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TWO VISITS TO NEPAL.

By

Louis Werner

Date of the Trek?

A trek of 10 days from the Kathmandu Valley due north into the Helambu district and back gave a chance to see quite a few species previously unknown to me.

Alone with two Sherpas I set off early one morning by Land Rover from Kathmandu to the edge of its valley at Sunderijal from where we started to climb steadily upwards for about 3 hours to reach the rim of the encircling hills at about 8,000 ft.

The swallows in abundance hawking low across the valley floor, looking exactly like the European swallow, but with white spots at the end of the tail feathers, puzzled me at first. I realised later they were the eastern subspecies 'gutteralis' of *Hirunda rustica*.

o/

On the climb up to the rim of the valley the Blue Throated Flycatcher (*Muscicapula rubeculoides*) was one of the commonest and certainly the loveliest of birds. Verditer and Grey Headed Flycatchers were also frequently seen.

u/

The monotonous call of the Blue Throated Barbets was heard but nothing like as strong or as numerous as when I came back to Nepal again briefly in late May. The Himalayan Barbet with his wilder almost raptorial-like cry seems to keep more to the thicker forests.

From 7,000 ft onwards up to about 9,000 ft. the red blossomed Rhododendron forests were in their full glory. Here the Black Bulbuls were around in noisy parties and the Black Headed Sibilas were calling their fluted notes; here too I started to see the dainty little Red Headed Tit in mixed groups with the Black Tit (*Lophophanes rufonuchalis beavani*). The Green Backed Tit and the Yellow Checked Tit seemed to stay at lower levels, as did the White Eyes, whereas the Brown Crested Tit (*Lophophanes dichrous*) I saw occasionally at the higher levels around 9,000 ft.

The little leaf warblers, as always, were difficult to identify and I needed much more time than was available to sit still and study them. The one that was abundant at all levels in suitable habitat up to 9,000 ft was, I feel sure, the Greenish Warbler (*Phylloscopus trochiloides viridanus*) of chiffchaff colouring, distinct wing bar and faint eye-stripe - some could well have been '*P. nitidus*', which I understand is almost identical in the field. The very large numbers between 6 and 9,000 ft suggested migration northwards. A very similar '*Phylloscopus*', seen with but not as numerous as '*trochiloides*', had a faint wing bar and eye-stripe but a most noticeable yellow rump, almost like the palaeartic Bonelli's Warbler. I could not place this one at all. The Grey Headed Flycatcher Warbler was easily identified and quite numerous at the lower levels - 6 and 7,000 ft. while higher were a few Yellow Bellied Willow Warblers (*Phylloscopus affinis*), but not as many as I had expected to see. Another *Phylloscopus* I noted with a double wing bar. Could these have been '*P. inornatus*' the Yellow Browed or '*P. proregulus*', Pallas's? The former certainly winters south into India and could well have been on migration at that time.

The bird life seemed at its busiest in the Rhododendron forests around the 8,000 ft contour: Sibilas, Black and White Checked Bulbuls, the endless energy of the industrious little tits and leaf warblers. Whistling Thrushes and Blackbirds in song, nuthatches and tree-creepers, not specifically identified, up and down the tree trunks, and the Short billed Minivets whose males were lost in the riot of red rhododendrons. The Woodpeckers were there too: Fulvous Breasted Pied Woodpecker (*Dryobates macei*) with the lovely warm orange ochre breast; Brown Fronted Pied, (*D. avriceps*); and the Himalayan Pied, (*D. himalayensis*). Higher up I came upon the Scaly-Bellied Green Woodpecker, (*Picus squanatus*).

Here and higher I frequently saw small parties of about 15-20 rosefinches which were later identified as the Nepal Dark Rosefinch, (*Carpodacus nipalensis*). They were not in the denser forests, but rather where it thinned out into isolated trees or bushes and so into the open alpine pastures. It was here on the grass slopes, still brown after the recently retreated snow that I came on large flocks, well over 100 in each, of brown-streaked nondescript looking finches, with slight white wing patches, who fed and rose and circled and alighted again all together, recalling the general behaviour of Snow Finches. They turned out to be the Mountain Finch, (*Leucosticte nemoricola*).

From these open alpine pastures I had some splendid views of the Black Eagle (*Ictinaetus malayensis*) from above as well as below. The rough sketches I did on the spot give the white rump as more prominent than Salim Ali's descriptions and the flight view from below shows a most marked light or even whitish grey line all along the trailing edge of the wings. Only one Golden Eagle was seen and far fewer Lammergeiers than I'd expected.

Other birds in this region of scrub and alpine pasture, but still zonally in the temperate mixed forest belt of rhododendron and conifers, were various thrushes. The Blue Headed Rock Thrush and the Chestnut Bellied Rock Thrush were easily identified, but a large and noisy flock of birds closely resembling in looks and behaviour the European Mistle Thrush, (*Turdus viscivorus*), I could not place. I had anticipated Black Throated Thrushes but there were no signs of such markings in these, and their behaviour was totally unlike the Mountain Thrush, seen rarely in the nearby forests. Of the occasional skulking babblers and laughing thrushes, none of which were yet singing by March 20, I could only be certain of the Striated Laughing Thrush. Here were also seen several large migrating flocks of Red Rumped Swallows, (*Hirundo daurica*), and the Nepal House Martin, (*Delichon nipalensis*), which differs from '*D. urbica*' in having a black throat and squarer tail.

Beside the torrents foaming down from the melting snows or balancing on the rocks in mid stream were invariably a pair of the lovely White Capped Redstarts.

In the snow covered Rhododendron woods above 10,000 ft on the edge of the subalpine forest zone of birch, rhododendron, juniper and berberis - the snow was lower than usual for that time of the year - were several pairs of Yellow Billed Blue Magpies with their magnificent length of tail, and a brief sight of a Himalayan Rubythroat (*Luscinia pectoralis*) in characteristic wing drooping, tail cocking position on the pathway ahead. Above 9,000 ft only a few rhododendron trees were out and these were mostly the white and pink flowering varieties, whereas below 9,000 ft it was exclusively the red blossoms, (*Rhododendron arboreum*). A glimpse of a pheasant flying was too short for certain identification but probably it was a cock Impeyan.

The most beautiful of all were the Yellow Backed Sunbirds of the genus '*Aethopyga*'. Two were distinguished: '*Aethopyga gouldiae*', Mrs. Gould's Yellow Backed Sunbird and the very similar '*Aethopyga nipalensis*, n.' the Yellow Backed Nepal Sunbird or sometimes called the Green Tailed Yellow Backed Sunbird. The latter tended to be at slightly higher elevations, about 9,000 ft, while the former were between 8,000 and 8,500 ft. Both at first sight bring a catch in the breath at the wonder of anything so small and so exquisitely fashioned and coloured. At first one just enjoys emotionally the sight of utter beauty, of colour combinations which no artist would dare - they would be certain to clash. But nature cannot go wrong, and the red and crimson, the violet and purple, the yellow and orange, the green and turquoise are all perfectly blended. Of the '*gouldiae*' I saw, only one had a flush of orange rather than crimson, as described by Salim Ali, on the yellow breast. The '*nipalensis*', when seen in perfect light, was if possible even lovelier and the colours of the back graduated down from the blue green head through crimson red to a metallic red copper colour on the middle back above the yellow rump, while the crown, upper tail-coverts and tapering tail were glistening turquoise rather than green.

This trek was not done specifically to see birds. Even so, I saw much of great beauty and variety and many that I had not time to pursue and identify - the buntings, for instance, on the open hillsides and many more forest birds.

Nepal is an ornithologist's dream with its altitudinal variations and consequent extremes of climatic and vegetational zones.

But much can be seen in a short stay even if you have to confine yourself to the valley, for splendid day trips can be done from Katmandu. Up from Dacca on a long week end at the end of May we got up one morning at 3.30 a.m., off by 4.00 bumping along a rough track in the dark to the base of one of the highest encircling hills, Phulchawki, just over 9,000 ft. By 4.45 we started up through the lower tropical mixed forests (pipal, chestnut, pine) where at first light and before sunrise the

laughing thrushes were hilariously living up to their name and filling the forest with every imaginable shriek, whoop, chortle and chuckle - "you know who, who, who" seemed the first to greet us. I've never before heard such a cacophony of bird noises but the very discords were intensely exciting and jubilant and one caught their mood of pulsating exuberant love of life. Such moments of place and time should be crystallised and kept for ever so that we can extract them from a pocket of the mind when imprisoned in large cities or the monotonous conversation of certain other people.

The East Himalayan White Crested Laughing Thrush (*Garrulax leucolophus hardwickii*) was probably the most raucous and noisiest and that morning the Striated Laughing Thrush (*Grammatoptila striata*) the most jubilant with its fluted calls. The monotonous but rather lovely wild cry of the Great Himalayan Barbet rang out everywhere loud and echoing over the valleys.

Where the forest thinned to scrubby hillside there were the startled notes of the male and female Rusty - Cheeked Scimiter Babbler (*Pomatorhinus erythrogenys*) calling and answering as one bird. In a clearing in the forest where we rested at 8,500 ft - amongst the rhododendron and mixed broad leaved trees - we watched the lovely Yellow Bellied Fantail Flycatcher (*Chelidorhynchus hypoxanthum*) commonly heard displaying with fanned tail to his mate; and heard, on the Indian side of the Mahabharat Lek, the Hawk Cuckoo (species 'sparverioides') up to the top at 9,000 ft. The height for the latter seemed remarkable as it does not come down into the Vale of Kathmandu where 'micropterus' is commonly heard.

In Kathmandu itself in the grounds of the Royal Hotel in early June was the most colourful colony of Buff Backed Herons (or Cattle Egrets) and a few Little Egrets that I've ever seen. Sixty nests I counted in one large tree; the white birds peeping out of the great purple mass of *Bourgainvillea* which covered it all over. Night Herons kept quite separate and were only just building.

Such are some of the sights and sounds in Nepal to tingle the ornithologist's blood on short walks or long treks.

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THIRD INTERNATIONAL SHORT COURSE ON MANAGEMENT OF NATIONAL PARKS AND EQUIVALENT RESERVES

(Your Editor has recently participated in this course and the following article reproduced from the Times of India of 23-10-1967 gives a broad picture of this course)

Three years ago, a group of international institutions devoted to the conservation of nature decided to sponsor a course for the benefit of active conservationists and persons connected with the administration of National Parks. The scheme appears to have been successful, for the third international short course in administration of national parks and equivalent reserves was held this year in the United States and it has been decided to hold the fourth one next year. The main sponsors are the Department of the Interior and the National Parks Service of the USA, the Conservation Foundation, the University of Michigan and the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources.

This year the course was organised as a travelling seminar, commencing at the Grand Teton National Park on August 27 and ending at Grand Canyon in Arizona on September 22. There were 35 participants from 25 countries, and I had the privilege of representing the Bombay Natural History Society. The cost of travel and other expenses were in many cases paid by the sponsoring institutions or by others like the Smithsonian Institution.

To live intimately with so many other conservationists from all over the world is in itself an education; it is quite unlike any other political or economic conference, for among conservationists the words mine or thine have no meaning. The natural assets of the earth, its scenery, wild life and historical monuments belong to everyone, and destruction or erosion of any of these anywhere is felt to be a common loss of the human race. The barriers of language were fortunately minimised because most participants knew English well.

NATIONAL PARKS:

The first strong impression we received of the National Park system of the USA was of the tremendous number of people who visit the parks. Last year 2.7 million people visited the Grand Teton National Park and at any one time there are as many as 6,000 persons lodged there for the night. This tremendous pressure on the park is due to the fact that the visitor season is extremely short being restricted to only about 88 days between June and September. Even so it must be remembered that the Grand Teton Park is about 125 sq. miles in area, which is almost the same size as our Corbett National Park. The Corbett Park has far more to offer in the way of wild life than the Grand Teton area. But it is unlikely that there are more than 50 visitors at any one time in the Park.

In the Grand Teton various types of boarding and lodging facilities are offered, ranging from rooms with attached baths and toilets at \$ 14 per day, to camp sites with a common bath and other facilities where one can establish a caravan. The total visitor use (to use an American expression) of all the national parks last year was 200 million persons, and the projections for the future are in a steeply upward direction.

One great problem which park concessionaries face in the United States because of the short season is that they cannot have a permanent staff. They, therefore, rely on college students during the vacation period to work in the lodges, cafeterias, laundries and other establishments of the Park during the busy season. College students get a dollar per hour for the work, and also get the opportunity to visit the most scenic places in their country. Training the students quickly to perform well in these various spheres is one of the most important tasks which the park concessionary has to undertake. From what we saw it was quite evident that Ph.Ds can become extremely efficient in serving meals in cafeterias and handling linen in hotels.

CONFLICT

There is always a conflict between the pure conservationist who hates the sight of another human being like himself in a natural environment and others with more fellow feeling who want the beauty of nature to be enjoyed by as many people as possible. I remember the conversation I had with a student of the School of Natural Resources, Logan, Utah State, who was doing a graduate thesis on the economics of recreation areas. It was almost with a passion that he said. "You and I like to be alone in the forest. But is it not our duty to open the eyes of millions of our countrymen to the beauty which they are missing?" I wish I could confirm that my sentiments were as generous as his.

Economics is a great handmaiden of conservation in America. By means of powerful audio visual programmes, by massive advertising in the press and the radio, by getting naturalist writers to convey their experiences of visits to parks and recreation areas, by organising package tours for the family and by constant research into what people want in the way of entertainment and recreation, visitors are drawn to all the spectacular parts of the country. Tourism in fact is considered to be an important stimulant of the economy, and 10 per cent. of the gross national product of America is ascribed to tourism.

In an instructive talk at Salt Lake City by the Director of the Bureau of Recreation, we were told that "people liked to travel; to see new places; to know in advance what to expect; people liked to stick to their plans." Based on this research, the Bureau decides which places should be "sold" to which class of client. Even inside a national park, there are places to suit all temperaments. The person who loves his automobile so much that he does not want to leave it (and there are many such) can drive to a "scenic overlook" and enjoy the view from his car. Others can fish, or climb, or hike and see the birds or animals, or water ski, or go on horseback with guides along a fixed trail. Since 99 per cent. people use only one per cent. of the more accessible parts of the park, the one per cent. who want to have a close look at nature get a large area to themselves.

An important lesson which America has to teach to the rest of the world is the necessity of a suitable conservation department at the centre. Though the Yellow Stone National Park was created as early as 1872, it was really the National Parks Act of 1916 and the Department of the Interior whose Secretary virtually plays the role of a Minister for Conservation that has given such a strong lead to the conservation movement of the country. With the Department keeping a watchful eye over the whole land, priorities for land use can be logically established, and after taking a total view of the landscape it is decided to designate an area as a National Park, a National or Historical Monument a Wilderness Area, a National Forest or a State Recreation Area.

PRICELESS LOSS:

Such a ministry is vitally necessary in India where the pressure of population subjects every bit of land for use by a variety of interests, and where unthinking action often leads to a loss of priceless treasures forever. The National Parks Act of 1916 says that it shall be the duty of the Government "to conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wild life therein, and to provide for the same..... in such a manneras will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations." The only clause in our Constitution which comes close to conservation is article 38A which is now sought to be amended. This says "The State shall endeavour to organise agriculture and animal husbandry on modern scientific lines," etc.

The time has now come to insert a clause on conservation which will enable the Central Government to leave our assets unimpaired for the use of future generations not only of Indians but as a heritage for the whole world. Perhaps, we should start preparing the ground to that at the time of the General Assembly of the I.U.C.N. at New Delhi in 1969, the scheme could be discussed in its final form.

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REDSTARTS IN DEHRA DUN

by

Joseph George

H.N. Mathur has asked for information on Redstarts in Dehra Dun (Newsletter, October 1967). My observations in the 1950s were as follows:

The Black Redstart was seen in the Tons River valley near the Forest Research Institute in the last week of September. The Plumbeous and the Whitecapped Redstarts also came down to this elevation in the last days of September or the first week of October. The Whitecapped penetrated New Forest estate of the Forest Research Institute along irrigation channels in the first week of October but the Plumbeous usually did this in the third or fourth week.

The Plumbeous Redstart was always found near water but the Whitecapped had a liking for buildings, sometimes staying for several days on the shady damp northern side. One bird moulted its tail feathers in March and was usually quiet while new tail feathers were growing. It did not even call for several minutes at a time.

The Plumbeous was the first Redstart to leave the area, staying no later than the second week of March. The Whitecapped usually stayed till the first or second week of April but one year a bird was reported seen in New Forest on 29th April.

The Black Redstart was seen about hedges and dry bushy areas holding solitary territories. Females were usually more abundant than males. The last birds left the area by mid-May.

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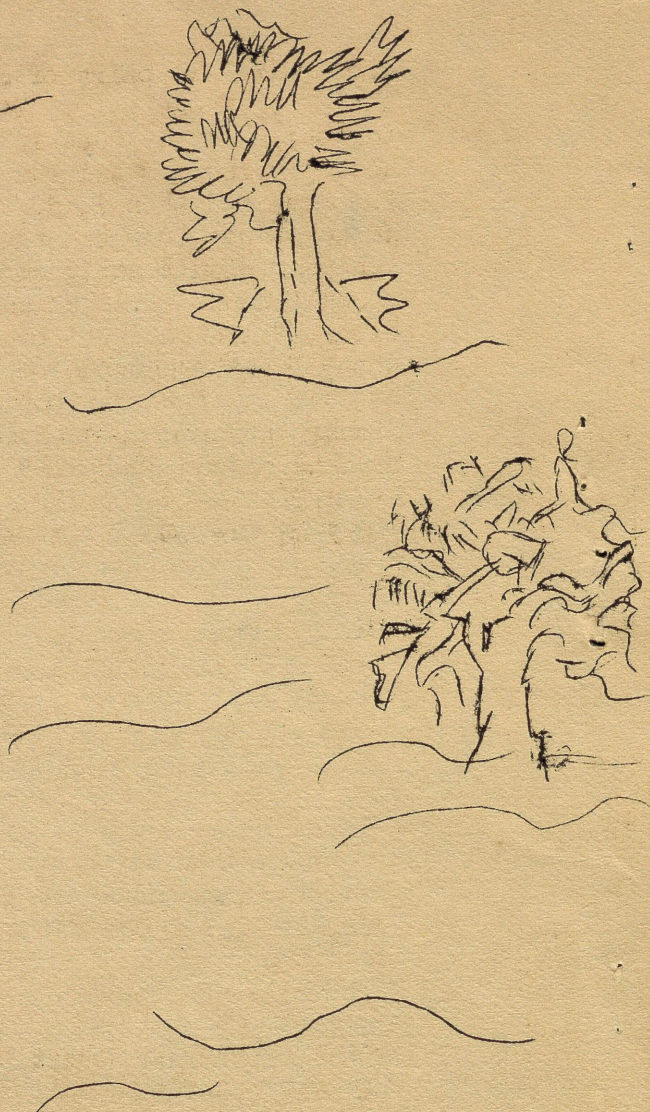
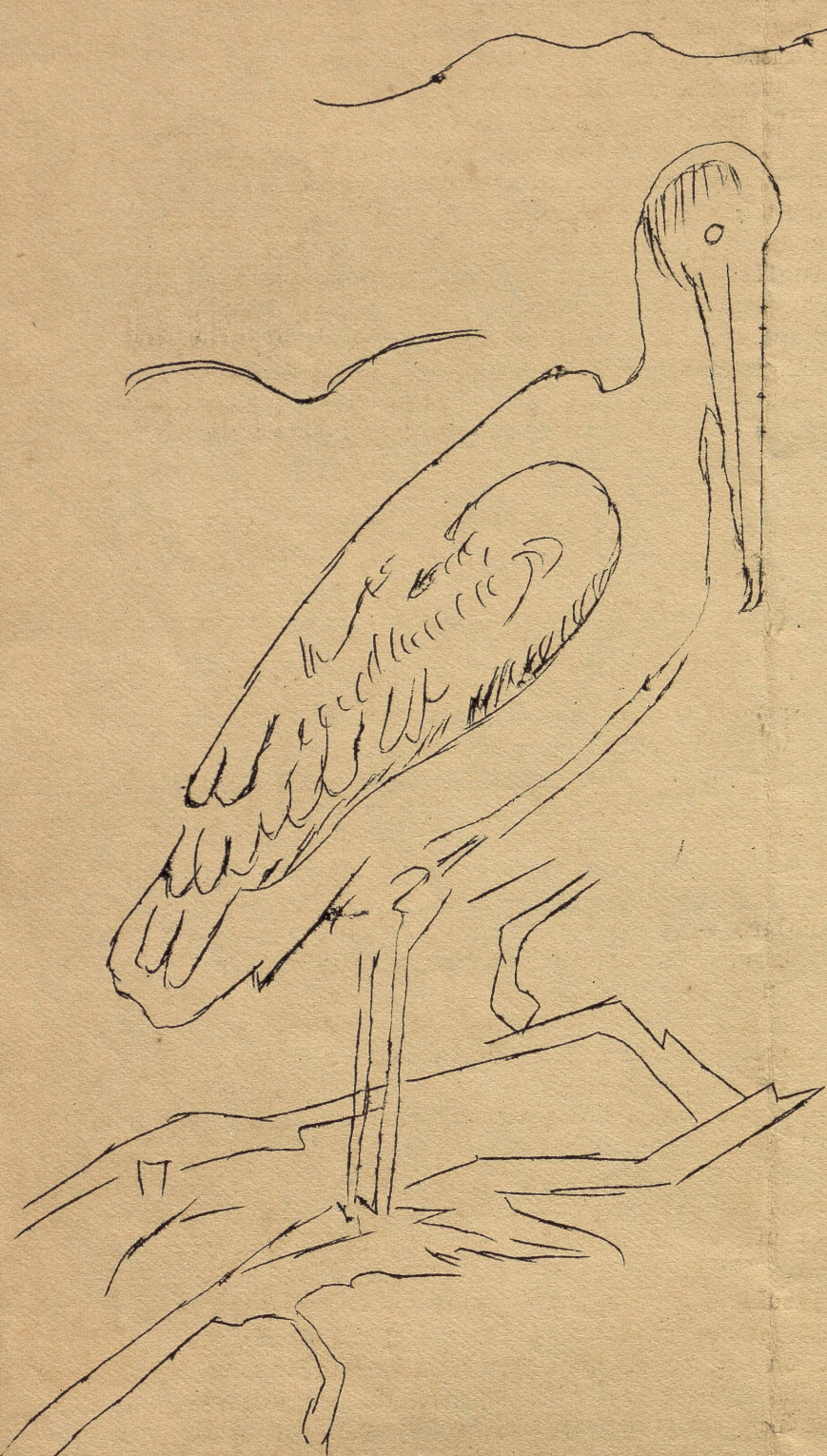
A WEEK IN BHARATPUR

By

Shama Futehally

The main feature of Bharatpur is a large ghana or lake which is full of Acacia trees standing out of the water, overflowing with the nests of Painted Storks, Openbilled Storks, White Ibises, Spoonbills, Grey Herons, and Large Egrets. One gets an impression of millions of water birds for 'miles around', and where this exhibition ground ends - there are two or three heavily concentrated areas - the lake abounds in duck, particularly from September to March. A punt can be taken up right to the nests themselves, and, now that the nests had eggs and young, it was interesting to compare the appearance of the chicks with that of the adults. We were lucky to be able to remain for two or three hours together on a machan in the water well in the middle of thick activity.

Openbilled Stork chicks are grey and fluffy with short, thick, open beaks. The young of White Ibis are also grey and fluffy but with orangish bills; cormorant babies are black, with enormous red bag-like beaks. The young of the Painted Storks had not hatched, and neither had those of the Spoonbills, which, however, had plenty of large starched-white eggs. There were flocks of Darters on the water, and quite often a Whitenecked Stork. We watched a couple of Rails - my first - skimming over the water, but it was quite impossible to locate them after they had subsided into the rushes. From the machan we also spotted a number of Whitebacked munias on the Acacias, and some Yellow-throated Sparrows.



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Around the lake the habitat is mainly just light scrub jungle, *Acacia nilotica* interspersed with *Prosopis juliflora* and *P. specigera*. The better forested areas comprise *Salvadora oleoides*, *Adina cordifolia* and *Mitragonia parviflora*. Through these forests, bundhs lead into the lake, and here it is very easy to see Nilgai, Chital Blackbuck and Jackal, and even, if one is prepared to be grateful for any and every kind of wild life, large hares. I am afraid I don't know their species. Animals are easy to locate at this time because the much advertised floods at Bharatpur have covered the forest floor with a good eight inches of water, and animals some distance away can be heard splashing.

We went through the sanctuary on bicycle and on foot in the early mornings and afternoons. The commoner birds were the Roller, Rufous-backed Shrike, Pied Myna, and the Spotted, Little Brown, and Ring Doves. The Brahminy and Bank mynahs were common, as were Roseringed Parakeets and Green Bee-eaters.

There were two pairs of Sarus Cranes in the area, of which we found the nest of one pair. It was on an 'island' in a patch of flooded forest: about $2\frac{1}{2}$ feet in diameter, quite neat and very flat, made of loose rushes and twigs. No attempt at all had been made to conceal it. Two eggs had been laid, which, contrary to the books, were pure white. We were able to watch the nest from a hide about 20' away, but unfortunately didn't get a chance to see the birds sitting. There was another nest of Blacknecked Storks not far away, with two eggs, but the birds, frightened off by too eager ornithologists, deserted it. The ghana has three types of Kingfishers, Whitebreasted, Common, and Pied, and sometimes we saw the gorgeous sight of a Pied or a Common Kingfisher 'hovering'. Spotted Owlets were very frequently seen at night, perched on odd stumps or telegraph wires; on one occasion we heard a Brown Fishing Owl calling from across water, presumably from one of the trees in the lake. The call is a low-pitched, rather devilish crescendo.

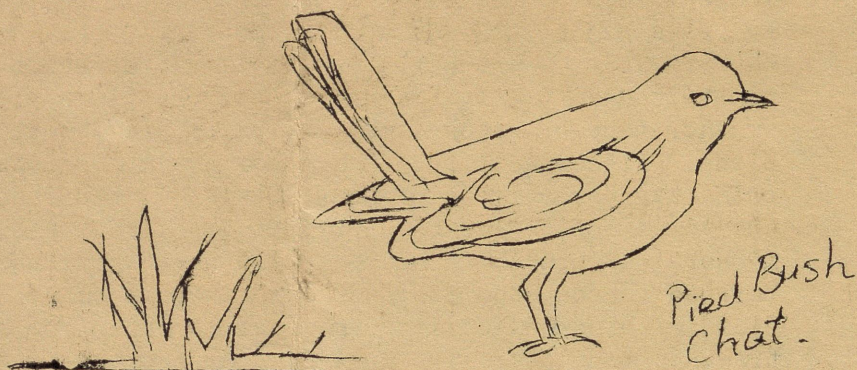


Numerous and nondescript warblers were as frustrating as always and the only one I could identify with any certainty was the Blythe's Reed Warbler which was rather common - On several occasions other people saw Syke's Tree Warblers and I did not. I did see another plumpish warbler which I have described as 'Grey, with black head, black-and white striped edges to wing and tail, pale buff underparts; this just may have been the Orphean Warbler which ~~has~~ has been seen before, and once in fact caught for ringing. Blackbellied or Ashycrowned Finch-larks and Crested Larks lined the sugar cane fields outside the ghana. I only once saw a group of Whitecheeked Bulbuls on an Acacia near the main road: plenty of occupied Weaver bird colonies, and coveys of Grey Partridges. There were two or three solitary Pied Crested Cuckoos, many Rufous-tailed Finch-larks, and, as the migrant birds were arriving, male and female Redstarts, Grey Wagtails, and flocks of European swallows, though there were Redrumped swallows as well. Walking along the bundhs during the late afternoons one became used to continual 'Whoosh' sounds overhead as wave after wave of duck, mainly Nukta and Cotton Teal, on sometimes Night Herons, flew to their feeding areas.

It was on one of these occasions that a friend and I saw a family of Purple Moorhens, the parents with two chicks. Later the hen sat down among the reeds, probably on a nest which we couldn't see. In about the same sort of habitat in another part of the sanctuary we also noticed a family of Indian Moorhens, but that was with more chicks, five or six. Another nest we saw on the lake was that of a Little Grebe. It was recognisable as a nest, but had neither eggs nor young just then. One of the members of the camp saw a pair of Cotton Teals emerging at different times from a hole in a tree, where they probably had a nest, but it was too high to be reached.

Once a Short-toed Eagle flew quite low over where the banding was, from underneath, looking like a squat white eagle with black edges to the wings and under the chin. Oddly enough we only saw a Shikra once. On one occasion some-one else came across a Pallas' Fishing Eagle badly mauling a Garganey Teal which had been ringed only that morning: this

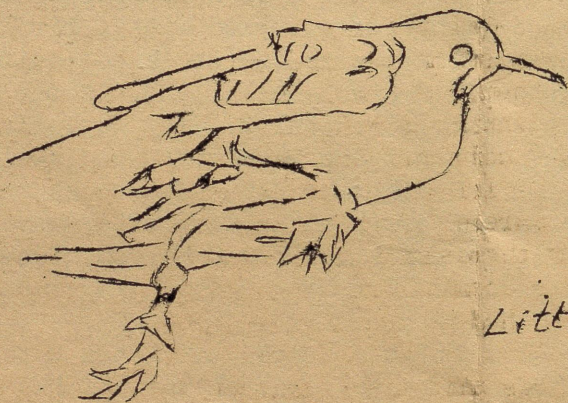
was some distance away from the banding. Finally the eagle abandoned the dead teal and the ring was destroyed.



Pied Bush
Chat.

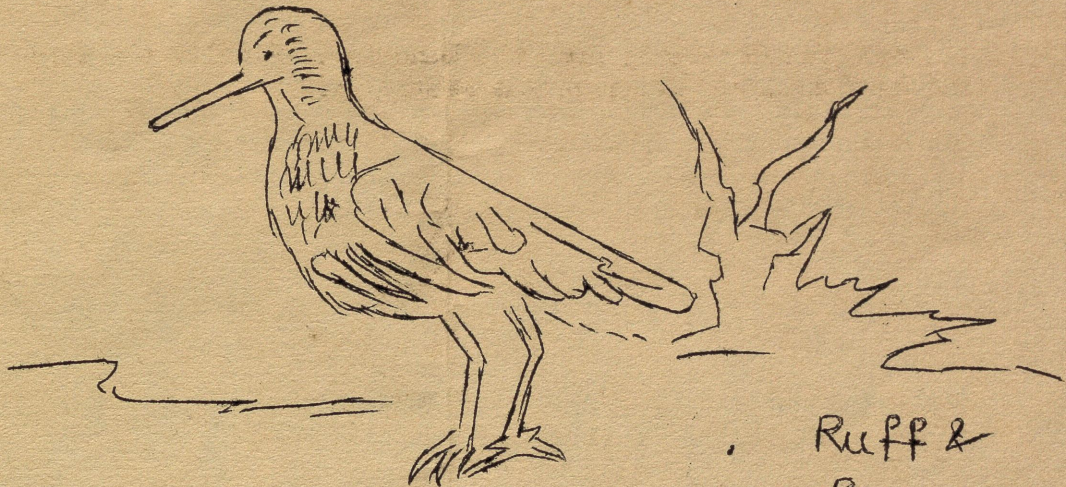
I saw my first Stone Curlew in a patch of scrub, its colour blending perfectly with the straw-coloured grass behind, and conspicuous only because of the white eye-stripes. I was very happy to see two or three Blue-tailed Bee-eaters together with the larger bodies, bluish tails, and chestnut throats; I missed the black stripe across the cheeks, but am not prepared to take that into consideration. Red-wattled Lapwings were very common: one or two India Pittas, and, in the thicker woods, Golden backed Woodpeckers and Treepies. Spotted and Common Sandpipers were found near patches of water in fairly well forested areas. Hoopoes, Indian Robins, Rufous Turtle Doves, Purple and Purple-rumped Sunbirds, Tickells Flower peckers, and Peafowl were found at every turn of the road, and there were a number of Whitebrowed Bulbuls. Bay backed Shrikes and Racket-tailed Drongoes were not very common, but seen once or twice, and once we saw a solitary Grey Shrike guarding a freshly killed mouse suspended on an Acacia thorn. Common Ioras and Pied Bush Chats were easily seen from the main road. A pair of White-browed Fantail Flycatchers were probably breeding near the Rest House.

I was at Bharatpur for about the first ten days of October with the Bombay Natural History Society bird-banding camp, and during that time 150 to 200 birds were ringed every day, and half the number were ticked. The ducks were caught at night by 'Mir Shikaris' from Bihar by an intriguing method using lanterns and nets on moonless nights.



Little Stint.

The majority of the waders ringed were Ruff and Reeve, Spotted Sandpipers, Little and Temminck's Stints, Blackwinged Stilts, Fantail Snipes, Jack snipes, once a Large Pratincole, Painted Snipe, and Little Ringed Plover. No ticks were found on any of them. The ducks were mainly Pintail, Spotbill, Garganey Teal, Nukta, Common Teal, and a few Coot. All the ducks were bled so that the blood discs can be sent to Siberian laboratories and tested for evidence of blood diseases which these ducks may be transmitting to human beings. Of course all these birds were commonly found on the water as well, particularly Ruff and Reeve.



Ruff &
Reeve

* * * * *

NOTES AND COMMENTS

TREES:

The speeches that are made on the occasion of VAN MAHOTSAV are cheering, but what is more important is the necessity of careful follow up action to preserve the saplings which are ceremonially planted every year. We might follow the example of U.K., and insist on detent penalties on persons who are negligent about looking after trees. The following quotation from HABITAT Vol 3 No.9 of September 1967 indicates the position.

"Trees and the Civic Amenities Act 1967 - new powers

The Minister of Housing and Local Government and the Secretary of State for Wales have drawn the attention of all local authorities in England and Wales to the new powers given to them by the Civic Amenities Act. A circular issued on 8 August which deals, among other things, with the effects of the Act in respect of trees and tree preservation (Part II of the Act), states: 'Trees are often destroyed unnecessarily in the course of development. The developer may have no interest in preserving them, while the planning permission may not have taken account of the desirability of protecting them. The Act requires local planning authorities when granting planning permission to make sure (wherever appropriate) that adequate conditions are imposed for the protection of existing trees on the site or for the planting of new ones. The Ministers urge them to pay careful attention to this new obligation, to take all steps to inform themselves about existing trees on building sites and to see that proper conditions, preferably reinforced by tree preservation orders are attached to their permissions!

Section 13 of the Act requires that trees covered by preservation orders be replaced if they die or are removed and that the original orders should continue to protect new trees. Maximum penalties for serious contraventions are increased. Fines of up to £250 or twice the value of the tree, whichever is greater, may be imposed. The Ministers hope that local authorities will take full advantage of these new powers. They believe that at least in some parts of the country there is scope for more vigorous action. Although the number of tree preservation orders has grown in the last few years are some areas where none at all have been made but where there is certainly preservation work to be done.

'The Ministers are concerned also about the steady disappearance of hedgerow trees in some parts of the country. Modern agriculture needs larger fields and there must be some losses in hedges, but the effect could be greatly reduced by a readier use of tree preservation orders to preserve or replace trees that are too often involved in these operations and whose disappearance is such a loss to landscape! "

* * * * *

The President's letter from the International Council for Bird Preservation contains the following extract:

Feeding ground for Flamingoes - India

'Kumar Shree Dharmakumarsinhji writes that he finds the salt compartments of the salt pans in some parts of Saurashtra offer better feeding grounds for Flamingoes and are a source of extra food supply. There are innumerable salt works in the Saurashtra Peninsula and it is possible that they have attracted more Flamingoes than would otherwise have been the case. When the compartments dry, large numbers of birds seek other feeding grounds on the coastline and in inland waters.'

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Sir Landsborough Thompson, known to the ornithological world for his phenomenal editing of A NEW DICTIONARY OF BIRDS, was in Bombay in the third week of October. During this time he gave an address at the Bombay Natural History Society about the Dictionary. Sir Landsborough said that over 200 persons collaborated, and it was remarkable that there were no more than two "defaulters". Sir Landsborough has been recently appointed Chairman of the British Museum (Natural History).

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CORRESPONDENCE

Black-bellied Finch larks

The following observations of mine may be of some interest to others.

We live on the left Bank of the Mahanadi River a mile downstream of the Hirakud main dam.

A few pairs of Black-bellied Finch-larks have been visiting our weekly lice "Haat" every Sunday. They have been observed by me gleaning rice around the bullock-carts every haat day for the past 6 months. But on no other days have I been able to locate them anywhere around. They have been located on the roadsides about 4 to 5 miles away from our colony.

I wonder how they time their visit to this place; whether they do it by instinct or follow the bullock-carts coming in, is a mystery to me.

M.R. Ray
Hirakud

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Discipline among Black-winged Bengal Vultures

In the Calcutta suburbs, one/^{thing} has drawn my attention: the 'team spirit' and discipline among the Blackwinged Bengal Vultures.

Several times I have observed these vultures waiting keenly for the carcass of some dead domestic animals which people leave in one particular place near the railway track. Some/are usually on the ground/vultures and some others in the sky. As soon as a dead animal is dumped there, the group on the ground approaches it and waits for the winging birds.

Then one of the vultures which I presume to be the leader, tears off a piece of the flesh majestically while the rest watch. The leader then leaves his share on the ground a little way away and flies off, while the rest commence to feed.

M.P. Mukherjee
Calcutta

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Birds attacking their Reflections

Surely, many readers would respond to your call for information on this topic. Here is my contribution.

Two dressing mirrors in our house at Palamcottah were covered with lace curtains to avoid damage from house-sparrows which pecked violently at their own images. When the elders were away we used to unveil the mirrors and enjoy the farce. Our entertainment was augmented by planting hand mirrors in boughs frequented by bulbuls and inducing similar reactions. All these birds were aggressive only during the nesting period and they appeared to be incapable of perceiving the real nature of the 'intruders'. One feels that serious students of animal behaviour might already have made detailed investigations in this field and published their findings in scientific journals.

In passing, I am amused to recall that at one time I believed that king-fishers dive headlong into calm waters attacking their own images! Who can say? The pond heron contemplating for hours over his image in halcyon waters is the real Narcissus and not the flower that bears his name today.

Lancelot E. Thomas
Calicut.

Redstarts at Dehra Dun

Shri M.N. Mathur's conjecture in October 1967 issue regarding our visit to Hardwar-Dehra Dun is correct. We visited Dehra Dun in the last week of December, 1966 when we spotted the Redstarts there. I am sorry I do not have the exact date of our stay.

V.C. Parikh
Bombay

Zafar Futehally
Editor, Newsletter for Birdwatchers
32-A, Juhu Lane,
Andheri, Bombay 58-AS.