

18 June, 1996

Dr Pamela Rasmussen
National Museum of Natural History
Division of Birds
Smithsonian Institution
Washington D.C. 20560
United States of America

Dear Dr. Rasmussen,

Greetings !

This is with reference to a letter which I happened to receive, in a rather circuitous manner, written by Gazala Shahabuddin to Mr. Zafar Futehally, for some photocopies of papers and notes published in the *Newsletter for Birdwatchers* on the birds of the Palni hills, especially the Kodaikanal region.

In it is mentioned the fact that you wrote/conveyed to him that the library at Smithsonian was on the look-out for a set of all the issues of the above publication and that Smithsonian might be interested in purchasing these if available.

I have an almost complete set in my collection which I could photocopy, spiral-bind and send for the Smithsonian library. I am enclosing a list of the issues which are in my collection. I give below the cost for each issue

Issues for the decade 1960-1969 @ US \$ 5.00 per issue
Issues for the decade 1970-1979 @ US \$ 4.00 per issue
Issues for the decade 1980-1989 @ US \$ 3.00 per issue
Issues for the period 1990-1995 @ US \$ 2.00 per issue

Postage, at actuals and as desired by Smithsonian, will have to be borne by the Institution.

Please let me know if you are interested, and feel free to clarify any doubts.

Thanking You

Yours sincerely



encl: list of *Newsletter for Birdwatchers* in my collection.

Aasheesh Pittie
8-2-545 "Prem Parvat", Road No. 7, Banjara Hills, Hyderabad 500034. India.
Phone: Off: Tel: 040-3320269 Fax: 040-314064 Res: 040-315683

23 November, 1996

Dr. Pamela Rasmussen
NHB Room 336, MRC 114
National Museum of Natural History
Smithsonian Institution
Washington D.C. 20560
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Dear Dr. Rasmussen,

Further to our short discussion on the Blewitt's Owllet *Athene blewitti*, in Coimbatore, I would be grateful if you could

1. Correct the draft, of which you made a copy, and send it to me, so that a proper account can be given for inclusion in the Red Data Book, and
2. Send me a copy of your paper (if you think it appropriate), or include those parts which you think are necessary, into my draft paper (also include the citation to your paper for the reference section) - so that the corrected compilation can be given to SACON.

An early reply would be appreciated. It was nice meeting you at Coimbatore. Hope your work on the fieldguide progresses smoothly.

With best wishes,



BIRDWATCHER'S SOCIETY OF ANDHRA PRADESH COMMEMORATES THE BIRD-MAN OF INDIA

Dr. Salim Ali was an eminent Indian ornithologist who spent his entire life in the study of birds. He was well known for his efforts at making birds popular. He was also involved in the conservation movement in the country. For his efforts he was conferred the prestigious J. Paul Getty International Prize for wildlife conservation in 1976. The government of India also honoured him with the Padma Bhushan for distinguished service to ornithology in 1958 and in 1976 he was awarded the Padma Vibhushan for continued distinction in ornithology.

As far back as 1941 Dr. Salim Ali, to popularize the study of birds in India, brought out *The Book of Indian Birds*, which formed the basis of all field studies of birds in India. This book has been followed by generations of bird-lovers in India and abroad.

The book was profusely illustrated to make it easy for birdwatchers to spot birds in the field and also provided extensive field notes on the birds. The popularity of this book resulted in a number of editions being constantly revised and printed to bring the content upto date.

Dr. Salim Ali was born in 1896 and passed away in 1987 at the ripe old age of 91 years. In the year of his birth centenary, a revised and enlarged 'centenary' edition of *The Book of Indian Birds* has been brought out by the Bombay Natural History Society. This edition covers 538 species of birds, as against the 296 species in the earlier edition, out of a total of 1,200 species described for the Indian subcontinent.

The Birdwatcher's Society of Andhra Pradesh was set up in 1980, by a group of amateur bird-lovers. Its activities include the documentation of birdlife in and around the twin-cities and also the state of Andhra Pradesh, study of birds as indicators of quality of habitats, field trips and indoor programmes for members, annual camps, slide and film shows and publication of a monthly news bulletin PITTA and a bi-annual journal MAYURA.

The Birdwatcher's Society of A.P. has worked in collaboration with the Bombay Natural History Society since a number of years and has arranged the release of this book as a tribute to the doyen of bird-lovers of India.



NATIONAL MUSEUM of
NATURAL HISTORY
SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION

5/2/97

16 January 1997

Aasheesh Pittie
8-2-545 "Prem Parvat"
Rd. No. 7
Banjara Hills, Hyderabad 500 034
INDIA
Fax: 040-314064

Dear Aasheesh:

It was very nice to meet you at the PASOC meetings, and many thanks for the copy of your bibliography, which already I've found very useful. Good luck on the next one, which I eagerly await seeing in print.

Thank you so much for allowing me to xerox a copy of your RDB account on *Athene blewitti*. As yet we are not far enough along on the paper to send a draft to you, but will do so asap. At this point let me mention, though, that there is only one Ball specimen to our knowledge. The citation for the paper will be roughly "Rasmussen, P.C. and N.J. Collar. MS. The Forest Owlet Athene blewitti: distribution, taxonomic status, and evaluation of a Meinertzhagen specimen", but of course is subject to change.

check-up

I think it will be possible to send you more details in February. Thank you so much for your patience. Please let me know if there are other publications you require that I may be able to help out with.

Best wishes,

Pam Rasmussen

e-mail: rasmussen.pamela@nmnh.si.edu

Fax: 202-357-1628

NHB Rm. 336 MRC 114

Smithsonian Institution

Aasheesh Pittie

8-2-545 "Prem Parvat", Road No. 7, Banjara Hills, Hyderabad 500 034. India.

Phone: Off: 040-3352269 Fax : 040-3356064 Res: 040-3350683

23 October, 1997

Dr Pamela Rasmussen
NHB Rm 336 MRC 114
National Museum of Natural History
Smithsonian Institution
Washington DC 20560
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Fax: 202-357-1628

Dear Dr Rasmussen,

Greetings!

I write to you in response to a letter I received from Dr S Subramanya, regarding head plumages of Blackthroated Weaver Bird *Ploceus benghalensis*. He says that you "too have seen these white-cheeked males in India and will send the locality details later." You also mentioned to him that their occurrence makes no geographical sense.

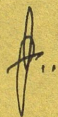
A couple of friends and I are in the process of writing a note / paper for the *Journal of the Bombay Natural History Society*, on the breeding plumage of males of *P. benghalensis*. In a Discussion in this paper we want to record all sightings/records of this plumage in India. The birds in the British Museum (with this plumage) are from E India.

Could you send us the localities where you saw these birds in India? We would be very grateful as it will add to the information we have. After including your information, I will send you (via e-mail) a draft of the paper for your comments.

Your urgent cooperation is requested as the paper is almost ready. You could fax me on the above number or e-mail to my cousin, marking the letter ATTN: AASHEESH PITTIE to: vinita@hd1.vsnl.net.in

With best wishes and regards,

Yours sincerely



Date: Thu, 18 Dec 1997 23:22:11 -0800
From: Aasheesh Pittie <aasheesh@hdl.vsnl.net.in>
To: Pamela Rasmussen <RASMUSSEN.PAMELA@NMNH.SI.EDU>
Subject: Re: Athene blewitti

Pamela Rasmussen wrote:

Athene blewitti

Dear Aasheesh,

*I hope you received my e-mail some weeks back. I've just returned from India; I and two friends decided to revisit the four known localities for *Athene blewitti*, and after ten days in the field and at the third site, we found two individuals which we videotaped extensively. While the find hasn't been kept a secret, we can't put out a press release until the beginning of the New Year, and we would prefer to keep it off the Internet in the meantime, but I wanted to let you know since you've worked on the species. Now I have to make some minor revisions to the manuscript, but should be able to send you a copy rather soon.*

Again, thanks for your help last year on this, and best wishes.

*Pam Rasmussen
rasmussen.pamela@nmnh.si.edu*

Pam! Congratulations!

What a wonderful Christmas present - to the world!

Awaiting eagerly for more

Best wishes and regards

--

Aasheesh Pittie
8-2-545 Road # 7
Banjara Hills
Hyderabad 500034
India
aasheesh@hdl.vsnl.net.in

Date: Fri, 19 Dec 1997 09:51:50 -0800

From: Aasheesh Pittie <aasheesh@hd1.vsnl.net.in>

To: **Dr Pamela Rasmussen** <rasmussen.pamela@nmnh.si.edu>

Subject: **Owls**

Dear Dr Rasmussen,

I cannot get over the sightings. Please do announce them as fast as possible. I think now you should write the red data book account on this bird. I am going to propose this once you make the re-discovery public. Where did you see them?

I would be grateful if you let me know when I can publish the info. in our bulletin, Pitta.

You mentioned you'd sent an e-mail to me. I did not receive it. Anything of importance?

Best wishes and regards!

Aasheesh Pittie
aasheesh@hd1.vsnl.net.in

Date: Mon, 22 Dec 1997 13:51:45 -0500
From: Pamela Rasmussen <RASMUSSEN.PAMELA@NMNH.SI.EDU>
To: aasheesh@hd1.vsnl.net.in
Subject: Owls -Reply

Dear Aasheesh,

Thank you for your good wishes. Actually I still find it hard to believe we found it. A reporter for the Washington Post is coming over this afternoon to look at the pictures. I am not sure when the article will go in, maybe this week.

Maybe we could co-author the account for the RDB?

Best wishes,

Pam Rasmussen

>>> Aasheesh Pittie <aasheesh@hd1.vsnl.net.in> 12/19/97 12:51pm >>>
Dear Dr Rasmussen,

I cannot get over the sightings. Please do announce them as fast as possible. I think now you should write the red data book account on this bird. I am going to propose this once you make the re-discovery public. Where did you see them?

I would be grateful if you let me know when I can publish the info. in our bulletin, Pitta.

You mentioned you'd sent an e-mail to me. I did not receive it. Anything of importance?

Best wishes and regards!

--

Aasheesh Pittie
8-2-545 Road # 7
Banjara Hills
Hyderabad 500034
India
aasheesh@hd1.vsnl.net.in

Date: Mon, 29 Dec 1997 08:25:38 -0500

From: Pamela Rasmussen <RASMUSSEN.PAMELA@NMNH.SI.EDU>

To: aasheesh@hd1.vsnl.net.in

Subject: Forest Owllet -Reply

Hi Aasheesh,

Thanks for your message. I was about to do as you asked, when I checked the India Nat. Hist. list and found you must have succeeded in downloading the article after you e-mailed me. As can be expected, there are some minor factual errors in the article, but the basic story is correct.

I've sent photos to Dr. Rahmani at the BNHS and am faxing them the article; you are welcome to include an item in the Pitta whenever you like. I'd be happy to provide more information if you need it.

Best wishes,

Pam Rasmussen

Date: Mon, 29 Dec 1997 08:25:38 -0500

From: Pamela Rasmussen <RASMUSSEN.PAMELA@NMNH.SI.EDU>

To: aasheesh@hdl.vsnl.net.in

Subject: Forest Owlet -Reply

Hi Aasheesh,

Thanks for your message. I was about to do as you asked, when I checked the India Nat. Hist. list and found you must have succeeded in downloading the article after you e-mailed me. As can be expected, there are some minor factual errors in the article, but the basic story is correct.

I've sent photos to Dr. Rahmani at the BNHS and am faxing them the article; you are welcome to include an item in the Pitta whenever you like. I'd be happy to provide more information if you need it.

Best wishes,

Pam Rasmussen

Date: Wed, 31 Dec 1997 16:25:43 -0500
Sender: owner-nathistory-india@lists.Princeton.EDU
From: Vivek Tiwari <vivek@ee.Princeton.EDU>
Subject: From Pam Rasmussen (Re: Owlet)

Pam asked me to forward this message to the list. First hand details on the exciting rediscovery of the Forest Owlet and some clarifications on the Washington Post story.

A happy new year to all.

Hope we have more of such good news throughout the year!

Vivek

vtiwari@scdt.intel.com

>Date: Wed, 31 Dec 97 10:46:18 EST
>From: Pam Rasmussen <MNHVZ102@SIVM.SI.EDU> >Subject: Re: Forest Owlet!!
>In-Reply-To: note of 12/29/97 17:38
>To: Vivek Tiwari <vivek@EE.Princeton.EDU>

Thank you, Vivek and Aasheesh, for your notes about the Forest Owlet. It was certainly a thrill to find it, after having studied the existing specimens and literature for the past several months. One minute you think something might well be extinct, and the next there it is, looking quite healthy!

To answer your question about identification, it is really quite different in several ways in appearance from the Spotted Owlet, even given the extensive variability in the latter's plumage and size. We all knew immediately upon sighting the bird what it was, and the only question was whether it would fly before we had been able to properly document the sighting. As it turned out, the bird was remarkably cooperative and allowed us to obtain extensive videotape footage, much of it through a spotting scope. Our footage shows all the diagnostic features of the bird, and in life it appears even more distinctive than I had expected based on study of the specimens.

We stayed at the site all that night listening for unknown owl calls, but heard nothing other than the common owl calls, then next morning at 8 a.m. another individual (with worn rectrices rather than fresh as the first bird had) was found, again on the top of a bare tree in the sun! We were able to obtain more film and still photos of this bird as well.

I'd like to take this opportunity to clarify a few things: first, in the Washington Post article that was posted on this listserv, the quote attributed to Dr. Rahmani of BNHS is erroneous and has regrettable implications. No one has any intentions of attempting to collect a specimen. The quote was supposed to indicate that identification of the Forest Owlet was made difficult by the lack of information within India, but that now with the new data on identification and the locality pinpointed, it would be possible to study the bird to formulate effective conservation strategies.

I would also like to mention that the photo mistakenly attributed to me was in fact taken by David Abbott of Ashburn, Virginia, and to stress that this was a team effort, with Ben King. We had not expected to find the bird at all; my major goal was to revisit all the known sites and document the state of the habitat, as background for a historical review of the species. Now we are preparing a paper as well on the rediscovery, that will include all we know at present about the bird and its habitat. But that is really very little at this point, and there is ample opportunity for others to add substantially to knowledge about this bird.

Best wishes to all,
Pamela C. Rasmussen