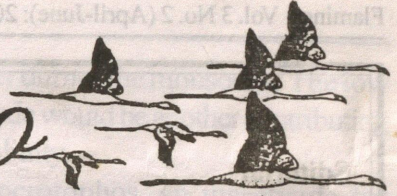


bcsg

Flamingo



Newsletter of the Bird Conservation Society, Gujarat

Vol. 3 No. 2 (April-June): 2005

EDITORIAL

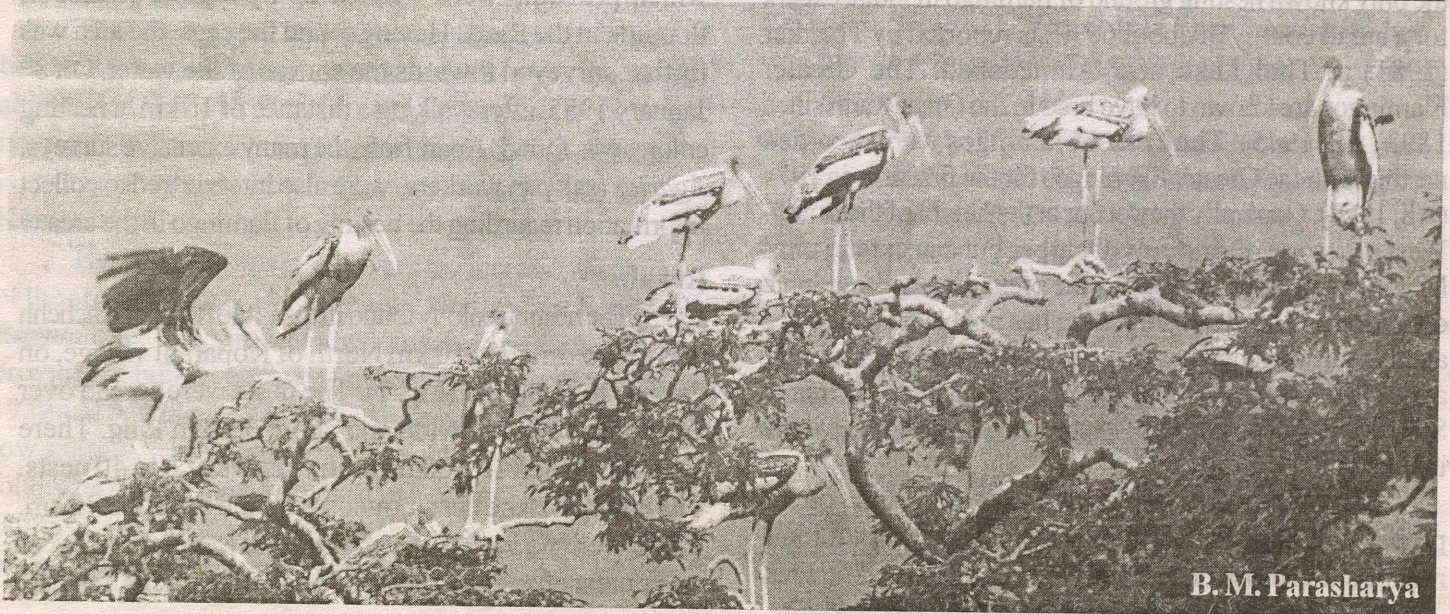
Waterbirds like storks, ibises, spoonbill, egrets and cormorants are colonial breeders. Usually a few to several pairs make their nests with the onset of southwest monsoon. But the Painted Stork start nesting activity in second half of August and their last chicks leave the colony in early February.

The primary nesting requirements of tree-nesting colonial waterbirds are the availability of adequate food for themselves and their chicks and safe nesting site. These requirements are met with to a large extent at Bhavnagar City and therefore the nesting colony at Piele Garden is flourishing well since many years. The Painted Stork colony of Bhavnagar is known to exist at least since 1920.

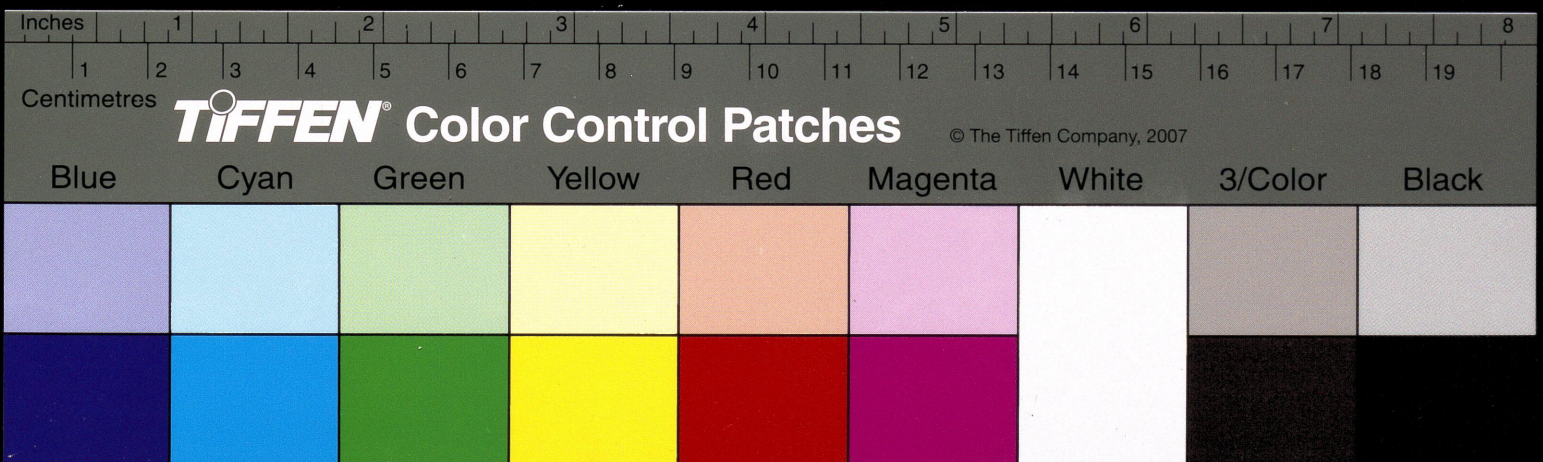
In 1979, there were only 42 nests of Painted Storks in Piele Garden and 23 nests at Ghogha. In 1983, there were 179 nests in Piele Garden alone. As the time passed, the colonies at Ghogha disappeared. But the colony size at Piele Garden has steadily increased. In 2003, there were 482 nests of storks in and around Piele Garden. In 2004, total 328 nests were recorded. The steady increase in the number of nests clearly indicates the suitability of the site for their successful breeding. Thanks to the Garden Authority of Bhavnagar Municipal Corporation and the

visitors of the Garden who have not been disturbed by these birds but often have taken extreme care of the helpless chicks which often fall on the ground.

Bhavnagar has expanded rapidly and so the Painted Stork colony. In spite of all the odds, including falling of trees during recent cyclone, or drought years which take tall of healthy trees, the stork colony has remained safe. This colony has been conserved by tradition and certainly not by enforcement of any law or other compulsion. Probable that is the reason why existence of this colony is not much highlighted to the external world. But now this is the time to appreciate the conservation work done by the people of Bhavnagar and its administrators. Highlighting existence of such large stork colony would also attract a large number of tourists. The tourists who stay at the hotels adjoining Piele Garden have an advantage to watch the stork colony from their rooms! Such facilities are not available even in Bird Sanctuaries. Bhavnagar is certainly an Urban Bird Sanctuary. There is mention of Bhavnagar's stork colony in the Book 'Storks, Ibises and Spoonbills of the World' by J. A. Hancock, J. A. Kushlan and M. P. Kahl, Published by the Academic Press. However, it still needs better recognition.



B. M. Parasharya



Contents

	Page
Editorial	1
Articles	
Nesting Behavior of Flamingos in the Rann of Kachchh – H. A. Vaishnav, S. A. Chavan and U. A. Vora	2
Communal Roosting of House Crows at Nalsarovar - Anika Tere	4
Important Birding Sites Around Porbandar - Jaidev Dhadhal	5-8
Birding Notes	
Nesting Adaptations in Birds - Snehal Patel	8
Bearded Vulture in the Great Rann of Kachchh - P. S. Thakker	9
Greylag Geese at Rajkot - Ashok Mashru and Rajdeep Jhala	9
Forest Wagtail at Jamnagar - Maulik S. Varu, Jalpan C. Rupapara and Purvesh K. Kacha	10
Hypocolius in Kachchh - S. N. Varu	10
Entrust the Mortifying Wetlands To Whom ? - S. Sapna	10-11
Red-winged Crested Cuckoo at Vapi: A first record for Gujarat State - Prashant Desai	11
Vulture Update	12
Reports	12
Recent Publications on Birds of Gujarat	13
Some Interesting Bird Sightings	14
BCSG News	14
Letters to The Editor	14-15
Letter from The President	15

Nesting Behavior of Flamingos in the Rann of Kachchh

H. A. Vaishnav¹, S. A. Chavan¹ and U. A. Vora²

¹ Chief Conservator of Forests (Retd.), ² Deputy Conservator of Forests, Forest Research Institute, Nr. Akshardham, "J" Road, Gandhinagar. e-mail: udayvora@yahoo.com

Introduction

The Greater Flamingo (*Phoenicopterus ruber*) and Lesser Flamingo (*Phoenicopterus minor*) are the two species of flamingos found in the Indian subcontinent. So far the "Flamingo City" in the Great Rann of Kachchh was the only known nesting ground of flamingo in India, except for a small colony of about 60 nests reported by Thakker (1981) at Thol Lake near Ahmedabad. The Greater Flamingos are known to have bred in the Great Rann since 1893 (Ali, 1945). The Lesser Flamingos were recorded nesting with the Greater Flamingos for the first time in 1974 (Ali, 1974). Generally they occur at the height of the South-West monsoon during July-October but can extend until March-April, depending upon the prevailing hydrographic conditions. Since 1977, breeding has not been taken place at the traditional nesting site, however, juveniles and sub-adult chicks are seen every year in different parts of Gujarat State, which is indicative of nesting taking place elsewhere in the Ranns.

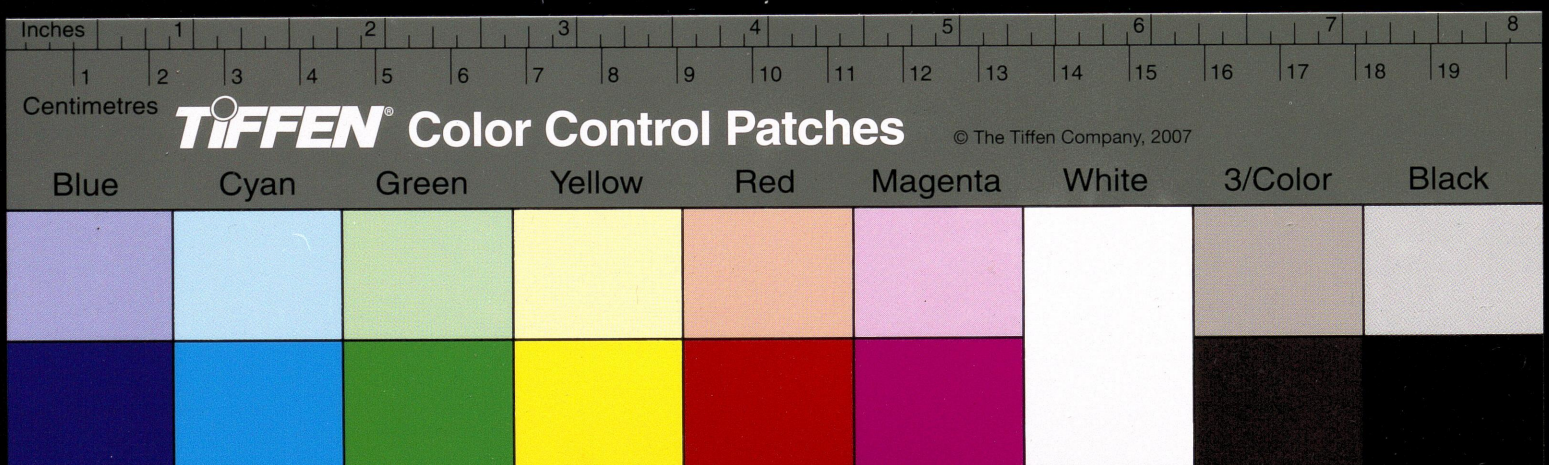
An attempt is made here to throw some light on the probable reasons for the sudden boycott of the traditional nesting site and also on location of alternative breeding sites.

Materials and Methods

"Flamingo City" area in the Great Rann was visited in June 1984. The Little Rann was surveyed during November 1984. During the frequent visits over the expanse of the Little Rann, I found some unhatched flamingo eggs, which probably were washed up by regular monsoon flooding in the Rann. Having found the eggs, the area was further surveyed towards the source of the water. On 8th January 1985, after walking a distance of 16 km, a nesting colony was found. Apart from the many extensive surveys, *Agarias* (salt pan workers) were also interviewed to collect information regarding the nesting of flamingo in the area.

Results

The nesting colony found in the Little Rann of Kachchh was approximately 10 km North of Koparani village, on the way to Pung Bet (Fig. 1). The nests were spread over an area about a km wide and about 3.5 km long. There were more than 10,000 nests in clusters of 8 to 40 nests. The heights of the nest mounds varied from 15 to 25 cm. There were no birds in the colony, however, there were many unhatched eggs, plenty of broken egg shells, feathers



etc. The ground was covered by footprints of adult and juvenile flamingos. Some of the nest mounds appeared to be of a previous year and were built over again. There was a marked difference in colour of mud in case of the old nests. The indications suggested that the site had been in use during and just after the rainy season as otherwise, the feathers, eggs, and eggshells would have been washed away and the footprints obliterated. A pair of Tawny Eagle (*Aquila rapax*) was observed predated on the flamingo eggs suggesting that they were fresh. Many eggs were found on higher uninundated patches of mud varying from 1 to 3 meters in area and about 5 to 15 cm above the surrounding wet mud. The eggs appeared to have been laid directly on the ground without any attempts at making nest mounds.

The *Agarias* revealed some interesting information, which is summarized below:

- 1) The *Agarias* come in that area every year after "Navratri" i.e. one month after monsoon to start their work.
- 2) At least since 1980, they have seen numerous flamingos, incubating their eggs on the bunds raised for the saltpans during the previous year. Birds were also seen feeding their juveniles in the area.
- 3) When work commences to make fresh saltpans, the flamingos move aside with their chicks leaving behind the unhatched eggs. It is these unhatched eggs that are predated upon by raptors, others get buried beneath the soil during preparation of the fresh bunds.
- 4) The *Agarias* do not eat the eggs, as they have a very unpleasant smell.

Discussion

The "Flamingo City" in the Great Rann of Kachchh believed to be the site since its discovery in 1893, has been abandoned since 1977 as there have been no reports of nesting in this area. The reason for this sudden abandoning is attributed to the rise in water level (Thakker, 1982; Ashok Kumar, 1986).

The other reasons put forward are increase in salinity of the area adversely affecting food availability. Seeds of *Ruppia* spp. and various algal species are believed to provide the bulk of nutrition in the Great Rann (McCann, 1939 and Abdulali, 1964). The algae would thrive in very low salinity, which would be available for a brief period following the first inundation by fresh water. The increase in salinity could be due to the construction of dams on the rivers flowing into the Ranns resulting in a drastic depletion

of flooding by fresh water during the monsoons. The low rainfall during the last decade would be another contributing factor to the increase in salinity.

In 1976-77, Monocrotophos, an insecticide for locust control was sprayed aerially over 400 sq. km areas of Khadir, Bunny, Panchchham and Khavda. Even after 7 years of spraying, we saw thousands of dead locusts preserved in the salt crusts!

The last decade has witnessed a tremendous increase in the levels disturbance in the Flamingo City area. So, the abandoning of the traditional nesting site could be due to any one, or all the reasons mentioned above. Subsequent years were of very poor rainfall in the Little Rann and hence no nesting took place. However, in September 1986, the entire area was submerged with water varying in depths from 20 to 100 cm and thousands of flamingos were observed feeding in the area. Nesting had not commenced.

Conclusion

Detailed investigations have not been done to locate the new nesting ground and to compare conditions there with these prevailing in the abandoned, traditional nesting site. Mundkur *et al.* (1989) have reported another nesting site of the Lesser Flamingo in the Little Rann but there has been no follow up study. It is a matter of concern.

References

Thakker, P. S. (1981). Flamingo flock at Thol Lake. The Times of India 18th September 1981.

Ali, S. (1945). The Birds of Kutch. Oxford University Press, Bombay.

Ali, S. (1974). Breeding of the Lesser Flamingo in Kutch. *J. Bombay Nat. His. Soc.* 71: 141-144.

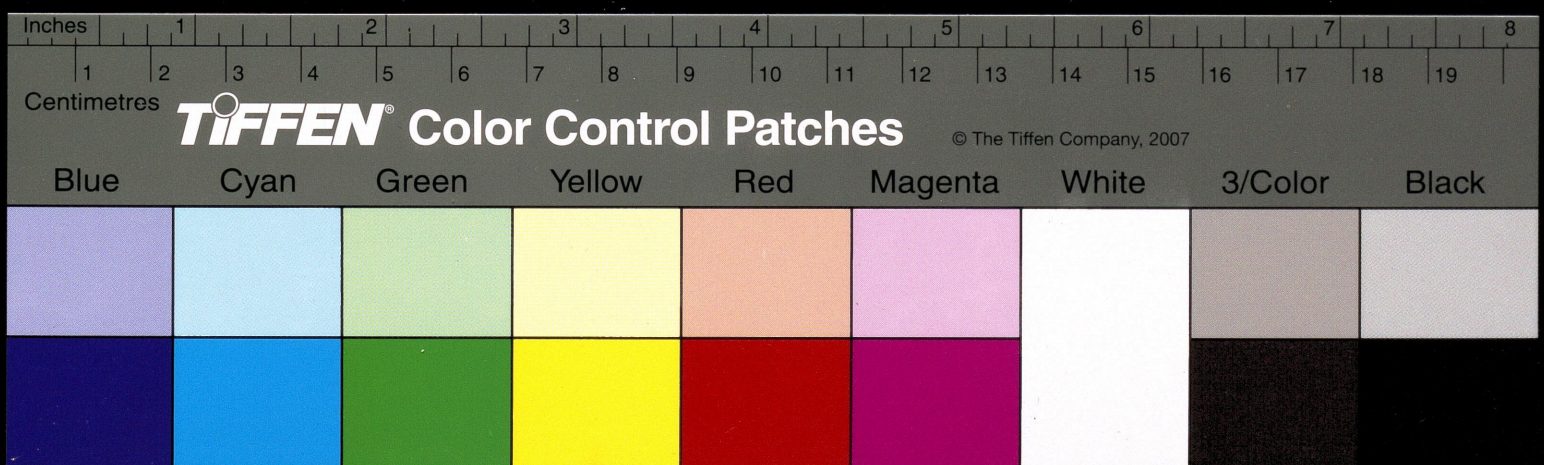
Thakker, P. S. (1982). Why did the Flamingos shift their breeding ground? ISRO (Ahmedabad), Technical Report. pp. 108-116.

Ashok Kumar, B. (1986). Rise in global mean sea level has it affected the flamingo breeding grounds? *J. Bombay Nat. His. Soc.* 83(2): 433-434.

McCann, C. (1939). The flamingo (*Phoenicopterus ruber antiquorum* Temm.). *J. Bombay Nat. His. Soc.* 41(1): 12-38.

Abdulali, H. (1964). On the food and other habits of the Greater Flamingo (*Phoenicopterus roseus* Pallas) in India, In: "A Century of Natural History" pp. 494-499. Oxford University Press, Bombay.

Mundkur, T., R. Pravez, S. Khachar and R. M. Naik (1989). Hitherto unreported nest site of the Lesser Flamingo *Phoeniconaias minor* in the Little Rann



of Kutch, Gujarat. *J. Bombay Nat. His. Soc.* 86(3): 281-285.

[This paper was presented in the national Symposium on Animal Behaviour held at Bhavnagar University in 1988 when its abstract was published. However, a full length paper was not published which is published here.

Since, there are some very valuable observations made that should be taken note of when working on any future strategy for the effective conservation of flamingos in Gujarat. -Eds.]



Fig. 1 Location of Flamingo City (in circle) and The New Location of Nesting Site (in square)

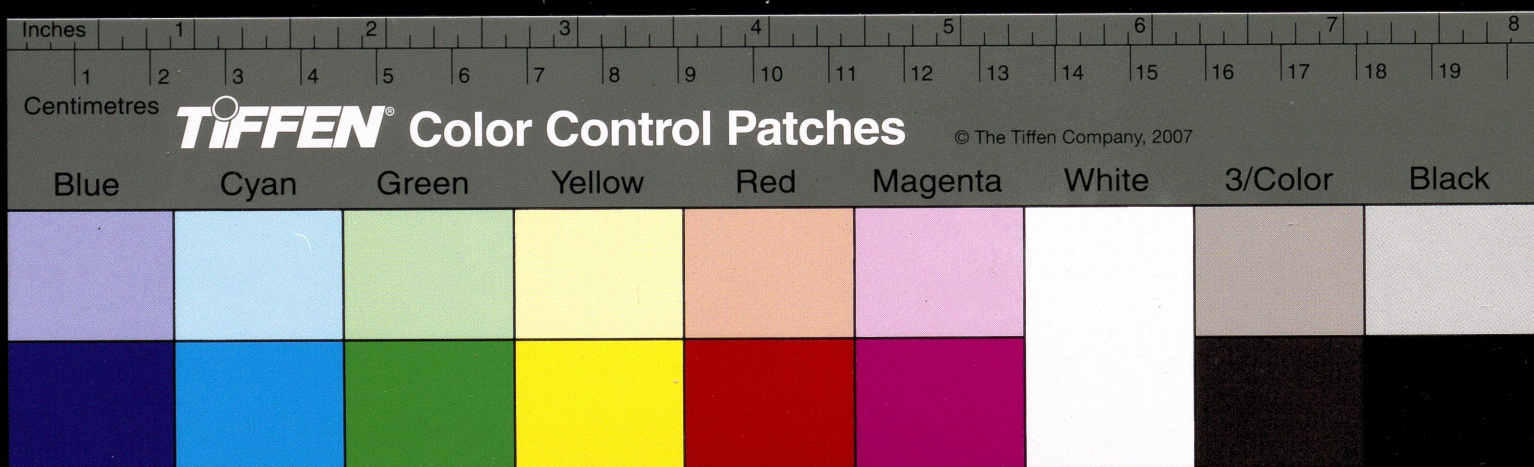
Communal Roosting of House Crows at Nalsarovar

Anika Tere

AINP on Agricultural Ornithology, Biological Control Laboratory,
Anand Agricultural University, Anand -388 110, e-mail: anikatere@rediffmail.com

We visited Nalsarovar on 9th February 2004 in the evening. At "Flamingo House", the Guest House of Forest Department, we heard loud calls of House Crows (*Corvus splendens*) along with those of egrets, mynas, etc. The House Crows were coming from different directions and settling on the trees around the "Flamingo House" for roosting. The birds seemed to be in a hurry to occupy the best place for the night! The larger and stronger ones were trying to push off the smaller and weaker ones. After sunset,

the calls became more intense and louder as the number of crows increased. Every tree contained from 3 to a maximum of 50 House Crows. They mainly occupied Neem and Eucalyptus trees; however other trees such as Tamarind, Peepal, Cassia, Prosopis, etc were also occupied. Many of the trees were exclusively occupied by House Crows, while on others there were Indian Shags (*Phalacrocorax fuscicollis*), Little Cormorants (*Phalacrocorax niger*), Bank Mynas (*Acridotheres ginginianus*), Rosy Starlings



(*Sturnus roseus*), Little Egrets (*Egretta garzetta*), Median Egrets (*Mesophoyx intermedia*), Large Egrets (*Casmerodius albus*) and Cattle Egrets (*Bubulcus ibis*). However, amongst the species of birds roosting in this area, House Crow seemed to be the dominant one. In addition to the trees around the Guest House, about 20 House Crows also made use of the television antenna for roosting! We counted a total of 466 House Crow.

The communal roosting was observed on 31 trees.

A total of 1194 birds belonging to eight species were roosting together. The dominant species was House Crow followed by Indian Shag and Little Cormorant. The House Crows occupied 24 trees; the egrets only 7 (all Eucalyptus), while the Bank Mynas and Rosy Starlings used 4 Cassia trees. The crows roosted with all the species of the commune except the Indian Shags and egrets. This roost has been in occupation for several years.

Table 1. Species grouping on trees of the communal roost at Nalsarovar.

Trees	No. of Trees	No. of House Crow	No. of Other Bird Species						
			L. Cormorant	I. Shag	C. Egret	M. Egret	L. Egret	B. Myna	R. Starling
Neem	9	138	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Eucalyptus	4	32	18	-	2	-	-	-	-
Eucalyptus	7		233	363	10	22	10	-	-
Prosopis	1	6	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Cassia	4	110	-	-	-	-	-	50	20
Acacia	1	10	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Salvadora persica	1	20	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Subaval	1	60	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Casurina	1	15	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Peepal	1	15	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Unidentified	1	60	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total No.	31	466	251	363	12	22	10	50	20

R. Starling = Rosy Starling

Important Birding Sites Around Porbandar

Jaidev Dhadhal

Plot No. 8, Vrindavan Society, College Road, Patan-384 265. e-mail: jaidevjaidev@rediffmail.com

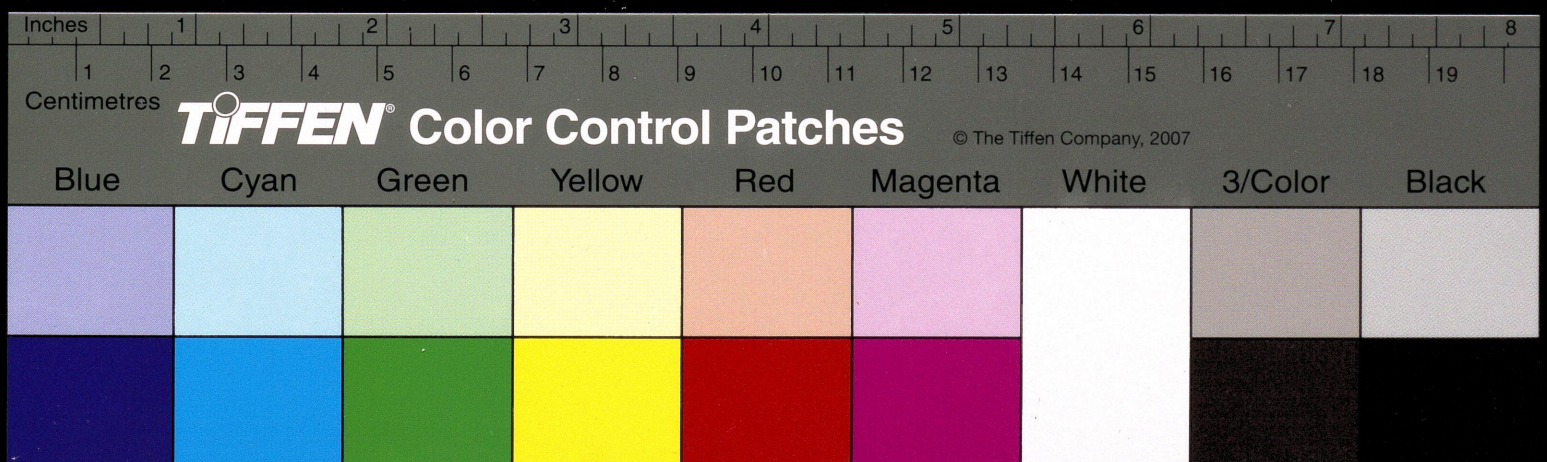
Porbandar, the *Janma-bhumi* of Mahatma Gandhi, *Karma-bhumi* of many mafia dons is Swarg-bhumi for birdwatchers! The combination of brackish water and fresh-rain water wetlands around the city attract a variety of birds. The avifauna varies from waders to grassland birds, and scrubland birds.

Bharatbhai Rughani, B. K. Parmar—RFO and myself have recorded around 211 species of birds around Porbandar. There would be many more. I will herewith describe some of the birding “hot spots”. Our checklist is also appended.

Rann of Chhaya: Situated between Chhaya village

and the Birla factory. The water-body contains rainwater, sewage water and wastes discharged from the factory. It is a wonderful place to watch Lesser Flamingos in thousands at very close quarter. Ducks, terns, grebes (Little and Black-necked) are other birds most visible. The water-body is completely surrounded by intense human activity, yet the birds are not disturbed and astonishingly confiding.

Khadi of Subhashnagar: The tidal creek with thickets of mangrove makes this an unique wetland which stretches 4 to 5 km from Kurly bridge to the sea. It is favourite hunt of a multitude of waders, Large Flamingos, storks (Painted and Black-necked), ducks, gulls, Rosy



Pastors and Harriers. In the evenings when thousands of the starlings converse to roost among the mangroves, they appear as a huge cloud whirling in the sky. Mangroves being cut for cattle feed is the major disturbance, otherwise there appears no major threat for the present. These are plans, however, to build a check dam below the Jubilee Bridge to check ingress of the tidal water and to store rainwater on other. If this happens, a two-kilometer stretch of mangroves will die above the check dam.

Kuchhadi – Zavar: Cranes, pelicans, Crested Grebes, ducks, Indian Coursers, Houbaras etc. among other species are main attraction of this wetland and rocky wasteland surrounding it. The rocky plains and scrub are favorite nesting grounds for larks, lapwings, coursers, Stone Plovers and Stone Curlews. The wetland is totally dependent on rainwater. Agricultural and residential encroachment on the wastelands, illegal quarrying for building stones and lifting water to irrigate farmland are the major threats to this attractive habitat.

Baradasagar Dam: Earlier the Sarus Crane used to nest here. After 1997-98 the cranes have not been seen. Thousands of wintering cranes visit the waterbody during the winter flying out to farms in the fields around. Pelicans, coots, Purple Moorhen, ducks, storks (White-necked, Asian Openbill and Painted), harriers, ibises (all three) can be seen in good numbers. Great Crested Grebes breed here every year and that too in large number. As the dam is meant for irrigation water lifting for agriculture cannot be considered a threat to the waterbody.

Gosa: This is a very large expanse covered by flood water during the monsoon and into the early months of winter. Waters of the Bhadar and its tributaries spread over what is known as the Ghed area and at Gosa Bara the water enters the sea. It is almost impossible to scan the whole wetland for an effective bird count both because of its size and the dense growth of reeds.

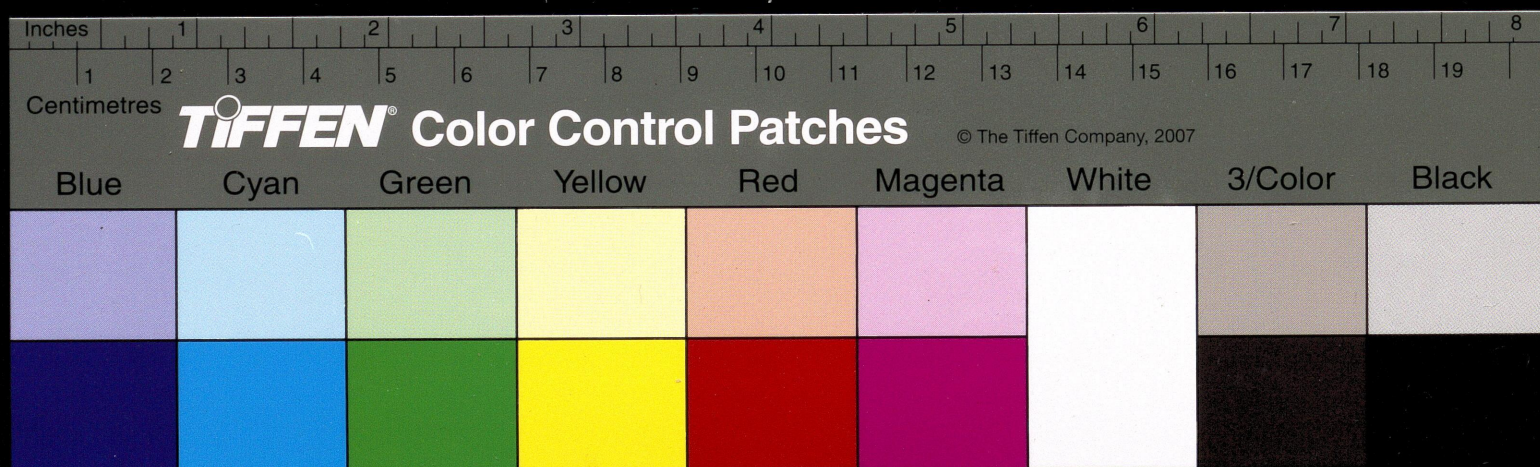
Amipur dam: One of the best water reservoirs of the area as far as an avian habitat. It has all the qualifications to be considered as a Ramsar site. More than ten thousand cranes visit the place. Great numbers of ducks and other water birds flow to this waterbody. Systematic surveys are to be recommended. The reservoir deserved to be declared as a bird-reserve.

Vanana: The area is connected to the Gosa waters. It is best for watching cranes, ducks, pelicans etc.

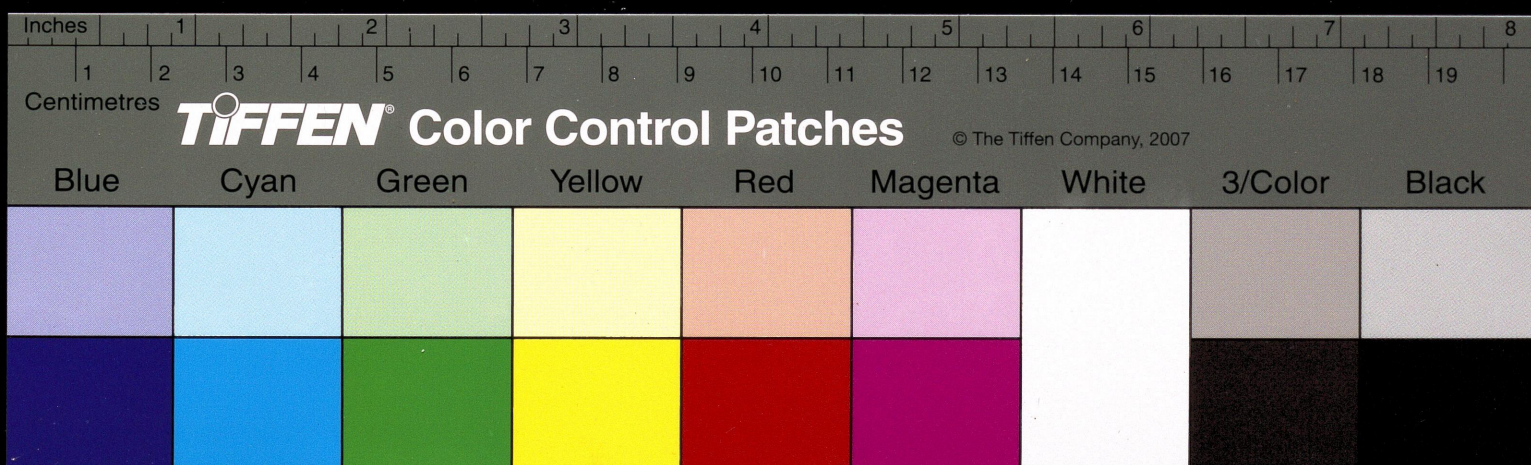
The Porbander Bird Sanctuary: Being situated in midst of the town; Porbandar bird sanctuary is facing great threat from human pressure and is on verge of getting extinct! Though fenced in, poor management has made it more of a sewage water accumulation. A few flamingos, coots and Little Grebes can be seen around. Spot-billed Ducks regularly nest here. Pochards (Common, Tufted and Ferruginous), Shovellers, Wigeons drop in during the winter. In my view, the Forest Department should constitute a permanent committee consisting of forest officials and bird-watchers to oversee for the development and improvement of this unique bird sanctuary.

A Checklist of the birds sighted at Porbandar

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. Great Crested Grebe (<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>) | 21. Oriental White Ibis (<i>Threskiornis melanocephalus</i>) |
| 2. Little Grebe (<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>) | 22. Black Ibis (<i>Pseudibis papillosa</i>) |
| 3. Great White Pelican (<i>Pelecanus onocrotalus</i>) | 23. Glossy Ibis (<i>Plegadis falcinellus</i>) |
| 4. Dalmatian Pelican (<i>Pelecanus crispus</i>) | 24. Eurasian Spoonbill (<i>Platalea leucorodia</i>) |
| 5. Great Cormorant (<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>) | 25. Greater Flamingo (<i>Phoenicopterus ruber</i>) |
| 6. Indian Shag (<i>Phalacrocorax fuscicollis</i>) | 26. Lesser Flamingo (<i>Phoenicopterus minor</i>) |
| 7. Little Cormorant (<i>Phalacrocorax niger</i>) | 27. Bar-headed Goose (<i>Anser indicus</i>) |
| 8. Darter (<i>Anhinga melanogaster</i>) | 28. Brahminy Shelduck (<i>Tadorna ferruginea</i>) |
| 9. Grey Heron (<i>Ardea cinerea</i>) | 29. Northern Pintail (<i>Anas acuta</i>) |
| 10. Purple Heron (<i>Ardea purpurea</i>) | 30. Lesser Whistling-Duck (<i>Dendrocygna javanica</i>) |
| 11. Indian Pond-Heron (<i>Ardeola grayii</i>) | 31. Common Teal (<i>Anas crecca</i>) |
| 12. Cattle Egret (<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>) | 32. Spot-billed Duck (<i>Anas poecilorhyncha</i>) |
| 13. Median Egret (<i>Mesophoyx intermedia</i>) | 33. Mallard (<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>) |
| 14. Little Egret (<i>Egretta garzetta</i>) | 34. Gadwall (<i>Anas strepera</i>) |
| 15. Western Reef-Egret (<i>Egretta gularis</i>) | 35. Eurasian Wigeon (<i>Anas penelope</i>) |
| 16. Black-crowned Night-Heron (<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>) | 36. Garganey (<i>Anas querquedula</i>) |
| 17. Painted Stork (<i>Mycteria leucocephala</i>) | 37. Northern Shoveller (<i>Anas clypeata</i>) |
| 18. Asian Openbill-Stork (<i>Anastomus oscitans</i>) | 38. Common Pochard (<i>Aythya ferina</i>) |
| 19. White-necked Stork (<i>Ciconia episcopus</i>) | 39. Ferruginous Pochard (<i>Aythya nyroca</i>) |
| 20. Black-necked Stork (<i>Ephippiorhynchus asiaticus</i>) | 40. Tufted Pochard (<i>Aythya fuligula</i>) |



41. Cotton Teal (*Nettapus coromandelianus*)
42. Comb Duck (*Sarkidiornis melanotos*)
43. Black-shouldered Kite (*Elanus caeruleus*)
44. Oriental Honey-Buzzard (*Pernis ptilorhynchus*)
45. Black Kite (*Milvus migrans*)
46. Brahminy Kite (*Haliastur indus*)
47. Shikra (*Accipiter badius*)
48. Bonelli's Eagle (*Hieraaetus fasciatus*)
49. Booted Eagle (*Hieraaetus pennatus*)
50. Tawny Eagle (*Aquila rapax*)
51. Steppe Eagle (*Aquila nipalensis*)
52. Indian White-backed Vulture (*Gyps bengalensis*)
53. Pallid Harrier (*Circus macrourus*)
54. Montagu's Harrier (*Circus pygargus*)
55. Western Marsh-Harrier (*Circus aeruginosus*)
56. Osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*)
57. Eurasian Hobby (*Falco subbuteo*)
58. Common Kestrel (*Falco tinnunculus*)
59. Painted Francolin (*Francolinus pictus*)
60. Grey Francolin (*Francolinus pondicerianus*)
61. Common Quail (*Coturnix coturnix*)
62. Jungle Bush-Quail (*Perdica asiatica*)
63. Indian Peafowl (*Pavo cristatus*)
64. Common Crane (*Grus grus*)
65. Sarus Crane (*Grus antigone*)
66. Demoiselle Crane (*Grus virgo*)
67. Baillon's Crake (*Porzana pusilla*)
68. Common Moorhen (*Gallinula chloropus*)
69. Purple Moorhen (*Porphyrio porphyrio*)
70. Common Coot (*Fulica atra*)
71. Houbara (*Chlamydotis undulata*)
72. Pheasant-tailed Jacana (*Hydrophasianus chirurgus*)
73. Eurasian Oystercatcher (*Haematopus ostralegus*)
74. White-tailed Lapwing (*Vanellus leucurus*)
75. Red-wattled Lapwing (*Vanellus indicus*)
76. Yellow-wattled Lapwing (*Vanellus malabaricus*)
77. Grey Plover (*Pluvialis squatarola*)
78. Pacific Golden-Plover (*Pluvialis fulva*)
79. Little Ringed Plover (*Charadrius dubius*)
80. Kentish Plover (*Charadrius alexandrinus*)
81. Lesser Sand Plover (*Charadrius mongolus*)
82. Whimbrel (*Numenius phaeopus*)
83. Eurasian Curlew (*Numenius arquata*)
84. Slender-Billed Curlew (*Numenius tenuirostris*) ?
85. Black-tailed Godwit (*Limosa limosa*)
86. Bar-tailed Godwit (*Limosa lapponica*)
87. Spotted Redshank (*Tringa erythropus*)
88. Common Redshank (*Tringa totanus*)
89. Marsh Sandpiper (*Tringa stagnatilis*)
90. Common Greenshank (*Tringa nebularia*)
91. Green Sandpiper (*Tringa ochropus*)
92. Wood Sandpiper (*Tringa glareola*)
93. Terek Sandpiper (*Xenus cinereus*)
94. Common Sandpiper (*Actitis hypoleucos*)
95. Ruddy Turnstone (*Arenaria interpres*)
96. Pintail Snipe (*Gallinago stenura*)
97. Common Snipe (*Gallinago gallinago*)
98. Jack Snipe (*Lymnocyptes minimus*)
99. Sanderling (*Calidris alba*)
100. Little Stint (*Calidris minuta*)
101. Temminck's Stint (*Calidris temminckii*)
102. Dunlin (*Calidris alpina*)
103. Curlew Sandpiper (*Calidris ferruginea*)
104. Spoonbill Sandpiper (*Calidris pygmeus*) ???
105. Ruff (*Philomachus pugnax*)
106. Greater Painted-Snipe (*Rostratula benghalensis*)
107. Pied Avocet (*Recurvirostra avosetta*)
108. Stone-Curlew (*Burhinus oediconemus*)
109. Great Stone-Plover (*Esacus recurvirostris*)
110. Indian Courser (*Cursorius coromandelicus*)
111. Small Pratincole (*Glareola lactea*)
112. Heuglin's Gull (*Larus heuglini*)
113. Brown-headed Gull (*Larus brunnicephalus*)
114. Black-headed Gull (*Larus ridibundus*)
115. Gull-billed Tern (*Gelochelidon nilotica*)
116. Caspian Tern (*Sterna caspia*)
117. River Tern (*Sterna aurantia*)
118. Common Tern (*Sterna hirundo*)
119. Little Tern (*Sterna albifrons*)
120. Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse (*Pterocles exustus*)
121. Painted Sandgrouse (*Pterocles indicus*)
122. Blue Rock Pigeon (*Columba livia*)
123. Eurasian Collared-Dove (*Streptopelia decaocto*)
124. Red Collared-Dove (*Streptopelia tranquebarica*)
125. Little Brown Dove (*Streptopelia senegalensis*)
126. Rose-ringed Parakeet (*Psittacula krameri*)
127. Pied Crested Cuckoo (*Clamator jacobinus*)
128. Brainfever Bird (*Hierococcyx varius*)
129. Asian Koel (*Eudynamis scolopacea*)
130. Sirkeer Malkoha (*Phaenicophaeus leschenaultii*)
131. Greater Coucal (*Centropus sinensis*)
132. Barn Owl (*Tyto alba*)
133. Eurasian Eagle-Owl (*Bubo bubo*)
134. Spotted Owlet (*Athene brama*)
135. Indian Jungle Nightjar (*Caprimulgus indicus*)
136. Common Indian Nightjar (*Caprimulgus asiaticus*)
137. House Swift (*Apus affinis*)
138. Lesser Pied Kingfisher (*Ceryle rudis*)
139. Small Blue Kingfisher (*Alcedo atthis*)
140. White-breasted Kingfisher (*Halcyon smyrnensis*)
141. Blue-cheeked Bee-eater (*Merops persicus*)
142. Small Bee-eater (*Merops orientalis*)
143. European Roller (*Coracias garrulus*)
144. Indian Roller (*Coracias benghalensis*)
145. Common Hoopoe (*Upupa epops*)
146. Coppersmith Barbet (*Megalaima haemacephala*)
147. Eurasian Wryneck (*Jynx torquilla*)
148. Yellow-fronted Pied Woodpecker (*Dendrocopos mahrattensis*)
149. Singing Bush-Lark (*Mirafra cantillans*)
150. Red-winged Bush-Lark (*Mirafra erythroptera*)
151. Ashy-crowned Sparrow-Lark (*Eremopterix grisea*)
152. Rufous-tailed Finch-Lark (*Ammomanes phoenicurus*)
153. Greater Short-toed Lark (*Calandrella brachydactyla*)



- | | |
|--|--|
| 154. Common Crested Lark (<i>Galerida cristata</i>) | 183. Plain Prinia (<i>Prinia inornata</i>) |
| 155. Sykes's Crested Lark (<i>Galerida deva</i>) | 184. Ashy Prinia (<i>Prinia socialis</i>) |
| 156. Eastern Skylark (<i>Alauda gulgula</i>) | 185. Jungle Prinia (<i>Prinia sylvatica</i>) |
| 157. Common Swallow (<i>Hirundo rustica</i>) | 186. Common Tailorbird (<i>Orthotomus sutorius</i>) |
| 158. Wire-tailed Swallow (<i>Hirundo smithii</i>) | 187. Indian Great Reed-Warbler (<i>Acrocephalusstentoreus</i>) |
| 159. Southern Grey Shrike (<i>Lanius meridionalis</i>) | 188. Oriental Magpie-Robin (<i>Copsychus saularis</i>) |
| 160. Bay-backed Shrike (<i>Lanius vittatus</i>) | 189. Black Redstart (<i>Phoenicurus ochruros</i>) |
| 161. Rufous-backed Shrike (<i>Lanius schach</i>) | 190. Common Stonechat (<i>Saxicola torquata</i>) |
| 162. Eurasian Golden Oriole (<i>Oriolus oriolus</i>) | 191. Pied Bushchat (<i>Saxicola caprata</i>) |
| 163. Grey-headed Starling (<i>Sturnus malabaricus</i>) | 192. Isabelline Wheatear (<i>Oenanthe isabellina</i>) |
| 164. Brahminy Starling (<i>Sturnus pagodarum</i>) | 193. Desert Wheatear (<i>Oenanthe deserti</i>) |
| 165. Rosy Starling (<i>Sturnus roseus</i>) | 194. Indian Robin (<i>Saxicoloides fulicata</i>) |
| 166. Common Starling (<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>) | 195. Blue Rock-Thrush (<i>Monticola solitarius</i>) |
| 167. Asian Pied Starling (<i>Sturnus contra</i>) | 196. Great Tit (<i>Parus major</i>) |
| 168. Common Myna (<i>Acridotheres tristis</i>) | 197. Paddyfield Pipit (<i>Anthus rufulus</i>) |
| 169. Bank Myna (<i>Acridotheres ginginianus</i>) | 198. Forest Wagtail (<i>Dendronanthus indicus</i>) |
| 170. Indian Treepie (<i>Dendrocitta vagabunda</i>) | 199. Yellow Wagtail (<i>Motacilla flava</i>) |
| 171. House Crow (<i>Corvus splendens</i>) | 200. Citrine Wagtail (<i>Motacilla citreola</i>) |
| 172. Common Woodshrike (<i>Tephrodornis pondicerianus</i>) | 201. Grey Wagtail (<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>) |
| 173. White-eared Bulbul (<i>Pycnonotus leucotis</i>) | 202. White Wagtail (<i>Motacilla alba</i>) |
| 174. Red-vented Bulbul (<i>Pycnonotus cafer</i>) | 203. Purple Sunbird (<i>Nectarinia asiatica</i>) |
| 175. Common Babbler (<i>Turdoides caudatus</i>) | 204. Oriental White-eye (<i>Zosterops palpebrosus</i>) |
| 176. Large Grey Babbler (<i>Turdoides malcolmi</i>) | 205. House Sparrow (<i>Passer domesticus</i>) |
| 177. Jungle Babbler (<i>Turdoides striatus</i>) | 206. Yellow-throated Sparrow (<i>Petronia xanthocollis</i>) |
| 178. Asian Brown Flycatcher (<i>Muscicapa daurica</i>) | 207. Baya Weaver (<i>Ploceus philippinus</i>) |
| 179. Red-throated Flycatcher (<i>Ficedula parva</i>) | 208. Black-breasted Weaver (<i>Ploceus benghalensis</i>) |
| 180. Tickell's Blue-Flycatcher (<i>Cyornis tickelliae</i>) | 209. White-throated Munia (<i>Lonchura malabarica</i>) |
| 181. Grey-headed Flycatcher (<i>Culicicapa ceylonensis</i>) | 210. Black-headed Bunting (<i>Emberiza melanocephala</i>) |
| 182. Asian Paradise-Flycatcher (<i>Terpsiphone paradisi</i>) | 211. White-breasted Waterhen (<i>Amaurornis phoenicurus</i>) |

BIRDING NOTES

Nesting Adaptations in Birds

Snehal Patel

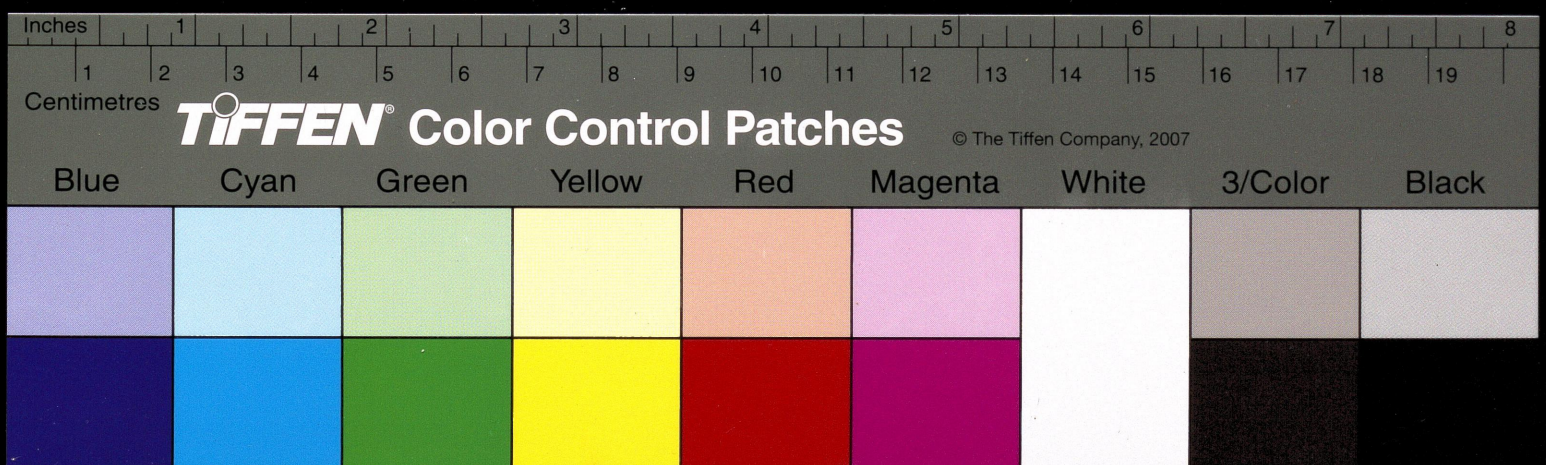
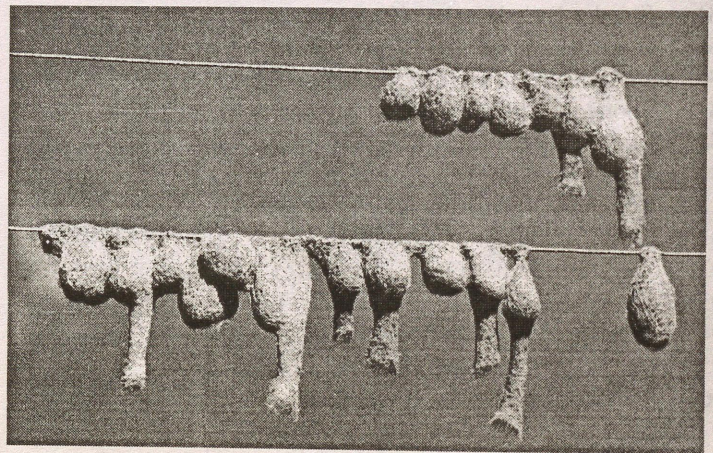
Nature Club Surat, 81, Sarjan Society, Surat -395 007.

With changes from open lands to urbanization, some of the birds have also started to adapt new nesting material and sites. This year, a bulbul placed its nest on a tube light strip inside a factory full of dust and loud noise! The nesting was successful and the juveniles have started living in the factory premises surviving on food tit bits offered by workers of the factory.

While transplanting a twenty feet tall Peepal tree from a construction site to our wetland conservation site, we observed an empty nest on the tree, it was completely made from wires, carefully placed to make a perfect cup shaped interior. There was no shortage of natural material, but the bird simply chose the readily available wire pieces from the construction site. From its size, the nest appeared to be that of crows.

Recently we saw about 25 Baya Weaver (*Ploceus philippinus*) nests on an electrical transmission line, they

were all so closely built that they were interwoven with each other and gave impression of one piece structure! In a normal colony of weaverbirds nests look beautiful with individual structures swinging from trees, but this colony brought to mind row houses with sharing walls.



Forest Wagtail at Jamnagar

Maulik S. Varu, Jalpan C. Rupapara and Purvesh K. Kacha

Room No. 39, Hostel 2, Shri M. P. Shah Medical College, Jamnagar

On 23rd February 2005, at 2:30 p.m. we sighted a Forest Wagtail (*Motacilla indica*) on a Neem tree outside our hostel. It came to the ground for sometime and again flew on the tree. It was wagging its tail from side to side. We photographed it and monitored it for next 3 days at the same place.

This wagtail is recorded in evergreen and deciduous forests in winter. In Gujarat, it has been recorded in Gir and Dang Forests. M. K. Himmatsinjhi had seen this bird at Bhuj in his garden on 10th January 1967. Satyajit Khacher had seen it at Jasdan in his compound on 19th November 1967.

Our campus is in middle of Jamnagar city hence this sighting is worth recording.

References

Himmatsinjhi, M. K. (1967). Some interesting migrants in Kutch. *J. Bombay Nat. Hist. Soc.* 65: 225.

Khachar, Satyajit (1989). Forset Wagtail *Motacilla indica* at Jasdan, Gujarat. *J. Bombay Nat. Hist. Soc.* 86(3): 453.



Hypocolius in Kachchh

S. N. Varu

Temple Street, Junavas, Madhapar, Bhuj-370 020

Hypocolius (*Hypocolius ampelinus*) is a rare winter visitor to Kachchh. In recent times, it has been frequently seen in Kachchh in the Fulay Rakhhal of Nakhatrana Taluka. During my recent visits to Fulay Rakhhal during year 2005, I have seen this bird thrice as under:

On 6th February 15 birds; on 13th February 20 birds and on 17th February 10 birds. They were seen on Pилоo

trees (*Salvalora persiea*) feeding on the berries. They were observed roosting in particular patches of Salvalora trees. House Crows (*Corvus splendens*) were also seen feeding on the Salvalora berries. Earlier on 13th January 2005, while bird watching with J. K. Tiwari, we had observed 10-15 House Crows feeding on Salvalora fruits at Chhari Dhandh.

Entrust The Mortifying Wetlands To Whom?

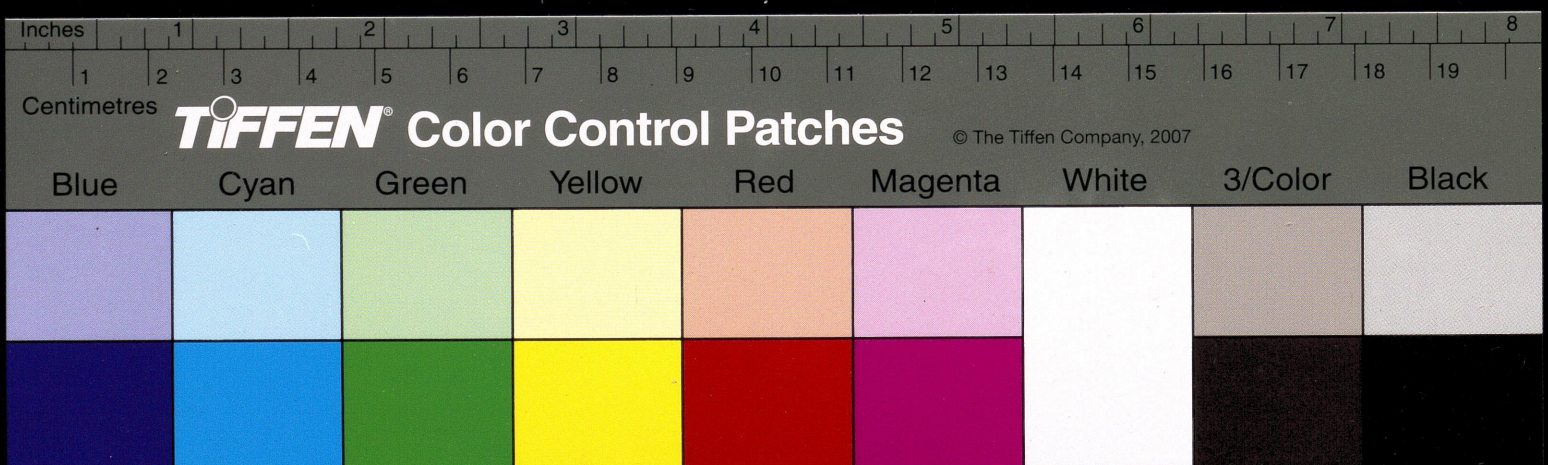
Sapna S.

6, Paramhans Society, Opp. ITI, Gorwa, Vadodara-390 016. e-mail: sapnasurendran@yahoo.co.in

A series of surveys have been conducted in the recent past to gather information about the condition of village ponds in urban as well as rural areas of India. But nothing has actually materialized in this existing world of degradation and elimination of the earth's resources. Available data emphasizes the need for serious conservation action for these water bodies. Most of the wetlands have receded under the pressure from growing population and ever increasing boundaries of city limits. A good wetland is known to act as a sponge and as a filter in the sense, it holds water and allows its release into a river slowly and, in the dry season,

it keeps the streams active through spring from recharged aquifers (Petrick Denny, 2004).

The elixir of life is depleting at an alarming rate. Innumerable appeals to the dailies have made little or no impact on the crisis. And indeed it is a crisis! The most awful and more recent example is of the Harni village pond, situated about 6km from the Vadodara railway station and on the outskirts of the Vadodara airport. An earlier itinerary of the floral and faunal diversity tinted a very promising picture. The potential of this small village pond appeared tremendous till the very recent past. There was a thriving



biodiversity in that pond of 20 acres. 130 species of winter migrants and resident birds thronged the water body all through out the year (Padate and Sapna, 1996). About 50 species of submerged, free-floating and terrestrial flora bloomed seasonally. The once thriving diversity of fish species in the pond has been sadly depleted by the inflow of sewage and progressive silting on the periphery. The flourishing biodiversity showed a sustainable set of dynamics that have completely collapsed. Digging and de-silting has not helped and the pond that was so full of life not so long ago has become a dead water tank. A vibrant pond with dual vitality appears to be a thing of the past!

The condition of the Lalbaug pond (just adjacent to the Central Reserve Police Force Colony) holds a similar fate. There is an explosive over-growth of algae resulting in eutrophication. Not just the resident bird species but also the wild crocodile has been dwelling in this roadside pond in peaceful coexistence since last many decades (Patankar, 2004). Then, there is the Gajrawadi agricultural land patch with a water body beside it (on the Mumbai-Ahmedabad Highway crossing No. 8), which used to attract hundreds of waders through out the year. But now the birds have gone and there is only concrete jungle in the once flourishing habitat of the aves. . These are just few examples of the degradation and destruction of wetland habitats, which are

being encroached upon by the ever demanding human population and their selfish needs.

Small water bodies have always been excellent homing and wintering grounds for a variety of birds since ages. . Can anything be done to ensure their conservation through careful management practices? Who is actually to take care of these water bodies? — the Municipal Corporation, NGOs or a Wetland Management authority? But is the blame game going to help the already worn out ecosystem? Stringent measures have to be taken instantaneously to prevent further degradation and obliteration of the remaining water bodies. We have to accept that the natural ponds are waterlogged wealth and friends of mankind. Can we as members of the bird watching fraternity effectively act to ensure that birds and associated life forms are protected?

References

Padate G. S. and S. Sapna (1996). Checklist of birds in and around Harni pond, an urban wetland near Baroda. *Pavo* 34 (1&2): 95-104.
 Patankar G. P. (2004). White Ibis nesting amidst chaos. *Newsletter for Birdwatchers* 44(2): 27.
 Patrick Denny (2004). In: Wetlands: Wastelands or Sources of Wealth? By Barry James, *Third World Network Features Update* January 2004.

Red-winged Crested Cuckoo at Vapi: A First Record for Gujarat State

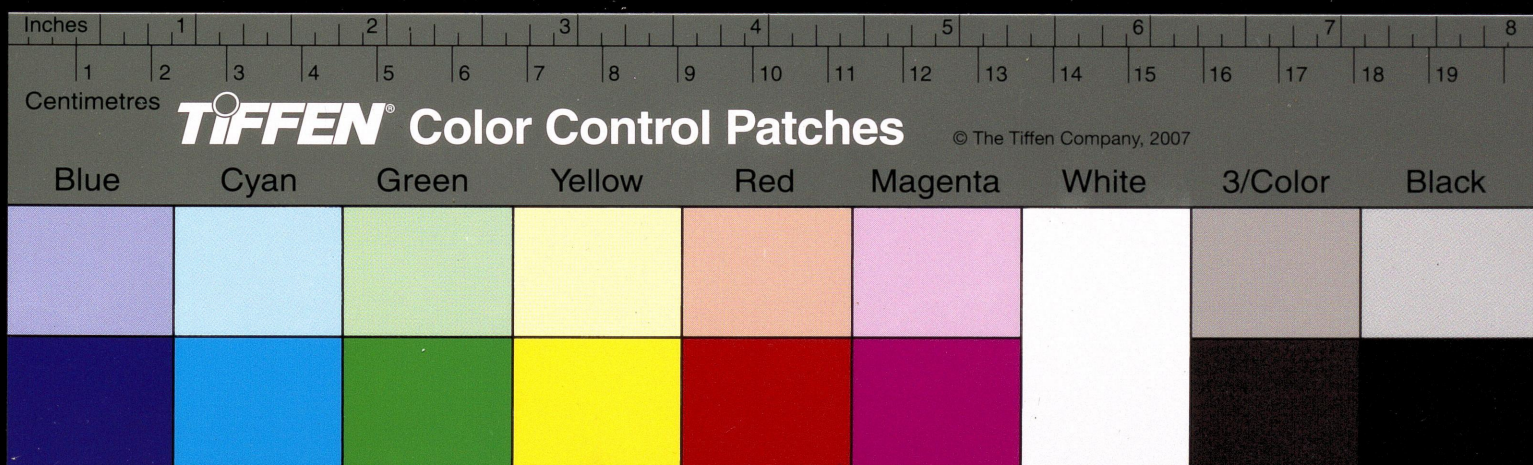
Prashant Desai

Micro Inks Limited, Bilakhia House, Chala, Vapi. e-mail: Prashant.Desai@microinks.com

On Sunday, 10th July 2005 at 07:30 in the morning, I was sitting in the balcony of my house at Vapi (Valsad District). To the South West of the balcony is an abandoned orchard; in front at a distance of about 200 meters is a lone bungalow and to the North West is an apartment. Rest of the land is huge grassland interspersed with shrubs of Babul, Wild Berry and a few Date Palms.

While sitting on the swing and reading, I suddenly noticed an unusual bird alighting on a Babul tree hardly 4 to 5 meters high and at a distance of around 50 meters from the balcony. The bird had shining black head with crest, yellowish buff on the throat and a large black tail. I instantly knew that I had not seen this bird before and was immensely excited. Initially I thought this could be a cuckoo or a malkoha. From its mere size, I eliminated the cuckoos. I knew – Brainfever Bird, Indian Plaintive, Sirkeer and Pied Crested. A current of excitement ran through my veins. I

was looking at a new bird! I knew I was on a jackpot. I rushed down, called my wife and instantly returned with our binoculars. The bird had flown farther on to another shrub 30 meters away. Through the binoculars, I saw the chestnut on its wings. I tried but could not see the white band on its neck. The bird came down on the ground to feed where it was challenged by Common Mynas (*Acrodothores tristis*) and it flew away. While my wife was still looking at the bird as Red-winged Crested Cuckoo. I opened my fieldguide by Grimmett *et al.* (1999) and confirmed the identity of the bird. The field guide's distribution map shows an individual record of the bird in Maharashtra but not a single one in Gujarat State. Fortunately Shri Lalsinh Raol was in Valsad at that time. When I informed him about the sighting in the afternoon, he said that this is the first record of the Red-winged Crested Cuckoo for Gujarat State.



VULTURE UPDATE

Date	Place	Vulture spp	Activity	Bird watcher
15 th Aug. 2004	Dabhala Panjrapole, Ahmedabad	WBV-100	Feeding on carcass	Kartik Shastri, Ahmedabad
29 th Aug. 2004	Jasapar, near Abdasa	WBV-58, LBV-3		S. N. Varu, Bhuj
26 th Sept. 2004	Jasapar, near Abdasa	WBV-2		S. N. Varu, Bhuj
30 th Sept. 2004	Space Application Center, A'bad	WBV-20	Soaring	P.S.Thakker, Ahmedabad
1 st Oct. 2004	Nanakwada, Near Valsad	WBV-3	Soaring	Vikas Upadhyay, Valsad
28 th Oct. 2004	Space Application Center, A'bad	WBV-6	Soaring	P S Thakker, Ahmedabad
22 nd Nov. 2004	Space Application Center, A'bad	WBV-5	Soaring	P S Thakker, Ahmedabad
5 th Dec. 2004	Dabhala Panjrapole, A'bad	EGV-8	Feeding on carcass	Kartik Shastri, Ahmedabad
7 th Dec. 2004	Satellite area, Ahmedabad	WBV-6	Soaring	B. M. Parasharya, Anand
7 th Dec. 2004	Near Flower market, Ahmedabad	WBV-4	Roosting on Neem	B. M. Parasharya, Anand
13 th Dec. 2004	Hanumangala Gir, Near Khambha, Dist.- Amreli	WBV- 6 chicks+4 adults, LBV-??	Nesting in cleft	Ramesh Raval, Diu. (Reporting: Amit Jethva, Khambha)
14 th Dec. 2004	Space Application Center,	WBV-6	Soaring	P S Thakker, Ahmedabad
14 th Dec. 2004	Morbi Town	WBV -14	Soaring	Prasad Ganphule, Morbi
18 th Dec. 2004	Municipality waste dumping area on Sarkhej - Narol Road	EV -15+	Soaring	Anika Tere and B.M. Parasharya, Anand
18 th Dec. 2004	Near Khoda village on Ahmedabad - Viramgam road	EV -1	Soaring	Anika Tere and B.M. Parasharya, Anand
19 th Dec. 2004	Dabhala Panjrapole, A'bad	HGV-1 along with EGV	Feeding on carcass	Kartik Shastri, Ahmedabad
26 th Dec. 2004	Dabhala Panjrapole, A'bad	WBV-110 along with chicks	Feeding on carcass	Kartik Shastri, Ahmedabad
26 th Dec. 2004	Dabhala Panjrapole, A'bad	EGV-6, HGV-2	Feeding on carcass	Kartik Shastri, Ahmedabad

REPORTS

*First Symposium on Grasslands of Saurashtra and Kachchh :
Status and Conservation of Lark Species*

Jaydev Nansey

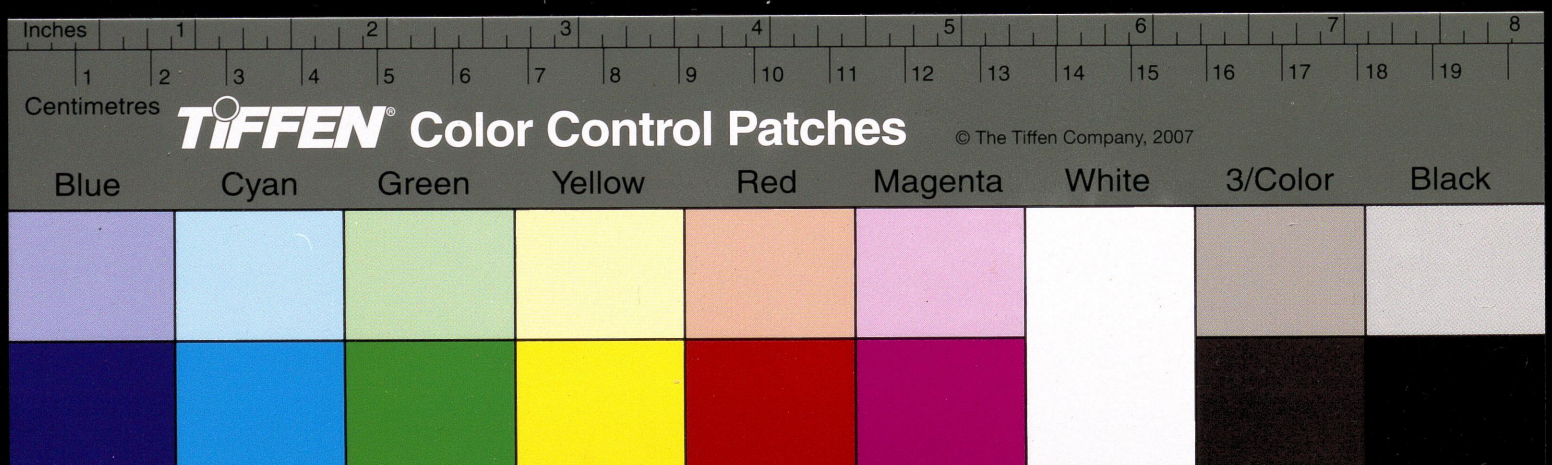
Nirmal Foundation, frd, Dr. Shah Bunglow, Patel Nagar, Jamnagar - 361 008. e-mail: nirmalfond@yahoo.co.in

First symposium on Grasslands of Saurashtra and Kachchh: Status and Conservation of Lark Species was held at Jamnagar on 4th October 2004. It was jointly organized by Nirmal Foundation frd, Jamnagar and Forest Department as a part of the Wildlife Week Celebrations 2004.

Larks belong to a group of birds found in the grasslands all over the world. Omnipresent but seldom noticed. There are about 22-24 species of larks found in India. of which 14 have been recorded in Gujarat. Larks were once very popular birds in folklore as well as aviaries of Gujarat. They were treated with great respect and were considered to be the singers of heaven. Unfortunately, today

they do not receive due attention as neither are they attractive birds nor are they endangered. In Saurashtra, larks were taught to sing classic ragas by their keepers and in Deccan they were used as fighting birds. The symbol of this symposium was a Singing Lark (with one wing spread like a poet's hand when he narrates his poetry) adopted from medieval heraldry with a motto - Hail Thee, Blithe Spirit! - taken from P. B. Shelley's famous poem 'To the Skylark'.

Eminent ornithologist, bird watchers, scientist and conservationists attended symposium from all over Gujarat. The event was organized under the guidance of Shri Pradeep Khanna, Chief Wildlife Warden, Gujarat State by Shri Jaydev Nansey, CE, Director, Nirmal Foundation frd,



Jamnagar. Mahant Sri Jagdishdasji of Kabir Ashram blessed the occasion and deliberated on the need to protect all life form in general and endangered birds in particular and released a special postal cover and cancellation. Shri Lavkumar Khacher eminent conservationist released an identification brochure on lark species found in Saurashtra

and Kachchh Region. Dr. Asad Rahmani of BNHS released a write-up on larks in Hyderabad. Experts deliberated on the status, distribution and threats to the species. Need to conserve lark habitat was discussed in detail. A set of recommendations was finalized which will be sent to relevant agencies for further action.

Heronry Appreciation Programme at Kankaria Zoo

Nandita Muni

7/2540, Shantivan Society, Opp. Talaja Octroi Point, City Circular Road, Bhavnagar - 364 002. e-mail: nandita_m@sancharnet.in

The Ahmedabad-Gandhinagar chapter of BCSG organized a Heronry Appreciation programme on 21st of August, 2005 at Kankaria Zoo. About 50 Birdwatchers participated in this programme from Ahmedabad, Gandhinagar, Baroda, Surat, Anand, Nadiad etc.

The programme started with Dr. Bakulbhai Trivedi's talk about the history of BCSG's formation, its activities and aims. Shri Lavkumar Khacher in his speech emphasized the need for community involvement if a secure future for birds were to be ensured. Shri Lalsinh Raol shared some inspiring anecdotes about birdwatching, and spoke about how love for nature could be a chief motivator in conservation efforts. Dr. Parasharya spoke about the importance of heronry and the appropriate methodology for surveying a heronry. Shri Bharatbhai Pathak (C. F.) conveyed his good wishes for BCSG's endeavours. Zoo director Dr. R. K. Sahu briefed about history of Kankaria Zoo, and about the heronry therein.

Shri D. S. Narve (C.F.) initiated discussion about Avian Flu and participants were informed about following migratory birds being recognized as potential carriers of the same:

1. Bar-headed Goose (*Anser indicus*)

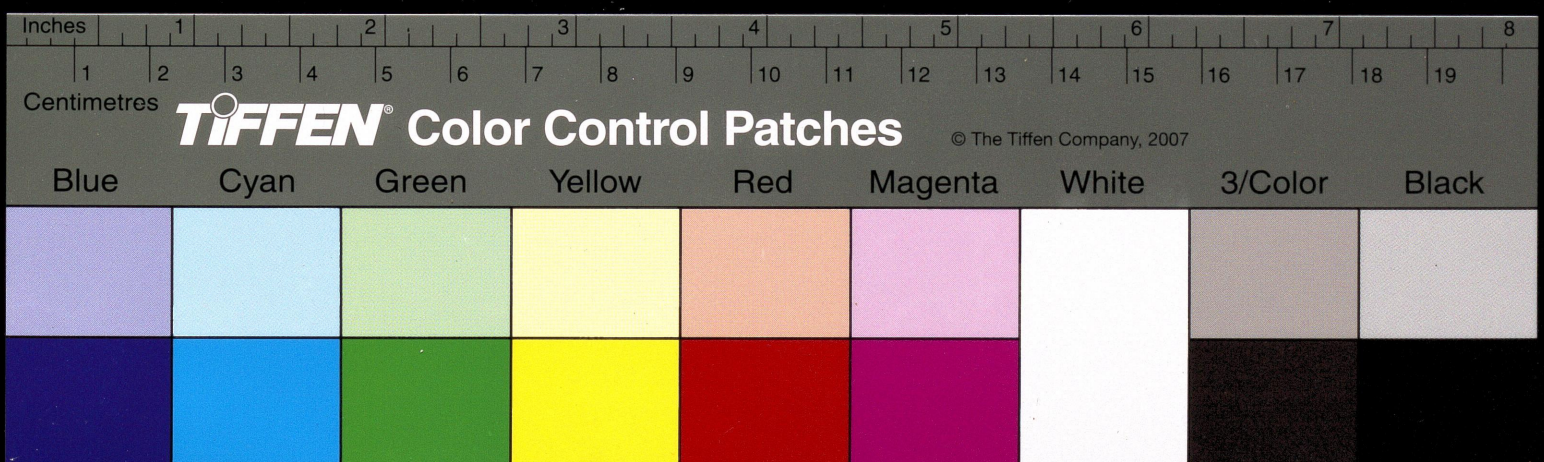
2. Great Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax carbo*)
3. Black-headed Gull (*Larus ridibundus*)

In the second part of the programme, participants visited the heronry inside the zoo and observed nesting activities of Little Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax niger*), Indian Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax fuscicollis*), Little Egret (*Egretta garzetta*), Intermediate Egret (*Mesophoyx intermdia*), Cattle Egret (*Bubulcus ibis*), Indian Pond Heron (*Ardeola grayii*), Black-crowned Night Heron (*Nycticorax nycticorax*), Black-headed Ibis (*Threskiornis melanocephalus*) and Eurasian Spoonbill (*Platalea leucordia*). Some predation of nestlings by the ever opportunistic House Crow (*Corvus splendens*) was also observed. Since many of the trees bearing nests were growing inside the zoo enclosures, taking a count of nests was not always possible. But seeing the various activities going about in the heronry was no less rewarding.

There was an informal meeting at the end in which participants discussed various issues and shared their experiences and concerns about bird conservation. Future activities for the chapter were also suggested. The programme concluded after this very useful interaction.

RECENT PUBLICATIONS ON BIRDS OF GUJARAT

1. Himmatsinhji, M. K. (2004). On the insectivorous diet of *Columba livia* Gmelin. *J. Bombay Nat. Hist. Soc.* 101(3): 455.
2. Pathak, B. J., S. Vijayan and B. P. Pati (2004). Observations on chick mortality in Darter *Anhinga melanogaster* in Gir forest. *J. Bombay Nat. Hist. Soc.* 101(2): 310.
3. Pathak, B. J., S. Vijayan, B. P. Pati and Belim Hanif (2004). Black Stork *Ciconia nigra* in and around Gir forest. *J. Bombay Nat. Hist. Soc.* 101(2): 311-313.
4. Chhokar, J. S. (2004). White-backed Vultures nesting at IIM, Ahmedabad campus. *Newsletter for Birdwatchers* 44(2): 30.
5. Dhadhal, J., P. Dodia, Ruchi Dave and Flamingo Nature Club (2004). Boobies in India. *Newsletter for Birdwatchers* 44(1): 9.
6. Mashru, A. (2004). Heronries around Rajkot city, Gujarat. *Newsletter for Birdwatchers* 44(5): 74-75.
7. Patankar, P. G. (2004). White Ibis nesting amidst chaos. *Newsletter for Birdwatchers* 44(2): 27.
8. Tiwari, J. K. (2005). 300 Great Crested Grebes *Podiceps cristatus*. *Indian Birds* 1(3): 72.



SOME INTERESTING BIRD SIGHTINGS

1. Pied Avocet (*Recurvirostra avosetta*) -6000+, Lesser Flamingo (*Phoenicopterus minor*) -4750+, Greater Flamingo (*Phoenicopterus ruber*) -2040+ at New Port Saltpans, Bhavnagar on 25th January 2005. – Dishant Parasharya and Vikas Trivedi, Bhavnagar.
2. Lesser Flamingo (*Phoenicopterus minor*) -5000+, Ruddy Shelduck (*Tadorna ferruginea*) -500+ and Northern Shoveller (*Anas clypeata*) -2250+ at Kumbharwada Sewagee Pond, Bhavnagar on 25th January 2005. -Dishant Parasharya and Vikas Trivedi, Bhavnagar.
3. Shikra (*Accipiter badius*) –2 pairs bred and 3 young fledged at Jasdan on 7th June 2005 -Ghanshyam Jebalia, Jasdan.
4. Streaked-throated Swallow (*Hirundo fluvicola*) -4 at Aji-II Dam, Rajkot on 25th April 2004 –Ashok Mashru, Rajkot.
5. Rufous-fronted Prinia (*Prinia buchanani*) -5, one making nest at Nyari-I Dam, Rajkot during August 2004 –Ashok Mashru, Rajkot.
6. Oriental Magpie-Robin (*Copsychus saularis*) solitary male on 10th December 2004 at Morbi. According to the map shown by Grimmett et al., Morbi is out of the birds Range. -Prasad Ganpule, Morbi.
[The distribution maps need updating. Magpie Robins spread out over Saurashtra out of the breeding season. Now they have started nesting in several locations where previously they were non-breeding visitors. Eds.].
7. Grey-necked Bunting (*Emberiza buchanani*) 1 male seen at Rampara Sanctuary in January 2005. -Prasad Ganphule, Morbi.
8. Ruff (*Philomachus pugnax*) -850 flying in and settling on the shore of the City Lake on 24th January 2005. – Jaypalsinh Jadeja, Jamnagar.

BCSG NEWS

1. An indoor meeting and slide show on common birds at the Seminar Hall of B. A. College of Agriculture, Anand on 7th October 2005 at 17:00 hours. All are invited.
2. Bird watching and star gazing programme at Thol Bird Sanctuary on 8th October 2005. Participants are requested to assemble at Thaltej Crossing, Ahmedabad by 15.30 hours. Sanctuary entrance fees etc. are to be born by the participants. Confirm participation to Shri Jyotal Thakker (9825265654).
3. A programme to welcome migrants on 25th November 2005 at Lalpari and Randarda wetlands, Rajkot. For more details contact Shri Ashok Mashru (9879758818).

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

● I was happy to have Vol. 3, No.1 (Jan-Mar): 2005 issue of the Newsletter and to read its contents. It was particularly pleasing to read of the record of the Eurasian Scops-Owl in Surendranagar District as also to see the printed photograph taken by Yogendra Shah. My hearty congratulations to him. I strongly feel this trend of providing photographic evidence of birds recorded should be widely and actively encouraged. In the old days any type of bird discoveries were backed up by collecting their specimens. In the present times the study/ hobby of ornithology is practiced on such a wide scale that it would not be possible or practical to attempt the collection of specimens. BCSG is a budding organization and so strict norms should be established from now. Merely good descriptions of new birds should never be accepted except when corroborated by an expert or an experienced birdwatcher. With so many

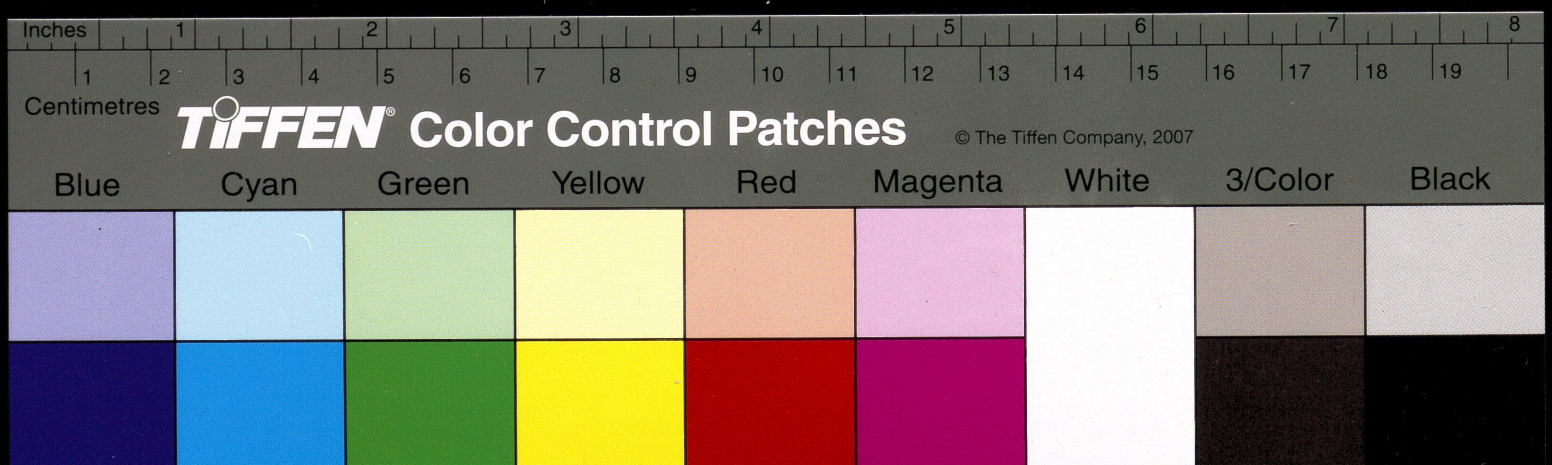
good picture plates and new bird books available these days, an over-enthusiastic watcher can easily imagine he has seen a bird depicted in such publications!

- M. K. Himmatsinhji, Bhuj

● I had an opportunity of discussing with Bakulbhai the need for using names as accepted by BNHS. A note from you to the effect would be advisable specially since there is a plethora of new field guides carried around. Both Lal'sinhbhai and I agreed with Bakulbhai that we need to have a fresh look at the Gujarati names. It might be to advantage to call a special meeting to go over the list and recommend changes where considered appropriate.

Both of you have taken on a great responsibility – may God keep your eyes sharp and your fingers strong.

-Lavkumar Khacher, Rajkot



- Thanks for the Flamingo Vol. 3(1) received some days back. It is really great to see these issues rolling out. In the latest issue it is interesting to read about the Eurasian Scops-Owl observation at Surendranagar. In 1985 or 1986, a Scops-Owl had flown into our Saurashtra University hostel and we had photographed and released it. I had written about it: Mundkur, T. (1986): Occurrence of Pallid Scops-Owl *Otus brucei* (Hume) in Rajkot, Gujarat. Newsletter for Birdwatchers 26(1-2): 10-11. Have there been any sightings of this since then? My photographs are in Malaysia and I will be bringing back my collection in the coming month. So if I can find this, I will send it to you if you wish to publish it.

As the Pallid and Eurasian can look very similar, it would be useful to alert people to this when they provide responses, perhaps useful to put together a short table of the distinguishing features to aid identification.

- **Taej Mundkur, Pune.**

- I received Flamingo yesterday. The issue covers good articles and now has reached the stage to make us eagerly wait for the next issue. I liked the lightness of its contents.

- **Ashok Mashru, Rajkot.**

- As usual I finished reading "Flamingo" in one sitting and enjoyed it very much.

I have seen 'Little Green Heron' regularly in December- January at Bedi Port near Jamnagar. It used to move in the aquatic vegetation. It is a very secretive bird, hardly coming out in the open.

I read with interest Shri Mohan Iyer's note on the terrestrial birds of the Thol Bird Sanctuary. I used to visit it often in mid - eighties and enjoyed watching aquatic and terrestrial birds there. I would like Mohan Iyer to look out for the "Black-crowned Sparrow-Lark" I had seen it near Vadsar Air Force Colony years ago.

Shri Mohan Iyer has, throughout his list used revised English names of birds. Why then has he made one exception

in the case of "Common Hawk Cuckoo"? He has preferred to call it "Brain-fever Bird" which is a British legacy. Even Hugh Whistler referred to it as "Common Hawk Cuckoo". Yes, Dr. Salim Ali has used "Brain-fever Bird" but as a second name. Grimmett *et al.* and Kazmierczak have dropped it altogether.

Indians have a special liking for this bird. It's a welcome call to most of us. So far as I know, in no Indian language it has been referred to by a derogatory name. In Indian folklore Common Hawk Cuckoo enjoys a special place as a favourite bird, both of the lovers and poets. Only the Britishers disliked it, so it is better to drop all together. On going through "Flamingo", I was a little disappointed, as I could not find a very interesting note by Shri Prashant Desai of Vapi. He saw a "Chestnut-winged Cuckoo" only 30-40 meters away from his house. It remained there for quite some time during which he brought binocular and observed the bird. His wife also enjoyed the sighting. I told Prashant to send a note to you. It seems you have not received it.

- **Lalsinh Raol, Ahmedabad.**

[The note on Red-winged Crested Cuckoo by Shri Prashant Desai is published in this issue -Eds.]

- I enjoyed reading "Flamingo" very much. In reference to the Yellow-legged Green-Pigeon in Kachchh by S. N. Varu, I would like to report that twice I have seen groups of around 12 pigeons at Morbi on a Peepal tree near my house. I have taken photograph of the same on 16th February 2005. Further, Rosy Starlings (*Sturnus roseus*) consisting of flock of around 40-45 birds including 15-20 juveniles are seen here by end of July 2005. I have seen them at around 5:30 p.m. during 4th to 7th August. Can they be breeding here?

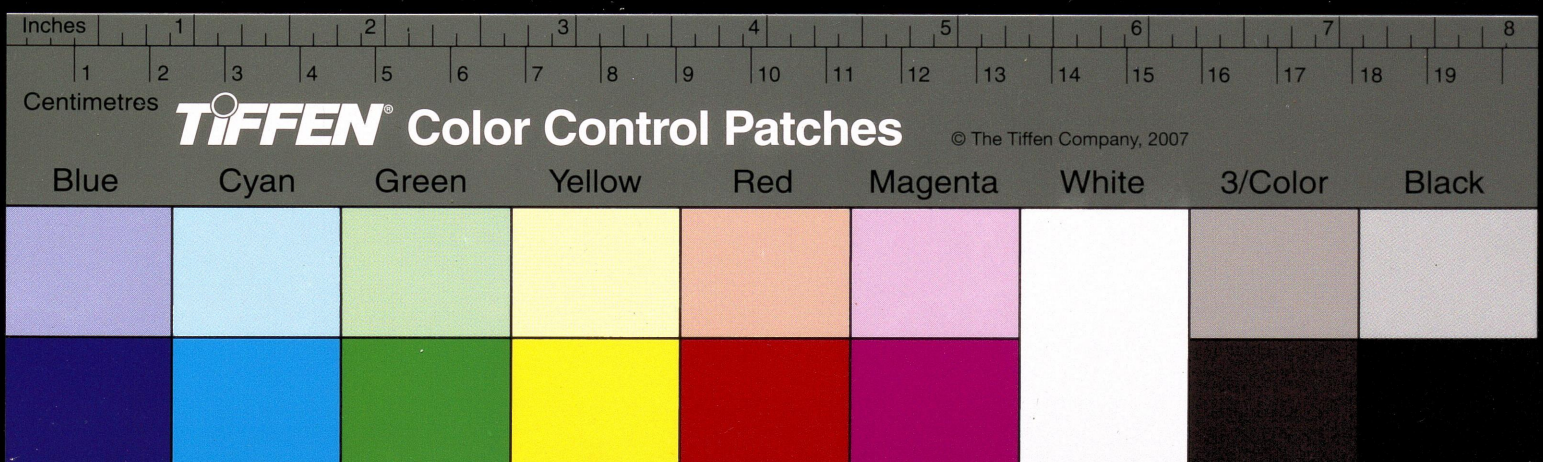
- **Prasad Ganpule, Morbi**

[The Rosy Starling is not known to breed in our area. In Gujarat, they are totally absent from May and June. Before we realize it, they are back in July. -Eds.]

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Some years back a couple of young friends had taken up the cause of preservation of a wetland outside Kalol north of Ahmedabad with considerable energy. A great deal of emotion was involved and, quite rightly, they were disillusioned by the apparent lack of concern among the older, better known in our fraternity. I was reminded of my own younger days of great enthusiasm and zeal. I had to carefully explain to them why everyone could not get excited

about and involved in essentially neighbourhood issues. Their entire drive would fail unless it became part of the wider concerns affecting all wetlands -there are indeed so many of them that Gujarat can justifiably be ranked as a major wetland region of the subcontinent! What was agitating my young friends was a problem that exists right across Gujarat. From what could appeared to be a local issue, we all need to develop a State wide concern or at least a specific



watershed one. The Gopalnagar wetland drains like several others into the Thol reservoir a justifiably exciting waterbird locale. Yet, Thol is but one of the many waterbodies draining into the famous Nal Sarovar. The Nal Sarovar itself is part of an aquatic spread with as diverse and highly distinctive habitats like the Great and the Little Ranns of Kachchh, the tidal mudflats of the Gulf of Khambhat and mangrove – coral ecosystems of the Gulf of Kachchh. Enmeshed in this wide expanse are human habitations all burgeoning. No! Conservation issues no longer can be happily isolated from human issues that, understandably, take top priority with politicians. Fortunately, though, sound conservation-oriented action, for the most part, is good for human welfare.

At that time, to lend mature thought to what was becoming a flamingo v/s people scenario, I visited the contentious site and went around with a view to gaining the wider picture. It was a very valuable experience that emboldened me to write to the Chief Minister strongly arguing against the filling in and building over the wetland. I had, with accompanying photographs, pointed out the need not only of preserving the lake (if such a shallow expanse of water can be called a lake), but incorporating it into the Ahmedabad Urban Development Authority's planning for Ahmedabad's remorseless urban spread. I also showed how the drainage from the Gopalnagar Lake had become choked with weeds. Site photographs graphically showed the threat posed by this clogging of the drainage system to the main Ahmedabad-Dehli railway line.

What was true of this one stream is true of all the watercourses along the entire north-south rail-road linkage from Mumbai to Ahmedabad and north into Rajasthan. While the arterial communication lines run from north to south, the drainage is entirely from east to west with all the major rivers flowing from the hills and plateau of Gujarat's eastern border, to enter the Gulf of Khambhat and the Ranns of Kachchh. Now we have other obstructions to the water flow: the main canal of the Narmada and the Express Highway!

It is absolutely essential that all wetlands forming in

natural depressions should be considered as important water absorbing areas into which run offs from the onslaught of the first torrential monsoon rains are received. Each of these depressions should have their outlet kept clear so that surplus water subsequently received flows away towards the major rivers. In earlier times, on either side of the rail and road embankments there existed wide ditches that carried floodwaters towards the many streams and so to the rivers. Today, these ditches, like the natural depressions themselves are being filled in and leveled for cultivation or occupied by slums. Formerly, we looked at water levels rising in the rivers before getting worried about flooding; today, we have the countryside inundated with rivers flowing far below their natural banks! So, it should not be difficult to convince people that maintaining the wetlands and the embankment –flanking ditches would safeguard human interests even as they provide suitable nesting habitats for Sarus Crane and other marsh nesting birds like jacanas, Coots, moorhen, rails and resident ducks. Apart from cushioning the force of the monsoon deluges, the wetlands would recharge subsoil water for use during the long winter and summer draughts! The cause of the birds and other aquatic life is integral to the welfare of the human population. I see no wildlife v/s human's conflict in demanding for stricter conservation action.

Significantly too, free flowing water in an interlinked water system between reservoirs, marshes, streams and rivers is absolutely essential for a vigorous fish population without which mosquitoes can breed with total impunity. So, when we are agitated about our local village ponds, we need not be apologetic or feel we are being parochial. Your village pond needs your care and concern for the simple reason that it is as important to you as, indeed, my locality marsh is to me. Local, highly specific issues have to be part of the kaleidoscopic whole across the entire region. It is necessary to develop personal commitments before getting agitated over distant, less personalized and possibly nebulous apprehensions.

- Lavkumar Khacher

For private circulation only:

President: Shri Lavkumar Khacher, Vice-President: Shri Lalsinh Raol,

Hon. Secretary: Dr. B M Parasharya Hon. Joint Secretary: Dr. Bakul Trivedi Hon. Treasurer: Dr. D. N. Rank

Executive Members: Shri Snehal Patel, Shri Shantilal Varu, Dr. P. S. Thakker, Dr. C. K. Borad, Shri Pranav Trivedi, Dr. Geeta Padate,

Dr. Raju Desai, Shri Mukesh Bhatt, Shri Niraj Joshi, Smt Ila Vora.

For information, write to: Hon. Secretary, BCSG, B-8, Veterinary Staff Quarters, Nr. Jagnath, Anand-388 001, India.

Editors: B. M. Parasharya (02692-262214) e-mail: parasharya@satyam.net.in ; parasharya@yahoo.com

Bakul Trivedi (079-2686 1878) e-mail: bntrivedi@hotmail.com

Membership (Rs): Life=1000, Ordinary Annual=100, Students=50, DD preferred, add Rs. 30 for outstation cheques.

