NEWSLETTER

FOR BIRDWATCHERS

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A VISIT TO KANHA NATIONAL PARK

By

Jasper Newsome

In the last week of January this year my friend Christopher Petyt and I visited Kanha National Park in the Mandla district of Madhya Pradesh. We spent five days in the park during which time we were able to see quite a good number of bird species, although we had less luck with the mammals which are the main attraction of the park, failing altogether to see either tiger, gaur, and blue bull. At night we heard tigers roaring close to the Forest Rest House, and often in daylight whilst walking along the forest-tracks we came across fresh footprints. Deer, however, we saw many of, though the great bulk were spotted deer, but we did see rare parties of both swamp deer and barking deer.

The habitat at Kanha is mostly sal (Shorea robusta) jungle, for the most part quite well grown with a good canopy for feeding parties of birds to forage in. The undergrowth is mostly bamboo. There are open spaces (or maidans) at several places in the park, primarily around the Forest Rest Houses at Kanha and Kisli. There are also tanks sheltering waterfowl and waders. Thus although the greater area of Kanha is thick forest nonetheless there is a diversity of habitat such that a few days there will produce a sizable and varied list of birds. I do not propose in this short article to include all the birds we saw, nearly one hundred species in all, but merely those less familiar species that we found more interesting than most, whilst at the same time giving an idea of the diversity of genera that make up the avifauna of the area.

First I should like to deal with the birds of the forest proper, since these are more worthy of mention in this habitat than elsewhere. For the most part we came across these forest species in mixed feeding parties of invariably one dozen species or more, woodpeckers, drongos, flycatchers, warblers, tits, all feeding according to their specific habit, yet also cooperating. A typical party that I have described in my field note-book consisted in the following species: feeding up the trunks of the trees were the small Scaly Bellied Green Woodpecker (Picus xanthopygaeus), two nuthatches, the Velvetfronted and the Chestnutbellied (Sitta frontalis and castanea); on a convenient perch from where it often launched into the air in pursuit of insects

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disturbed by the trunk-feeders sat a Whitebellied Drongo (Dicrurus caerulescens) whilst amongst the upper branches of the trees Grey Tits (Parus major) and Yellowcheeked Tits (Parus xanthogenys) foraged about, acrobatically gleening the undersides of the leaves for any creeping food they might be harbouring. In the same way Ioras (Aegithina tiphia) fed, whilst the very topmost part of the canopy seemed the province of the minutest Phylloscopi warblers, that very difficult genus of drab olivaceous birds that confounds most amateur birdwatchers. We saw very many of these birds, we watched them until our necks ached, and made many descriptions, noting the presence or absence of one or two bars on the wing, the colour and extent of the supercilium, whether or not the birds had coronal bands, what their calls were.... in spite of my partiality to this genus and a decade of watching them, several birds stumped me completely, but we were able to positively identify three species. The commonest was the Chiffchaff (Ph. collybita), which has no wing-bars, no coronal stripe and a fainter supercilium than the majority of the genus. Usually the chiffchaff has black legs, though this character is unreliable as often in winter the legs are pale, an often quoted characteristic of the very similar Willow Warbler (Ph. trochilus), a much rarer bird in India than the Chiffchaff. The next most numerous species was apparently the Dull Green Leaf Warbler (Ph. trochiloides), a species with a single wing-bar and a clear, creamy supercilium, no coronal markings, rump uniform with back-colour and having no white on the sides of the tail as some species of this genus do. This Dull Green species is inseparable in the field, essentially, from another species, the Largebilled Leaf Warbler (Ph. magnirostris) were it not for the great difference in calls. Whilst trochiloides has a typical, single call-note sooeet, magnirostris has a distinctive double chir-chee call note; on the evidence of this call note along we saw only one definite magnirostris, that was on our first day at Kanha. The bird was moving about the upper branches of a good sized sal in open woodland, not in any feeding party or closely associating with other birds though there was a flycatcher in the same tree that we could not identify immediately. This flycatcher was olive-brown above, a darker, browner shade toward the tail which was itself almost rufous. The bird had a clear buff eye-stripe and white throat patch, the latter bounded below by an [illegible] of dark grey, almost black. The call note I described at the time as 'a whistle and jarrr'. My tentative identification is Muscicapa monileger, the Whitegorgetted Flycatcher, I say tentative since it was far beyond the range given for this species in Dillon Ripley's SYNOPSIS, but there is little definite information on the status of this rare bird.

We were given a trying time by several species of flycatcher, so much so in two cases that I had finally to abandon the attempt to fix their identity. The commonest occurring species was the Redbreated Flycatcher (M. parva) which we saw almost everywhere on the forest edges and in clearings. This species has a very individual 'jizz'-- those characteristics especially behavioural that a bird may be unfailingly recognized by. Very often words fail one when attempting to describe the 'jizz' of some species, but not so that of the Redbreasted Flycatcher: this species is given to low perches and frequent descents to the ground, tail-flicking that highlights the white base to the tail) and the tic tic tic call note. Another flycatcher we were fortunate to meet with was the Little Blue and White Flycatcher (M. superciliaris). We met this bird on the longest sustained walk that we made, a walk through all the biotopes of the area, covering over a dozen miles and clocking up many species like this flycatcher that we were not to see again. Or as I should say, not to actually identify subsequently: we saw a confusing multiplicity of immature and female flycatchers that we found hopelessly unmanageable. This is a poor confession coming from a pair of keen and fairly competent British ornithologists, who at home are accustomed to missing nothing, immature, female or otherwise; but our avifauna is neither as varied nor quite so confusing as that of India.) The Little Blue and White Flycatcher is a cobalt-blue above and white below with a black smudge on either side of the breast and a white eye stripe that is variable in size and shape. The bird we saw had a small white stripe above and before the eye. Another pale flycatcher, somewhat similar to the last except that instead of being

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blue above was entirely black but for white supercilium (distinct and well formed), white at the base of tail (as latter) and with some white on the wing. The underparts of this species were quite white, lacking any markings. The same hour I saw and described a diminutive female flycatcher that at the time I fancied was the female of this same species since it had similar patterning but was olivaceous above apart from a brown tail. What made me feel acutely that it was the female of the same species was its warbler-like feeding habits, rather than the usual perching and swooping habit of most flycatchers. These birds were Little Pied Flycatchers (M. westermanni), like scaled-down Pied Flycatchers (M. hypoleuca) that are familiar birds of a European summer. The final (definitely identifiable) species of flycatcher that we are able to record from Kanha was the small, drab Brown Flycatcher (M. latirostris) that we saw several times, usually around the Forest Rest Houses where they fed much more like chats than flycatchers, flying to the ground after crawling prey, much as the Bluethroats (Luscinia svecica) and Collared Bushchats (Saxicola torquata) were doing.

Most of the Collared Bushchats we saw seemed typical, but one bird we watched often during the first two days at Kanha seemed aberrant. The upperparts were normal but the underparts were lacking a collar although the throat was grey and the breast pale rufous. The rest of the underparts were creamy. The tail had conspicuous amounts of white on the outer webs of the outer feathers. I do not know which subspecies this was. Most closely it resembles S. leucura which Ripley suggests may or may not be a separate species. In these open spaces around the Rest Houses we found Rufoustailed Finch Larks (Ammomanes phoenicurus), Ashy Crowned Finchlarks (Eremopterix grisea) large flocks of Waxbills (Estrilda amandava), and Spotted Munias (Lonchura punctulata). In these openings tanks had been constructed for the game to take water at. We found that they had also attracted good numbers of waterfowl, mostly Lesser Whistling Teal (Dendrocygna javanica) also smaller numbers of the Large Whistling Teal (D. bicolor) and several Common Teal (Anas crecca). In addition we found Spotted Sandpipers (Tringa glareola) and Common Sandpipers (T. hypoleucos) there were abundant Redwattled Lapwings and several Yellow-wattled Lapwings (Vanellus indicus and V. malabaricus).

Finally I shall mention the predators that we came across at Kanha before concluding this note on a most excellent short visit to a fine area. Most commonly seen apart from the three species of vulture that seemed ever overhead was the Crested Serpent Eagle (Spilornis cheela), never an hour seemed to pass without us seeing one of these handsome birds. On our final day we saw a lone Crested Hawk Eagle (Spizaetus cirrhatus) perched by the track leading out of the park. Everyday we saw Shikra (Accipiter badius) and Kestrels (Falco tinnunculus) and one day we saw a puzzling falcon that it seems must have been some race (maybe peregrinoides) of the Peregrine (Falco peregrinus). The distinctive characteristics of this bird, or birds, I should say as we saw a pair was the bold black barring on the flanks and the very distinctive call note which I wrote down at the time kit-weeoo. We first spotted the pair circling very high overhead when suddenly first one then the other went into a mighty stoop, it seemed they could have topped a hundred miles an hour, and they landed in a tall tree-top in a clearing.

In preparing this article I have merely gleaned a few pages of my field notebook. There was much that we saw, especially in the forest feeding parties, such as barbets, parakeets, minivets and drongos of several species which I have somehow not found space to mention. But many of these species are more familiar to me than most of those which I have mentioned and no doubt they are quite commonplace to most readers too. I have also omitted the many, many Hoodwinks (Nyctitator spp.) that came our way in several days we spent at Kanha.

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BIRDS OF SIMLA IN AUTUMN

By

Usha Ganguli

I spent nearly 19 days in Simla from October 21 to November 8, 1966. The main object of this visit was to compare the birds of Simla in autumn with those of Ranikhet where I had spent three weeks in October-November 1965.

Simla is 7000 ft. above sea level, a thousand feet higher than Ranikhet and the vegetation varies accordingly with more firs, spruce, deodars and blue pines in the higher reaches, but the Himalayan Oak and Horse chestnut are common to both places. Simla lacks the wild cherry trees and the eucalyptus groves of Ranikhet and has few of the common pine trees, but it is richer in wild fruit and berry bearing trees and shrubs such as the Himalayan Holly, Cornus macrophylla, Rhamnus virgatus and others. As it is a fairly populous city and our hotel was centrally situated, I had to walk a mile in any direction before I could expect to find anything of interest. In contrast, I could watch a variety of birds in the hotel compound or from any of the quieter roads at Ranikhet. I found much of Simla proper singularly devoid of interesting birds, and only along the approaches to Jacko Hill did I see birds that interested me. Perhaps it would not be out of place to mention that I was surprised to find seven or eight varieties of butterflies visiting the last of the season's flowers. I hardly saw any skinks or lizards though I had seen both these and a snake at Ranikhet. I did see a family of martens on the Jacko Hill.

The Blackeared Kite and the following vultures: Pondicherry, Egyptian, Whitebacked, Bearded, and the Himalayan Griffon were common to both hill stations. The Whitebacked Vulture was seen up to a height of 8500 ft. near Kufri.

The peregrine falcon was the only raptor met with at Simla. It was seen flying leisurely among jungle crows and vultures on three occasions, each time with the jungle crows chasing it.

A lone male Kaleej Pheasant was sighted once on the road to Sanjoli.

The Rock Pigeon commonly seen about large buildings at Simla was absent from Ranikhet while the Rufous Turtle Dove was met with at both places.

The Slatyheaded Parakeet is present in most hill stations but the presence of the Large Indian Parakeets baffled me completely. I saw parties of two, three, and four on three occasions, twice near the office of the Chief Conservator of Forests. On the second occasion two males and a female were on an oak tree when one male drove out the other while the female entered a hole in the trunk of the tree!! The large crimson shoulder patch and the loud call were diagnostic. Whistler and Ripley give the range of this bird as up to 4000 ft. and 1000 ft. respectively.

The Great Himalayan Barbet, resident in most hill stations and the most noisy of the tribe was only heard occasionally, and the midget Spotted Piculet also a resident was seen only once in a small bamboo clump.

Woodpeckers were surprising few in number and variety and strangely silent too. In Ranikhet I saw six varieties of which three species, Scalybellied Green Woodpecker, Himalayan Pied Woodpecker and the Brownfronted Woodpecker were uncommonly numerous and vociferous. These were the only three varieties that were seen at Simla. Why were they so few in number? There was no appreciable difference in temperature between the two places at that time of the year, so perhaps the altitude had something to do with the lack of insects on which these birds feed. Perhaps my young friend Julian Donahue who is specializing on entomology will enlighten me. The Common Myna in Ranikhet was common in certain areas.

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The Jungle Crow was the boldest and most abundant bird in every part of the city from the most crowded areas to deep shady hillsides. I saw some of them pulling out from a burning pile some food stuff that was being roasted or smoked. Their unusual abudnance probably explains the total absence of the Blackthroated Jay. The Redbilled Blue Magpie was also scarce at Simla. I saw four on one occasion feeding on wild pear and heard them a few times. This and the Jay were uncommonly bold and abundant at Ranikhet.

Simla was rich in thrushes and chats at that time. One morning I saw the Chestnutbellied Rock Thrust catch wat looked like a hornet with a brown and yellow banded abdomen.

The highlight of my birdwatching was the sight of 4 thrushes, two of which were new to me. I had noticed a narrow footpath that went up through a grove of Abies which appeared too shady for birds. Only towards the end of my stay when I saw nothing of interest for days did I go up the torturous path to discover that the forest of firs was interspersed with Himalayan Holly and soon came to a little clearing where a golden beam of sunlight lighted up an enormous manure heap. This was surrounded by various types of shrubs and a single deciduous tree; Cornus macrophylla ? completely bare but full of tiny clusters of small blackish berries. The manure head had attracted several Orangeflanked Bush Robins, all in female plumage. As some male birds sometimes breed in that plumage I suppose there were some male birds among them. A few were on the heap. Others were flitting about the bushes. I saw one or two male birds in brilliant plumage, but they were rather shy and kept to the centre and lower branches of the shrubs and bushes. There I saw two Plainbacked Mountain Thrushes, (Zoothera mollisima) and two Small-billed Mountain Thrushes (Zoothera dauma) feeding at the opposite edges of the heap. Both these birds were new to me. According to A. E. Jones the Plainbacked Mountain Thrushes are rare in Simla. Suddenly a Grey-headed Thrush appeared at another corner of the manure dump! I had seen this bird only once 3 years ago at Gulmarg in June for a few moments, but I was fortunate enough to hear its wonderful song for at least ten minutes. To this day I cannot say which is the finest song bird in India, the Greywinged Blackbird or the Greyheaded Thrust. Watching this beautiful thrush at such close quarters I was thinking of my first encounter with it when a male Greywinged Blackbird appeared on the scene while the Greyheaded Thrush disappeared. Soon two Variegated Laughing Thrushes were busy feeding from the heap and a Streaked Laughing Thrush foraged about the undergrowth nearby and a Himalayan Whistling Thrush flew in and landed on a tall bush.

I visited this charming spot on the remaining two days of our stay, and not only did I see all four kinds of thrushes and the Bush Robins feeding on various berries, chasing each other through the fir trees; occasionally visiting the manure heap but I also saw in that limited area: Shortbilled Minivet, Whitecheeked Bulbul, Black Bulbul, Stripethroated Siva, Black-headed Sibia, Greyheaded Flycatcher, Yellowbellied Fantail Flycatcher, Greyheaded Flycatcher-Warbler, Orange-gorgetted Flycatcher, Rufous-breasted Accentor, Crested Black Tit, Redheaded Tit, Greenbacked Tit, Himalayan Tree Creeper, Whitetailed Nuthatch, Himalayan Pied Woodpecker, and the Bluefronted Redstart.

I wish to add that all the four thrushes were completely silent. The Variegated Laughing Thrush had several different calls like the Black-headed Sibia which was fairly common at Simla. The Himalayan Whistling Thrush sang quite often.

I did not see any sunbirds but one day I was very fortunate in seeing 2 male Firebreasted Flowerpeckers in a garden one of which had a thin black line running down from the red breast to the centre of the abdomen. This puzzled me at first but Stuart Baker says that the black patch under the crimson breast is sometimes prolonged down the centre of the abdomen.

The Whitetailed Nutchatch, is resident, fairly common and very noisy even

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in autumn. I saw one bird on the ground picking up several small black things one after another in a row in its bill, then flying off. Ranikhet has the Cinnamonbellied Nuthatch which is resident and equally noisy at that time. The House Sparrow and the Cinnamon Tree Sparrow were common residents but I was surprised to see 2 Spotted Munias on a deodar. I had seen this bird at Kasauli 6000 ft. in June, at Bhatrojkhan 5200 ft. near Ranikhet in November and in June at Ooty 7200 ft. where it was breeding.

On a day's trip to Wild Flower Hall 8200 ft. near Kufri the only two unusual birds seen were a lone Wren (Troglodytes) and apair of Meadow Buntings.

There were two birds which I was unable to identify. The first, about the size of a Grey Tit, was ashy brown above had a rufous tail with dark central feathers; a broad indistinct fulvous supercilium, no white ring round the eye; whole of the underside pale ashy; chin and throat very white contrasting with darkish head and cheeks and pale ashy underparts. It was constantly flicking its wings. It flew up from a small bush and caught a fairly large winged insect. I saw it again about the same place (below Grand Hotel) in the evening uttering a harsh cry. I never saw it after that. The second was about as large as the Orangeflanked Bush Robin but slimmer, the whole upper back including wings was ash grey; lores, sides of face, forewing and tail black; chin, throat and upper breast (like a bib) blackish; rest of underside white as also a broad white patch through the wings. In behaviour it was like a Redstart, dropping down to the ground from its perch for insects. It was also feeding on the blackish berries of Cornus macrophylla. I am almost certain that this was the bird that I had seen at Ranikhet the year before hawking insects like a flycatcher from its perch on a tree!

I do hope some birdwatchers will identify these birds for me.

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BIRD-RINGING

By

D. N. Mathew

General

Some small-scale ringing was done in Great Britain from 189[illegible] onwards, but Christian Mortenson of Viborg Denmark (1899) was the first person to undertake systematic large scale ringing, Germany took up the study in 1903, Hungary 1908, Great Britain 1909, Yugoslavia 191[illegible], Holland 1911, Sweden 1911, Denmark 1914, Norway 1914. In the new world the American Bird Banding Association was founded in 1909. Before 1914 Jack Miner was marking wildfowl with rings carrying Biblical quotations instead of serial numbers!

The U. S. S. R., Japan, Egypt, the Republic of S. Africa, Belgian Congo, Tasmania, New Zealand, Australia and Pakistan are the other countries where bird ringing is done on a large scale.

Bird ringing is thus free of any regional slant. Every year bird ringers the world over ring over 1,000,000 birds about 600,000 of these in the U.S. and Canada.

Bird ringing in India

His Highness the Maharaja of Dhar was probably the first person to start bird ringing in India. Out of the 200 ducks and teals ringed at Dhar between 1926 and 1929, ten were recovered by 1935. During 1928 and 1929 ringing was started in Bahawalpur State and some ringing of ducks and teals was done there again in the late 30's. Some ringing was done at Bharatpur also during the same period. In all, about 500 or so

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ducks were ringed by 1959.

The BNHS/WHO BIRD MIGRATION STUDY FIELD PROJECT.

In 1959, the World Health Organization took up Dr Salim Ali's proposal that a project of ringing migratory birds at suitable localities be started with the special purpose of investigating the possible role of birds in the dissemination of arthropod-borne viruses. Special attention was to be focused on the transmission of viruses responsible Kayasanoor Forest Disease (K. F. D.) which killed men and monkeys at Kayasanoor in Mysore.

Thus in 1959, with the expert advice of Dr. A. Schifferli of Switzerland and with the cooperation of the Virus Research Centre, Poona, the Bombay Natural History Society started the present programme of bird ringing. Birds trapped in mist nets or by trappers are marked with numbered rings bearing legends 'INFORM BOMBAY NAT. HIST. SOCIETY and are examined for ectoparasites like ticks. These ticks are sent to the V. R. C. for Virological Studies. Besides, blood-smears and blood-soaked discs are collected for studies by Russian experts in the USSR.

By 1966 November, the BNHS/WHO Project has ringed a total of 74,379 birds of 128 forms. Of these 87 have been recovered in various parts of the world, largely in the USSR by December 1966.

Ringing of Passerine Birds

Among the perching birds the project has concentrated on the ringing of migratory wagtails. Mention must be made here of the remarkable discovery of the gigantic wagtail roosts in Central Travancore in Kerala. In 1961 Shri P. V. George, a Zoology Teacher at a College near Kottayam found large numbers of wagtails flying in a particular direction every evening. From a knowledge of the average speed of flight and the time before night fall George estimated the rough distance of the roost from his site of observation. His surmise was proved correct and the roost was located at the village of Edanad near the town of Chengannur. Here a few square miles of sugar cane plantation is used by millions of yellow wagtails as nightly roost, day after day from November to April every year. As a result of intensive ringing at this roost during the years 1961-64 the project has banded over 48,000 wagtails 10 of which have been recovered in various places in Burma, Pakistan, Afghanistan and the USSR. These ten recoveries even though only one for ever 4800 or so roughly indicate some of the possible routes taken by these migratory passerines. For instance a Forest Wagtail which visits our country from Siberia during the cold season was ringed at Chengannur in Kerala on 25th March 1963 and recovered at Tiddim Chin Hills in Burma on 25th April in the same year. A Yellow Wagtail ringed on 2nd February 1963 at Chengannur was collected near Kabul by a Kabuli school-boy and handed over to his teacher on 10th May in the same year. This teacher happened to be the keen German biologist, Dr Meyer-Ohme, who not only reported the matter to us but also took part in our next ringing session at Kerala in 1964. Thus birds can act as ambassadors of goodwill! As more of our banded birds have been recovered from farther north of Kabul in the Kirghizia in Russia, and also from south near Lahore in W.Pakistan, our work would indicate that some of the Yellow Wagtails which visit us from Russia do pass through Afghanistan and Pakistan crossing the Hindukush mountains between longitudes 65° and 75°. However, at least 50 recoveries are needed to make our experiments conclusive. Also interesting were the two inland recoveries of wagtails ringed at Bharatpur and Calcutta which were subsequently recovered at Chengannur in Kerala.

Ringing of Ducks

Our ringing of migratory ducks have been more fruitful in terms of recoveries. Out of some 2300 ducks ringed by us in the past 5 years in Rajasthan and Bihar 50 or 2.14% have been recovered in various parts of East and West Pakistan and the USSR. For example, take the Common

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Teal which visits us in winter from central and eastern parts of Russia; we have ringed 1206 birdsof this species and have recovered 30 or about 2.5%. It is interesting to note that common teal ringed at a particular locality in Monghyr district in Bihar have been recovered in areas in Russia as far apart as longitudes 71° (Uzbekistan) and 132° in East Yakutian ASSR in Siberia.

Compared with the number of recoveries reported from Russia, those from our own country either of our rings or of Russian rings is very poor. It is believed that many of our sportsmen who shoot banded birds fail to report the matter promptly. The few recoveries we have had so far indicate that most or our migratory visitors come from various parts of Russia. One of our banded buntings -- a bird related to sparrow -- was recovered in Cyprus. Much more remains to be known about the exact routes of most of these birds and about their role in the transmission of diseases if any. Only more intensive ringing in many centres in the country and better rates of report of recoveries can provide adequate answers to those and many related problems of bird migration.

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NOTES AND COMMENTS

We are happy to reproduce here the report of the Birdwatchers' Field Club of Roorkee for 1966. The small batch of birdwatchers in Roorkee seem to have been active throughout the year. It would be interesting if Regional Editors of other areas also report on their activity -- or inactivity -- in the past year.

Birdwatchers' Field Club of Roorkee

During the year 1966, avaried programme was arranged. A good number of members and their friends participated in field outings which were organised at least once a month.

Five special lectures were arranged. Dr Robert R. R. Brooks, Cultural Attache, United States Information Service, New Delhi, addressed the Club on BIRDS OF NORTH AMERICA. The lecture was illustrated with slides. Lt. Gen. Sir Harold Williams described the ducks found in Northern India and explained the project OBSERVATION SURVEYS AND COUNTS OF MIGRATORY WILDFOWL. He also arranged to show the film WILD WINGS.

Mr Gurdial Singh, member of the successful Indian expedition to Everest spoke on EVERET illustrating his lecture with slides. As part of the Club's membership enrollment drive, Dr Joseph George gave a talk on BIRDWATCHING FOR BEGINNERS to an audience consisting largely of students. Mr M. D. Chaturvedi retired Inspector General of Forests, addressed the Club on WILD LIFE IN INDIA.

A new feature introduced during the year was the screening of films on birds and other wild life. Films loaned by the British Information Services and the Forest Research Institute, Dehra Dun, were shown on four occasions. This activity has become popular with students.

Joseph George
Honorary Secretary
%Central Building Research Institute
Roorkee, U.P. 27 Jan. 1967

CORRESPONDENCE

Birdwatching in Kolaba

In last December's issue of the Newsletter Mr Futehally wrote of the 'superb view from fairly close quarters' which he and I recently obtained in Dharamtar Creek, Kolaba, of a'Hen-Harrier'. Since no reader familiar with Kolaba's birdshas so far made any comment on this note I am doing so myself. I think it is worth while, because the range of the Hen-Harrier (Circus cyaneus) is described in Ripley's SYNOPSIS as 'West Pakistan and northern India, east to north Burma'.

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The bird we saw fidgeted about on alow bush less than ten yards away from us and gave us an excellent, though too brief, opportunity to study its plumage in excellent light. To judge from the unsullied rufous-buff of the underparts, it was a young bird. Young males and both young and old females of all of the Indian species of harriers except the Marsh are notoriously difficult to identify with certainty in the field, and although some authorities (like G. M. Henry) would have us believe that separation is possible on visual characteristics alone, others are less optimistic. To be really sure of a bird's identity one must inspect its primaries in the hand, and measure its tarsus. Sometimes putative field diagnosis can be supported, if not confirmed, by the presence of an identifiable adult male in the vicinity. Indeed, on this occasion there was amale bird about, but it was too far away for us to identify with confidence, and hence also too remote from the other bird for it to be safe to assume any relationship. All we had to go on therefore was a good view of a bird with a very distinct buff ruff, unstreaked with sepia, which immediately reminded me of the Pale Harrier (Circus macrourus) in G. M. Henry's painting (A GUIDE TO THE BIRDS OF CEYLON, plate 19).

The Montagu's Harrier (C. pygargus)does not have a distinct ruff, and that of the Pied Harrier (C. melanoleucos) is more or less streaked with sepia, but even if we are bold enough to eliminate these possibilities we are still left with two alternatives Pale (C. macrourus) and Hen (C.cyaneus). I have recently examined the skins of some of the harriers in the Bombay Natural History Society's collection, and if their labels are correct (some of the harriers' are evidently not), the females of these two species look too similar for separation in the field to be possible — at any rate, by your correspondent. I cannot myself assign the bird we saw to a species with any confidence. On the grounds that the known range of C. cyaneus does not seem to embrace Bombay, it is surely more probable that our bird was macrourus.

R. A. Stewart Melluish

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The arrival of the Bank Myna in Bhubaneswar

One of us (S. D. J.) has been in Bhubaneswar since August 1962, and has since then been recording every species of bird that he observes and which he can identify. The other two arrived in Bhubaneswar in February 1966. But since then they have done fairly intensive birdwatching in the Bhubaneswar area, particularly near their home in the area that lies between the New Capital and the old religious centre. Therefore it is unlikely that a bird of the size, appearance and behaviour of a Bank Myna (Acridotheres ginginianus) would have been missed by all three of us, had individuals of this species been present in Bhubaneswar before the date on which we saw them.

On January 19, 1967, while L. W. was hoping to show S. D. J. a Wryneck that L. W. and S. W. had seen several times less than 100 m. from their house, the three of us saw two Bank Mynas on the ground just outside a vacant compound. Two Bank Mynas, presumably the same ones, spent much of their day from then until January 25 on the same patch of land. Common Mynas were always present when the Bank Mynas were. Other birds usually present were several Common Swallows, many Jungle Crows, seven to ten Common Drongos, firve Motacilla alba (two presumably personata in breeding plumage, three presumably dukhunensis), two Pipits, two Pied Bushchats (Saxicola caprata) and two Indian Robins (Saxicoloides fulicata). Occasionally present were two Bush-larks (Mirafra sp.) and a Wryneck. The small patch of land had not attracted many birds until the beginning of the year when (a) the soil was turned and (merely coincidentally) (b) a five-day gathering of sadhus and pilgrims scattered food and refuse in the area.

Though it is not surprising to find the Bank Myna in this part of India, it is perhaps worth recording such first appearance in a specific area in the Newsletter.

S.D. Jayakar, Louis Werner and Susan Werner
Bhubaneswar

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Behaviour of an escape Chloropses

Your readers will be interested to know that I have about six chloropsss; one of them a Goldfronted one flew away, and one fine morning I was surprised to see the bird returning to the garden after a lapse of more than six months. As soon as I opened the cage and put in some fruit, it got back into it. They are the best mimics and song birds I have ever had. Only one of them is a goldfronted one; the rest are of still brighter colours with electric blue on their wings and . mauve borders on their tails.

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