

# NEWSLETTER

FOR BIRDWATCHERS

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FOR  
BIRDWATCHERS

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NOTES ON THE BEHAVIOUR OF THE PEA FOWL

While studying the habits of the big game animals<sup>1</sup> in the Kanha National Park, Madhya Pradesh, I saw peafowl (Pavo cristatus) daily and took casual notes on their behaviour. Although my data include only seven months of observation, from December 20 1963 to July 20 1964, the period covers the major part of the breeding cycle of the peafowl, and the notes may thus be of interest for comparison with other areas in India.

Kanha National Park, 122 square miles in size, lies at an altitude of 1750 to 2900 feet in the Central Indian highlands at 22° 15' N. latitude and 80° 35' E. longitude. The main park area consists of a broad valley surrounded by hills on three sides. Extensive sāl (Shorea robusta) forests are found in the low-lying portions of the park, and mixed forest covers the hills. Peafowl occur throughout the park, but my observations are confined to a large grass meadow near Kanha village.

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<sup>1</sup> This research is being carried out under the auspices of the Johns Hopkins University Centre for Medical Research and Training, Baltimore, Maryland, U.S.A.

Peafowl remained inconspicuous until mid-January. The sexes were usually separated, both hens and cocks being found singly and in flocks of two to four individuals each. Most cocks were in full breeding plumage by the beginning of the year, but in a few the upper tail coverts had not yet grown to their full length. There were also some cocks, presumably subadult, which had the iridescent blue neck and chest yet lacked the elongated upper tail coverts. Such birds tended to stay in the company of hens.

Cocks suddenly became prominent in the middle of January as they wandered around on the open meadow, especially in those areas where the grass had been burned earlier in the month. Several cocks called loudly for the first time on January 16, an activity which marked the beginning of the breeding season. The most conspicuous behaviour of the cocks in the following months consisted first of establishing a territory and then of courting the hens.

Establishing of territory. After an initial period of wandering, each adult cock chose by late January or early February a certain limited area, roughly 400 to 600 feet in diameter, that represented his exclusive territory from which other adult cocks were apparently excluded. Since most cocks favoured territories with one side bordering the forest and another side touching the territory of a neighbouring cock, there were marked concentrations of birds in some parts of the meadow and almost none in other parts. Within his territory each cock had a small area, often only about 50 feet in diameter, with the following attributions: 1) a prominent place, like a rock or termite mound, on which to stand, 2) a tree providing shade and a roost for the night, and 3) an open area, such as a road or patch of short grass, on which to court. Cocks spent much of the day within this small area, often giving their raucous, two-toned scream with which they appeared to proclaim their territory to other males and perhaps to advertise their presence to distant hens. Calls were given throughout the day and sometimes at night at the height of the breeding season, and a call by one cock frequently brought a response from all others in the vicinity.

Occasionally two cocks met at the boundary of their territory. At such times they walked slowly parallel to each other and about five feet apart until suddenly one or the other turned away at a 90° angle, swinging his long tail abruptly toward the opponent. This seemed to be an intimidation display. Once two cocks were seen to fight by jumping at each other with slashing feet.

Courting. While the cocks remained in their territories, the hens travelled around in flocks of two to ten individuals each. If such a flock entered the territory of a cock, he advertised his presence with a characteristic display. He dashed back and forth on his courting area with chest thrown out and with head and neck bobbing up and down, all the while emitting a call that began with a trumpet-like honk and was followed by a series of nasal ea-ea-ea-a-a. As often as not the hens ignored him and drifted into the territory of another cock which then displayed in a similar manner. These observations indicate that the cock does not possess a harem of hens, as has often been stated, but that he courts any transitory flock that enters his territory.

If the hens approach a cock to within 80 feet or less, he displays his well-known courtship dance. He minces towards the hens with rapidly treading feet and with tail fanned out, then slowly revolves before them with lowered wings quivering violently, showing off the rusty-brown primaries and grey-barred

scapulars, only to turn away, still treading and quivering, to reveal his greyish under tail coverts and black rump surmounted by the white radiating shafts of his fanned tail feathers. Occasionally the hens then too displayed like the cock; pirouetting in front of him with quivering wings, spread tail, and treading feet.

As one peahen left the forest in the direction of a cock and several hens that were displaying to each other, a crested hawk-eagle (Spizaetus cirrhatus) landed on her back. She squawked loudly and ran into a patch of grass where she cowered. However, the hawk-eagle once more attacked her back, rolled off when she jumped ahead, then tried to follow her on foot. Both entered some high grass and after a brief shuffle all was silent. Five minutes later the hawk-eagle emerged and flew into a tree. I checked the site and found the peahen dead, talons having punctured both sides of her body. Five minutes later the raptore returned to his kill and fed for 50 minutes on the head and neck. The other peafowl, 300 feet away, ceased to display and sought cover at the beginning of the attack.

The first courtship display of the season was seen on January 31, and the peak of the activity occurred between mid-February and mid-March, the spring time at Kanha when temperatures were in transition from cool January to hot April. Some cocks abandoned their territories in early April, but others retained theirs until the middle of the month. Cocks sometimes courted hens after having left their territory. The last courtship display of the season was seen on June 21, the day after the monsoon began, but a few birds were still calling intermittently in the latter part of July.

Courting behaviour occurred in atypical situations in a few instances. Both adult and subadult cocks sometimes displayed to each other. One cock courted a chital deer (Axix axis). On March 28, four hens inadvertently approached the nest of a stone curlew (Burhinus oedicnemus). The incubating curlew left its nest and advanced on the peahens with its stubby tail in a fan and with wings extended laterally -- a distraction display designed to lure the intruders from the vicinity of the nest. One peahen, apparently stimulated by the resemblance of the distraction display of the curlew to the courtship display of the peacock, responded by dancing.

Many peafowl withdrew into the forest in May after calling and courting had essentially ceased. The first moulted tail feather of a cock was found on June 6, and a week later shed feathers were common. However, some cocks still had the upper tail coverts in late July. The first young of the season were seen on June 5, and on June 8 a shallow scrape with two newly hatched chicks and two pipped eggs was discovered.

George B. Schaller,  
Kanha, M. P.

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#### ARRIVAL OF COMMON SWALLOWS IN BHUBANESWAR

We were surprised on 7 July of this year to see a swallow flying in the residential area of New Capital, Bhubaneswar, Orissa, but were too slow on the draw to check its species. Common Swallows (Hirundo rustica) are seen here regularly during winter and spring, but we had not seen any since May 9, nor have we ever seen any other species in or around Bhubaneswar. On July 19, two undoubted H. rustica were seen flying over our garden for a long

time. They were seen on July 20 both in the same garden and over a pond on the Bhubaneswar - Cuttack section of National Highway 5. On July 23, they were flying over a small lake near the Biological Park at Barang south of Cuttack. One of the individuals seen on July 20 had both its russet and its black very pale and shabby.

Authorities differ greatly over when these swallows reach India during their southward migration. Salim Ali (THE BOOK OF INDIAN BIRDS, 6th ed.) states that their arrival starts in September-October and that they leave in April-May, and Whistler (POPULAR HANDBOOK) states only that it occurs in winter. However, for Burma, Smythies in his BIRDS OF BURMA states that 'the sub-species gutturialis may be seen in every month of the year, but there is a great diminution of numbers in June.' Apparently, 'the first arrivals in July are adults that have finished breeding very early; whereas the juveniles, which arrive rather later -- may not leave -- until June'. Meinertzhagen's BIRDS OF ARABIA states that 'in the Middle East, autumn passage commences in late July'.

Perhaps this newsletter can collect arrival and departure dates for various migrants all over India which, linked up, will provide more information on their movements.

S.D. Jayakar and H. Spurway

Genetics and Biometry Laboratory,  
Govt. of Orissa, Bhubaneswar 3.

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#### A NOTE ON THE STONE CURLEW IN BRITAIN

The other day when motoring back to London from Norfolk, my friends and I stopped just a mile or two on the London side of Thetford, in the Suffolk Brecklands, to see if any Stone Curlew (Burhinus oedicnemus oedicnemus) were to be found at a favourite spot of theirs and where there is a small breeding colony.

We were not disappointed, for a short walk was rewarded by the sight of our first wary bird, standing on a footpath and eyeing us suspiciously. A few more cautious steps was more than the bird would permit, and it soon ran down the pathway away from us for a short distance and then turned off into some cover.

A moment or two later, another bird, same distance away, flew up out of the shore heather and made a long flight away from us and eventually dropped down out of sight.

By now the first bird and the other hidden members of the party, about seven or eight all together, had become alarmed and took to wing, calling loudly and frequently. It was delightful to hear their plaintive, wailing calls -- coor-lee-coor-lee-coor-lee dinning away in the stillness of a summer evening, as the birds disappeared in the far distance.

Whilst the birds were on the wing, we noticed most of the diagnostic features, including the whitish, double wing-bar. We observed that one bird stayed behind and seemed noticeably attached to one particular spot. It may well have been at its nest site, for all together it was a little late in the season, the bird is occasionally double-brooded.

Although the Stone Curlew, in the two forms of saharae and indi-

cus, is a common bird in dry, stony areas throughout the Indian sub-region, I wonder how many of our readers knew that the bird is also found in Britain?

With us, it is mainly a summer visitor from March to October or November, breeding patchily and in small numbers in SE. England, south of a line from the Wash to Dorset. Elsewhere it is a vagrant. The bird occasionally winters in SW. England and elsewhere.

S.K. Reeves

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Surrey, England

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MORE ABOUT THE GREEN BARBET  
MEGALAIMA VIRIDIS

The Green Barbets of my note in the Newsletter for April 1964, were found brooding from 7.3.1964. They were first noted bringing food for the young on 29.3.64. Feeding in the nest went on till the 27th of April -- for 29 days. On the 27th of April before 8.8 a.m. the adults came at least six times to feed the young. The food consisted of the fruit of a variety of Muntingia of the mulberry, and, apparently, of pieces of half-ripe mango.

The last time an adult came and fed the young was at 8.7 a.m. A nestling, in its greed, thrust half its body out of the nest. The parent flew off after feeding this nestling. At 8.8, without any preliminaries whatsoever, this nestling slipped out of the nest and flew a distance of 40 feet before alighting on a mango branch. Having spent a number of mornings in the hope of seeing the young ones leaving the nest, and having pictured to myself something rather dramatic, I was surprised and rather disappointed at the casual manner in which the young ventured into the world. I had expected the adult to entice the young by tantalisingly holding out food or to coax them with some special call-notes to desert the cosy nest. But nothing even remotely like that happened. The adults were not there to scold or to encourage. The fledgeling showed no fear or hesitation.

There was only one young. After waiting for a while to make sure that the nest was indeed empty, I left. But, at 8.23, on going to the observation post I found a bird looking out of the nest with a red berry in its beak. A little later it flew off, the food still in its mouth. At 8.30 a bird came to the tree, stopped for a minute or two, and flew off without approaching the hole. At 8.46 and again at 8.52 a bird with a red fruit in its bill came to the tree and flew off without so much as looking at the hole. Thereafter, I think the visits were not repeated.

I believe that the bird which brought food to the empty nest was the parent which had been far away when the fledgeling left the nest. (The other parent which had fed the young at 8.7 had been on the tree to which the young first flew, and had flown off accompanied by the fledgeling.) Its urge to feed the young probably persisted because it had not seen the emergence of the young.

To pass from conjecture to facts, that evening, at 6.15, there was a barbet in the hole, looking out. As the light was not very good I could not say whether it was an adult or the juvenile. It flew off a few seconds later. At 6.45 a barbet (what wouldnt I have given to be able to tell one from the other of the three -- or more? -- birds involved!) flew down and entered the hole.

I waited till it grew dark, and am quite certain that the bird spent the night in the hole.

The next evening (28th April), a barbet went into the hole at 6.3. At 6.5 a second barbet came, sat on a branch close to the hole, and then flew past the entrance, almost brushing it. At 6.7 the bird in the hole came out and flew off. At 6.34 a barbet again went into the hole. Four minutes later another called close by, and the bird in the hole at once jumped out, sat for a few seconds on the branch which served as an approach to the hole and flew off. At 6.41 a barbet alighted on a branch six feet away from the hole. At once another flew down to the same branch from a neighbouring tree and I heard the kworr-kworr-kworr notes which indicate a tiff. I do not know how it happened, but, one of the barbets had meanwhile slipped into the hole. At 6.43 one flew to the entrance and clung there while the other hopped out and flew off.

Something very like this was repeated the next evening also. One bird went into the hole at 6.36. Four minutes later another came and alighted on the branch a foot away from the mouth of the hole. The first one hopped out and both sat on the same branch, 10 to 12 inches apart, without showing any animosity. A minute later the first one flew off and the new-comer entered the hole and remained for the night.

For the next three days I could not watch the roosting. On 3rd May no bird turned up. I watched on the 4th and the 5th also and made certain that the barbet was no longer roosting in the hole. Then, just as a casual check, I watched the hole on the 16th, the 25th and the 26th, but no bird came near the hole.

On June 16th I thought that there was something unusual in the behaviour of the barbets which, as usual, came late in the evening to a tall mango tree near the roost-tree. At 6.30 a barbet flew down, sat near the hole for a few seconds, and went in. For a long time it did not settle down, but went on peeping out. At 6.51 it jumped out, but returned to the hole a minute later. I waited till 7.00, but the bird made no further move. From the 16th of June till the 29th I watched the bird going to roost in the hole. It is still regularly using the roost. Neither on the 16th nor on any subsequent date did any rival show up.

Summary

- Barbets seen first quarrelling for possession of the hole: 11.2.64
- " " " definitely brooding .....: 7.3.64
- " " " feeding young in nest .....: 29.3.64
- Fledgeling left nest .....: 24.4.64
- Bird roosted in deserted nest (3 days) .....: 27,28, 29.4.64
- one bird replacing another which occupied hole first.
- Barbets did not use hole (so far as could be ascertained) from 3rd May to 16th June.
- Hole again in regular use as roost from 16 June to this date 15.7.1964
- These days no barbet seen going near hole between 7 a.m. and 6 p.m.

It is known that woodpeckers (one of the breeding pair) roost in the newly made nest as soon as it is large enough to do so. I have myself noted that the male Goldenbacked Woodpecker roosts in the nest until the eggs are laid. The barbet too may have this habit. But why did two birds quarrel for the privilege of roosting in the nest? Nothing like this was noticed among wood-

peckers. Why did two birds dispute, though very feebly, for possession of the hole after the young had flown?

K.K. Neelakantan,  
Ernakulam

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### INDIAN ORNITHOLOGICAL GARDEN (BIRD ZOO)

There are so many zoological gardens where all classes of the animal kingdom -- mammals, aves, reptiles, pisces, and amphibia -- are displayed. There are no zoos where one will see only birds. It may not be possible, or even desirable for zoos to concentrate specially on bird collection alone. Zoos, in general, aim at an equitable display of all classes of animal kingdom. 'I am desirous that we should have in our country a zoo specially devoted for the display and study of birds' -- this has been the cherished desire of Shri Gianchand Jain, one of the important industrialists in India. It is indeed a magnanimous thought which is bound to create more interest in bird lore.

Shri Gianchand Jain has been a very keen birdwatcher since his childhood, and he has travelled widely in search of birds. He developed a hobby of collecting very colourful and attractive birds from different parts of the world. He built series of aviaries in his garden in Dhrangadhra (100 miles NW. of Ahmedabad), a former princely state in the Gujarat State. Many birdwatchers and bird lovers started pouring in to see his collection, and I happened to be one of those fortunate visitors in May 1963. I saw for the first time the Turquoise Parrakeet (Neophema pulchella) which is reported to be practically extinct in their natural haunts in Australia. A pair of Chukor Partridges in captivity with a brood of chicks. (the breeding of Chukor Partridges - Alectoris graeca - in captivity is rather considered difficult ), 2 or 3 nests of the Cockatiel (Nymphicus hollandicus) with eggs and young -- provided me very much to stay and enjoy the birds for a longer time. The collection, even at that time was full of promise: I thought this could be systematically organized to present one of the biggest bird collection in a zoo atmosphere.

Shri Gianchand Jain's enthusiasm knows no bounds. His ambition to possess at least 4000 species of birds is really sky high. I do not think any individual collection, in any part of the world can boast of more than 2000 species. A fruitful conversation with this ardent bird lover yielded quick results. We found that both of our ideals were coinciding. At the request of Shri Gianchand Jain I agreed to take up the challenge of his desire to create something unique connected with the study and display of living birds. I took charge of Shri Gianchand's collection of birds in August 1963, when its status was 6 orders, 17 families, 105 species or kinds and 343 specimens. We began to concentrate more in collecting as many rare species of Indian birds as possible and we are proud to say that within a year we have improved the status of our collection to 12 orders, 40 families, 238 species or kinds and 735 specimens. The following statement gives a fair indication of the status of our collection.

Orders	Families	No. of species or forms	No. of Specimens
1. Passeriformes	21	108	310
2. Piciformes	2	8	21
3. Coraciiformes	3	4	9
4. Cuculiformes	2	2	5
5. Psittaciformes	1	49	158
6. Columbiformes	2	19	77
7. Charadriiformes	1	2	3
8. Gruiformes	3	3	8
9. Galliformes	1	33	119
10. Falconiformes	2	3	3
11. Anseriformes	1	5	17
12. Ciconiformes	1	2	5
	40	238	735

There has been a consistent demand from the public to see our collection. We celebrated the 8th wild life week in October 1963 and declared our bird zoo open to the public free of charge and since then about 22,000 people had visited the bird zoo within 3 months and up till now say about 47,000 people had visited. This shows the great amount of interest people have in a remote place like this, for seeing the birds.

The nucleus for the bird zoo has been set up here in Dhrangadhra but in order to serve a very large section of the people, attempts are being made to shift this unit to the metropolitan city of Bombay where it is bound to become as an added attraction for tourists. Almost every big city in the world has a zoo, a museum and an aquarium, and perhaps there are none having an out-and-out bird collection in what may be called an 'Ornithological Garden' organized on the lines of the modern zoological parks. The Government of Maharashtra have been approached for placing at our disposal a minimum area of about 50 acres of wooded area for organizing the Indian Ornithological Garden where all types of birds from the biggest Ostrich to the smallest sunbird could be displayed in large areas simulating the natural effects of their habitats.

The methods of display we are contemplating are entirely different from the ones usually found in zoos. There will be no more old methods of displaying birds in small cages. The ostriches will be displayed in vast open air enclosures simulating the African Veldt; sea birds and other birds of northern latitudes will be housed in glass fronted enclosures with conditions reminiscent of arctic environment; birds of the rain forests will be seen in huge aviaries with natural green vegetation usually found in the rain forest areas. In these enclosures artificial effects of thunder, lightning and rain will make the birds feel quite at home; large expanses of water locked areas will be created to form sanctuaries for wading birds and waterfowl. All latest techniques of display will be employed and wherever possible suitable ecological conditions will be arranged for maintaining various species of birds. Wherever necessary changes of temperature, changes of soil, changes of water, changes of food will be judiciously exploited. The method of display that we are planning is entirely different from what is commonly seen in the present day zoos. Instead of viewing the birds from outside the aviary, especially the birdwatchers will have the opportunity to walk through inside the aviaries and feel one with the birds around them. The aviaries will be suitably

landscaped with miniature brooks, waterfalls, cascades, with luxuriant vegetation providing a wonderful background and a natural set up where birdwatchers will really enjoy the birds and observe them at close quarters.

Apart from making this as a birdwatcher's paradise and providing a recreational amenity to the people the main objects of this enterprise will be, to organise large scale breeding operations, breeding birds which are on the verge of extinction and to liberate them back in their natural homes; breeding game birds like pheasants, partridges, etc. for introduction in various forest regions in the country for improving the game bird population.

This institution when fully developed will provide ample opportunities to the bird student intending to do research on bird biology, bird behaviour and bird keeping. To aid the students in particular and to create more interest in the people we have also quite a big plan to provide a good library of books on birds.

The field of aviculture and ornithology is such a vast one that it is not possible to see in a life time all the birds known to exist, and owing to various difficult conditions it may not be possible to keep in captivity certain birds of distant lands. Therefore, we have also in our programme to build up a museum section in the garden for the display of those birds which cannot easily be kept.

We are quite sure that all birdwatchers and bird lovers would like to associate themselves with our project and make the Indian Ornithological Garden a rendezvous of the birdwatchers.

Our project indeed is a very big one and the success of it much depends on gathering the experiences and observations of many naturalists, Ornithologists, aviculturists and birdwatchers. We are always in search of valuable information from birdwatchers all over the world and we are also conscious that if we are to be on the right path of success, our appetites have to be whetted, and therefore, we will be much obliged to receive valuable advice and help in whatever form it may come forth from birdwatchers and other interested persons in the successful organization of the Indian Ornithological Garden.

B. V. Ramanjulu

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BLACK REDSTART RETURNING TO THE SAME  
WINTER QUARTERS

The May 1964 Newsletter gives a few examples which suggest that migratory birds are 'true' to their winter quarters. One more example of a migratory bird returning to the same wintering area has been recorded in Roorkee.

A Black Redstart (Phoenicurus ochruros) regularly roosted in the cup at the base of a ceiling fan shaft in one of the residential quarters at the Central Building Research Institute during 1962-63 winter. The bird was trapped and an improvised plastic ring was placed on its leg. In April 1963 the bird disappeared, but returned to roost in the same cup in October.

T.C. Phatak & Joseph George  
Central Bldg. Res. Inst., Roorkee, U.P.

Mr. Humayun Abdulali/

[At p. 265 of Vol. 53 of the J. Bombay nat. Hist. Soc. records an instance of attachment to winter quarters in a Black Redstart (Phoenicurus ochruros). On the night of 20 March 1953 he placed a plastic ring on the leg of a bird roosting on the stem of a banana leaf in Mr. Shumoon Abdulali's garden at Thana, Bombay. Thereafter the bird migrated out and was back in the garden on 16 October 1953, and spent the winter in the same area. It was last seen on 23rd March 1954. On 23 October 1954 a bird flew in the house, presumably the same individual, but the ring had been lost. A fresh ring was placed and the bird stayed till end of March 1955. - Ed./

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#### REVIEW

AS THE FALCON HER BELLS. By Phillip Glasier. pp. 223 (22.5 x 14.5 cm.). With one coloured and many black and white plates. London, 1963. Heinemann. Price 25s net.

Phillip Glasier, according to the blurb on the cover, is one of the last professional falconers of the British Isles. This book is an absorbing account of his life and of his personal experience with a number of birds that he trained. To give the reader an idea of how interesting this book is I cannot do better than quote from the last page. Trudy incidentally is the dog that is employed for making the birds fly up from cover. Gale, Canisp and Poacher are the trained hawks. . . . 'I put Gale on the wing, and she is soon well up, cruising around at a good three hundred feet or more. She really is a delight to fly. Whether she kills or not, I know she will put on a good show. Trudy is sent in, and up gets a snipe, one of the few that we occasionally come across on this hill. Gale puts in a stoop, which he avoids by a neat twiddle at the right moment, and climbs away in long zig-zags with Gale hard on his tail, following every twist and turn. She is so close that he dare not seek refuge in the gully but goes over it and away, climbing all the time. The binoculars are essential now, for they are probably five hundred feet up and a mile away, growing rapidly smaller every second. The snipe is only a speck at this distance, and the falcon is pretty small too. Several times I see her try to grab him, and at least once I think she's got him; but Mr. Snipe is a very smart fellow and manages to slip out of the way. Each time Gale tries she loses a bit of ground; but in no time she is on his tail again, and still they climb. Gale tries another grab and again is thrown out, and the snipe suddenly decides on different tactics. The few feet Gale lost trying to snatch him give him a chance suddenly to double back. Gale swings round after him, and now the snipe is coming down in a shallow dive, making for safety in the gully.

'She is above and behind him and is wise enough not to keep on his tail, but retains her height and flies even harder. She gets right over him and puts in a stoop as hard as she can go; he twists away, and she is directly below him, but she throws up beautifully and is back in position for another stoop. Again she turns over and comes at him. They are both quite close to us now, and we can hear the noise of her wings as she comes down in a sizzling stoop that will send the snipe to his happy dibbling grounds if she touches him.

'But he is right over the gully now and he plummets in like a stone; as Gale pulls out to avoid hitting the steep banks, the snipe drops into safety, doubtless very thankful, and probably a good deal out of puff. We leave him there and Gale comes in to

my lure. For once her beak is open from her exertions, and she is certainly due for a rest. In fact, we decide that she has done enough and feed her up on the old grouse she killed earlier on. As is so often the case, the best flight of the day ended in the quarry getting away; only the hungriest of hunters would have any regrets.

'Canisp misses an easy one by raking away downwind; the grouse, seizing the opportunity, makes off in the other direction, and she gets nowhere near him. Poacher goes well and gives us a nice young grouse for the larder.

'We make our way down to the cars and go home, Poacher feeding up on my fist as we drive along. Trudy gets what remains of my pick-up piece of meat, and the hawking-party discuss the day's flying. The grouse that eluded us have rejoined their conveyances by now and are doubtless telling the tale to their chums, describing how cleverly they eluded that silly falcon.

'I put the falcons back on their blocks, unhood them and give them clean bathwater for the morning. They rouse and preen a bit and then tuck one foot up and rest, contented with their full crops and their day's outing.'

Z.F.

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#### NOTES AND COMMENTS

The British Trust for Ornithology brings out a B.T.O News, subtitled A Bulletin for Birdwatchers. It is instructive to compare this with our own Newsletter and also to see the type of birdwatching that is done in England. Take the July issue for instance. The headings of articles will suggest the type of work that is done. There is note on 'Breeding birds around Beech Grove'. 'Dawn over the Dark Continent'-- this title may not give much of a clue to the reader. It reports on recoveries ~~of birds~~ from Africa of birds ringed in the British Isles. The author is particularly elated about the recovery of two Sand Martins ringed from the famous Chichester roost. 'The Observatories in April and May', 'Bird Census Facts and Figures', 'Where do You like Bird-Watching?' are a few other articles. The standard of the articles is very high and they have all been written by knowledgeable persons. There are several lighthearted touches which make this four page bulletin very attractive. For example:

##### 'BEECH GROVE

'Gifts and offers of garden implements have been made by two members, and a third has sent a cheque as being easier to transport.....'

##### 'CONGRATULATION

'..... to George Waterston, a past Vice President of the B.T.O., on receiving an O.B.E. for services to ornithology in Scotland. As George says: 'Ornithology Before Everything'.

CORRESPONDENCE

Chick of a first brood accompanying a subsequent incubation

An egg of the Yellow-wattled Lapwing Vanellus malabaricus hatched on 3.3.64. The nest, still containing two addled eggs, was deserted on 6.3. The family was subsequently watched in its territory, the parents also being morphologically recognisable. This chick was first seen to fly on 4.4. On the same day the parents were first seen nest building and copulating in a new restricted area within their territory, and here a fresh scrape, already containing 3 eggs, was found on 12.4. The 4th egg was laid by 13.4 morning. The young bird now behaved like the parent that was off duty, standing and grooming in the same range of shaded areas, the two birds often being quite close together. On 26.4 more systematic watching began, and it was seen that both parents pecked, ran, flew, and jumped at the chick who was careful to keep at least 40 cm. away from them. This continued on 27.4 when, in addition to these physical attacks, the father performed at it the ritualized ground pecking display which birds, either singly or as a pair, use against intraspecific intruders in their territories. The young bird gradually walked away from its father. This was not surprising as the evening foraging period was beginning for both. However this chick was never seen again after watching was discontinued that evening, at least not in this territory, or elsewhere until it had grown out of recognition. The day ended with a violent storm. At this time the chick was not quite full grown, its legs and wattles were duller than those of the adult, and the latter smaller. The fawn of its back and wings was brindled. Three of the eggs of the second clutch hatched on 9.5 and 10.5, the fourth again being deserted on 11/5.

Is it extraordinary for an older chick still to be accompanying its parents while they are incubating a younger clutch?

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Strange behaviour of a Crow

A few days back at about 7.15 a.m. I was reading the newspaper in my verandah, when a male House Crow (Corvus splendens) came and alighted about 5 yards from me on the garden lawn. It had something whitish yellow -- an inch long -- in its mouth. It kept on hopping for a couple of minutes and then went to one corner, dug a stone, put the stuff in the hole, put the stone back; covered it with some dried leaves and flew away to a babul (Acacia) tree where incidentally it has its nest with a chick. I left the paper and rushed to the spot where the crow had hidden that piece. On removing the stone, would you believe what I discovered? Guess? A sodden cigarette butt!! What intrigued me was: (a) What was the crow doing with the cigarette butt? (b) Why it hid it under a stone in that fashion? Possibly it was trying to distract my attention from its young chick. If it is so then you will agree that it is a strange way of preservation indeed? Perhaps some of the readers of the Newsletter might be able to throw light on this. The crow sees me every day on the spot at that time.

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