

NEWSLETTER
FOR BIRDPWATCHERS

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May-June, 1984

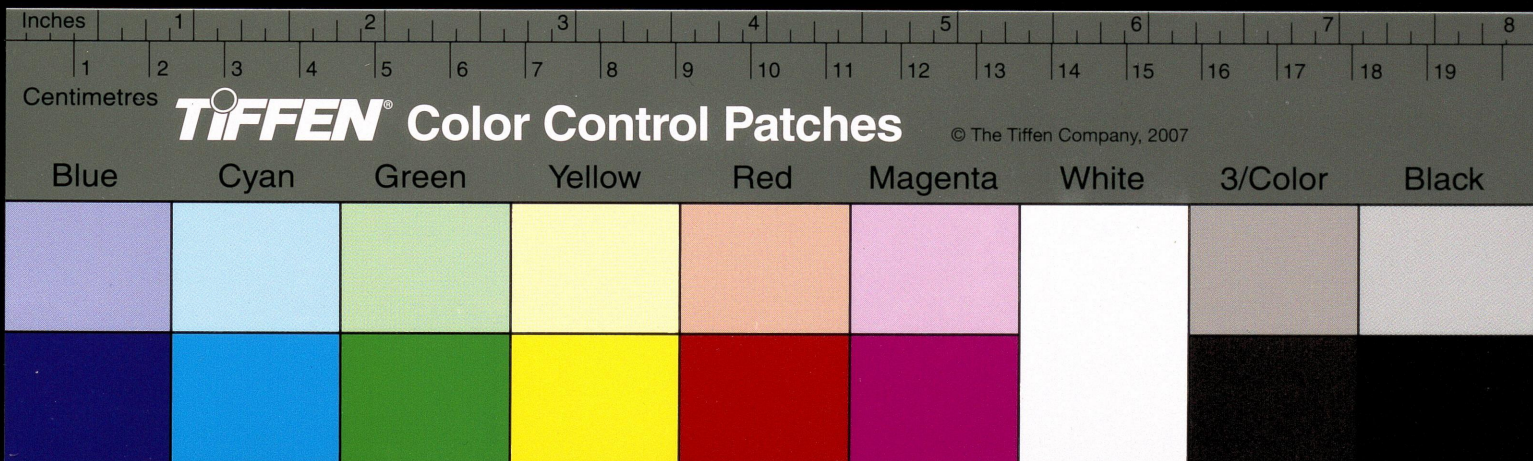
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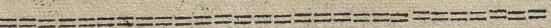
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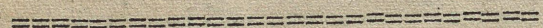


Editorial

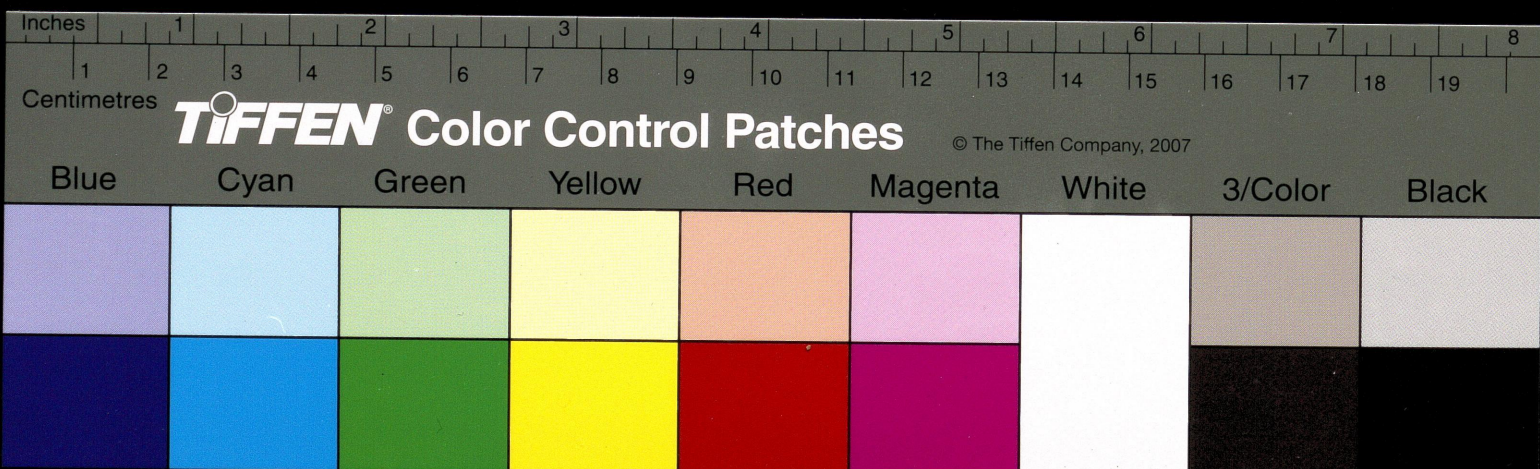
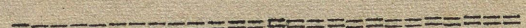
25 years of the Newsletter: At the end of this year the Newsletter for Birdwatchers will have been in existence for 25 years. It has become customary to celebrate such events and perhaps we can start thinking about the kind of leap forward we should take, in the interests of the Birdwatchers' of this country. One of the ideas which comes to mind is that we should have a rotating Executive Editor for each year. This mechanism might help to introduce fresh ideas and generally make the publication livelier and more useful. I am sure that there are a number of people within the circle of our readers and subscribers who would fulfill the task very creditably. The Founder Editor would continue to look after the financial aspects such as securing advertisements, and having the paper produced and distributed. I would greatly appreciate any comments on this proposal.



No crows in Kodaikanal: During a recent visit to Kodaikanal (May 2-8), I was anxious to find out whether Kodaikanal was still free from crows, as had been stated by a number of birdwatchers in recent years. I saw none, though Romulus Whitaker pointed out a few, flying in the distance. I hope this happy state will remain. The few remaining sholas of Kodaikanal abound with bird life, and there are a large number of raptors seen on this hill station, including the Black eagle, the crested serpent eagle, and the kestrel. The well wooded gardens have plenty of white-eyes, and the calls of jungle fowl from within city limits was surprising. I also had a good look at a scimitar babbler which called vigorously every morning.



Urban sanctuaries: It is encouraging to note that if birds are assured of security, they are prepared to co-exist in close proximity to humanity. There is no reason, therefore, to create sanctuaries only in far away places. Every bit of open land, suitably planted and landscaped, can become the abode of interesting avians. In the March-April issue, K.K. Neelakantan wrote about the heronry in Trivandrum. The Bulletin of the Madras Naturalists Society of May '84 describes the SimpsonEstate Heronry, and this is reproduced in this issue.

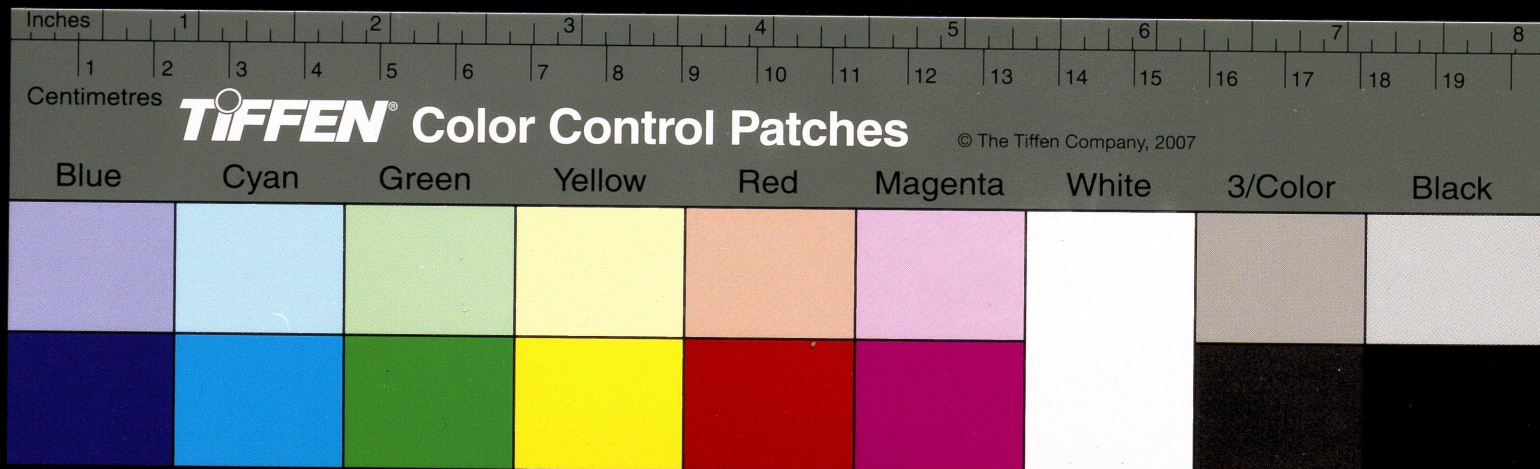


The growth of Bangalore city has also removed a pair of Redheaded merlins (Falco chicquera) from Rajajinagar, where they had nested for three successive seasons from 1978-1981. The merlins had appropriated crows nests on a tall casuarina tree. In the 1979-80 season a nest under construction by jungle crows was in fact misappropriated. The nest tree was situated in a densely populated residential locality but the falcons roamed the surrounding expanse of open cultivated fields hunting for their food. Their main prey was house sparrows but they were seen feeding on a small green bee-eater (Merops orientalis, a redrumped swallow (Hirundo daurica), a warbler (Acrocephalus sp.) a bat and on a few occasions the male returned from foraging with pipits (Anthus novaeseelandiae) found in the grass meadows and uncultivated fields.

The pair raised a brood of three during 1978-79 and of four during 1979-80 season. The number of young in the 1980-81 brood is not known, but the pair had one young bird with them when I returned to Rajajinagar after an years' absence. During 1981-82 the pair did not breed at the site, even though they kept visiting it occasionally. They were last seen at the tree in October 1982. By late 1980, a number of houses started coming up in all the five large open areas which the merlins frequented to gather their food. With these foraging areas being broken up, the merlins must have decided to abandon the nest site.

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Some observations on the apparent decrease in numbers of the Northern Roller or Blue Jay (Coracias benghalensis benghalensis) By Dr. (Miss) Hamida Saiduzzafar, Gul-e-Rana, Aligarh: Over the last twenty years I have been travelling by car from Aligarh to Delhi and back by the Grand Trunk Road (G.T. Road) fairly often, and usually in the mornings between 6 to 10 a.m. Apart from crows and mynahs, the parakeets, drongoes, doves, white-breasted kingfishers, and blue jays are the birds most commonly seen and identified, sitting on telegraph poles or wires running parallel to the road for about 85 miles. From among these the blue jays (Coracias benghalensis benghalensis) are by far the most colourful and spectacular in flight, and catch the eye as they fly up or down to catch their morning breakfast! Around 1965-66, to amuse my young nephew (who was getting interested in bird-watching), he and I used to count these blue jays and I remember noting down our tally, which varied between 60 to 80 birds between Aligarh and Delhi.



7 white necked storks (Please refer to A. Bapat in NFB March-April 1982) and finally spoonbills, a group of seven individuals which fed about the openbill storks.

So, apparently these spoonbills have been seen in the Poona district as early as 1981, and there seems to be no reason why they needn't have been there earlier too, the conditions of the lake remaining the same.

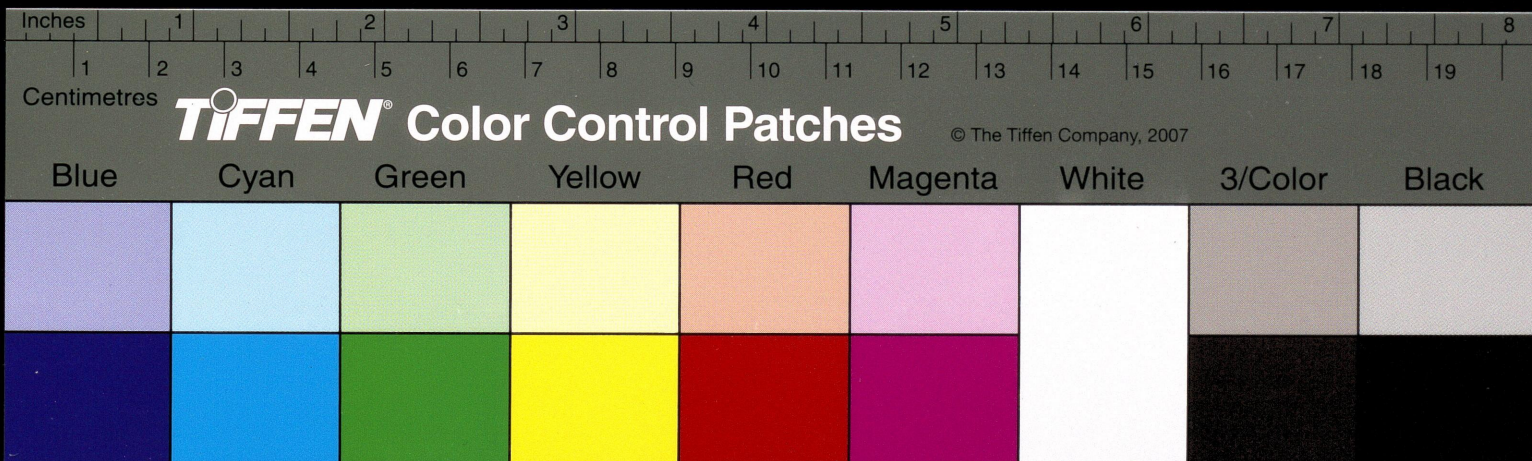
'No habitat' and 'Single habitat' preference in some birds in Mudigere by A.K. Chakravarthy, 509, Shri Lakshmi Nalayan, II Stage, Rajajinagar, Bangalore 560 055:

Consideration of habitat preference is of great importance in bird conservation. Percent sightings of birds in different areas over a long period may indicate their preference for different habitats. However, if birds are regularly monitored at a place with different habitats, species frequenting all habitats ('no habitat' preference) or a habitat ('single habitat' preference) may be located. Such habitat preference in some birds, in Mudigere is shown in Table -1.

Table 1: Habitat preference in some birds, in Mudigere as indicated by 30 outings from Nov. '83 to Mar.1984.

Birds frequenting all habitats	Birds frequenting a single habitat
1. Red whiskered bulbul	1) Fairy blue bird
2. Jungle crow	2) Paradise flycatcher
	3) Nilgiri verditer flycatcher
	4) Black naped blue flycatcher
	5) Large wood shrike
	6) Green billed Malkhowah
	7) Chesnut headed bee-eater
	8) Blackheaded bulbul

Red whiskered bulbul and jungle crow frequented all habitats, viz. well wooded areas, lightly wooded areas,



frequented such low elevations. Similarly, when Dr. Biswamoy Biswas and Dr. B. S. Lamba were present here, for a workshop, they were informed about this occurrence. But, due to radical changes in the existing ecology because of the construction of new roads, I could not locate the flock, to prove to them that my report was authentic.

When Mr. K. L. Mehta was the State Wildlife Warden, in 1970, game birds were strictly protected. The old jeepable road winding through the forest, with tall lofty trees with thick and dense undergrowth of fern and shady moist bushes, were ideal shelter for the kalij, cheer pheasant, catreus wallichi, even koklas; while occasionally, chukur were also observed in the upper ranges of Chail.

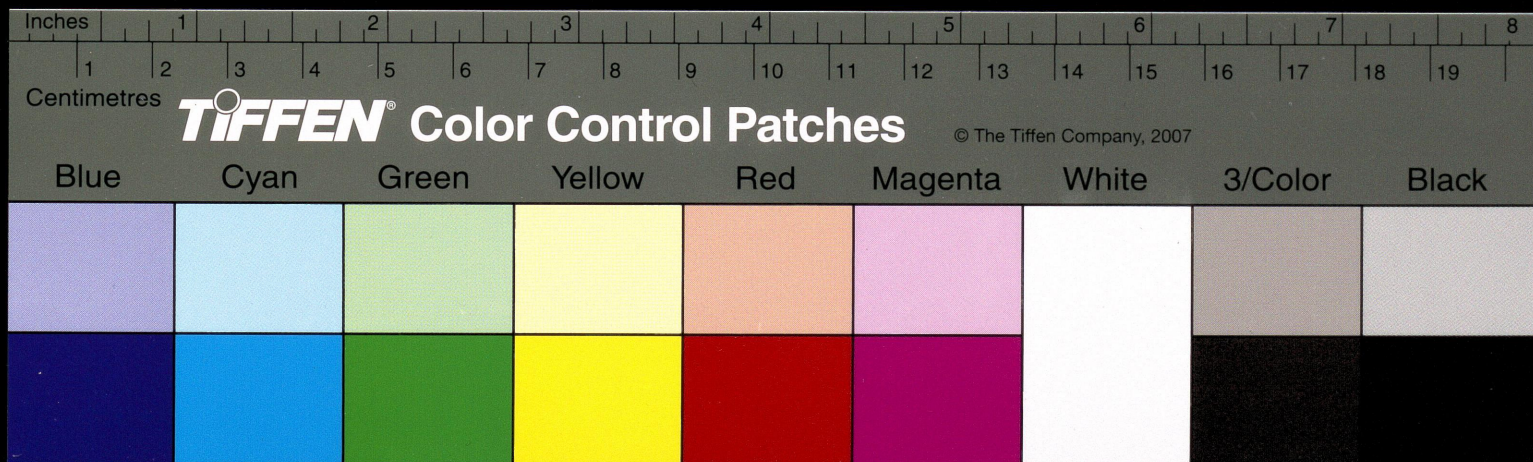
The veteran and seasoned naturalist and taxidermist, Mr. C. L. Hitehsi, still remembers some unique birds which he had collected from this region.

Previously, this region was under U.P., in Mahashu district. In 1971, Himachal Pradesh received Statehood, and new districts were created, of which one was Solan district, with its headquarters in this town. As a result of this, road construction, increase of population, and setting up of new establishments, became the major factors for the disbalancing of the topography.

It is now very rare to see hoopoes, redbilled magpies, pekin robins or the great himalayan barbet in this region; species which were so plentiful before. The only find worth mentioning, was collected and recorded in this decade, from Happy Valley, about 2 furlongs from my laboratory, by Drs. Raj Tilak and A. Tyagi, in November 1975. It was a really lovely specimen of the Cushat or the eastern woodpigeon (Colimba palumbris casiotis (Bonaparte)). It was a really remarkable collection, considering the fact that this is only the second recorded collection from the Simla Hills region, the other being in 1880 when one was recorded by Hume. We are still in quest of another specimen.

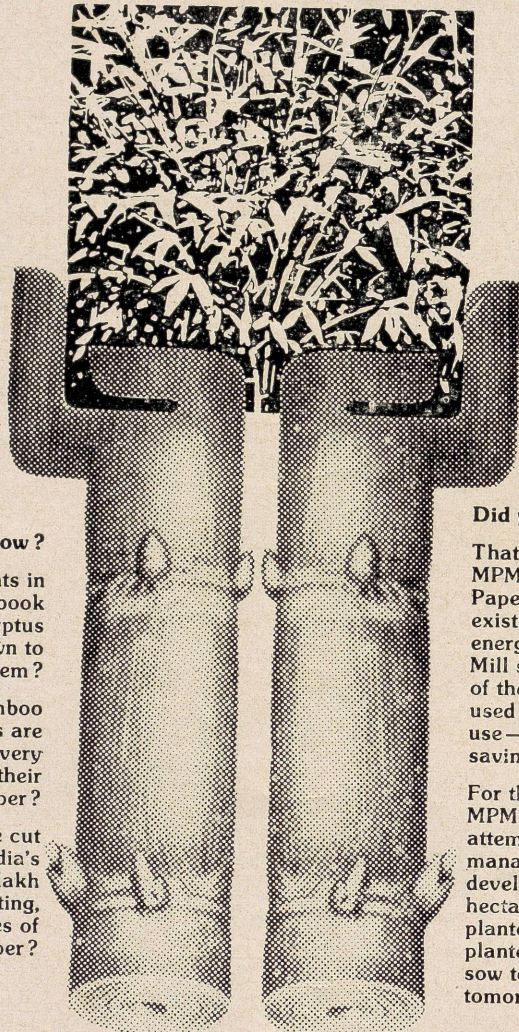
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Re-formation of Delhi Birdwatching Society by Raj Kumar Bhutani, C/o. DAB's Office, 468 Bankener, Narela, Delhi-40:
You might be aware of the Delhi Birdwatching Society, It stopped functioning in 1971. However, now, some young enthusiastic persons of Delhi have reformed it. It is now known as the Delhi Area Birdwatching Society (DABS).



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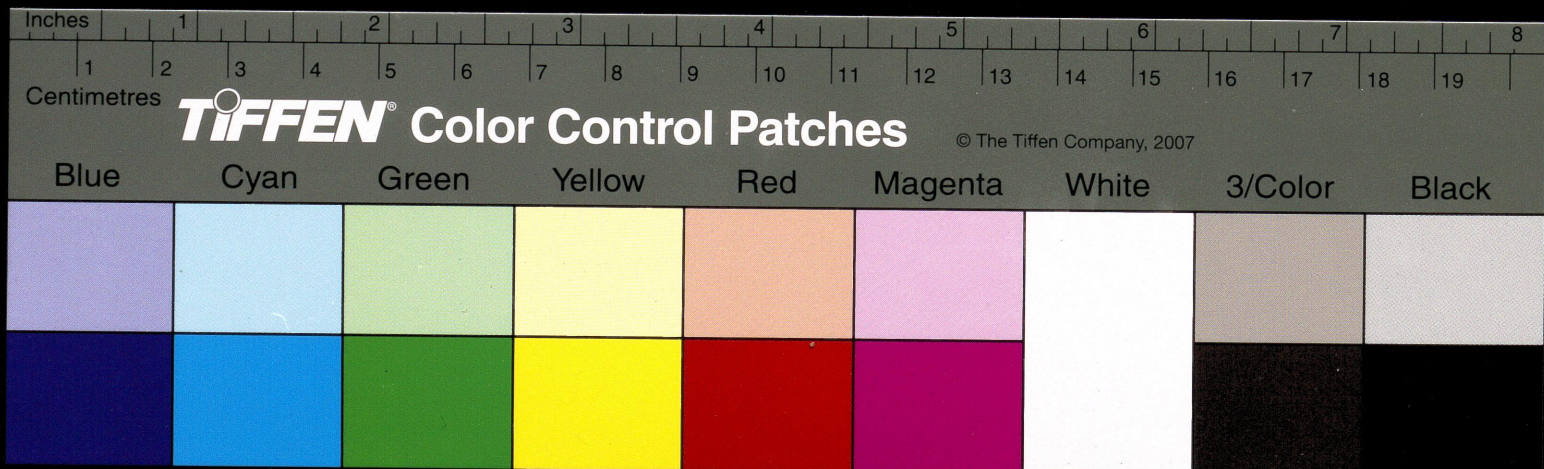


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