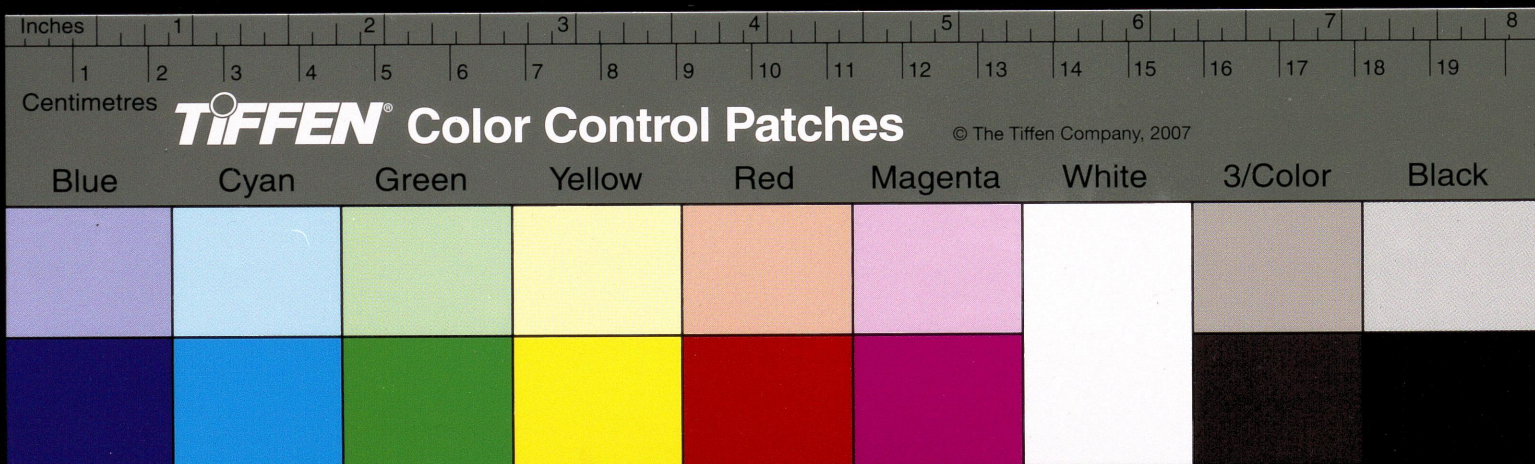


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Newsletter for Birdwatchers

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NEWSLETTER FOR
BIRDPATCHERS

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AND ALL BECAUSE OF THE FALL OF A TREE

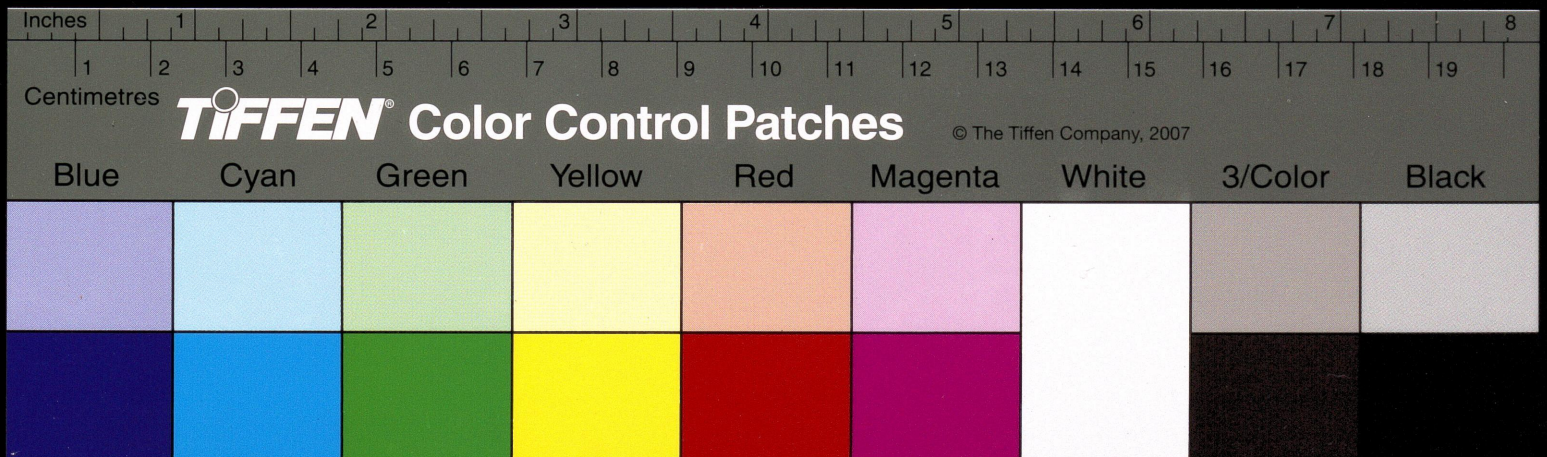
A. Navarro, S.J.

Within the compound of the Court of Small Causes facing the main entrance of St Xavier's High School, on Lokmanya Tilak Marg, there is a jakfruit tree that for many years has been the roosting resort for a large colony of House Sparrows. In the morning when there is not much traffic along the street, at about sunrise, the chorus of uniform chit chit of hundreds of sparrows calling together was so loud and at times so insistent, that it could not be ignored by the whole of the neighbourhood.

During the last monsoon, after a heavy shower one night, a large old mahogany tree by the side of one of the school gates fell stretched across the road. In the opinion of the Professor of Botany of St Xavier's College, Prof. P. V. Bole, the tree must have been nearly a hundred years old.

A few days after this incident, the whole neighbourhood noticed that the sparrows were no longer roosting at their favourite jakfruit tree. This fact struck my attention too. Since then I am trying to find the connection between the fall of the mahogany tree and the silence on the part of the birds, and the roosting spot where the birds have had their habitat for more than twenty five years.

I did notice however that with the fall of the mahogany



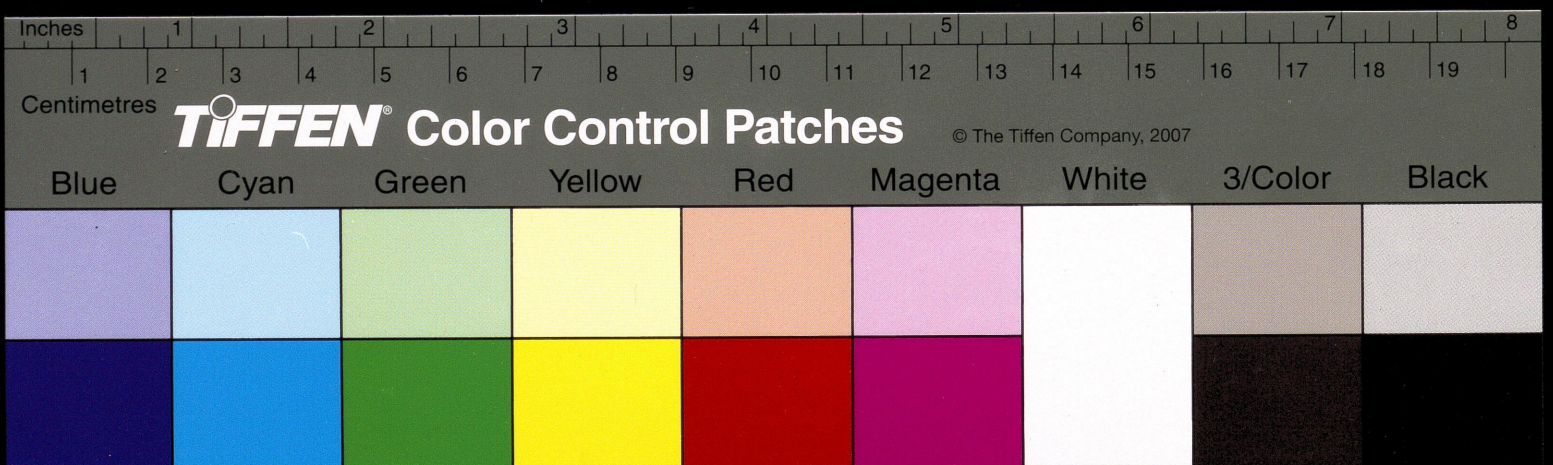
ter the Whitebrowed Bulbul in the Borivli National Park. It would be of interest to know whether our members residing in the areas mentioned above have seen the bird in their immediate environs or near by. If the information obtained from all members is pooled together it would give one a fair idea of the present status of the bird in the Bombay City, particularly because of the rapid rate at which concrete and cement is replacing the gardens and compounds.

BIRDS SEEN AT BANDIPUR, KARNATAKA

Shailesh Zaveri, Jyotindra Zaveri & Ameet Zaveri

Last summer we visited five South Indian wildlife sanctuaries. The one that we liked most was Bandipur in Karnataka (Mysore State). There we had a very interesting time, watching mammals and birds during a five days' stay from 15.v.1973 to 19.v.73. About 50 different species of birds - not a bad record for rank amateurs like us - were seen. On the first day, we met Mr Neginhal, Assistant Conservator of Forests, Karnataka. He, himself an avid birdwatcher, showed us a fig tree near the Forest lodges, which attracted lots of birds. In just half an hour we saw ten different species visit it. There were three species of bulbuls: Redvented, Redwhiskered and Whitecheeked. A Velvetfronted Nuthatch (Sitta frontalis) was working diligently on the bark, one to be disturbed when we arrived on the scene. There were two species of barbets: Crimsonbreasted and Large Green, and a female Pygmy Woodpecker (Picoides nanus). Jungle- and Common Mynas were there in plenty. The Tailor Bird was the last to come as we left. With such a grand start we saw many other species of birds which we had never met before.

One evening we were sitting quietly by a jungle pool, when a pair of Tawny Eagles (Aquila rapax) suddenly flew overhead. They circled about lazily but gracefully for some time before flying on to some other hunting grounds. A little later a pair of Grey Hornbills (Tockus birostris) flew up and alighted on a branch right overhead. Their presence was felt more by their loud calls rather than sight. Soon they also made off. Somewhere behind us a Lapwing (Vanellus indicus) had detected our presence and was proclaiming the fact to the whole jungle, so that no animals were seen later on. This lapwing continued its Did-he-do-it? even after dark. When we went for jeep rides to see animals, we almost always saw peafowl (Pavo cristatus) and Goldenbacked Woodpeckers (Dinopium benghalense). Sometimes in some small glade, Grey Junglefowl (Gallus sonneratii) would be feeding beside the peafowl. The quails we saw were very fearless. They would be searching for food along the paths as our jeep approached. All they would do was to shift about 2 ft to one side and allow us to pass. They would take to flight only when we had almost passed them. Once we saw a Short-toed



On 16.iii, my Officer-in-Charge, Shri K.K. Mahajan proceeded on a General Faunistic and a special collection of birds and mammals for establishing the Natural History Study Museum. So I had another chance of visiting the high altitude area of Chamba District. Till March 29th I did not observe any hoopoes but on 30.iii when we reached Gharola, a small village on the southeastern bank of the River Ravi, at 7000 ft, a single specimen was seen on the twig of an oak. It was collected and was found to be fully infected by some skin disease.

The following day another single bird was seen. A local guard accompanying me stated that he had seen the hoopoe after c. 7 months in that vicinity, further adding that they inhabit the locality from middle of March to August, and after that they migrated themselves from the locality.

NOTES AND COMMENTS

Nature Calendar for 1974

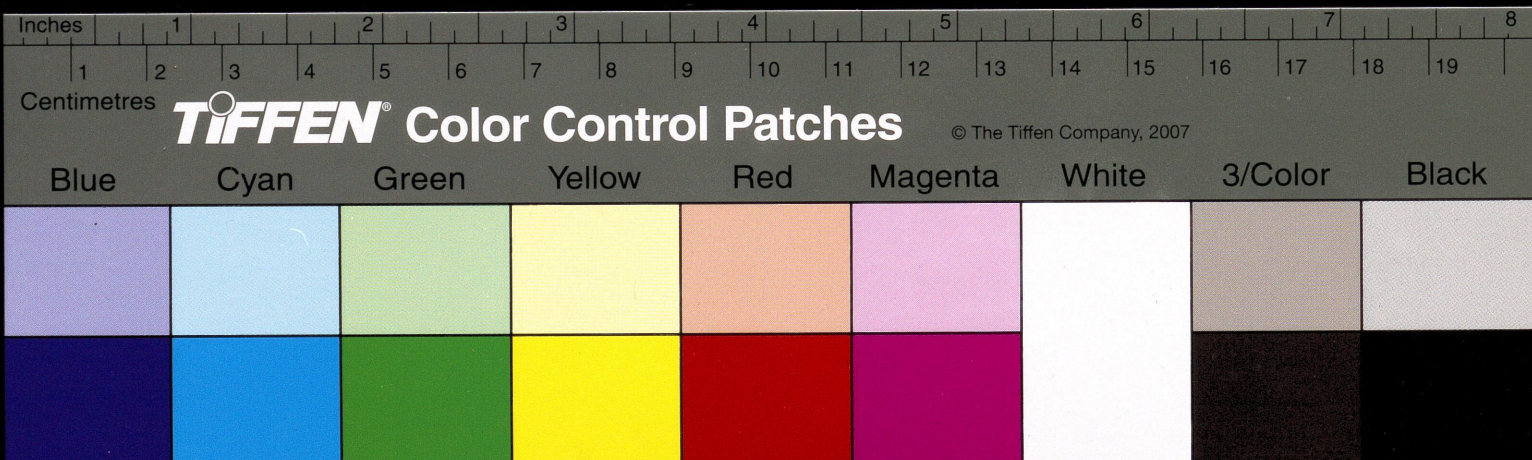
The Bombay Natural History Society issues every year a desk calendar (24.1 x 17.8 cm) printed in four colours and illustrated with twelve beautiful nature photographs in colour by well-known photographers. The 1974 calendar is priced Rs5/- per copy, postage and packing extra. Persons interested in buying them, please contact

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CORRESPONDENCE

Size of Bird Flocks

Madhav Gadgil in his article (Newsletter, 13(9), Sept. 1973) very rightly stresses the importance of studying the quantitative aspect of biological phenomena. It is of interest to inquire about the size of the largest flocks of birds recorded. Unfortunately, naturalists have usually been satisfied with vague descriptions, such as small, medium, large or huge. The size of the rookeries of seafowl is restricted by the availability and size of the rocky coast, etc., whereas there are no such restrictions regarding land birds. Now, fortunately, accurate data with regard to the North American Passenger Pigeon are on record, thanks to the ornithologist, Alexander Wilson. Wilson recorded the size of flocks of Ectopistes migratorius: One passed over him in 1810, containing more than two billion birds. They nested in vast stretches



pick up the bread pieces. Some of them have become very pampered and expect me to throw the pieces exactly where they sit on the terrace door.

Among all these crows, I have observed one with a deformed beak. The beak is crossed and the crow finds it very difficult to pick up the bread pieces I throw at him. In the meantime other crows snatch away the bread pieces. Once or twice I was able to feed it when the other crows were not around. But still he has not gained enough confidence to come near me. The last time I saw him, he had also damaged one of his legs and was finding it difficult to hop along. I have not seen him for the last one month and wonder if he is still alive. I wish I had a good camera to snap him. Have any of our readers seen a crow with a similar deformity

I am anxiously awaiting the arrival of the swallows and a pair of Large Pied Wagtails. The latter come on the terrace every afternoon when they are in our midst, and I enjoy their presence.

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