

NEWSLETTER
FOR
BIRDWATCHERS

12

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BIRD BOOKS

By

R.A. Stewart Melliush

Nothing adds so greatly to the pleasures of field ornithology, and makes them meaningful, as the handling, study and regular use of satisfactory literature. Many bird books are intrinsically pleasant and beautifully illustrated; it is little wonder that far more people buy bird books for armchair contemplation than ever dream of doing anything more about birds or watching them than chucking a few crumbs at sparrows every day. Many will gloat over reproductions of the paintings of Audubon or Gould, G.E. Lodge or David Reid-Henry, who will never be found counting starlings going to roost, or optimistically climbing trees to delve into old abandoned nests full of droppings and slush. The joys of ornithological literature can be savoured independently of the more rigorous study of the living bird.

For the serious birdwatcher, however, his bird books are more than coffee-table or fireside diversions. They are valuable tools or accessories, often hard to be without. Indeed, they play so big a part in fixing the direction his studies take and the intensity with which he pursues them that their selection should be as deliberate and systematic as that of other far more costly pieces of equipment, like field-glasses and cameras.

What books are useful for the birdwatcher in India, and in what degree? This article is supposed to offer a partial answer. It is a review of some of the reference literature available and forthcoming which is relevant to birds in this country. It is not intended to be comprehensive because I have confined myself strictly to books systematically describing birds found in the subregion, and have said nothing about more discursive literary works such as Lowther's A Bird Photographer in India and Macdonald's Birds in My Indian Garden, however excellent they may be. I have also not discussed books on birdwatching in general and of inter-regional application, or those which deal with birds of other regions and yet are useful to Indian observers because species migrate or overlap from one region to another (e.g. Witherby's Handbook of British Birds). There are other omissions due to my own unfamiliarity with the books in question. To the veteran birdwatcher this may well be of no interest whatsoever; but there are many readers of the Newsletter whose acquaintance with ornithology is not of long standing and who would be stimulated to far greater activity and interest if they possessed good books to guide them, and knew their way around those which are only to be seen now in libraries or other people's homes.

The book to buy first, unless one lives in an area covered by a provincial survey, is unquestionably Salim Ali's The Book of Indian Birds. Wisely, this does not include everything. There are nearly 2100 species and subspecies of birds on the subcontinental list, and to illustrate all these in a handy inexpensive volume of portable size and to include adequate text under each entry is impracticable. Salim Ali restricts himself to describing 256 of the commoner birds to be found in every variety of habitat, and all the birds described are illustrated - not all, it must be said, with unqualified success - in colour. There are also numerous photographs. The author has chosen his representative selection of species shrewdly, and his descriptions are models of intelligent compression. It is remarkable how much he can say about a bird in a few short sentences. Salim Ali's writing on birds is always a pleasure to read; he gets the very most out of the English language, his style being lively and colourful and yet at the same time precise. He never forgets how varied his readers will be in their knowledge of his subject, and avoids pretentious displays of erudition and the horrors of writing down to the novice. His scholarship is impeccable. In the introduction and the 30-odd pages at the back devoted to nesting, flight, migration, the usefulness of birds, and birdwatching, he is at his very best.

Every user of this book could doubtless suggest improvements. The order in which the birds are dealt with is not the most up to date, even if the latest editions have acknowledged the fact and explained it satisfactorily. I have always thought a few plates of birds in flight, especially of duck and other waterbirds, and raptors - to show their upper and under wing and tail patterns - would greatly ease the observer's task of identifying our commoner birds. But costs prevent any great change in the layout from edition to edition, and compromises are unavoidable. This book is a fine achievement by any standards, and at Rs 25/= it is very good value indeed. Any reader of the Newsletter who does not possess a copy really should at once make amends for this grave and deleterious omission as long as he has enough pocket-money left over afterwards to pay his subscription to this paper too. The Book of Indian Birds is published by the Bombay Natural History Society at Hornbill House, opposite Lion Gate, Apollo Street, Bombay 1-BR. It is now in its seventh (1964) edition.

Another useful book - by another meticulous craftsman, the late Hugh Whistler - is The Popular Handbook of Indian Birds, the 4th edition of which was revised by Kinnear and re-issued by Oliver and Boyd in 1963 at 30s. What follows may not apply to this latest edition, as I have not seen it; but earlier editions were decidedly attractive, a little old-fashioned in appearance (not a disadvantage), of great character and sterling worth. It is well illustrated with paintings and drawings by H. Gronvold. Only 4 of the 17 full-page plates are in colour, which is a pity, especially since the privileged 4 are so capably done. But the descriptions in the text

of the colours of plumage are detailed and greatly compensate for this economy. Some authors rely too much on their not always adequate coloured plates, and if a bird is pictured in colour they think it lets them off a full description. Whistler was not one to skimp his readers in this scurvy way. He was a diligent observer, and he lets others enjoy the full benefit of his experience.

The above are the only two books in print today which attempt systematic descriptions of the birds of the whole of India, and for anything else at all comprehensive one must visit libraries or scrounge around for older works now much dated: e.g. The Fauna of British India Including Ceylon and Burma (the bird volumes are seven, and were written by Stuart Baker and published between 1922 and 1930). This book is in the monumental category, and although any beginner who is offered a copy should pounce on it without hesitation (if he doesn't afterwards find a use for it he can always sell it to me) he may agree with Whistler who wrote, 'One search for a common bird in the volumes of the splendid Fauna of India series is enough to send the inquirer away frightened by the mere wealth of material and by the technical terms in the descriptions.' Notwithstanding this comment I must add that as one's interest in the study of birds grows with closer acquaintance of them, so also grows the desire and need to refer regularly to, if not to possess, the standard authoritative reference book on the region one lives in. Indian ornithology has been blessed with three such standard works over the last hundred years: Jerdon's Birds of India (1862-4); Blanford and Oates' bird volumes in the Fauna of British India (1889-1898); and Stuart Baker's 'New Fauna' already mentioned. And now, happily, a fresh 'last word' is soon to be uttered and so to take its place in this progressive chronicling of Indian avifaunal studies. The first volume of the Handbook of the Birds of India and Pakistan together with those of Nepal, Sikkim, Bhutan and Ceylon, by Salim Ali and S. Dillon Ripley II, is already in press, and nine more volumes will follow it in the next few years. This series will be one of those fat juicy stupendous sets of reference books packed with fastidiously presented technical detail and multitudinous gorgeously coloured pictures, which all birdwatchers in India will want to own. The author's names - particularly the former's, with his long experience of writing popular books for the non-scientist - are a sufficient guarantee that this series will not daunt the amateur, in fact will hearten him and give him confidence, while at the same time it will offer the more technically-minded everything he could ask for. Of course it will not be the last word; the authors are well aware that there cannot be a final unalterable verdict on most ornithological phenomena; but it will say all that can now be said at the present rudimentary stage in the progress of bird studies in India.

So much for descriptive books covering India as a whole. There is one other all-India book still obtainable, a check-list, which everyone should know about even if many may not need to use it very often - Ripley's A Synopsis of the Birds of India and Pakistan together with those of Nepal, Sikkim, Bhutan and Ceylon, published by the Bombay Natural History Society in 1961 and costing Rs. 25/=. This is a list of all the species and subspecies known to India, either as common residents or visitors, or as accidental vagrants. They are classified in the scientific order now most widely accepted (i.e. starting with the 'lowest' forms of bird life, the poor Loons and Divers, and working up to the more highly evolved ones). The Synopsis presents a still largely upto date assessment of the racial variations within species, and of the allocation of species to genera and families. It is useful in showing at a glance the English and scientific names of all the species and subspecies one is ordinarily ever likely to see in India, with a brief note on the status and range of each. It contains a few maps, but no pictures of birds.

of

The remaining books/fairly recent authorship which describe and illustrate birds are provincial studies. Their regional bias does not however mean that they are quite useless to anyone outside the areas they nominally cover. Here is a list. It is not complete, because I do not want to mention books I have not seen and learnt to appreciate myself. If any reader of the Newsletter can supplement it usefully I hope he will do so in the next issue.

Salim Ali's Indian Hill Birds (1949, Oxford University Press, Rs 35/=) is a most attractive pocket-book with a lively text and 64 coloured plates by G.M. Henry. The birdwatcher who visits ghat-country or a hill-station without a copy in his baggage or better, I suppose, pocket, handicaps himself needlessly. Even if the sholas are silent and empty, and mist smothers every view, he can enjoy looking at the pictures and reading about what he might have seen. This book is in print, and costs Rs 35/=. Also by Salim Ali, and published by Oxford, are The Birds of Kutch (1945), The Birds of Travancore and Cochin (1953), and The Birds of Sikkim (1962) - the last containing some particularly good coloured plates. These three can now only be obtained secondhand; but The Birds of Travancore and Cochin will shortly re-appear in a revised and enlarged edition under the title Birds of Kerala. The Freed-
ing Birds of Kashmir, by R.S.P. Bates and E.H.N. Lowther (1952, Oxford, Rs 30/=) and A Guide to the Birds of Ceylon by G.M. Henry (1955, Oxford, Rs 35/=) are two more highly competent studies not to be neglected by anyone living anywhere near the areas they deal with. They are still in print. Being normally confined to southern India I have rarely had recourse to the former, but at Madras I am constantly using Henry's book and would warmly recommend it to birdwatchers in southern peninsular India. G.M. Henry is an outstanding bird painter and draughtsman, and his pictures make this guide one of those cherished companionable volumes that can be returned to again and again in those moments of agreeably exhausted repose at the end of a long day's walking in the sun, and it never ceases to please. The text too is illuminating and reveals the wisdom of a lifetime's careful observation in the field.

the I do not know whether Birds of Saurashtra, written and published by R.S. Dharmakumarsinhji (1954), is still in print. I hope so, because it is well worth possessing. It is a book of sumptuous expansive type, with generous broad margins and a serene, leisured look; particularly good are the black and white photographs, many of them by the author himself, which follow the paintings. It describes many birds common to other parts of lowland India, and could certainly be useful outside Saurashtra. Of similar extralimital use is Smythies' Birds of Burma (2nd ed., 1953, Oliver and Boyd, 84 s.). This is shown as in print in Whitaker's British Books in Print 1965 so may well still be obtainable. I quote the reviewer who concluded his notice in the April 1954 issue of the Journal of the Bombay Natural History Society with the following words: 'Finally I strongly advise people to order the book, look at the Jungle Cock on the dust cover, open the book in the middle and feast on the beautiful plates and promptly pay the bill without letting the first glow of excitement fade. They can later find the money by giving up smoking for a year. Their health will not suffer and they will be in possession of one of the finest bird books published anywhere in the world.'

Mention of the Journal reminds me that the back numbers of this publication, which has appeared without a break since 1886 and is now in the 63rd volume, are the godown in which is embedded by far the greatest store of information about Indian birds, as well as about other forms of animals and plants. In their pages will be found accounts of numerous provincial surveys of bird life, such as 'The Birds of Bombay and Salsette' by Salim Ali, Humayun Abdulali, and Hugh Whistler (1939-40), and Whistler and Kinnear's report on their survey of the Eastern Ghats (1930, 1933-7), which is still the only satisfactory published study of the birds of the eastern half of peninsular India and should be examined by all birdwatchers in Andhra and Madras, and perhaps the states which adjoin them too. Then there are numberless letters and notes from correspondents which go to make the Journal a kind of Aladdin's cave of treasure. Its entrance is usually to be found buried deep beneath the matted thickets and scrub-and-bush jungle of public libraries. It is well worth hacking a way through the undergrowth now and then and spending an hour or two in sweating communion with its riches. It is also advisable to spare one's posterity such effort and by joining the Society obtain new issues of the Journal for oneself every four months. A subscription costs Rs 30/=. It is true that some issues barely recognise the existence of birds at all, being morbidly devoted to such irrelevancies as the pre-coital posturings of

snails, or the number of bristles on the big toe of a new kind of louse; but one must learn to take the rough with the smooth, and frequently very useful ornithological notes appear.

Lastly, a brief word about buying books. Theoretically, any bookseller worthy of his calling ought to be able and willing to supply any book which is still in print (i.e. of which the publisher holds unsold stock or which he is reprinting or proposes to reprint). If the bookseller does not have a copy in his own stock, he ought to be prepared to order it, from abroad if necessary & if the import trade control procedure permits, for any bona fide customer. Unhappily not every bookseller will take the trouble to order unstocked books - it is often far easier for him to shake his head and say 'not available', whether he has heard of the title or not - and there are sometimes perfectly respectable reasons why the best of booksellers cannot satisfy their customers. If frustrated the customer should not give up hope but should write to the publishers and explain his difficulty. Whatever authors may say to the contrary, somewhere in the lower regions of their systems, often modestly hidden from view, publishers usually have a residual urge to barter their wares for gold.

Books which are out of print are much more difficult to come by, but a secondhand bookseller, of which there are a number of good ones in India, can often work miracles.

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BIRDWATCHING IN KOLABA DISTRICT

By

Zafar Futehally

On Sunday 20th November Stewart Melliush and I wandered about near Alibagh and Dharamtar Creek in the Kolaba District. I will try and report on the more interesting birds that we saw. As I have reported in an earlier issue of the Newsletter this area provides ^{an} excellent habitat for a variety of birds. The sea coast ^{is} bordered with a picturesque line of casuarinas and has formations of black rock in many places where the patient pond heron and the impatient gullbilled tern can both be seen with the spray from the sea wetting their feathers. Behind the sea coast there is some forest where the ungainly grey hornbill and the elegant golden oriole are always around. At this season there were several paradise flycatchers hawking insects among the high banyan trees. Behind the forest, again, there is a wide marsh where before sunset a dozen golden plovers stood motionless almost asleep and it was only through Stewart's telescope with 25 magnification that we could see them sufficiently well to be certain about their identity.

We started after a leisurely breakfast at 9 a.m. and as we were walking along a dusty path bordered with lantanas, bhend, euphorbia and casuarinas a brownish bird landed on the ground in front of us and quickly disappeared into a near-by tree. Both from the appearance and from the fact that the number of Redwhiskered bulbuls, tailorbirds, and others started to scream we thought it was a shikra. Soon however it came into view again and with the slanting rays of the morning sun we got an excellent view. It had a weak yellow bill and a long drooping tail and we surmized that it was a cuckoo of some sort. The two white lines on the tail and the other on the nape were confusing but after seeing specimens in the Bombay Natural History Society and after checking up with the books we came to the conclusion that the bird was the Common Hawk Cuckoo, the Brain-fever bird. It was completely silent. Otherwise it would have been much easier to identify the species.

It is both exciting and disappointing to run into a new bird which one cannot identify straight away disappointing because it shows up our ignorance, and exciting for obvious reasons. I have been watching birds in this area for the last ten years but had never come across the hawk cuckoo before.

Soon after our encounter with this cuckoo we came across a Pied Crested Cuckoo which is a species which should not have been here at this time. It should have migrated to its native land in Africa. As is well known these birds come to India with the SW. monsoon in early June and after perasitising our babblers depart for their wintering grounds by about October. From the fact that this bird remained practically in the same patch of jungle for about 20 months or so a thought crossed our mind that it might be injured and not fit enough to do the migration across the Arabina Sea. In the same patch of jungle there were purple rumped sun-birds, whitebacked munias, Tickell's blue flycatcher, whitebrowed bulbuls, redvented bulbuls, black drongos, orioles. We heard the pleasant whistling of the spotted babblers and the not so melodious scolding notes of Franklin's wren warbler.

We came out of this mixed forest into a pure casuarina grove where years before I had seen the blackcapped kingfisher which I then thought was the handsomest bird under the sun. Every attempt to see it again has failed. A raptore suddenly came into view. In profile it looked rather like a pigeon apart from its large size of course. Again with the help of reference books we pinned it down as a Honey Buzzard. Stewart's capacity to make sketches on the spot indicating terminal and subterminal bands on the tail, the shape of the wings, the type of head, flat or rounded, is a great asset and much more effective for subsequent indentification than the conglomeration of loose words on which I am dependant.

In the evening before returning to Bombay we spent a little time near Dharamtar Creek. As the steno is getting impatient to go home I cannot dwell too long on the many birds which I saw here but I must mention the Hen Harrier of which we got a superb view from fairly close quarters. The country on both banks of Dharamtar Creek is flat and treeless, and gives an excellent view of the high flying species which patronize it.

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SOME COMMON MIGRANTS IN CALCUTTA AND WEST BENGAL

By

J. McKelvie

Those who live in Calcutta through the long hot weather look forward to the first signs of autumn not only for the relief it brings in climate but also for the greater variety of birds one may see in one's garden, on the golf courses or further afield. The arrival of the first migrants is greeted with pleasure as the first real sign that cooler weather is on the way.

In my garden in Alipore, the first autumn arrival this year (1966) was the Brown Shrike (Lanius cristatus). He reappeared on 17 September, bold and prominent on the top of a jamun tree, after an absence of some five months; I had last recorded him in the garden on 8 April on a hot day, but he may well have been with us somewhat later as my observations were interrupted about that time. On the same day (17th) in September, I saw another Brown Shrike in a prominent position on a bougainvillea at the Tollygunge Club and another (or perhaps the same) bird in my garden in the evening. On 18 September I saw two more in the Botanical Gardens. It was obvious that the Brown Shrike had arrived and shortly afterwards I saw it again in the north of the State in Kalimpong (22 September).

The Common Sandpiper (Tringa hypoleucos) is often found on the nala at the back of our garden, which divides Alipore from New Alipore, but the first I saw in Calcutta this year was on a stony margin of the Hooghly River alongside the Botanical Gardens on 18 September. A week or so earlier I had observed a single bird on a small sandspit near the edge of the Maithon Reservoir, in the Damodar Valley Corporation area on the

borders of West Bengal and Bihar (10 September).

My wife and I awaited the wagtails with impatience. We had seen four White Wagtails (Motacilla alba) on 8 September on the road and parapet of the Maithon Reservoir (without being able to identify the race) and when I returned to Calcutta I went hopefully to the Tollygunge Club on 17 September expecting to find Yellow and Yellow-headed wagtails in their familiar place on the 1st and 7th fairways. I was disappointed, and did not see a single wagtail. Eventually we saw our first wagtail of the Calcutta season in our own garden on 29 September when a single Grey Wagtail (Motacilla caspica) alighted on the lawn about 0800 hours and fed for ten minutes or so. Another, perhaps the same bird, was seen feeding in the evening. On 1 October another Grey wagtail appeared, this one having either lost or not grown his tail, presenting the strange sight of a bird trying to wag a non-existent tail. It was joined a few minutes later by a second of the same species, this being fully equipped with standard-size tail, and the two fed alongside each other for a few minutes until the tailless one (which had shown signs of resenting the new arrival getting too close) eventually shooed it away into our neighbour's garden. The same tailless bird reappeared on 2 October on which day we also had a visit from a White wagtail which set me studying the excellent illustrations of eighteen wagtail heads opposite p. 254 of the FIELD GUIDE TO BIRDS OF BRITAIN AND EUROPE and wishing some thing similar could be produced in India.

I mentioned Kalimpong in connexion with the Brown Shrike. I suppose being further north and of higher altitude, Kalimpong gets its migrants coming in weeks earlier than Calcutta but in four days there on 21-24 September I did not see a single wagtail. Flycatchers were the most prominent visitors and I had good views of the Greyheaded (Culicicapa ceylonensis), Little Pied (Muscicapa westermanni), and Verditer (Muscicapa thalassina). One flycatcher remained unidentified: it was slaty blue above, with a chestnut breast extending the full extent of the underparts except for a grey throat, and with a prominent white mark on the wing coverts. The bill was dark brown or black and the legs pale ashy brown. It was the white mark (patch rather than bar) on the wing that was especially clear and this feature was seen by Mr Brooks, Headmaster of Dr Graham's Homes, as well as by myself. I cannot find any flycatcher in my books with this mark.

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BIRDS OF COCHIN AND ERNAKUTAM

By

N. G. Pillai

Given below, are a few additions to the lists of birds published for this area in the Newsletter (May, September, and November 1961, and June 1962).

1. The Nilgiri Pied Bush Chat: Saxicola caprata

A single bird on the outskirts of Ernakulam, on the road to Trippunittura, perched on the wall of a roadside embankment in a stretch of rice fields. First and only time seen on September 27, 1965. A male with the white of the underside confined to the vent.

Apparently a straggler, as it is a bird associated with high elevations -- hills chiefly above 3000 ft.

2. The Southern Indian Blackbacked Robin: Saxicoloides fulicata

A single female seen on April 10, 1966, near the northern end of the Willingdon Island, pecking at the rotten tip of a partly decayed stump. Later, chivied by crows and driven into a shed attached to an unoccupied house. Altogether a surprise, since the island with its marshy terrain is anything but the 'dry stony' type of country which is the preferred habitat of the bird.

3. The Paradise Flycatcher: Tchitreia paradisi

Not common in this area. Heard a call for the first time on February 11, 1965 and later on the 24th, saw a chestnut plumaged bird with short tail at

Ernakulam. The bird was not seen nor heard again until February 9, 1966, when a chestnut bird with streamers was seen on a *Muntingia* tree, in the neighbour's compound. On March 27, a chestnut plumaged bird was noted on the same tree, but disappeared before I could make sure if it was the longtailed form.

4. The Malabar Large Racket Tailed Drongo: Dissemurus paradiseus

Noticed for the first time on 19.4.1964 on a tree at Edappalli about 7 miles north of Ernakulam. The very next morning, one was seen on a jak tree in the neighbour's compound for a few minutes before it flew away. Saw it again on the 13th of March 1965, on the same tree. Since then, the tree has been cut down and the bird has not been seen again.

5. The Rosy Pastor: Pastor roseus

First seen on a *Muntingia* tree on Willingdon Island on the 20th of January 1965 -- 3 to 5 birds. Again on the 7th of February and 1st of March 1965, the same number on a Bombax on the island.

6. The Indian Alpine Swift: Micropus melba

This magnificent swift was met with for the first time at Ernakulam on 18th of February, 1965. Thereafter it was seen almost every morning till March 26. Reappeared on February 24th this year and remained with us till April 2. Usually seen singly, but 3 to 4 birds were at times seen working the extensive waterfront from Tevara bridge in the south to Rama Nilayam (Kerala High Court) in the north. In this connection, Mr Ravi's note (Newsletter Vol. 4, Oct. 1964, p. 10) that the bird was observed in Guntur in January and February 1963 and again during the same period in 1964, in large numbers flying from the NW. to SE., but only in the evenings, apparently on their roosting flight, is of special interest. At Ernakulam the bird was seen only in the mornings.

NOTES AND COMMENTS

The Council of Nature in London brings out a monthly newsletter called Habitat. The name is appropriate for a publication which is devoted to Nature Conservation, because the preservation of Habitat is after all the most difficult challenge which naturalists are facing all over the world.

The English are well known for their love of nature and a single issue of Habitat gives evidence of the great effort which nature lovers in that country put into the 'cause'. Habitat of September 1966 refers among other things to:

A public meeting on the Tees Valley & Cleveland Water Bill will be held at the Caxton Hall, London the chair will be taken by Dr Bruce Campbell. The Tees Valley & Cleveland Water Bill will have its third reading in the House of Common on October 18 it will then go direct to the House of Lords for its first reading there and within the next ten days a new petition opposing the Bill will be submitted by a vast number of organizations interested in nature.

The Orkney Field Club are concerned about the precarious existence of a unique British sheep which can throw light on the evolution of some of our modern breeds.

The growth of interest in conservation in N. Ireland is shown by the success of National Nature Week

Last month's request for information on permanent or seasonal nature trails brought more than 50 completed forms.

The Monks Wood report outlines the research on toxic chemicals being done in Britain.

Observers round the coast of Britain will be going out each week for the next 12 months checking beaches and offshore waters for birds with oil on their feathers.

The Youth Committee of the Council of Nature has organized natural history courses for youth leaders which have been well attended.

The Duke of Edinburgh has taken many photographs of birds and mammals and are being displayed in an exhibition of wild life. Sale proceeds of the photographs and the catalogue will go to the World Wildlife Fund.

Finally there is a note on the Bombay Natural History Society: "The above Society wishes to contact former residents and tourists coming to India to get their impressions on any aspect of the country's natural history."

Habitat is published on the first Wednesday of every month by the Council for Nature, c/o Zoological Society of London, Regent's Park, London N.W. 1. Readers of the Newsletter will find very interesting material in this cyclostyled bulletin.

Members of the Bombay Natural History Society were recently shown WILD WINGS, a film about the Severn Wildfowl Trust at Slimbridge, England. Slimbridge has become world famous both because of the good work it is doing for rehabilitating vanishing species of waterfowl and because Peter Scott is the founder and Honorary Director of the Trust. The film is available with the British Information Services and it is willingly given to any group of persons who want to have it displayed. It is a film well worth taking the trouble to see.

One interesting fact revealed by the film is that geese have very strong social ties and stay together in families even in the non-breeding season. For this reason when geese are caught for ringing the entire lot that is captured together is released at the same time, but ducks are less dependant on members of their own tribe. So individual ducks are released as soon as they are ringed and recorded.

Birdwatching at Slimbridge is very hard work indeed. Naturalists on the staff cannot just sit back and enjoy the scene. When they are not involved in catching birds with nets powered with rockets they sit down and count how many times a minute geese and duck peck at the grass, what is the total quantity of food consumed by each bird, and so on. Counting the number of birds in any area is not an easy task and the film indicates how it can be done. Aerial photographs of the birds are taken on which lines are drawn dividing the photograph into convenient sectors for counting. By this means the results are very accurate.

Peter Scott visited Bharatpur last November, and made certain recommendations for improving facilities of this splendid waterfowl sanctuary in Rajasthan. We are awaiting (in true Indian fashion) for something to happen.

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