

Aasheesh Pittie

9/c

B-4 Trendset Vantage, Road No. 14, Banjara Hills, Hyderabad 500034, India.

27 January 2013

Sari Zafar Futehally
Bangalore

Dear Sir,

A strangely disquieting outburst, from one of the Bird-watchers' Soc. of A.P.'s oldest members, ruffled the feathers of our generally pastoral community. It was a vitriolic jibe in response to a member's checklist. Unless your posting is the result of concerted scientific investigation, the livid or frustrated person fired, your reporting is a lot of hot gas!

Needless to say, this was like a loose machine gun strafing innocents. The outcry was instantaneous, and justified. Being a moderator of the group I had to step in and brush the hackles into place.


I am mystified at this aberrant gene of the human psyche, ^{harboring} ~~to~~ such a rabid propensity. It serves no purpose, either for the instigator or the victim. I think that our ability to retain the thin skin of civilisation

is often tested. Sometimes, through a carelessly manned defense post, the latent primitive escapes, unleashing the terror of incivility.

Does civility exist among animals? Are they taught, as we are. If they are born thus, their instincts primed to the requisite societal mores of their ilk, why are we not?

I tried reading the hugely reputed Mann novel, The magic mountain, but left it half-way. Seemed dated & disconnected. Now reading a compilation of, mainly, reviews, by John Updike, an author I've much liked over my growing years. In it he says that a review should be part anthology. That is such a revealing observation. But to fulfil it requires a certain amount of research, or solid scholarship.

JB 8.1 languishing due to the uncertainty of one short note. After I inserted it, Santharam reminded me that Bill Harvey had reported it — a solitary mallard from Pondicherry. This is the tough part of an editor; in the interest of good science one has to console a distraught author. I might insert a boxed "In memoriam" for Mr Joseph George, and a graph illustrating our journey — 'Indian Birds' — in the number of articles published, pages printed, photographs selected, etc., in its run-up till volume 7.

Trust you and Mrs Fortesally are well. With all my love and warm regards, yours truly; 



Dear Friends,

*Prior to our intended shift to Mumbai on 31st March, 2013,
we would be very pleased if you could join us at a goodbye lunch,
at the Anchor Lawn, Bangalore Club at 12:30 pm on
Sunday, 3rd March, 2013.*

We hope very much that you will be able to come.

Laeq & Zafar Futehally

*zafar123blr@dataone.in
Tel : 080 - 25533684*

ZAFAR FUTEHALLY

2205, Oak/Wood Apartments, Koramangala IIIrd Block, 8th Main, Bangalore 560 034

Kichim 402201

17-5-13

My dear Rakesh

We are settling down slowly in a place we have known so well. Our journey by Jet caused some problems, because in many places en route the passages were not wide enough - a sign of poor planning in view of the fact that an increasing number of wheel chairs will now be required in airports.

The house has been re-done keeping in view Laxmi's need of a wheel chair. More ramps than stairs. From my window now (6.45 PM - with sunset still 1/2 hour away) I see an incredibly beautiful sky - the colours of a PITA and KING FISHER combined. I had planned to watch our common birds (bulbuls, kingfishers, coppersmiths) intensely, but I am too weak to walk around, nor able to stand still, so

Phones : Res.: +91-80-25533684, Mobile : +91-9902875510

E-mail: zafar123blr@dataone.in

will need to sit in a place from where
I can see some bird activity. The 4 horses
are lovely to look at, but alas I can no
longer get on their backs

I hear Dominique and Ravi have been
in South America studying the ways of parrots
in adapting themselves to different environments,
and will soon be going to Australia for the
same project

I have finished reading JANE EYRE, and
am now thinking of Mansfield Park
what are you reading?

Contract with RUPA has been made for my
autobiography. The Chandolas who have edited
it have done a good job and I believe you
have helped in crucial ways

I hope the monsoon does not fail this
year. Water wars is a terrible prospect
So far the open well in our compound is
still at the level which it has always
been at. Writing to you is a pleasure

Much love Zafar

Aasheesh Pittie

7/2 1/2

B-4 Trendset Vantage, Road No. 14, Banjara Hills, Hyderabad 500034, India.

8 June 2013

Shri Zafar Futehally
Kihim
Maharashtra

Dear Sir,

It was truly wonderful of you to call today. Thank you. That you and Mrs Futehally are comfortably settled in a house modified to your requirements speaks for the ^{heartfelt} planning that Murad khai has done in making you and Mrs Futehally happily comfortable.

I've been busy with two minor projects. Both, happily, birds' related. One is a technical paper I wrote about the dating of a paper that T. C. Jerdon wrote in the erstwhile Madras Journal of Literature & Science in 1846. It was his Second Supplement after the series on the birds of peninsular India. What I found out, in the process of my bibliographic work, was that authorities had been citing this work from the wrong date (year). This becomes relevant because Jerdon introduced several new taxa, to science, in his II Suppl. The twist in the tale was provided by Edward Blyth, Jerdon's correspondent friend in Calcutta, who was publishing at

the same time in the journal of the Asiatic Soc. of Bengal. Blyth had the habit of rerunning birds, sent by his friends for his opinion, and publishing them in his own papers! Finally, in the game of priority, it boiled down to who published earlier, Jerdon or Blyth? Proving that date too is not easy for the simple reason that journal wrappers, which had the dates on them, were discarded by binders.

To cut a long story short, this paper was a huge learning curve for me. I was able to prove that Blyth did in fact publish before the Dr., and so his names will be used. I also established that the generic name Phragmaticola will have to give way to Arundinax. They are the genera for the species aedon: Thus Arundinax aedon. Earlier known as Acrocephalus aedon or Phragmaticola aedon.

It is about splitting hairs, but it is also about historical and scientific accuracy.

The second project is this talk on John Gould's *The Birds of Asia* volumes in the club's library. The deeper I look into the various facets of ornithology, the deeper I am drawn into its fascinating depths. I know this is true for any subject ~~under~~ under the sun, and I dearly wish that people pursue their passions relentlessly. The joys encountered on that journey are life sustaining, nutritious for the brain.

I have sent you a PDF of my slide show and I hope you will be able to view it on your computer. We are also going to display the folios. I hope to dazzle the daylights out of the audience with those lithographs. My ultimate aim

is to garner enough public opinion to ensure the folios remain in the Club library. When committee members hear the value of the vols., they begin to salivate at the prospect of selling them and creating another "useful facility" for the members. The club has a fat bank balance is in no dire need of lucre. Even if it was, there are a number of ways of collecting it, the least being selling the "family" jewels.

But locking up the folios away from public view does not help my cause. I am plying the idea of an annual showing, perhaps during the Club Day celebrations. Lets see what finally happens.

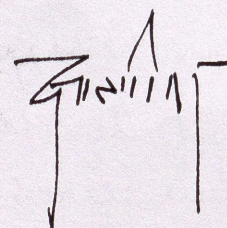
We are planning two ~~long~~ special issues of Indian Birds in the near future. One will deal with urban ornithology, for which we have received nearly twenty abstracts. This will be guest-edited by Dr Madhusudan Kathi, who is part of the world-wide movement, this year, concentrating on urban biodiversity. Did you know, that for the first time in the history of our planet, there are more humans living in urban landscapes, than in sub-urban or rural? This is a huge shift of the axis & will have enormous consequences on future generations. To me it is an unhappy, scary, insane situation. Our generation has ensured the devastation of the future. Hope is the things with wings. Ours search for other planets now, having

destroyed the one we have. I hope Madhu Katti is able to write a telling editorial/Comment on the situation. He wields a perceptive pen!

The other special issue will comprise an updated checklist of the birds of India — like the one that Rajit Manakadan & I had done in NLBW. Only, this will be compiled by the highly capable duo — Praveen J., & Rajat Jayapal. A great deal has changed in the systematics of birds since DNA studies took the field; things like grebes and flamingos ~~are~~ being closely allied; like falcons being unrelated to the other raptors. We feel, like you felt & encouraged, that Indians deserve to know what is happening to our understanding of birds.

Sorry that I've been going on and on. Yes, before I forget, our daughter Prateriti, all of 26, is engaged to be married to Shivan Prasad on 8 December 2013! The boy is from Hyderabad, is an engineering and an MBA graduate, and works with Unilever, presently out of Chennai. Thankfully the kids liked each other and came and told us so.

Take care of yourself and of Mrs Futehally!
With lots of love,

Yours truly,


8 July 2013

Shri Zafar Futehally
Kihim

P.S. Shanthi informs me too about your troubles with the PC. I had emailed you earlier today to acknowledge deep gratitude for the Lear painting, which reached me today. Birds & humour have their own ways of getting around! It is so comically endearing.

Dear Sir,

Chest

I hear from Shanthi about your, congestion & sore throat, and I think of HALDI ^{at Seethai} milk, or plain gargle with warm water in which a thumbnail sized blob of turmeric powder is stirred. It's restorative powers are amazing. The change of season affects the most robust easily. Your advantage is the recuperative atmosphere of the seaside. I'm sure you'll be fine soon,

A preliminary draft of the completed Indian birds 8.4 came to me today, a galley proof of sorts. We've got some interesting stuff in there and several new records & extension of ranges. I sit with Sharada and Jayaram tomorrow to smoothen its ruffled feathers till it becomes sleek, like a freshly preened peregrine. We should launch it by end of next week.

Praveen J., and Rajah Jayapal (who is with SACON now, which is really good for that rheumatic institution) are working feverishly at, what I feel, will become the definitive checklist of

Indian birds. We've got a series of notes on disputed & ambivalent species, fence-sitters, if you will, that will be printed in Indian Birds as a precursor to the final checklist early next year. Their flock of consultant ornithologists & birders are working more than our blockhead politicians have done in an entire parliamentary year. A good feeling creeps over my pelage about this checklist business. It will be uploaded to our website, and alive to charges that new research proposes.

The next project should be to finally lay ^{down} some ground rules for the formation of an India Rarities Committee which will seriously weigh new records, based upon objective criteria, before they can be added to the India Checklist. Bill Harvey has promised to help out with this one.

I am so glad your memoir is well on its way. Nostalgia and reminiscence are among the most fascinating ways of recording history for posterity.

Here is a little secret. This year I've acquired two fine edition vintage classics of Indian ornithology.

① I. C. Jerdon's Illustrations of Indian Ornithology (1843-47).

② John Gould's A century of birds from the Himalaya mountains (1830-1834).

We have to build-up a fine library of South Asian Ornithology in southern India - perhaps Bangalore - for the work & pleasure of future ornithologists.

As always, I seek your blessings, and wish you & Mrs. Futehally, good health and peaceful days.

Yours truly,
Bill Harvey

ZAFAR FUTEHALLY

2205, Oak Wood Apartments, Koramangala IIIrd Block, 8th Main, Bangalore 560 034

240713

16-7-13

My dear Rashiresh

Your letter of the 5/7 by speed post arrived today. Very glad to hear that you like EDWARD LEAR. It could not find a more appropriate habitation

I have not experienced or enjoyed so much rain ever before. From my window the lashing of the Casuarina trees in a storm, and the way the branches just yield to the punishment, by a slight change of their angles is a lesson to be learnt. Compromise is a wonderful attitude. It involves your accepting the fact that you are not the sole repository of wisdom and your "opponent" may be right. I wish India/Pak negotiators kept this fact in mind

I have not been very well unfortunately & have not been able to enjoy the "naturalness" of Kihim after the cemented atmosphere of Bangalore as much as I had hoped to do
Your letters are a great source of joy
Zai sensing that I needed a little cheering up came over and her presence here has

Phones : Res.: +91-80-25533684, Mobile : +91-9902875510

E-mail: zafar123blr@dataone.in

boosted my health. One aspect which is worrying
is the deterioration of my eyesight. I can read
the Kindle but I find the normal "unlighted" letters
of books and the newspapers a problem.

Sorry for this gloomy outpouring. My next
I am sure will be better

Most affectionately

Zafar