. About 8000 ducks visit this 0.187 acre waterbody every year of which over 90% are lesser whistling teals, a few hundred garganeys, gadwalls and pintails and a handful of cotton teals, Indian moorhens, coots, egrets and cormorants. In 1993 and 1994 there were also a couple of falcated teals (*Anas falcata*). Although no systematic census was done in the seventies and eighties, from 1990, Prakriti Samsad, a Calcutta-based nature club started one on their own and was only recently financially supported by WWF-India (Eastern Region). The counting is done in the second week of January every year as part of the



Two *Dendrocygna javanica* (left) and  
Two *D. bicolor* (at right side)  
Dipankar Ghose 26.01.96 (drawn from Video)

Asian Mid-winter Waterfowl Census, the data collected by WWF is sent to the Asian Wetland Bureau in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. On such a census trip this year on January 7, 1996 we recorded the presence of 4 greater whistling teals (*Dendrocygna bicolor*) among the flock of about 6000 lesser whistling teals (*Dendrocygna javanica*). The ducks were distinguished by their larger size, whitish lines on neck, creamy white upper tail coverts and bright buff colouration, the rusty brown cap on crown continuing as a dark brown stripe over the nape. The species is believed to be becoming extinct from this part of the country and was recorded only as far back as 1983.

In spite of the fact that this wetland was taken over by the Forest Department in 1994, no studies on bird migration have been carried out here. The team conducting the waterfowl census at Santragachi on January 13, 1994 discovered an albino lesser whistling teal among 3000 others. Another team reported spotting a similar bird at Kalyani lake in Nadia district, West Bengal (about 200 kms away) on January 21, 1994. A hurried trip to Santragachi the very next day (22.01.1994) revealed the absence of the albino even after 8 hours of constant observation. As albinos are produced one in a million, there is every possibility that it may be the same bird and that atleast part of the flock had migrated from Santragachi to Kalyani. It is interesting to note here that an albino lesser whistling teal was spotted again at Santragachi on February 8, 1995. Was it the same bird? Could this mean that it is the same flock visiting the lake again and again every year? Probably the answers to these questions can be found out by ringing and recapturing some of the birds.



**THE GREATER ADJUTANT STORK LEPTOPTILOS DUBIUS IN MEGHALAYA.** ANWARUDDIN CHOUDHURY, Near Gate No.1 of Nehru Stadium, Islampur Road, Guwahati 781 007

On 6th May, 1992, while going to Guwahati from Diphu (Karbi Anglong) I came across a greater adjutant stork (*Leptoptilos dubius*) in flight in association with white-backed and longbilled vultures. A few more storks were also there. The location was Baridua, near CRPF Group Centre, c.15 km from the heart of the Guwahati City. The spot where it was seen is in Ri- Bhoi district of Meghalaya (26° 05' N and 91° 50' E). Its occurrence in Meghalaya has not yet been specifically mentioned anywhere. Then again on 10th May I came across one greater adjutant stork near the inter-state border but inside Assam.

The storks were apparently wanderers from Assam, especially from Guwahati and its environs. But they seemed to move to the area frequently. This is because of the fact that the area is a fast growing one with new hutments coming up daily due to its close proximity to Guwahati city.

Increased population has resulted in increase in refuse dumps and carcasses attracting vultures and the greater adjutant frequently. There is no scope of nesting in the immediate vicinity of the area.



**SIGHTING OF WHITE STORKS NEAR GUNTAKAL.**  
**AMEEN AHMED, Ghouse Buildings, Hospet Main Road, Tumkur 572 101**

I was on my way back to Bangalore after attending a 1-day NGO's meet on Environment held at New Delhi and Organised by Ministry of Environment & Forests, Government of India. During the trip, my first to North India, I saw many species of birds new to me especially in the Jim Corbett Tiger Reserve. On 30th January 1996, travelling for about 5 minute from Guntakal Junction in Andhra Pradesh towards Bangalore, just to the right besides the railway track I came across a half-filled water reservoir. At the northern edge I saw about 6 'white' birds feeding. Fortunately for me, the train slowed down and stopped for reasons best known the the driver. I had enough time to take out my 12 x 50 Binocs and have a good look at them. I could confirm that they were white storks [*Ciconia ciconia*]. Also I had some time to look at other waterbirds which included a couple of hundred of Northern pintails [*Anas acuta*]. It would be interesting to know from other birders, if the white storks have ever been recorded around Guntakal.



**MYSTERY MARKED WATERBIRDS ROAM THE ASIAN FLYWAYS.** **TAEJ MUNDKUR, Senior Technical Officer, AWB, HQ**

The marking of birds with colours or bands (ring) to identify them individually has been going on for over a century. A variety of techniques have been developed and birds are now marked with colours dyes, metal bands (rings), special plastic colour bands, flags or wing-tags, or a combination of these markers.

Around the world, the utilization of these marking techniques have been crucial in the identification of precise migration routes, staging areas, and distributions during the non-breeding periods of several migratory species, information that has been fundamental to conservation efforts. The techniques have also served well in deciphering other facets of avian biology.

Over the last 12 years, AWB has been contacted by people from across the Asia-Pacific region with reports of recoveries and sightings of marked waterbirds. These birds have been marked by a variety of research or conservation agencies and individuals in countries in the region as well as from the USA and Europe. For a majority of these sightings, we have been able to relay the information to the appropriate agencies, where it is used to contribute to our growing knowledge of the migration routes of birds in the region.

However, AWB and the other agencies also receive reports of waterbirds whose identification marks do not appear to match those of any known scheme. Unsolved reports received between 1 January 1994 and 31 August 1995 and pending with AWB, the Australian Bird and Bat Banding Scheme and the Yamashina Institute of Ornithology (Japan) are :

- 1 South India :  
Unknown bird recovered with band 92 444 CMHS
- 2 Yancheng coast, East China :  
Dunlin "*Calidris alpina*", white colour-ring on left leg.  
Caspian Tern "*Sterna caspia*", white colour-ring on right leg.
- 3 Nakdong Estuary, South Korea :  
Saunders Gull "*Larus saundersii*"; metal band on left leg.  
Relict Gull "*Larus relictus*", metal band on right leg.
- 4 Broome, Northwest Australia :  
Grey-tailed Tattler "*Tringa brevipes*"; white painted metal band on leg (tibia).
- 5 Kooragang Island, New South Wales, Australia :  
Little Tern "*Sterna albifrons*", dark green leg flag.
- 6 Botany Bay, New South Wales, Australia :  
Little Tern "*S. albifrons*", yellow-over-orange bands on right leg and metal band on left leg.
- 7 Roebuck Bay, Northwest Australia :  
Red Knot "*Calidris canulus*", metal band on left leg (tarsus) and red colour-ring on the right leg (tarsus).

We would greatly appreciate the help of our readers in solving these mysteries. If you are aware of a scheme that matches, or is similar to, any of the records listed above, please contact AWB. Similarly, please contact AWB if you yourself would like assistance in tracing the origins of marked waterbirds that you have seen.

[Asian Wetland News, Vol.8, No.1, September 1995, p.29]



**SIGHTING OF PIED HARRIER *CIRCUS MELANOLEUCOS* (PENNANT) IN PENCH TIGER RESERVE, MADHYA PRADESH.** **MOHD. KHALID S. PASHA AND K. SANKAR, Wildlife Institute of India, P.O. Box 18, Chandrabani, Dehradun 248 001 (UP)**

On our visit to Pench Tiger Reserve (78° 55' W to 79° 35' E and 21° 8' S to 22° N), Madhya Pradesh, on 28th of October 1995 we sighted a pied harrier. The harrier was seen quartering over the catchment area of the Pench Reservoir at Pyortnadi forest village. The bird's black head and breast, white belly and under-wings were some of the identifying characters visible in flight. When the bird sat on one of the submerged dead tree branch a clear white shoulder patch further confirmed the sighting of the species.

The vegetation around the submerged area comprised of tropical moist and tropical dry deciduous forest with tall grass along the banks.

Pied harrier is a species of grassland, open expanses of plains and hills and also of paddy fields and stubbles and grassy margins of jheels. It is chiefly a winter visitor to the eastern parts of the subcontinent and quite common in Manipur and Assam, where it occasionally breeds (*Ali and Ripley 1986*). In Madhya Pradesh this species has been reported by Ali & Ripley (1986) in the eastern districts of Balaghat, Banda and Bastar.

The occurrence of pied harrier in Pench Tiger Reserve, which lies in the Seoni district range, is notable as this is the first record from the south-eastern region of Madhya Pradesh.

### Reference

Ali, S. & Ripley, S.D. (1986). Handbook of Birds of India and Pakistan. Oxford University Press, Bombay.



### Notes

#### 'Extinct' birds turn up in Cambridge

The Invisible Rail isn't invisible anymore. The Caerulean Paradise flycatcher isn't lost, either, nor is the Lompobattang Flycatcher.

With animal and bird species dying all over, the Cambridge-based Global Conservation Group Birdlife International has good news: in 1995 it found three species presumed to be on their way to extinction after they were not seen for decades.

"It is terribly exciting to discover they still exist after all this time. But that doesn't mean they have been saved. Now we need urgent action to help them", said Dr Nigel Collar a Birdlife researcher. In the past decade, Birdlife searches have unearthed some 20 to 30 species lost for many years. Most dramatic was the yellow throated Serin of Ethiopia, spotted in 1989 for the first time in 103 years. Birdlife, which documents, analyses and conserves bird populations around the world, says some 1,111 bird species 11 per cent of those in existence are threatened with extinction.

Some 80 species have been confirmed 'extinct' since 1,600 when international seafaring and colonization began to gather pace, spreading disease and predators. Newcomers wanting timber and shelter cleared forests and shrubland, destroying bird habitats. Until it was spotted in Indonesia in last July, the Invisible Rail so called because it hides in dense undergrowth had not been seen alive since 1948.

So there was great excitement when a Birdlife field officer saw the small bluish gray bird with black bars in a

sago swamp on the Indonesian island of Halmahera, said Collar. The Caerulean Paradise Flycatcher, a medium-sized blue and gray bird with a distinctive beard, had not been seen alive since 1978. Birdlife feared that extensive conversion of forests to nutmeg and coconut plantations of the Indonesian island of Sangihe had pushed the species to extinction.

But in September, a joint expedition from the University of Sam Ratulangi of Indonesia and Britain's York University saw a single female in scrub on the island. The previous month, two ornithologists working in collaboration with birdlife had found a Lompobattang Flycatcher, a small brown marsh bird that is related to coots and moorhens. Last seen in 1931, it inhabits a mountain of the same name in the southwestern corner of Sulawesi island.

It is not known how many of the birds remain possibly few in each case, said Collar, Sangihe, for example, is almost deforested, and we urgently need to survey and preserve what trees are left for the Caerulean Paradise Flycatcher, he added.

Courtesy: *Economic Times*, February 2, 1996



**MADIVALA TANK.** DR. JYOTSNA VIJAPURKAR, *Institute of Astrophysics, Koramangala, Bangalore 560 034*

I went to Madivala Tank with the Birdwatcher's Field Club yesterday, and it was quite a different scene from what I had encountered on my earlier visits there. We saw shovellers, bluewinged teals, pintails, dabchicks, scores of blackwinged stilts, also purple herons, marsh harriers, a snipe, green sandpipers, and the usual purple moorhens, and egrets and swallows. One of the birdwatchers counted the ducks - there were over 2,400 of them.



### Comments

**REGARDING LAVKUMAR, GOLE AND LAEEQ'S WRITINGS.** KUMAR GHORPADE, *1861 Bethel Street, St. Thomas Town, Bangalore 560 084*

I was pleased to go through the last issue of the Newsletter (Vol. 35, No. 6, Nov / Dec 1995); especially to see that Dr. Ripley's SYNOPSIS numbers have been used instead of serial numbers. I also enjoyed reading Kunvar Lavkumar's 'Comments' on the NLBW and would like to see other senior, experienced, birdwatchers also do this in future for the benefit of younger amateurs.

I haven't seen Prakash Gole's recent book that Laeeq reviewed and cannot but help make some comments here. Her agreement with Gole's 'final conclusion' that we must control the cattle population and leave Nature alone if we are to have any success in protecting the environment was

interesting. But, I would re-phrase the conclusion-like this: "Control the human population and study Nature to help us understand it for conserving and managing biodiversity." I agree, however, that remote wilderness areas away from our road networks and little visited, must not be publicized so the Forest Department can protect them; better to keep quiet about these still existing magnificent wildernesses away from the haunts of man (the worst offender), and not to use our communication network system to identify them for 'protection'. This is usually the quickest way to attract forest 'butchers' and the usually ill-informed eco-tourist (including some so-called birdwatchers' groups). And, Laeeq, birds most certainly are not 'the best indicators of the health and status of any area', I beg to disagree. Some species are good indicators of vertical zonation in jungles, but that's about it.



#### Announcement

**INDIAN BIRDWATCHERS' DIRECTORY & GUIDE : FINAL CALL.** KUMAR GHORPADE, 1861, Bethel Street, St. Thomas Town, Bangalore 560 084

The pre-final draft manuscript of my forthcoming Directory & Guide which has been in preparation since 1985, has recently been entered into a computer. The book will contain a Directory of Indian birdwatchers, another of those from adjacent countries, and a third of men and women from other foreign countries who have worked on our birds. An Annotated Check-list of every species (and higher taxa) of bird known to have a record of its occurrence in India or a neighbouring country (including Burma), forms another Directory. The Guide part of my book will include chapters on bird watching techniques and equipment, good bird habitats in our area, Institutional / NGO resources on Ornithology here, a selected bibliography of relevant bird literature for the serious amateur, and some suggestions on field work required to be carried out in our region on priority. Several indices, for ease of information retrieval, and a glossary, complete the book. It will also carry some illustrations to supplement the text.

The Directory of bird watchers and the one on our birds each list about 1500 persons and species, respectively. I would be pleased to receive letters from bird watchers who

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Printed and Published Bi-monthly by S. Sridhar at Navbharath Enterprises, Seshadripuram, Bangalore 560 020. For Private Circulation Only.

Tel. : 3364142 Fax : 3364692  
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haven't returned questionnaires yet, or ever written to me, so their names and addresses could also be entered into my computerized Database, before the final draft manuscript is made ready for press soon. I would also like those persons who have already written to me to send their present addresses if they have moved since they last wrote to me. The book is expected to be published later this year. Thank you.



#### ADVERTISEMENT Experienced Birdwatchers Required

##### 1996 AUTUMN MIGRATION SURVEY, ISRAEL

During the Autumn, over a period of 45 days, some 806,000 migrating birds were counted passing over Israel. It included 580,000 raptors of 30 different species, 250,000 White Storks and 36,000 White Pelicans.

We would like to invite you to join an international team of birdwatchers and be a part of the annual Raptor, Stork and Pelican Migration Survey. The survey will take place at the northern valleys of Israel. During that time, you will experience the busiest migration route on the western Palearctic.

Minimum participation period will be 4 weeks. We will provide lodging and food during the survey. The cost of travel to and from Israel will be covered by the participant.

If you are an experienced birdwatcher, capable and willing to watch migration for a minimum of 10 hours a day, please contact us as soon as possible, enclosing details of your previous experience & c.v.

Dan Allon  
Director of Israel Ornithological Center  
155 Herzl St  
Tel-Aviv 68101  
Israel



#### A correction

In the article on Bengal Florican in Burachpori, Assam, by Bibhab Kumar Talukdar (May - June 1995) please read the area of Burachpori RF as 44 sq km and not as reported.

Cover : Male **Fairy Blue Bird** (*Irena puella*) an unmistakable bird with shining blue and velvety black plumage. The female has dull verditer - blue plumage. This conspicuous noisy and restless bird sings a mellow song from the canopy of the forest.

Photo : S. Sridhar, ARPS



## Integration of IUCN Partners to form 'Wetlands International'

A new global force for wetland conservation has been created, following the decision of the governing bodies of the Asian Wetland Bureau (AWB), the International Waterfowl and Wetlands Research Bureau (IWRB), and Wetlands for the Americas (WA) to integrate. The new organisation will operate from 1 January 1996 under the new name "Wetlands International", and with a new and common logo.

This integration has been planned for several years, in recognition of the need for new initiatives and stronger partnership to address this continuing loss and degradation of wetlands, worldwide. The final decision to integrate occurred during joint meetings of the governing bodies of AWB, IWRB and WA at the International Conference on Wetlands and Development that was held in Malaysia during October 1995.

### Combined strengths

The creation of Wetlands International draws together and builds upon the strengths and achievements of the three founding organisations, which date back

more than 40 years. These achievements have included a key role in the development of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, major regional assessments of the status of wetlands and wetland species, research and conservation measures for migratory waterbirds, support to regional and national action plans for the conservation of wetlands and wetland species, training programmes in wetland management, and dissemination of information and awareness materials.

The Mission of Wetlands International is "To sustain and restore wetlands, their resources and biodiversity of future generations through research, information exchange and conservation activities, worldwide".

### Structure and partnerships

The global Board of Wetlands International is supported by three small Regional Councils (drawn from the existing regional councils of AWB and WA, and a new regional council for the Africa/Europe/Middle East region). The existing headquarters of AWB, IWRB and WA will coordinate the

development and implementation of programme activities for the Asia/Pacific, Africa/Europe/Middle East, and the Americas regions, with global coordination being provided by a small International Coordination Unit. The catalytic work programme will depend heavily on the activities of specialist groups and existing networks of thousands of wetlands experts in more than 100 countries.

Long-standing partnerships with the secretaries of international conventions (notably Ramsar and Bonn) and other international organisations (particularly Birdlife International, IUCN and WWF) will be strengthened. The integration of AWB, IWRB and WA was strongly endorsed in Malaysia by Jean-Yves Pirot of the IUCN Secretariat, and we shall be working closely during the coming months to see how Wetlands International can enhance its contribution to the IUCN programme through, for example, the Ecosystem Management Programme, the Commission on Ecosystem Management and the Species Survival Commission.

For further information on the programme of Wetlands International, or on how you can support Wetlands International, please contact any of the following offices:

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# INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON WETLANDS AND DEVELOPMENT

9-13 October 1995

## *The Kuala Lumpur Statement on Wetlands and Development*

An International Conference on Wetlands and Development held in Selangor, Malaysia, from 9-13 October 1995, was hosted by the Ministry of Science, Technology and the Environment, the Selangor State Government and the Institute of Advanced Studies, University of Malaya, and opened by the Prime Minister of Malaysia, YAB Dato' Seri Dr. Mahathir Mohamad. The Conference was organised by the Asian Wetland Bureau (AWB), the International Waterfowl & Wetlands Research Bureau (IWRB) and Wetlands for the Americas (WA), and supported by other organisations, with 342 participants drawn from 64 countries. The Conference is:

**COMMENDING** the Government of Malaysia for hosting the Conference, promoting the wise use of wetlands internationally and more specifically in Malaysia, and for designating Tasek Bera as its first Ramsar site;

**WELCOMING** the creation of Wetlands International through the linkage of the Asian Wetland Bureau, the International Waterfowl & Wetlands Research Bureau and Wetlands for the Americas;

**RECOGNISING** that wetlands form an irreplaceable and essential component of the Earth's natural systems, and noting especially their support of local human populations and development, the maintenance of biodiversity, their hydrological and ecological functions and their critical role in the life cycle of many species;

**APPRECIATING** the critical importance of cultural heritage and local practices in the wise use of wetlands (defined at the Fourth Conference of the Contracting Parties to the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat held in 1987 at Regina) and that local communities have an important role to play in the development process;

**CONCERNED** that there has been a significant loss and degradation of wetlands with the consequent reduction in global biodiversity, and that there are serious, on-going and impending threats to many remaining wetlands;

**RECALLING** the provisions for wise use of wetlands, that the conservation of biological diversity is a common concern of humankind, and the philosophy of sustainable development;

**CONSCIOUS** of the urgent need to strengthen international cooperation and partnerships between governments, non-government organisations, local communities, the private sector and others;

**ACKNOWLEDGING** that the private sector and the development assistance agencies are showing increased interest in accommodating sustainable use and sound environmental management principles in development plans;

**CONCERNED FURTHER** by the limited human and financial resources currently allocated to the conservation and wise use of wetlands;

**STRESSING** the need to enhance cross-sectoral planning for wetland use within the framework of holistic environmental management;

**AWARE** that there is an urgent need to increase understanding and share knowledge of wetland functions, values and management practices;

**DETERMINED** to conserve and use wetlands sustainably for the benefit of present and future generations,

The Conference urges governments, intergovernmental organisations, regional economic integration organisations, local communities, non-governmental organisations, the private sector and others

**TO WORK TOGETHER TO PREVENT FURTHER LOSS AND DEGRADATION OF WETLANDS, TO ENSURE THEIR WISE USE, AND TO MAINTAIN, RESTORE AND APPROPRIATELY ENHANCE WETLAND BIODIVERSITY AND FUNCTIONS.**