

P I T T A

Bulletin of the Birdwatcher's Society of Andhra Pradesh HYDERABAD

No. 46.

July 1994

PROGRAMME

JULY 1994: 2nd: Executive Committee Meeting.
3rd: Field Trip: Jubilee Hills National Park.
18th: Indoor Meeting: Film show & discussion.

Indoor Meeting: Venue, office of the World Wide Fund for Nature- India, A-22, A-Block, 6-2-1, View Towers, Lakdi-ka-pul, Hyderabad -500 004 Meeting begins at 6.30 pm.

Field Trip: Members are requested to reach the destination on their own. We meet at 8.00 am., at the L. V. Prasad Eye Institute bus stand. It shall be a half-day outing.

Executive Committee Meetings will henceforth be held on the first Saturday of every month till further notice. Venue will be informed by phone to Committee Members.

NOTES & NEWS

★ In its Annual General Meeting held on 18th April 1994 at the office of the PCCF, AP Forest Dept., Saifabad, Hyderabad, members of the Birdwatcher's Society of Andhra Pradesh elected the following Executive Committee, and subsequently the Executive Committee elected these office-bearers.

PRESIDENT:	Mr. Pushp Kumar, IFS (Retd.)	Ph: 248825
VICE-PRESIDENTS:	Mrs. G S Plumber	Ph: 232520
	Mr. N G Reddy	Ph: 238382
HON. SECRETARY:	Mr. Rajeev Mathew	Ph: 310721
HON. TREASURER:	Mr. Tim Galbraith	Ph: 232982
MEMBERS:	Mr. Aasheesh Pittie	Ph: 315683
	Mr. M S Kulkarni	Ph: 233336
	Mrs. Geeta Raghavan	Ph: 616550
	Mr. K Bharadwaj	Ph: 248343
	Mr. M K Kashinath	Ph: 36942
EX-OFFICIO:	Chief Wildlife Warden, Govt. of A.P.	

★ It was resolved at the above AGM that membership of persons on the rolls of the Society as on December 1992 would be extended up to 30th June 1994. Members are requested to send in their membership dues for 1994 to Mr. Tim Galbraith, Hon. Treasurer, Birdwatcher's Society of A.P., G.P.O. Box 159, Hyderabad-500001. Subscription rates are also given for information.

Membership Category	Admission Fee	Membership Fees (in Rupees)	
		Annual	Life
Ordinary	10.00	35.00	500.00
Student	10.00	15.00	500.00
Corporate	10.00	100.00	N.A.

★ Members of the society went on a field trip to the Nehru Zoo Park on 12th June. The curator, Mr. Banerjee, took the group around the lion safari, where it was noticed that free roaming cheetal had grazed most of the ground cover. The curator mentioned that he is trying to trap and shift the deer out of the safari area. A male tickell's flycatcher enthralled members with its soft lilting song from within a small phoenix palm grove. Outside the safari, a brown flycatcher was sighted in some casuarinas. Later we went to the bird sanctuary at Singosh Bund, which attracts waterbirds throughout the year. The idea was mooted that the society adopt this water-body and give suggestions for display material, public-usage and awareness, etc., to the zoo management. Members also volunteered to visit the sanctuary every Sunday and talk to visitors about wetlands and their importance. The curator agreed readily and promised all help.

★ At the indoor meeting on 20th June, a Survival Anglia film, 'Sunlight and Shadow', was screened to an audience of about twenty members at the WWF-India office. Members also discussed future programmes and projects, which include the compilation of an inventory of wetlands in Andhra Pradesh, for the WWF-India, who are compiling a directory of wetlands in India.

★ The editor has received a letter from Dr. S.D. Ripley's office, which is preparing a field guide to the birds of India and the surrounding countries. They require photographs of many species, forms and plumages, for a reference file from which artists can borrow pictures for their paintings. Photos will not be published, but used as reference material only. A list of birds whose pictures are required is with the Hon. Secretary. They are willing to reimburse handsomely for pictures which they purchase. For more details, please contact the Hon. Secretary.

★ Professor Sankar Chatterjee, a palaeontologist working at Texas Tech University in the USA, has discovered a new fossil 'projobird' which predates *Archaeopteryx* by at least 75 million years. The new find also gives new insight into the origins and early radiation of birds, their links to early dinosaurs and the tempo and mode of bird evolution. Previously, *Archaeopteryx lithographica*, discovered in 1863, was regarded as the oldest known bird; it has been the subject of much debate on evolutionary links with reptiles and the development of flight. Named *Protoavis texensis*, the new bird has been described from two fossil skeletons found side by side in a Texas quarry in Late Triassic deposits estimated to be 225 million years old. It was apparently a predatory protobird, about the size of a modern pheasant, with many advanced avian features placing it closer to the ancestry of today's birds than *Archaeopteryx*. The latter, indeed, seems to have been pushed into a side-branch in bird evolution - a 'living fossil' in its own lifetime, perhaps. For more of this fascinating story, read Prof. Chatterjee's paper in Series B of the Royal Society's *Philosophical Transactions* (obtainable from The Publications Sales Department, The Royal Society, 6 Carlton House Terrace, London SW1Y 5AG) [from BRITISH BIRDS, 84:10:445-446].

For more information write to : Rajeev Mathew, Hon. Sec., 6-3-912/1 Kapadia Lane, Somajiguda, Hyderabad - 500 482. INDIA. Ph: 310721.

EDITOR: Aasheesh Pittie.

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P I T T A

Bulletin of the Birdwatcher's Society of Andhra Pradesh HYDERABAD

No. 47.

August 1994.

PROGRAMME

AUGUST 1994: 6th: Executive Committee Meeting.
 7th: Field Trip: Mahavir Harin Vanasthali.
 22nd: Indoor Meeting.

Indoor Meeting: Venue, office of the World Wide Fund for Nature - India, A-22, A-Block, 6-2-1 View Towers, Lakdi-ka-pul, Hyderabad- 500004. Meeting begins at 6.30 pm.

Field Trip: Members are requested to reach the destination on their own. We meet at 8.00 a.m., at the ticketing counter in the Deer Park. Buses to Vanasthalipuram stop in front of the Deer Park.

NOTES AND NEWS

* In spite of a steady and strong drizzle, nine members participated in the Society's field trip to Jubilee Hills National Park on 3rd July. As we moved around inside the park, new members exclaimed at the existence of such lush vegetation within our city limits. The cat-and-dog weather added a rare touch of thrill and adventure. Birds were a bit scarce, but those that braved the pitter-patter were white-headed babblers, lustily singing Franklin's wren-warblers, busy tailor birds and ashy wren-warblers, quizzing ioras, flitting-fluttering spotted doves and a solemn goggle-eyed stone plover. The meows of peafowl resounded again and again and we had great views of males with long, elegant trains. Inside a horizontal crevice between two huge precariously balanced boulders, near the entrance to the park, perched four fluffed-up spotted owlets which caused some identification problems for everyone! Green bee-eaters twittered and sallied after midgeets which braved the mizzle. When birds were scarce our President, Mr. Pushp Kumar, held forth on the local botany and past history. He spoke of its importance as a catchment area for Banjara Hills and Jubilee Hills. Laburnums were in flower in many places, adding their luminous brilliance to the abundant verdure among the rocky landscape. Monsoonal magic had transformed the landscape into a delightful carpet of ephemeral plants which sported delicately hued flowers. A brittle stick insect did not escape the keen eye-sight of some member, and was shown around and delighted in and replaced carefully on a wavy branchlet of some bush. At the end of the trip, members did not want to leave this haven. What all of us took away was a feeling that birdwatching is after all much more than just watch- ing birds. It is experiencing them and their environment with all the five senses! We left our footprints and took away lovely memories.

* The publications of the Society, both PITTA and MAYURA, need contributions from members. The former is a monthly bulletin which serves the purpose of an information board about Society activities and programmes. Members are requested to send interesting tit-bits of news and information about the birding world in particular and the natural

world in general, for publication. The latter is our newsletter or journal which carries articles and observations on the birdlife of Andhra Pradesh. Members' contributions are essential to make it a success. Both are supplied free of charge to members of all categories.

* On Sundays, volunteers from the Society participate in the wetland project at the zoo, where, with their assistance, visitors watch and identify birds at the Bird Sanctuary and are informed about the importance of wetlands in the environment. Those who wish to help may please contact the Hon. Secretary. A telescope has been purchased by the Society for this project, and will be used at the zoo on Sundays.

* Sightings of Darters *Anhinga rufa* have become rare all over the country. Their habitat of freshwater lakes and rivers are under tremendous stress by increasing human populations and their water requirements. This fish-eating bird with its graceful snake-like neck and rapier beak is an indicator species of our wetland areas and its decreasing sightings do not augur too well about the health of our wetlands. Members should report sightings to the Hon. Secretary with details about location, time, date and number of birds seen.

* This monsoon, plant an indigenous species of plant in your house or work place. Most of them attract birds and also require much less water than would most introduced species. For a list of such plants you may contact either the Hon. Secretary, or Editor.

* "The picids (of the bird family Picidae) are called true woodpeckers simply because they are widespread and common enough to be the birds to which the vernacular name was originally applied. But they also have the right stuff to be the nominal standard bearers. They are the premier specialists in their ecological class. Many other kinds of birds peck and pry wood to expose insects, but none do it with the elan and precision of a picid. The awl-shaped bill hits the wood at between 20 and 25 kilometers an hour, whereupon it instantaneously decelerates at 1000G, where 1G is the acceleration needed to counteract earth's gravity and 4G is what an astronaut experiences on liftoff. An ordinary brain jarred hundreds of times daily by a blow to the head of this magnitude would be reduced to pulp. The woodpecker survives because it possesses two unusual features. The brain case is made of unusually dense spongy bone joined with sets of opposing muscles that appear to act as shock absorbers. And the woodpecker brings its head up and down like a metronome in a single plane, avoiding the rotational forces that would skew the brain from side to side and tear it loose from its moorings. Jackhammer feeding is only one adaptation of the picid wood-peckers. Many of the species have a stiff wedge-shaped tail that braces them against tree trunks and bristlelike feathers over the nostrils that shield the air passages from wood dust. They employ cylindrical, sticky tongues that can be extruded beyond the tip of the bill by as much as twenty centimeters and snaked through the insect burrows to seize their prey, then retracted and coiled in a cavity encircling the inner surface of the skull." (from *The Diversity of Life* by Edward O. Wilson.)

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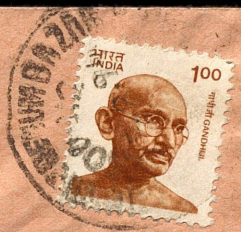
For more information write to:

Rajeev Mathew, Hon. Sec., 6-3- 912/1 Kapadia Lane, Somajiguda, Hyderabad-500 482.
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P I T T A

Bulletin of the Birdwatcher's Society of Andhra Pradesh HYDERABAD

No. 48.

September 1994

PROGRAMME

September 1994 : 4th : Field trip : Sanjivayya Park.
5th : Executive committee Meeting.
19th : Indoor Meeting.

Indoor Meeting: Venue, office of the World Wide fund for Nature - India, A-22, A-Block, 6-2-1 Biew Towers, Lakdikapul, Hyderabad

Field Trip: Members are requested to reach the destination on their own. We meet at 8.00 a.m. at the main gate of the park.

EDITORIAL

Birding by ear is as enjoyable as bird-watching! I was introduced to this facet of the birder's art by some friends while at a WWF - I camp in the National Defense Academy in Pune. On most of our outings I was nonplused at the longer bird lists which my friends read at the end of the day. When I wondered aloud how I had not seen such and such a bird, I was let into this birder's secret. They had *heard* the birds which I had not seen! My endeavor since then, to lend an alert ear to avian phonetics, has paid rich dividends.

The art is to follow any bird call, or for that matter any intriguing sound in the wilderness, to its source. This is the surest way of identifying it. I remember how some of us spent half an hour, heads craned upwards, under a huge tree in Eturnagaram Wildlife Sanctuary, perplexed by a loud, ringing call, repeated again and again, till someone spied the Indian Cuckoo *Cuculus micropterus* - the "one more bottle" bird in the foliage!

Bird song is a source of delight and information. It is a fairly accurate indicator of the whereabouts and circumstances of the caller. With care and patience one can distinguish between the alarm call of an Ashy Wren-warbler *Prinia socialis* and its' song. As one becomes proficient in this art, the pleasure of bird song is felt deeply when the distance is nothing but a spread of Babool *Acacia arabica* and Prosopis on a hot afternoon and the raucous call of Large Grey Babblers *Turdoides malcolmi* is wafted towards you on a tendril of breeze. I have delighted in the morning chorus of various places and maintained lists of bird calls as they occurred, one by one with approaching daylight. Many a time, fellow birders slept through it all! It becomes second nature to identify the caller in the mind, while within the house, at any time of day. Lesser Whistling Teals *Dendrocygna javanica* used to fly every evening at 7 p.m. over my house in Begum Bazaar, perhaps from Miralam Tank to Hussain Sagar. And if their characteristic whistles, uttered on the wing, reached my ears, my heart leapt out the confines of the room I sat in and thrilled in the flock of birds winging their way to roost through the gathering dark, whistling as they went. Begin birding by ear today. Birding will never be the same again.

NOTES AND NEWS

- ☆ THIS IS THE LAST REMINDER FOR RENEWAL OF MEMBERSHIP FOR THE YEAR 1994-1995. THOSE WHO DO NOT RENEW THEIR MEMBERSHIP BY THE END OF SEPTEMBER 1994 WILL NOT BE SENT THE PUBLICATIONS (PITTA AND MAYURA) OF THE BSAP.
- * Members can collect their membership cards from the Hon. Secretary. Separate cards have been printed for annual members and life members.
- * Our member, Mr. Kishore Rao, wrote a popular article on the activities of the BSAP in the local newspaper, DECCAN CHRONICLE, on 20-7-1994. This was excellent publicity for the society and resulted in a number of

nature enthusiasts contacting the Hon. Secretary to make enquiries about the Society. Most of them eventually became members!

- * "The Ministry of Environment and Forests of the Centre has initiated a Rs 8 lakh project for the study of the impact of the effluents discharged from aquaculture ponds, said Dr. A. Abdul Rahman, Project Coordinator, and head of the dept. of Zoology of Pushpam College, Poondi. During the three-year project, a detailed study of the shrimp farms from Nellore in Andhra Pradesh coast, up to the Kanyakumari coast in Tamil Nadu would be made by research scholars. The project would prepare an environment management plan for the coastal region in the light of the practice of aquaculture." (The Hindu, 27.7.94)
- * Participants in the Zoo Project of the BSAP were thrilled by the sighting of an Eurasian Hobby *Falco subbuteo* near the Singosh Talab on 24-7-1994. Also of interest were four pairs of Little Grebes *Tachybaptus ruficollis* nesting in the water! One pair was busy with two precocious two-day-olds and the danger of rising water level, from the recent rains. They were constantly adding material to their nest to perhaps prevent inundation!
- * A new bird sanctuary has come up at Sur-Sarovar, 20 km. from Agra on the Agra-Delhi road. Spread over 403 hectares, it is home to a large number of local and migratory birds. This area was earmarked in 1991 with a three-point programme-namely habitat management, tourism and interpretation and infrastructure development (The Hindu 17.8.94).
- * We welcome the Society for Applied Ornithology (India), into the fold of societies working for the cause of birds in India. Formed in 1993, its primary objective is to provide a forum for exchange of information and experiences related to the recent advances in the field of applied ornithology among members and related persons/organizations / institutions devoted to the study of ornithology in India and abroad. This Society proposes to hold a National Symposium on BIRDS IN AGRICULTURAL - ECOSYSTEM at A.P. Agricultural University, Rajendranagar, Hyderabad - 500030, from 22-24 December, 1994. There are various topics for the Symposium under the following heads: Crop losses, Management, Ecology and behaviour of birds and Environment and conservation. For more information about the Society and the Symposium contact Dr. P. Syamsunder Rao, Secretary, Society for Applied Ornithology (India), Insectory Buildings, Veterinary College Campus, A.P. Agricultural University, Rajendranagar, Hyderabad - 500 030.
- * The first announcement has arrived of another seminar on ECO- DEVELOPMENT, HABITAT AND WILDLIFE CONSERVATION IN RAJASTHAN AND ADJOINING AREAS, to be held between 21-23 October, 1994 at Kota, Rajasthan. Details may be had from the Hon. Secretary.
- * The Vanasthali trip on 7.8.94 was a grand success with 28 members participating in the nature walk through the deer park. Herds of frisky Blackbuck *Antelope cervicapra* and stately Cheetal Axis axis enthralled members. It was noted that with the increase in number of these ungulates the ground cover of grass, etc., is almost completely grazed, but lots of Flame of the Forest *Butea frondosa* trees are coming up all over the park. A Tawny Eagle *Aquila rapax* was seen two to three times, soaring overhead, amidst much smaller Pariah Kites *Milvus migrans*. Someone spotted a Small Greenbilled Malkoha *Rhopodytes viridirostris* flit across the path and disappear into a tree. A number of butterflies and moths were identified by Dr. S. Tej Kumar, who also helped identify many types of caterpillars spotted by members. The cryptic colors and behaviour of these tiny creatures fascinated everybody. In one place was a moth mimicking the cracked bark of a tree to perfection and in another a caterpillar was stretched out like a slender twig between two branchlets of a Neem *Azadirachta indica*. There was one miming a minuscule predator with the wrong end resembling a head, uplifted in deception, its abdomen painted with large yellow and blue 'eyes' to frighten away adversaries. The day closed with a film on Project Tiger, screened in the mini-auditorium of the Environmental Education Centre in the park. We appreciate the assistance of the A.P. Forest Department and place on record our gratitude.
- * In a rain-blessed ceremony, the Chief Minister of A.P. renamed the Jubilee Hills National Park as Brahmananda Reddy National Park. The A.P. Forest Dept., also started its Vanamahotsav celebrations at this function with tree planting by dignitaries and children, prize distribution to school children for painting, debate, etc., and for the first time in the state, by nature education through Eco-Camps. About thirty students of various schools in the city, participated in the two day camp, staying overnight in tents, going around on nature trails and understanding the basics of ecology. Members of the BSAP took them around on a birdwatching trail one morning and later our President spoke to them about the role of birds in the environment. We learn that such eco-camps are going to be a regular activity throughout the state.

For more information write to :

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Editor : Aasheesh Pittie

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