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Wendy Sparks
Birds of Pauri district
Black Tern in Gujarat



Red-rumped Swallow *Hirundo daurica*



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PHOTOGRAPHER: Clement Francis

Gwendolen (Wendy) Mary Beryl Sparks (1916–2007): a Gujarat sojourn in 1947–1948

Aasheesh Pittie

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Richard Sparks & Margold Heron

Wendy Sparks in her WWII uniform—she was in the Auxiliary Territorial Service (ATS) as a driver of lorries and ambulances during the London Blitz.

Introduction

In 2008 I bought a 'lot' of books on Indian ornithology from an online bookseller. Some of them were signed, 'Gwendolen Sparks,' on the front free-endpaper, and contained a great deal of marginalia: it seemed that Mrs Sparks knew her birds intimately. Intrigued by comments in the copy of Salim Ali's *The birds of Kachchh* (1945), I enquired on email groups for information about this lady. Just one was forthcoming, from Margaret Sykes, of the Oriental Bird Club (OBC), who emailed me stating that Wendy Sparks had been a member of the OBC from 1992 to 2001. "Wendy wrote to me in February 2001 enclosing a copy of the list of birds she had seen in the former Kachchh state, western India, between 5 February 1947 and the end of March 1948. She also said, 'I feel it would be a pity if all my records were just thrown away, which is what will probably happen when I die. I am already 84 years old.' But we do have the list of birds if you are interested." For some incomprehensible reason I did not respond to her generous offer. Recently, while compiling a bibliography of Gujarat ornithology, my interest in Wendy Sparks' contributions to Indian ornithology was rekindled, and I emailed Margaret Sykes once again, requesting the list, which she promptly sent. It is presented here as a historical record of bird life in Kachchh from over half a century ago, preceded by a brief biographical sketch of Wendy Sparks.

Gwendolen (Wendy) Mary Beryl Sparks (1916–2007)

Gwendolen (Wendy) Mary Beryl Haviland was born on 1 November 1916 to Captain Wilfred Pollen Haviland MBE and Beryl Marion Haviland (nee Durand, who was born in Dehra Dun in 1887). Wendy's maternal grandfather, Colonel Sir Edward Law Durand, was Assistant Commissioner of the Afghan Boundary Commission between 1884 and 1886. He was invested as a Companion, Order of the Bath (CB) in 1887. He held the office of Resident of Nepal between 1889 and 1891. He gained the rank of Lt-Col in the service of the Indian Staff Corps and was created

1st Baronet Durand, of Ruckley Grange, Shropshire (UK), on 8 April 1892. His younger brother was Rt. Hon. Sir Henry Mortimer Durand of the Durand Line Agreement (1884). Wendy's brother, Pilot Officer David Haviland, was killed in action in 1940 aged 22.

On 19 October 1946, Wendy married Major Peter Herbert Sparks (b. 7 March 1914, d. 23 March 2003), who had been commissioned into the King Edward's Own Second Gurkha Rifles (2GR) in 1941. They were introduced by a mutual friend—the only girl Peter knew in London on his repatriation—and became engaged five weeks later. Peter was delighted to meet Wendy's Indian-born mother, who showed him some of the many beautiful landscapes painted by her father during his years in India and Nepal; Peter always said that Wendy's family history "made her an honorary Gurkha in my eyes." Early in 1947 he took Wendy back to Kachchh, where he resumed his job as tutor to MKS Himmatsinhji, grandson of Maharao Sri Khengarji of Kachchh, which he had begun in 1939. Peter too was very interested in natural history: he had regularly consulted Whistler's *Popular Handbook of Indian Birds* during the war, and he and Wendy gave each other a pair of initialled Zeiss 10x50 binoculars as wedding presents. Peter was not sure whether his new wife would want to live in a remote part of India, but she was thrilled at the prospect—mainly because of the endless opportunities for bird-watching—and she continued to compile her Life List while living there. The royal family divided its time between Bhuj and Vijay Vilas palace on the coast at Mandvi. She was able to visit the entire country, and particularly loved the Rann. A keen ornithologist all her life, Wendy always thought of her time in India as the high point of her bird-watching life.

Politics put an end to their time in India, when the Raj ended in 1948. They were asked to stay on but decided to return to England, believing that from then on India should be for the Indians. Peter had succeeded in getting Himmatsinhji a place at Oxford University, but after India became an independent country it was decided that he should go to college in India. The old

Maharao, Khengarji, was broken-hearted at the prospect of the end of the Raj. As Peter put it, "He turned his face to the wall and died." Wendy and Peter returned home via Bombay, where they witnessed some of the tragic violence of that sad time of partition.

A few months after leaving Kachchh's palaces, they were living in a caravan on various farms where Peter worked as a farmhand. Jobs were very hard to come by, but being an Oxford graduate in English Language & Literature he was well qualified to teach, and he duly became a schoolmaster at Cheltenham College in 1952. By that time they had two small children, Marigold (3) and Richard (1), who were brought up on stories of a magical place called Kachchh and treated to regular imitations of tiger and bird calls. In 1987 Richard and his wife decided to backpack around the Far East and went to Kachchh where they were royally entertained by both Himmatsinhji and his elder brother Madansinhji, the then Maharao. They enjoyed several bird-watching days at places mentioned by Wendy in her records, both in Kachchh and at other reserves in Saurashtra. They also visited Bharatpur in Rajasthan. Ten years later Marigold and her husband visited Gorkha while trekking the Annapurnas in Nepal, and met some of the famous 'soldiers of small stature but indomitable spirit' with whom it had been such an honour and privilege for Peter to serve his "six unforgettable years."

Wendy Sparks' memberships of ornithological societies included the British Trust for Ornithology: August 1978–January 2004 (Carole Showell, *in litt.*, 10 November 2010); British Ornithologists' Union: 1980–? (Olney 1981); Royal Society for the Protection of Birds: 1981–2007 (Chris Bowden, *in litt.*, 15 November 2010); Oriental Bird Club: 1992–2001 (Margaret Sykes, *in litt.*, 1 April 2008); life membership of the Gloucestershire Naturalists' Society. She was both proud and pleased when her name was put forward for a Fellowship of the BOU following one of her many bird-watching trips. Both Peter and Wendy maintained a lifelong friendship with Himmatsinhji, himself a keen naturalist and member of the Bombay Natural History Society. They corresponded until the end of Wendy's life and it is certain that they both inspired his love of birds. She also corresponded in great detail with Salim Ali, sending him the minutiae of all her bird records from her time in Kachchh.

As children, Marigold and Richard visited reserves all over Great Britain, such as Slimbridge and Kilspindie, with their parents. When they both started boarding school in 1960, Wendy took a degree in philosophy at Bristol University, and in 1964 she and Peter took over Berkhampstead School in Cheltenham. As joint Principals they ran the school together for 14 happy years; it was

very successful, regularly winning scholarships to the top public schools in the west of England (St Mary's Calne, Westonbirt, Cheltenham Ladies College and Cheltenham College, several well-known schools in Malvern, Sherbourne, and so on). Among other subjects, Wendy taught natural history. She particularly enjoyed leading field trips and teaching the children to keep careful diaries of what they had seen. They retired in 1978, which left them free to undertake bird-watching holidays wherever they could—St. Kilda and the Faroe Islands, South Africa, Israel, and Egypt, to mention a few. The one they most enjoyed was to the Himalayas. While Peter had been a serving Gurkha officer, Nepal was closed to the British. Now at last he could visit the home of the people he so admired. Wendy described him as being surrounded by Gurkha people everywhere they went, and said how much he enjoyed speaking Gurkhali again.

Equipment & recordkeeping

Her first pair of Zeiss binoculars was a small lightweight 8x30 pair given to her on her twenty-first birthday in 1937. She always had binoculars (for which she used the old-fashioned term 'field glasses') at the ready, and her children remember them being in almost every room in the house. One of her oldest pairs was a Stepruva Ross 9x35, but she strongly favoured Zeiss, of which she had at least three pairs of 10x40B. Her preferred travel binoculars were a pair of Swift 8x42 Ultralite. Her first telescope was a Nickel Supra 15x60X on a Cobra CX30 stand—later replaced by a more up-to-date model.

Wendy was a meticulous annalist and researcher. She was very much the perfectionist. Her life lists were marvellously detailed, and perfectly neat. She used marker pens in many different shades according to the information she was recording—a source of great amusement to her children. If she made a mistake, she preferred to start a page again rather than correct it. She was very careful to be absolutely certain of all her bird identifications, and to note whether they were seen or heard, or both, and the place, weather conditions, time, *etc.* She was very accomplished at identifying British birds by song. She never guessed. Her list of the birds of Kachchh is testimony of this trait.

Wendy's copy of 'The birds of Kachchh'

On 29 July 1946, Peter presented his fiancée with a copy of 'The birds of Kachchh' (Ali 1945) following their engagement, inscribing it with the words 'Wendy from Peter' and the date. She entered marginalia into it at least till the tenth, and last volume of the Ali & Ripley (1974) magnum opus was published. The evidence for this is on p. 172, wherein, along the fore-edge, she wrote, 'The figure against each name is the number given for it in *The Handbook of the Birds of India and Pakistan*, Ali and Ripley, 1968 to 1974,'—referring to her notes, on the same page, on four species she had added during her sojourn in Kachchh, to Ali's (1945) work. These were: Pallas's Fishing Eagle *Haliaeetus leucoryphus*, Kentish Plover *Charadrius alexandrinus*, Large Crested Tern *Sterna bergii*, Indian Skimmer *Rynchops albicollis*, and Alexandrine Parakeet *Psittacula eupatria* (highlighted with an asterisk '*' before the English names in the list below).

Wendy used her book extensively, but also preserved it in excellent condition, despite her innumerable marginalia. She had a critical eye for accuracy, and edited typos in several places, e.g., on p. 34, in the first line she corrected 'withethroats' to "whitethroats"; on p. 57 she changes 'The Small Punjab Skylark' to "The Punjab Small Skylark." Large sections of the book are neatly



Richard Sparks & Marigold Heron

Peter & Wendy Sparks.

underlined to highlight information that was important to her: identification features of larks; the descriptions of nightjar's songs; the onomatopoeic call of *Pterocles senegallus*, "waku-waku." She applied very strict objectivity to the correct identification of larks, pencilling in Peterson-style arrows on the plate depicting them, and underlining appropriate text in each species' account. Waders, and egrets were other birds that held her special attention. That she was up-to-date with published literature is evident through her innumerable emendations of English and scientific names, as they changed over the years. At the bottom of the Index (p. 175), the book ends, with her evidently proud note, "315 sp. (sic.) in Index + 4 added!" Her personal list, given below, stood at 178 spp.

Classified list of birds seen in Kachchh between 5 February 1947 and the end of March 1948

- Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis* 18 February 1947 between Mandvi and Bhuj.
- Little Cormorant *Phalacrocorax niger* 9 February 1947 between Bhuj and Mandvi.
- Great Cormorant *P. carbo* 12 February 1947 near Mandvi.
- Oriental Darter *Anhinga melanogaster* 13 February 1947 near Mandvi.
- Little Egret *Egretta garzetta* 9 February 1947 between Bhuj and Mandvi.
- Western Reef Heron *Egretta gularis* 11 February 1947 near Mandvi.
- Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea* 10 February 1947 near Mandvi.
- Large Egret *Casmerodius albus* 9 February 1947 between Bhuj and Mandvi: POSSIBLE.
- Median Egret *Mesophox intermedius* 12 August 1947 at Laeja creek, Mandvi: POSSIBLE. Unsure about ID of egrets, whether Large, or Median, sighted on 9 July Laeja creek, 19 October Raval Pir tank 1947; 8 February 1948 Chaduva Rakhhal. Therefore listed as probables.
- Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis* 9 February 1947 between Bhuj and Mandvi.
- Pond Heron *Ardeola grayii* 16 March 1947 at Chaduva Reserve.
- Little Green Heron *Butorides striatus* 6 March 1947 at Khari Nadi, near Rhudramata.
- Black-crowned Night-Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax* 16 March 1947 at Chaduva Reserve.
- Painted Stork *Mycteria leucocephala* 9 February 1947 between Bhuj and Mandvi.
- Black-necked Stork *Ephippiorhynchus asiaticus* 10 February 1947 near Mandvi.
- Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus* 15 February 1948 at Jamara tank.
- Oriental White Ibis *Threskiornis melanocephalus* 10 February 1947 near Mandvi.
- Black Ibis *Pseudibis papillosa* 10 February 1947 in Vijay Vilas Palace grounds.
- Eurasian Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia* 9 February 1947 between Bhuj and Mandvi.
- Greater Flamingo *Phoenicopterus roseus* 10 February 1947 near Mandvi.
- Lesser Flamingo *P. minor* 18 August 1947 in Laeja creek, Mandvi.
- Lesser Whistling-Duck *Dendrocygna javanica* 16 July 1947 between Mandvi and Bhuj.
- Comb Duck *Sarkidiornis melanotos* 27 July 1947 at Khatriwala talau, Bhuj, six birds.
- Gadwal *Anas strepera* 19 October 1947 at Rawal Pir tank, Mandvi, three birds.
- Eurasian Wigeon *A. penelope* 4 March 1947 towards Ningal, near Bhuj.
- Mallard *A. platyrhynchos* 2 November 1947 at Rawal Pir tank, Mandvi.
- Spot-billed Duck *A. poecilorhyncha* 9 February 1947 between Bhuj and Mandvi.
- Northern Shoveller *A. clypeata* 10 February 1947 near Mandvi.
- Northern Pintail *A. acuta* 6 March 1947 on Hamirsar tank, Bhuj.
- Common Teal *A. crecca* 11 February 1947 near Mandvi.
- Common Pochard *Aythya ferina* 4 March 1947, by P. H. S. [= Peter Herbert Sparks?], towards Ningal, near Bhuj; 24 January 1948 at Marmoor tank.
- Oriental Honey-Buzzard *Pernis ptilorhynchus* 16 March 1947 at Chaduva Rakhhal.
- Black-shouldered Kite *Elanus caeruleus* 27 February 1947 SW of Bhuj; 1 October 1947, a pair in Vijay Vilas Palace grounds, Mandvi.
- Black Kite *Milvus govinda* 6 February 1947 on Bhuj golf course; 8 February 1947 on the Bhujia.
- Brahminy Kite *Haliastur indus* 11 February 1947 near Mandvi; 8 February 1948 at Chaduva Rakhhal.
- *Pallas' Fishing Eagle *Haliaeetus leucoryphus* 15 February 1948 at Jamara tank, an adult.
- Egyptian Vulture *Neophron percnopterus* 5 March 1947 on the way to Bhrindiala.
- Indian White-backed Vulture *Gyps bengalensis* 6 February 1947 from garden of Commandant's bungalow, Bhuj.
- Red-headed Vulture *Sarcogyps calvus* 11 February 1947 near Mandvi.
- Crested Serpent-Eagle *Spilornis cheela* 24 January 1948 between Bhuj and Ratnal (immature). PROBABLE.
- Marsh Harrier *C. aeruginosus* 24 January 1948 at Marmoor tank.
- Pallid Harrier *Circus macrourus* 10 February 1947 at Mandvi golf course; 15 February 1947 near Mandvi; 23 February 1947 near Narayanpur. POSSIBLE.
- Montagu's Harrier *C. pygargus* 5 October 1947 near Laeja creek. POSSIBLE.
- Shikra *Accipiter badius* 18 February 1947 near Bhuj.
- White-eyed Buzzard *Butastur teesa* 28 February 1947 near Bhuj by Peter Herbert Sparks; 27 June 1947 near Laeja creek, Mandvi; 24 January 1948 between Bhuj and Ratnal.
- Greater Spotted Eagle *Aquila clanga* 16 February 1947 near Mandvi. POSSIBLE.
- Tawny Eagle *A. rapax* 5 March 1947 on the way to Bhrindiala. 15 February 1947 near Mandvi: PROBABLE.
- Eastern Imperial Eagle *A. heliaca* 13 February 1947 near Mandvi; 29 July 1947 south of Ganga Nal, Mandvi, two birds (pair?). Both records listed as PROBABLE.
- Bonelli's Eagle *Hieraetus fasciatus* 26 July 1947 near Bhuj: POSSIBLE.
- Osprey *Pandion haliaetus* 13 July 1947 at Laeja creek, Mandvi; 7 August 1947 on Mandvi golf course; 2 November 1947 at Rawal Pir tank (2 birds).
- Common Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus* 7 February 1947 Bhujia area.
- Red-headed Falcon *F. chicquera* 5 July 1947 at Mandvi ("Turumti").
- Laggar Falcon *F. jugger* 5 February 1947 between Kandla and Bhuj; 5 March 1947 between Bhuj and Bhrindiala. POSSIBLE.
- Black Francolin *Francolinus francolinus* 13 February 1947 near Mandvi.
- Grey Francolin *F. pondicerianus* 5 February 1947 between Kandla and Bhuj.
- Common Quail *Coturnix coturnix* 5 March 1947 by Peter Herbert Sparks between Bhuj and Bhrindiala: POSSIBLE. 8 March 1947 at Trumbau, near Bhuj.
- Rock Bush-Quail *Perdica argoondah* Seen 9–11 February 1948 at Edmund dam.
- Indian Peafowl *Pavo cristatus* 10 February 1947.
- Eastern Common Crane *Grus grus* 12 February 1947 near Mandvi. 26 September 1947 (two flocks, one of 30 birds), between 27 September and 4 October 1947 (many large flocks), all near Mandvi. PROBABLE records: 26 September 1947 from Vijay Vilas palace gardens, Mandvi, two flocks in flight, the second of c. 30 birds; 2 November 1947 at Raval pir, three flocks of four, 41, and 36 birds.
- Sarus Crane *Grus antigone* 5 March 1947 at Devisar tank.
- Purple Moorhen *Porphyrio porphyrio* 9 November 1947 at Rawal Pir tank.
- Common Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus* 9 March 1947 at Trombau near Bhuj.
- Common Coot *Fulica atra* 5 March 1947 at Devisar tank.
- Houbara *Chlamydotis undulata* 10 February 1947 near Mandvi; 5 March

¹ Though five spp., are marked by asterisks in her list, she added only four to the main list. She might have believed the Alexandrine Parakeet was a probable escapee, and did not allow its inclusion in her list of added species. This was typical of her strict self-censure!

- 1947 on the Great Rann of Kachchh (one bird on each occasion).
Pheasant-tailed Jacana *Hydrophasianus chirurgus* End of March 1947 at Devisar tank.
- Eurasian Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus* 10 February 1947 near Mandvi.
- Grey Plover *Pluvialis squatarola* 8 August 1947 at Laeja creek, Mandvi (five birds). POSSIBLE record: 2 July 1947 at Ganga nal near Mandvi, two birds.
- Little Ringed Plover *C. dubius* 8 February 1948 at Chaduva Rakhhal. POSSIBLE records of two races, *curonicus*, and *jerdoni*: 1947: 6 March, Hamirsar tank, Bhuj city, 16 March Chaduva, 8 July Mandvi, 19 October Raval Pir tank. 1948: 11 January between Bhuj and Majal / Angia / Jakhau / Dhinodhar, 8 February Chaduva, 9 February Jamara, second tank.
- *Kentish Plover *C. alexandrinus* 5 August 1947 in bay beyond Laeja creek. POSSIBLE, 1947: 13 February near Mandvi, 5 March between Bhuj and Bhrindiala, 8, 10 July, 16 August near Mandvi, 8 November Laeja creek.
- Lesser Sand Plover *C. mongolus* 8 July 1947 in bay beyond Laeja creek. POSSIBLE, 1947: 4 July near Mandvi, 5 August beyond Laeja creek.
- Greater Sand Plover *Charadrius leschenaultii* 8 July 1947 in bay beyond Laeja creek. POSSIBLE records in 1947 from near Mandvi: 13 February, 22 June, 4, 5, 11, 13, 28, 31 July, 1 August, 5 October, 8 November.
- Red-wattled Lapwing *Vanellus indicus* 5 March 1947 at Devisar tank.
- Yellow-wattled Lapwing *V. malabaricus* 12 February 1947 near Mandvi.
- Sociable Lapwing *V. gregarius* 3 August 1947 on Mandvi Golf Course (200); 7 August 1947 (20); 9 August 1947 (125); 13 August 1947 (20); 16 August 1947 (flocks of c. 20 and c. 10, plus another flock, uncounted); 17 August 1947 (10); 18 August 1947 (30); 19 August 1947 (uncounted); all on Mandvi Golf Course.
- Common Snipe *Gallinago gallinago* PROBABLE: 1947: 5 March between Bhuj and Bhrindiala, 1 November at Raval Pir tank, 13 birds; 1948: 18 January at Ningul, 8 February at Chaduva Rakhhal.
- Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa* 16 March 1947 at Chaduva Rakhhal.
- Bar-tailed Godwit *L. lapponica* 5 October 1947 at Laeja creek, Mandvi, several birds.
- Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus* 6 July 1947 near Ganga Nal, Mandvi, about three birds. POSSIBLE: 3 July 1947 near Mandvi.
- Eastern Curlew *N. phaeopus* 5 February 1947 between Kandla and Bhuj.
- Common Redshank *Tringa totanus* 5 February 1947 between Kandla and Bhuj. POSSIBLE: 15 February 1947 at Jamara tank.
- Marsh Sandpiper *T. stagnatilis* 12 October 1947 at Raval Pir tank (two birds). POSSIBLE: 5 March 1947 at Devisar tank.
- Common Greenshank *T. nebularia* 10 February 1947 near Mandvi. POSSIBLE: 5 March 1947 at Devisar tank.
- Green Sandpiper *T. ochropus* 12 October 1947 at Raval Pir tank.
- Terek Sandpiper *T. terek* 28 July 1947 near Laeja creek.
- Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos* 11 February 1947 near Mandvi.
- Ruddy Turnstone *Arenaria interpres* 9 August 1947 beyond Laeja creek, 12 birds.
- Sanderling *Calidris alba* 7 July 1947 near Laeja creek, about eight birds.
- Little Stint *C. minuta* 7 August 1947 on shore beyond Laeja creek, three birds.
- Temminck's Stint *C. temminckii* 19 October 1947 at Raval Pir tank, eight birds.
- Dunlin *C. alpina* 17 August 1947 at Laeja creek. POSSIBLE, 1947: 7, 8, 31 July near Laeja creek.
- Curlew Sandpiper *C. testacea* 7 August 1947 on shore beyond Laeja creek, five birds.
- Ruff *Philomachus pugnax* 12 October 1947 at Raval Pir tank, four birds, also two birds on 19 October 1947, with females, and immatures. POSSIBLE: 15 February 1948 at Jamara tank.
- Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus* 5 March 1947 on the way to Bhrindiala.
- Pied Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta* 12 October 1947 at Raval Pir tank, two birds.
- Stone-Curlew *Burhinus oedicnemus* 5 July 1947 from road between Mandvi town and Vijay Vilas palace, two birds in the fields. Also seen on 22 October 1947 when out shooting near Laeja creek, four birds among sand dunes.
- Great Stone-Plover *Esacus recurvirostris* 11 February 1947 near Mandvi and on 16 August 1947 beyond Laeja creek, Mandvi.
- Cream-coloured Courser *Cursorius cursor* 12 February 1947 near Mandvi.
- Indian Courser *C. coromandelicus* 2 March 1947 near Mandvi.
- Lesser Black-backed / Eastern / Yellow-legged Herring gull *Larus fuscus* / *L. heuglini* POSSIBLE / PROBABLE 25 October 1947 beyond Laeja creek.
- Black-headed Gull *L. ridibundus* 11 February 1947 near Mandvi. PROBABLE: 5 August 1947 beyond Laeja creek.
- Gull-billed Tern *Gelochelidon nilotica* 29 July 1947 near Ganga nal, Mandvi.
- Caspian Tern *Sterna caspia* 11 February 1947 near Mandvi.
- River Tern *S. aurantia* 8 February 1948 at Chaduva Rakhhal.
- *Large Crested Tern *S. bergii* 7 July 1947 near Mandvi.
- Little Tern *S. albifrons* 3 July 1947 near Mandvi, three birds.
- *Indian Skimmer *Rynchops albicollis* 3 August 1947 near Mandvi, nine birds.
- Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse *Pterocles exustus* 12 February 1947 near Mandvi; 5 March 1947 on way to Bhrindiala. PROBABLE: 9 February 1947 between Bhuj and Mandvi.
- Painted Sandgrouse *P. indicus* 8 March 1947 at Trombau, near Bhuj.
- Blue Rock Pigeon *Columba livia* 6 February 1947 in the Bhuj area.
- Little Brown Dove *Streptopelia senegalensis* 6 February 1947 in the Bhuj area.
- Red Collared-Dove *S. tranquebarica* 4 March 1947 in the Bhuj area.
- Eurasian Collared-Dove *S. decaocto* 5 February 1947 between Kandla and Bhuj.
- *Alexandrine Parakeet *Psittacula eupatria* 2 March 1947 near Bhuj. 27 September 1947 in Vijay Vilas palace gardens, a pair was around for two–three days. PROBABLE escapee?
- Rose-ringed Parakeet *P. krameri* 6 February 1947 in the garden of the Commandant's bungalow at Bhuj.
- Asian Koel *Eudynamis scolopacea* 9 February 1947 in Vijay Vilas palace grounds at Mandvi.
- Sirkeer Malkoha *Taccocua leschenaultii* 15 February 1948 at Jamara tank.
- Greater Coucal *Centropus sinensis* 13 February 1947 near Mandvi; 12 February 1948 in Mitra Niwas garden, Bhuj.
- Spotted Owlet *Athene brama* 5 March 1947 at Devisar tank.
- Short-eared Owl *Asio flammeus* 2 March 1947 near Mandvi.
- Common Indian Nightjar *Caprimulgus asiaticus* 29 March 1947 at Fakinwadi near Bhuj.
- Alpine Swift *Tachymartus melba* 9 March 1947 at Trombau near Bhuj.
- House Swift *Apus affinis* 18 February 1947 near Bhuj.
- Small Blue Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis* 9 March 1947 at Trombau near Bhuj.
- White-breasted Kingfisher *Halcyon smyrnensis* 2 March 1947 near Mandvi.
- Lesser Pied Kingfisher *Ceryle rudis* 9 February 1948 at Edmund dam.
- Green Bee-eater *Merops orientalis* 8 February 1947 on Bhuj golf course.
- Blue-cheeked Bee-eater *M. persicus* 20 January 1948 on the Bhujia.
- European Roller *Coracias garrulus* PROBABLE: 1 September 1947 the first roller of the autumn was seen at Mandvi. From that date onwards numbers increased daily until by 21 September 1947 there were rollers everywhere in the Mandvi area. These were assumed to be mainly Kashmir Rollers *C. g. semenowi* on autumn migration.
- Indian Roller *C. benghalensis* 8 February 1947 at end of private road from Bhuj to Vijay Vilas palace.
- Common Hoopoe *Upupa epops* 5 February 1947 between Kandla and Bhuj.
- Red-winged Bush-Lark *Mirafra erythroptera* 3 July 1947 near Mandvi.
- Ashy-crowned Sparrow-Lark *Eremopterix grisea* 16 March 1947 at Chaduva Rakhhal.
- Rufous-tailed Finch-Lark *Ammomanes phoenicurus* 16 March 1947 at Chaduva Rakhhal.
- Greater Hoopoe-Lark *Alaemon alaudipes* 11 January 1948 on the way to Dhinodhar, monastery of the Kanphata Order, or Kanphutties.
- Greater Short-toed Lark *Calandrella brachydactyla* POSSIBLE: 9–10

February 1947 between Bhuj and Mandvi, and on Mandvi golf course.

Common Crested Lark *Galerida cristata* 5 March 1947 on the way to Bhrindiala. PROBABLE: 28 July 1947 near Laeja creek, two birds.

Dusky Crag-Martin *Hirundo concolor* 22 March 1947 in the Bhujia fort.

Common Swallow *H. rustica* 13 July 1947 near Laeja creek, Mandvi.

Wire-tailed Swallow *H. smithii* 16 March 1947 at Chaduva Rakhhal.

Red-rumped Swallow *H. daurica* 14 August 1947 between Mandvi and Bhuj.

White Wagtail *Motacilla alba* 23 February 1947 beside a stream near Narayanpur.

Large Pied Wagtail *M. maderaspatensis* 23 February 1947 by a stream near Narayanpur.

Yellow-headed Wagtail *M. flava* 11 January 1948 between Bhuj–Majal–Angia–Jakhau–Dhinodhar. PROBABLE.

Citrine Wagtail *M. citreola* 14 March 1948 at Jamara tank.

Grey Wagtail *M. cinerea* 23 February 1947 by a stream near Narayanpur.

Brown Rock Pipit *Anthus similis* 19 August 1947 between Mandvi and Bhuj. PROBABLE: 26 July 1947 in the Bhuj area. 19 August 1947 and 5 October 1947 between Mandvi and Bhuj.

Small Minivet *Pericrocotus cinnamomeus* 18 February 1947 near Bhuj.

White-eared Bulbul *Pycnonotus leucotis* 6 February 1947 in garden of Commandant's bungalow, Bhuj.

Red-vented Bulbul *P. cafer* 6 February 1947 in garden of Commandant's bungalow, Bhuj.

Marshall's Iora *Aegithina nigrolutea* 14 August 1947 between Mandvi and Bhuj.

Bay-backed Shrike *Lanius vittatus* 7 February 1947 on the Bhujia.

Grey Shrike *L. meridionalis* 11 February 1947 near Mandvi.

Blue Rock-Thrush *Monticola solitarius* 22 March 1947 at Narayanpur near Bhuj.

Bluethroat *Luscinia svecicus* 23 February 1947 beside a stream near Narayanpur, near Bhuj.

Indian Robin *Saxicoloides fulicata* 8 February 1947 on the Bhujia.

Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros* 6 February 1947 in garden of Commandant's bungalow, Bhuj.

Stonechat *Saxicola torquata* 5 March 1947 between Bhuj and Bhrindiala. POSSIBLE: 9 February 1947 between Bhuj and Mandvi, 14–15 August 1947 in the same areas.

Desert Wheatear *Oenanthe deserti* 11 February 1947 near Mandvi. POSSIBLE: 9 February 1947 between Bhuj and Mandvi, 10–11 February 1947 in the Mandvi area.

Indian Chat *Cercomela fusca* 11 January 1948 between Bhuj and Dhinodhar.

Common Babbler *Turdoides caudata* 13 February 1947 near Mandvi.

Rufous-fronted Prinia *Prinia buchanani* 13 February 1947 near Mandvi.

Common Tailorbird *Orthotomus sutorius* 13 February 1947 near Mandvi.

Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita* 8 March 1947 near Mandvi.

Common Lesser Whitethroat *Sylvia curruca* POSSIBLE: 8 February 1948 at Chaduva Rakhhal. The bird was *very small* which suggests Desert Warbler *S. nana*, BUT the colour was wrong. Also, 19 August 1947 and 5 October 1947 between Bhuj and Mandvi and in the Mandvi area.

Paradise Flycatcher *Terpsiphone paradisi* 2 March 1947 near Mandvi, one female.

Pied Tit *Parus nuchalis* 10 March 1947 on the Bhujia.

Purple Sunbird *Nectarinia asiatica* 9 February 1947 in guesthouse garden, Vijay Vilas palace, Mandvi.

Grey-necked Bunting *Emberiza buchanani* 27 February 1947 to the south-west of Bhuj.

Common Silverbill *Lonchura malabarica* 8 February 1947 on the Bhujia.

House Sparrow *Passer domesticus* 6 February 1947, Bhuj area.

Yellow-throated Petronia *Petronia xanthocollis* 6 February 1947 from the garden of the Commandant's bungalow near Bhuj.

Brahminy Starling *Sturnus pagodarum* 6 February 1947 in garden of Commandant's bungalow, Bhuj.

Rosy Starling *S. roseus* 2 March 1947 near Mandvi.

Common Myna *Acridotheres tristis* 6 February 1947 in garden of Commandant's bungalow, Bhuj.

Bank Myna *A. ginginianus* 11 January 1948 on the way to Dhinodhar,

monastery of the Kanphata Order.

Indian Golden Oriole *Oriolus kundoo* 1 September 1947 in Vijay Vilas palace gardens, Mandvi, a pair.

Black Drongo *Dicrurus macrocercus* 6 February 1947 on Bhuj golf course.

House Crow *Corvus splendens* 6 February 1947 in garden of Commandant's bungalow, Bhuj.

Acknowledgements

I was not making any headway with this biographical sketch, till I wrote to Wendy's son, Richard Sparks. Frankly I did not expect an answer, for the address that I had for him was several years old. But a fortnight or so later his email popped up on my laptop! It made fascinating reading, and as we exchanged emails, he marked copies to his sister, Marigold Heron, who sent me a final draft. This paper would not have been what it is without their wonderful cooperation and help for which I am deeply indebted to them. As you will realise, they have written a large part of Wendy's life history, which is the way it should be. My special thanks go to Margaret Sykes, Membership Secretary, Oriental Bird Club, Alison Harding, Assistant Librarian, Ornithology & Rothschild Libraries, Natural History Museum, Tring, UK, and Tony Statham. All of them played a vital role in the formative stages. Carole Showell, Librarian, British Trust for Ornithology, U. K., for researching Wendy's membership status in BTO, and Chris Bowden (RSPB). Lieut. Gen. Baljit Singh (Retd) for enlightening conversations about movements of the 2GR, and Edward Dickinson for putting me in touch with Alison Harding.

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Sparks, Gwendolen. Her copy of Salim Ali's *The birds of Kachchh*, with marginalia. Her husband, Peter, presented it to her before they were married, and inscribed on the front free-endpaper, "Wendy from Peter, 29th July '46."

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Caspian Tern *Sterna caspia*.

A checklist of birds of Pauri district, Uttarakhand, India

Archana Naithani & Dinesh Bhatt

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Abstract

This paper deals with observations of the avifauna of some parts of Pauri district (western Himalayas), Uttarakhand. Surveys were carried out during January 2005–December 2008 along an elevational gradient following line transect method. 133 bird species, belonging to 37 families, were recorded. The number of species was higher at high elevation zone than at mid- and low- elevations. The almost stagnant population of two species, Kaleej *Lophura leucomelanos* and Koklass *Pucrasia macrolopha*, in the study area, listed under the category 'Least Concern' in the IUCN Red List (IUCN 2004), is a matter of concern.

Introduction

The Himalayan range, well known for its biological diversity, has been identified as a biodiversity hotspot. From the avian diversity point of view, the entire Himalayan ecosystem has been an adobe since more than 970 avian species have so far been recorded from this area, including 15 specific endemics, and one generic, *Ophrysia* (Himalayan Quail *Ophrysia superciliosa*, CR) (Stattersfield *et al.* 1998). Biogeographically, this enormous mountain range has been divided into North-western-, Western-, Central-, Eastern-, and Trans- Himalayan regions (Rodgers *et al.* 2000).

The Western Himalayas, by themselves, contain 11 restricted-range species, including the aforementioned Himalayan Quail, Cheer Pheasant *Catreus wallichii* (VU), and Western Tragopan *Tragopan melanocephalus* (VU), which last is also endemic.

Western Himalayan avifauna has attracted a number of ornithologists and naturalists over the years, and scientists have explored most parts of this area, for the baseline information that is synthesised in Ali & Ripley (1987). Some of the regions surveyed by ornithologists are, Great Himalayan National Park in Himachal Pradesh (Gaston *et al.* 1981, 1983; Gaston & Garson 1992; Gaston *et al.* 1994; Ramesh *et al.* 2003); Majhatal Wildlife Sanctuary (Mishra 1997); Nanda Devi National Park (Lamba 1987; Tak & Kumar 1987; Sankaran 1995; Satyakumar 2003); Kerdarnath Wildlife Sanctuary (Satayakumar *et al.* 1992; Kumar 1997; Raza 2006); Ascot Wildlife Sanctuary (Raza 2006); Chenab Valley, Chamoli Garhwal, Uttarakhand (Bhattacharaya & Sathyakumar 2007). However, information on the status and diversity of the avifauna of Pauri district is lacking. We have attempted to fill this gap through extensive field surveys on the avifauna of parts of Pauri district along elevational gradients, from January 2005 to December 2008.

Study area

The present study was conducted in some parts of urbanised, and forest habitats of Pauri District (**Fig. 1**), namely, Pauri town (30°08'N 78°46'E); Nagdev reserve forest; Srikot-Khanda urban and forest habitats (30°11'N 78°47'E) and Srinagar urban and forest habitats (30°13'N; 78°47'E). Pauri town is located at an

altitude of 1,640–2,180 m asl, and has a population of 20,397 (Census 2001). It is spread over c. 5 km², which includes residential and commercial buildings, roads and other paved surfaces, and ornamental plants. 'Banj' *Quercus leucotricophora*, 'burans' *Rhododendron arboretum*, and 'chir' *Pinus roxburghii* are the major tree species along with numerous bushes of 'kingod' *Berberis chitria*. The climate is temperate and the average annual temperature of the area is 17°C, and average rainfall is 207 mm.

Srikot-khanda lies between 890–1,100 m a.s.l., and encompasses about 2.4 km². It has mixed vegetation including some agricultural terraces used to grow maize, wheat, rice, vegetables, *etc.* Its population is about 450 (Census, 2001). An open scrub area with scattered pine *Pinus roxburghii* and a patch of 'khair' *Acacia catechu* trees lies just adjacent to the urban habitat. The average annual temperature of the area is 21°C and the average rainfall is 189 mm.

Srinagar, situated along the bank of Alaknanda River, lies between 540–840 m a.s.l. The area of town is about 9.6 km², and the population is about 19,861 (Census, 2001). Pine is the predominant tree of the area along with a few wild date *Phoenix humilis*, 'bel' *Aegle marmelos*, and some species of ornamental plants. The average annual temperature of the area is 22°C and the annual maximum rainfall is 202 mm.

Methods

Line transects were used to estimate bird diversity (Verner 1985). Four transects were laid in each habitat type at each elevational zone. Each transect was one kilometer long, and 20 m wide, on either side. Altogether 1,152 transect visits [48 months x 4 transects x 2 habitat types (forest, and urbanised) x 3 elevational zones] were made during the study period, covering all seasons (summer, monsoon, winter and spring). Census methodology was identical in both types of habitat, along altitudinal gradients. All birds seen while walking along transects, including those flying c. 10 m above the transect were recorded. Sampling was done between 0600–1100 hrs and 1530–1930 hrs during April–September, and between 0700–1130 hrs and 1500–1600 hrs during October–March. The identification of birds in the field

was based on Grimmett *et al.* (2001), and classification and nomenclature follows Manakadan & Pittie (2001).

Results & discussion

133 species, belonging to 37 families, were recorded during the present study (Table 1). Muscipidae comprised the maximum number of species (35), followed by Accipitridae (9), and Picidae (9). In other regions of Western Himalayas too, Muscipidae dominate (Bhattacharya & Sathyakumar 2007).

We observed two species, listed by the IUCN Red List under the category 'Least concern' (IUCN 2004), Kalij- *Lophura leucomelanos*, and Koklass- *Pucracia macrolopha* Pheasant during our surveys. Kalij was sighted at all elevations (n=192; 40, 42, 43 sightings at high, mid, and low elevational zones respectively). The abundance of the Kalij was highest (encounter rate = 6.5/km) at high elevation followed by mid- (encounter rate = 5.56/km), and low- elevations (encounter rate = 4.75/km). Koklass was sighted only at high elevation (n=192; 44 sightings) and the over all encounter rate was 5.62/km. There was no significant difference between mean abundance values of these species across the years during the study period indicating some level of disturbance in the area causing hindrance in the increase in the population size of these least count species. Threatened species needs special attention toward their status and, distribution as these species are more sensitive to disturbance (BirdLife International, 2001; Wijesinghe & Brooke, 2005; Lei *et al.*, 2003, 2007; Pandit *et al.*, 2007). Thus, the presence of the two least concern species in the area invites immediate conservation concern from the ecologist and conservationist.

Of the 133 spp., recorded, the maximum, 112, were present at high elevation (1640-2180 m asl), followed by mid- (85 species) and low- elevations (84 species). Kessler *et al.* (2001), and Kattan & Franco (2004) have also obtained peak species richness around 2,200 m asl.

It has generally been accepted that the configuration and composition of vegetation of a habitat acts as one of the determining factors for the distribution and abundance of bird species (Cody 1985; Morrison 1992; Block & Brennan 1993). Thus, in the present study the high number of bird species at high elevation could be attributed to the mixed, complex, and varied vegetation profile in this region when compared to mid- or low- elevations. For example, the number of plant species was highest (98) at high elevation in comparison to mid- (85) or low- (78) elevations. Similarly, tree density was also highest at high elevation (MS under preparation).

During the study, a total of 37 spp., were observed as uncommon (less than 10 individuals)—being 16, 14 and 12 on high-, mid- and low- elevations respectively. The presence of a high number of uncommon species in any specific habitat indicates the availability of minimum resources required for breeding and feeding for those species. However, further studies on this aspect would be required to generate some additional information on the distribution pattern of avifauna in the present and other habitat(s).

Seven species of waterbirds were also observed on the banks of River Alaknanda near Srinagar town. Out of these three, namely Brahminy Shelduck *Tadorna ferruginea*, Gadwall *Anas strepera*, and Mallard *A. platyrhynchos* were winter visitor staging in the study area during January to March. However, Plumbeous water redstart *Rhyacornis fuliginosus*, Red-wattled Lapwing *Vanellus indicus*, White-capped water redstart *Chaimarornis leucocephalus*, and River lapwing *V. duvaucelii* were observed

throughout the year in the study area.

Nine species of altitudinal migrants, namely Scarlet minivet *Pericrocotus flammeus*, Eurasian tree creeper *Certhia familiaris*, Oriental turtle-dove *Streptopelia orientalis*, Grey tree pie *Dendrocitta formosae*, Red billed blue magpie *Urocissa erythrorhyncha*, Eurasian jay *Garrulus glandarius*, Black headed jay *Garrulus lanceolatus*, White throated fantail flycatcher *Rhipidura albicollis*, and White browed fantail flycatcher *Rhipidura aureola* were also observed during the present survey. The basis of calling all these species as altitudinal migrants was clear cut as during winter these all were observed at mid and low elevations but not at high elevation. Similarly, during summer these species were observed at only high elevation. Seasonal migration across the Himalaya has widely been reported by naturalists over the past 30 years (Grimmett *et al.*, 1998; Kery *et al.* 2000). Additionally, impact of environmental factors might also cause seasonal movements of birds within and between habitats (Perrins & Birkhead 1983; Loiselle & Blake 1991; Norris & Marra 2007). In our study area, snowfall was a common feature at only high elevation during winter causing a sharp decline in temperature, which, in turn, resulted in altitudinal migration by some avian species. Karr (1976), Terborgh (1977), and Vazquez & Givnish (1998) have also reported fluctuations in bird abundance, due to variation in the temperature and/or intensity of the rain at higher elevations.

Conclusions

1. Avian diversity, in parts of Pauri district, is greatest at high elevations, followed by mid- and low- elevations. This could be attributed to the change in vegetation of the area along elevational gradient.
2. The presence of two least count bird species and some uncommon species (sightings less than 10 individuals per year) makes it an important area for biodiversity conservation.

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Rufous-tailed Shrike *Lanius isabellinus*.

Table 1: Systematic list of birds observed at high, mid and low elevational zones of District Pauri Garhwal, Uttarakhand

Species	Elevations			Distribution status
	H	M	L	
Anatidae				
Brahminy Shelduck <i>Tadorna ferruginea</i>	A	A	P	WV
Gadwall <i>Anas strepera</i>	A	A	P	WV
Mallard <i>A. platyrhynchos</i>	A	A	P	WV
Accipitridae				
Black Kite <i>Milvus migrans</i>	P	P	P	R
Crested Serpent-Eagle <i>Spilornis cheela</i>	P*	A	A	WV
Shikra <i>Accipiter badius</i>	P*	P*	P*	WV
Eurasian Sparrowhawk <i>A. nisus</i>	P	A	A	R
Common Buzzard <i>Buteo buteo</i>	P*	A	A	WV
Black Eagle <i>Ictinaetus malayensis</i>	P*	A	A	R
Greater Spotted Eagle <i>Aquila clanga</i>	P*	A	A	WV
Steppe Eagle <i>A. nipalensis</i>	P	P*	P*	WV
Booted Eagle <i>Hieraetus pennatus</i>	P*	A	A	R
Falconidae				
Common Kestrel <i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	P	A	A	WV
Phasianidae				
Chukor <i>Alectoris chukar</i>	A	P	P	R
Rain Quail <i>Coturnix coromandelica</i>	A	P	A	R
Koklass Pheasant <i>Pucrasia macrolopha</i>	P	A	A	R
Red Junglefowl <i>Gallus gallus</i>	A	P	P	R
Kaleej Pheasant <i>Lophura leucomelanos</i>	P	P	P	R
Charadriidae				
River Lapwing <i>Vanellus duvaucelii</i>	A	A	P	R
Red-wattled Lapwing <i>V. indicus</i>	A	A	P	R
Columbidae				
Blue Rock Pigeon <i>Columba livia</i>	P	P	P	R
Speckled Wood-Pigeon <i>C. hodgsonii</i>	P*	A	A	R
Oriental Turtle-Dove <i>Streptopelia orientalis</i>	P	P	P	R/AM
Spotted Dove <i>S. chinensis</i>	P	P	P	R
Eurasian Collared-Dove <i>S. decaocto</i>	P	P	P	R
Green Imperial-Pigeon <i>Ducula aenea</i>	P*	A	A	R
Psittacidae				
Rose-ringed Parakeet <i>Psittacula krameri</i>	P	P	P	R
Slaty-headed Parakeet <i>P. himalayana</i>	P	P	P	R
Plum-headed Parakeet <i>P. cyanocephala</i>	P	A	P	R
Red-breasted Parakeet <i>P. alexandri</i>	P	A	A	WV
Cuculidae				
Indian Cuckoo <i>Cuculus micropterus</i>	P	P*	P*	R
Asian Koel <i>Eudynamis scolopacea</i>	P	P	P	R
Strigidae				
Brown Wood-Owl <i>Strix leptogrammica</i>	P	A	A	R
Asian Barred Owllet <i>Glaucidium cuculoides</i>	P*	A	A	R
Apodidae				
Alpine Swift <i>Tachymarptis melba</i>	P	A	A	M
House Swift <i>Apus affinis</i>	P	P	P	R
Alcedinidae				
White-breasted Kingfisher <i>Halcyon smyrnensis</i>	A	A	P	R
Meropidae				
Small Bee-eater <i>Merops orientalis</i>	P	P	P	R/AM
Upupidae				
Common Hoopoe <i>Upupa epops</i>	P	P	P	R
Capitonidae				
Great Barbet <i>Megalaima virens</i>	P	P	P	R

Species	Elevations			Distribution status
	H	M	L	
Blue-throated Barbet <i>M. asiatica</i>	A	P	P	R
Picidae				
Speckled Piculet <i>Picumnus innominatus</i>	P	P*	A	R
Grey-capped Pygmy Woodpecker <i>Dendrocopos canicapillus</i>	P	P	P*	R
Brown-fronted Pied Woodpecker <i>D. auriceps</i>	P	P	P*	R
Himalayan Pied Woodpecker <i>D. himalayensis</i>	P	P	P	R
Small Yellow-naped Woodpecker <i>Picus chlorolophus</i>	P	P	P*	R
Large Yellow-naped Woodpecker <i>P. flavinucha</i>	P	P*	P	R
Large Scaly-bellied Green Woodpecker <i>P. squamatus</i>	P	P*	P	R
Black-naped Green Woodpecker <i>P. canus</i>	P	A	P*	R
Himalayan Golden-backed Woodpecker <i>Dinopium shorii</i>	P*	A	A	WV
Alaudidae				
Eastern Skylark <i>Alauda gulgula</i>	P	A	A	SV
Hirundinidae				
Common Swallow <i>Hirundo rustica</i>	P	P*	P	SV
Red-rumped Swallow <i>H. daurica</i>	P	P	P	SV
Motacillidae				
Large Pied Wagtail <i>Motacilla maderaspatensis</i>	P	P	P	WV
Campephagidae				
Large Cuckoo-Shrike <i>Coracina macei</i>	P	A	A	R
Small Minivet <i>Pericrocotus cinnamomeus</i>	P	P	A	R
Long-tailed Minivet <i>P. ethologus</i>	P	P	A	WV
Scarlet Minivet <i>P. flammeus</i>	P	P*	A	R/AM
Pied Flycatcher-Shrike <i>Hemipus picatus</i>	P	A	A	R
Pycnonotidae				
Himalayan Bulbul <i>Pycnonotus leucogenys</i>	P	P	P	R
Red-vented Bulbul <i>P. cafer</i>	P	P	P	R
Black Bulbul <i>Hypsipetes leucocephalus</i>	P	P	A	R
Irenidae				
Common Iora <i>Aegithina tiphia</i>	P	P	P	R
Laniidae				
Rufous-tailed Shrike <i>Lanius isabellinus</i>	P	P	P	SV
Muscicapidae				
Blue Whistling-Thrush <i>Myophonus caeruleus</i>	P	P	P	R
Dark-throated Thrush <i>Turdus ruficollis</i>	P*	P	A	WV
Oriental Magpie-Robin <i>Copsychus saularis</i>	P	P	P	R
Indian Robin <i>Saxicoloides fulicata</i>	P	P	P	R
White-capped Redstart <i>Chaimarrornis leucocephalus</i>	A	A	P	R
Plumbeous Redstart <i>Rhyacornis fuliginosus</i>	A	A	P	R
Little Forktail <i>Enicurus scouleri</i>	A	P*	A	R
Black-backed Forktail <i>E. immaculatus</i>	A	A	P*	R
Spotted Forktail <i>E. maculatus</i>	P	P*	P	R
Pied Bushchat <i>Saxicola caprata</i>	P	P	P	R
Grey Bushchat <i>S. ferrea</i>	P	P	P	R
White-throated Laughingthrush <i>Garrulax albogularis</i>	P	A	A	R
White-crested Laughingthrush <i>G. leucolophus</i>	P	A	P	R
Striated Laughingthrush <i>G. striatus</i>	P	A	A	R

Table 1: Systematic list of birds observed at high, mid and low elevational zones of District Pauri Garhwal, Uttarakhand

Species	Elevations			Distribution status
	H	M	L	
Streaked Laughingthrush <i>G. lineatus</i>	P	P	P	R
Rusty-cheeked Scimitar-Babbler <i>Pomatorhinus erythrogenys</i>	P	P	P	R
Jungle Babbler <i>Turdoides striata</i>	P	P	P	R
Rufous Sibia <i>Heterophasia capistrata</i>	P*	A	A	R
Brown Prinia <i>Prinia crinigera</i>	A	A	P	R/AM
Franklin's Prinia <i>P. hodgsonii</i>	P	P	P	R
Ashy Prinia <i>P. socialis</i>	P	P	P	R
Common Tailorbird <i>Orthotomus sutorius</i>	P	P	P	R
Grey-faced Leaf-Warbler <i>Phylloscopus maculipennis</i>	P	A	A	R
Lemon-rumped Warbler <i>P. chloronotus</i>	P	A	A	WV
Blyth's Leaf-Warbler <i>P. reguloides</i>	P	P*	A	SV
Gold-spectacled Flycatcher-Warbler <i>Seicercus burkii</i>	P	P	P	R/AM
Grey-headed Flycatcher-Warbler <i>S. xanthoschistos</i>	P	P	P	R
Asian Brown Flycatcher <i>Muscicapa dauurica</i>	P	A	A	R/WV
Little Pied Flycatcher <i>Ficedula westermanni</i>	P	P	A	R
Verditer Flycatcher <i>Eumyias thalassina</i>	P	P*	A	SV
Small Niltava <i>Niltava macgrigoriae</i>	P*	A	A	R
Grey-headed Flycatcher <i>Culicicapa ceylonensis</i>	A	A	P*	R/AM
Asian Paradise-Flycatcher <i>Terpsiphone paradisi</i>	P	A	A	SV
White-throated Fantail-Flycatcher <i>Rhipidura albicollis</i>	P	P	P	R/AM
White-browed Fantail-Flycatcher <i>R. aureola</i>	P	A	P	R/AM
Aegithalidae				
Red-headed Tit <i>Aegithalos concinnus</i>	P	P	P	AM
Paridae				
Simla Crested Tit <i>Parus rufonuchalis</i>	P	A	A	R
Great Tit <i>P. major</i>	P	P	P	R
Green-backed Tit <i>P. monticolus</i>	P	P	P	R
Black-lored Yellow Tit <i>P. xanthogenys</i>	P	P	P	R
Yellow-browed Tit <i>Sylviparus modestus</i>	P	P	P	R
Sittidae				
Chestnut-bellied Nuthatch <i>Sitta castanea</i>	P	A	A	R
Wallcreeper <i>Tichodroma muraria</i>	A	P*	A	R
Certhiidae				
Eurasian Tree-Creeper <i>Certhia familiaris</i>	P	P	P*	R/AM
Bar-tailed Tree-Creeper <i>C. himalayana</i>	P	P*	P*	R
Dicaeidae				
Thick-billed Flowerpecker <i>Dicaeum agile</i>	P*	A	A	AM
Yellow-bellied Flowerpecker <i>D. melanoxanthum</i>	P	P	P	R
Nectariniidae				
Purple Sunbird <i>Nectarinia asiatica</i>	P	P	P	R
Crimson Sunbird <i>Aethopyga siparaja</i>	P	P	A	R
Zosteropidae				
Oriental White-eye <i>Zosterops palpebrosus</i>	P	P	P	R
Emberizidae				
Crested Bunting <i>Melophus lathamii</i>	P	P	P	R
Fringillidae				
Yellow-breasted Greenfinch <i>Carduelis spinoides</i>	P	A	A	WV
Common Rosefinch <i>C. erythrurus</i>	A	P	P	WV

Species	Elevations			Distribution status
	H	M	L	
Estrildidae				
White-rumped Munia <i>Lonchura striata</i>	A	P	A	R
Spotted Munia <i>L. punctulata</i>	A	P	P	R
Passeridae				
House Sparrow <i>Passer domesticus</i>	P	P	P	R
Cinnamon Tree Sparrow <i>P. rutilans</i>	P	P	A	R
Sturnidae				
Common Myna <i>Acridotheres tristis</i>	P	P	P	R
Jungle Myna <i>A. fuscus</i>	P*	P	P	R
Dicruridae				
Black Drongo <i>Dicrurus macrocercus</i>	P	P	P	R
Bronzed Drongo <i>D. aeneus</i>	P*	A	A	R
Corvidae				
Eurasian Jay <i>Garrulus glandarius</i>	P	P	A	R/AM
Black-headed Jay <i>G. lanceolatus</i>	P	P	A	R/AM
Red-billed Blue Magpie <i>Urocissa erythrorhyncha</i>	P	P	P	R/AM
Indian Treepie <i>Dendrocitta vagabunda</i>	P	P	P	R
Grey Treepie <i>D. formosae</i>	P	P	P	R/AM
House Crow <i>Corvus splendens</i>	P	P	P	R
Jungle Crow <i>C. macrorhynchos</i>	P	P	P	R

Key to abbreviations

*=uncommon species (= > 10 sightings per year); A=Absent; AM= Altitudinal migrant; H=High elevation; L=Low elevation; M=Mid elevation; P=Present; R/AM=Resident/altitudinal migrant; R=Resident; SV=Summer visitor; WV=Winter visitor.

Asian Paradise-Flycatcher *Terpsiphone paradisi*.



Apti Deomurari

Authorship of new names proposed in papers by Whistler & Kinnear, entitled 'The Vernay Scientific Survey of the Eastern Ghats (Ornithological section)', during 1930–1937

Aasheesh Pittie & Edward C. Dickinson

Pittie, A., & Dickinson, E. C., 2010. Authorship of new names proposed in papers by Whistler & Kinnear, entitled 'The Vernay Scientific Survey of the Eastern Ghats (Ornithological section)', during 1930–1937. *Indian BIRDS* 6 (6): 158–161.

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The ornithological material collected by the Vernay Scientific Survey of the Eastern Ghats, was published in a series of 17 papers by Hugh Whistler and Norman B. Kinnear, in the *Journal of the Bombay Natural History Society* (1930–1937). Except for the first paper in this series, which was authored by "N. B. Kinnear & H. Whistler" (1930), all the rest were authored by "H. Whistler, assisted by N. B. Kinnear" (1932–1937).

In this series, the authors proposed names for 27 avian taxa. The authorship of these new names is not constant throughout the series of papers as the authors have randomly used pronouns, e.g., "I; we", or proper nouns, "Kinnear & Whistler; Whistler & Kinnear", to indicate authorship of new names.

In this paper we compare the treatment of the authorship of these taxa, in various works, and address the conflicting statements of authorship based upon Art. 50 of the International Code of Zoological Nomenclature (I.C.Z.N. 1999), henceforth 'The Code', wherein Art. 50.1 clearly states that, "If a work is by more than one person but it is clear from the contents that only one of these is responsible for the name or act, then that person is the author; otherwise the author of the work is deemed (*sic*) to be the author of the name or act."

Treatment of names proposed by use of the pronoun "we" in the instance of first use, or left 'open'¹, however subsequently indicated. Table 1.

Since all the papers in which new names are proposed, are authored by "H. Whistler, assisted by N. B. Kinnear", authorship proposed via the pronoun "we" should remain with "Whistler & Kinnear", despite the fact that later in the text, the authors may indicate authorship of the same name under "Kinnear & Whistler".

Based upon Art. 50.1 of The Code, quoted above, a nomenclatural act that is left 'open', also remains the work of the authors, i.e. "Whistler & Kinnear". Thus in Table 1 we use red to signal indications given by the authors that are not consistent with dual authorship.

Treatment of names proposed by use of the pronoun "I" in the instance of first use. Table 2.

Based upon Art. 50.1 of The Code, quoted above, it is quite clear that the person indicated by the pronoun "I", as the author of a name or act, is here identified as the first author of this series, i.e., Hugh Whistler, in his individual capacity. Thus in Table 2 we use red to signal indications given by the authors that are not consistent with the sole authorship implied by the first person singular.

The term *nomen novum* as used past and present

Of these 27 names two were given as '*nom.nov.*' [= *nomen novum*, plural *nomina nova*]. However the two cases are quite different. The first one, *Dendrocitta vagabunda parvula* was proposed to replace *Corvus rufus* Latham, *Index Ornith.*, 1790 from Malabar, a name preoccupied by *Lanius rufus* Scopoli (1786), which was the first name for this corvid, but that was preoccupied by *Lanius rufus* Linnaeus, 1766, a name given to neither a corvid nor a shrike, but to a vanga (Rand in Peters, 1960: 365). This is a situation where a *nomen novum* was required and correctly provided. This action is precisely what the current Code (I.C.Z.N. 1999) approves. The second, *Turdus simillimus maharattensis*, sees the term *nomen novum* misapplied, although this usage was quite usual before 1961. Here the new name, and it is indeed new, does not replace a name that is preoccupied, it fills a need created by the perception that the name previously used for that population (namely *nigropileus* Lafresnaye, 1840) was in fact a synonym of another name: *simillimus* Jerdon, 1839. In such circumstances a new name is needed but its introduction is no different to naming any other nameless population. Whistler & Kinnear did this and correctly provided a type. A true *nomen novum* replaces a preoccupied name from which come its types and type locality. Since then Ripley (1950) reviewed the blackbirds of the Nilgiris and concluded that Whistler & Kinnear misjudged the situation and that the name *nigropileus*, applicable to northern Nilgiri birds,

¹ By saying that a name is left 'open' we mean that a name has been proposed without any specification of its authorship either by spelling this out (e.g. "Whistler & Kinnear") or by using a pronoun, i.e., "I" or "we".

should not be applied to southern Nilgiri birds represented by Jerdon's description of *simillimus*. On this reading *mahrattensis* becomes a synonym of *nigropileus*.

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Table 1

1		2		3		4		5	
Publication		Vernay Survey		Peters		H&M (2003)		Ripley (1982)	
Date	Vol.: p	New name	Text entry	Vol.: p.	Author(s)	p.	Author(s)	p.	Author(s)
15.2.32	35: 515	<i>Dendrocitta vagabunda parvula</i> nom. nov.	1st use, 'We' (p. 515); 2nd, 'K & W' ² (p. 516)	15: 246	W & K	510	W & K	288	W & K
15.2.32	35: 520	<i>Machlolophus xanthogenys travancorensis</i> subsp. nov. [= <i>Parus x travancorensis</i>]	1st use, 'We'; 2nd, 'K & W'	12: 112	W & K	525	W & K	500	W & K
15.2.32	35: 522	<i>Sitta castanea prateri</i> subsp. nov.	1st use, 'We'; 2nd, 'K & W'	12: 133	W & K ³	645	W & K	506	W & K ³
15.7.32	35: 752	<i>Chloropsis aurifrons insularis</i> subsp. nov.	'We'	9: 306	W & K	699	W & K	307	W & K
15.7.32	35: 754	<i>Microscelis psaroides humii</i> subsp. nov. [= <i>Hypsipetes leucocephalus humii</i>]	Open	9: 296	W & K	575	W & K	319	W & K
15.7.32	35: 754	<i>Malpastes cafer saturatus</i> subsp. nov. [= <i>Pycnonotus c. wetmorei</i>] ⁴	1st use, open (p. 754); 2nd, 'We' (p. 755); later, 'K & W' (p. 755)	9: 236	W & K	566	N/A	313	W & K
15.7.32	35: 759	<i>Pycnonotus luteolus insulae</i> subsp. nov.	'We'	9: 247	W & K	568	W & K	315	W & K
15.11.32	36: 73	<i>Saxicoloides fulcata intermedia</i> subsp. nov.	'We'	10: 133	W & K	681	W & K	472	W & K
15.11.32	36: 76	<i>Turdus simillimus mahattensis</i> nom. nov. (sic) [Synonym of <i>T. merula nigripileus</i>]	'We'	10: 191	W & K	668	N/A	483	W & K
15.11.32	36: 77	<i>Turdus simillimus spencei</i> subsp. nov. [= <i>T. merula spencei</i>]	'We'	10: 191	W & K	668	W & K	483	W & K
15.4.33	36: 340	<i>Pericrocotus speciosus semiruber</i> subsp. nov. [= <i>Pericrocotus flammeus semiruber</i>]	'We' (p. 341). pp. 340–341	9: 216	W & K	473	W & K	302	W & K
15.4.33	36: 344	<i>Pericrocotus peregrinus ceylonensis</i> subsp. nov. [Synonym of <i>P. c. cinnamomeus</i>]	Open	9: 209	W & K	472	N/A	304	W & K
15.8.33	36: 586	<i>Gracula religiosa peninsularis</i> subsp. nov.	'We'	15: 118	W	654	W	284	W & K
15.12.33	36: 835	<i>Uroloncha kelaarti vernayi</i> subsp. nov. [= <i>Lonchura k. vernayi</i>]	'We'	14: 377	W & K	735	W & K	547	W & K
15.8.34	37: 293	<i>Brachypternus benghalensis tehminae</i> subsp. nov. [= <i>Dinopium b. tehminae</i>]	'We' (p. 292)	6: 144	W & K	329	W & K	231	W & K
15.8.36	38: 686	<i>Perdicula asiatica vidali</i> subsp. nov.	Open	N/A ⁵	N/A	55	W & K	74	W & K

² K & W = Kinnear & Whistler.³ States the year of publication as 1936, in errore.⁴ Deignan in Rand & Deignan (1960) proposed 'P. cafer wetmorei nom. nov.' because the name *saturatus* was preoccupied⁵ This volume of Peters' Check-list was published in 1934.

Table 2

⁶ Incorrectly spelled *Primia* in the original description.⁷ Stresemann & Amadon (1979) in Mayr & Cottrell (1979).⁸ This volume of Peters' Check-list was published in 1934.

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Table 2

1		2		3		4		5	
Publication		Vernay Survey		Peters		H&M (2003)		Ripley (1982)	
Date	Vol.: p	New name	Text entry	Vol.: p.	Author(s)	p.	Author(s)	p.	Author(s)
15.8.33	36: 574	<i>Prinia⁶ socialis inglisi subsp. nov.</i>	'I'	11: 142	W & K	558	W & K	414	W & K
15.8.33	36: 582	<i>Irena puella sikkimensis subsp. nov.</i>	'I'	9: 307	W & K	632	W & K	308	W & K
15.4.34	37: 105	<i>Eremopterix grisea ceylonensis subsp. nov.</i> [= <i>Eremopterix griseus</i>]	'I'	9: 32	W	550	N / A	247	W & K
15.8.34	37: 294	<i>Dinopium javanense malabaricum subsp. nov.</i>	'I'	6: 145	W & K	329	W & K	232	W & K
15.12.34	37: 516	<i>Thereiceryx zeylanicus kangrae subsp. nov.</i> [= <i>Megalaima zeylanica kangrae</i>]	'I'	6: 32	W	305	N / A	221	W & K
15.4.35	37: 760	<i>Ceryle rudis travancoreensis subsp. nov.</i>	'I'	5: 167	W	293	W	204	W & K
15.8.35	38: 37	<i>Caprimulgus indicus hazarae subsp. nov.</i>	'I'	4: 203	W & K	242	W & K	191	W & K
15.4.36	38: 434	<i>Astur trivirgatus layardi subsp. nov.</i> [= <i>Accipiter t. layardi</i>]	'I'	1: 324 ⁷	W	104	W	45	W & K
15.4.36	38: 435	<i>Accipiter virgatus kashmiriensis subsp. nov.</i> [= <i>Accipiter v. affinis</i>]	'I'	1: 338 ⁷	W	107	N/A	46	W & K
15.8.36	38: 686	<i>Perdica asiatica ceylonensis subsp. nov.</i>	'I'	N/A ⁸	N / A	55	W & K	75	W & K
15.4.37	39: 251	<i>Leucopoliis alexandrinus leggei subsp. nov.</i> [= <i>Charadrius a. leggei</i>]	'I'	N/A ⁸	N / A	136	W & K	116	W & K

Marbled Teal *Marmaronetta angustirostris*, a rare winter visitor on the Pulicat Lake, Andhra Pradesh

Odd W. Jacobsen

Jacobsen, O. W., 2010. Marbled Teal *Marmaronetta angustirostris*, a rare winter visitor on the Pulicat Lake, Andhra Pradesh. *Indian BIRDS* 6 (6): 161.

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Manuscript received on 31 October 2009

During 1998–2009, I spent every winter on the Pulicat Lake at Sullurpet, Andhra Pradesh, to monitor wintering wetland birds on the lake. A survey of the wetland birds, and the maximum numbers of all species during 1999–2004, is given in Jacobsen & Raj (2009). On 26 February 2002, a flock of 30 Marbled Teal *Marmaronetta angustirostris* was observed at 0715 hrs in Pulicat Lake, close to the bird watchtower on the SHAR road (Jacobsen & Raj 2009). This is the first record of Marbled Teal from Pulicat Lake, and probably the first from southern India itself. While processing the data for publication, I realised that the Marbled Teal is an endangered species (Islam & Rahmani 2002).

The flock associated with dabbling ducks, such as Shoveller *Anas clypeata*, Gadwall *A. strepera*, and Garganey *A. querquedula*. The birds were in shallow water and were feeding actively, frequently upending. The birds were observed for about 20 minutes, and were not observed later in the day.

Previously, I have observed Marbled Teals in Eastern Europe (Romania), and the Western Mediterranean (Morocco and Tunisia). According to Grimmett *et al.* (1999), the Marbled Teal migrates during the non-breeding season to eastern Iran, Pakistan, the north-western parts of India, and recently, astonishingly, even to Assam. So far, it has not been recorded south of Pune (Maharashtra) in India. Hence, this isolated record of a straggler flock, as far south as Pulicat Lake, is of great interest

to the managers of Pulicat Lake in particular, as well as Indian birdwatchers in general.

At Pulicat Lake, in late winter, large and mixed flocks of Anatidae (six species of ducks, three of teals and one of geese) keep dabbling in shallow water, "overtaking" one another, resulting in a situation where it is easy to overlook particular species and individuals. However, a good deal of patience would amply reward birdwatchers on the Pulicat Lake Bird Sanctuary, which is an increasingly popular winter destination even for distant migrant water birds.

Acknowledgements

I would express my sincere thanks to members of Pulicat Lake Bird Lovers' Society (PLBLS) for their valuable collaboration in the field, and to P. J. Sanjeeva Raj, P. S. Raghavaiah, S. Jayasankar, and T. Murugavel for useful discussions. I thank P. J. Sanjeeva Raj for useful comments to this manuscript. Financial support was given by Bergen University College, Norway.

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An unusual nesting colony of Great Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo* at Jamnagar, Gujarat

Maulik S. Varu & Vatsal Trivedi

Varu, M. S., & Trivedi, V., 2010. An unusual nesting colony of Great Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo* at Jamnagar, Gujarat. *Indian BIRDS* 6 (6): 162.

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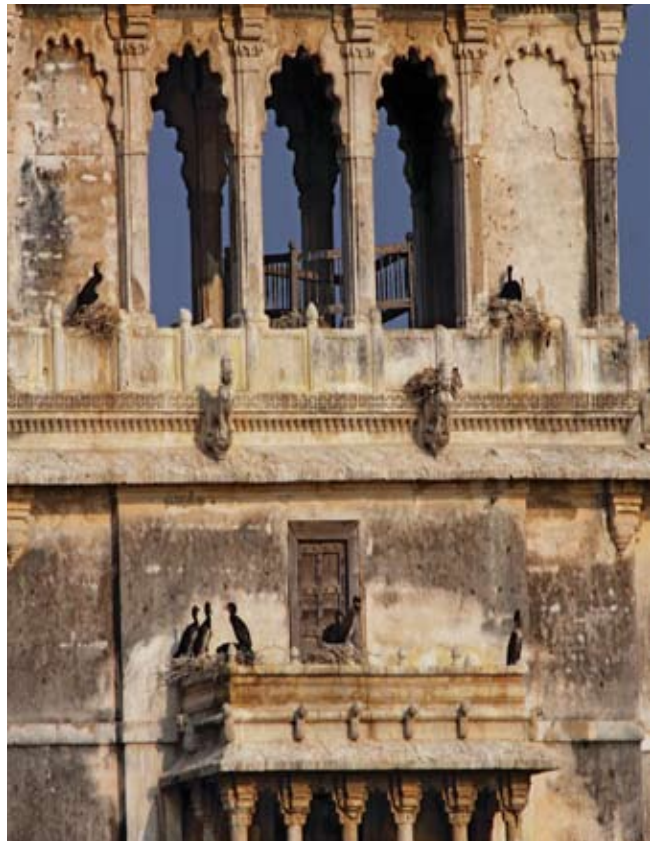
On 6 November 2009, while birdwatching at Lakhota Lake, Jamnagar (Gujarat, India), we came across a strange nesting colony of Great Cormorants *Phalacrocorax carbo*. In the middle of the lake is the circular, and regal, mid-nineteenth century structure of the Lakhota Palace. Recently, around its walls, wooden scaffoldings have been erected for carrying out repair work. However, work has not yet started along certain parts of the walls, or at least, nothing has happened for several months.

We were pleasantly surprised to note that in this undisturbed area of the scaffolding, some Great Cormorants had constructed nest platforms. We counted 18 nests. A further six nests were located on window parapets, etc., of the palace itself. Chicks were visible in most of the nests, and adults were busy feeding them.

Ali & Ripley (1978) state that, Great Cormorants build their nests colonially, often in a mixed heronry, and on trees standing partially submerged in water. They mentioned one record of nests on ledges of rocks, described by Baker. But we have not come across mention of such a type of nesting colony. Hence this unusual nesting colony of Great Cormorant is worth recording.

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Vatsal Trivedi

Large Cormorants *Phalacrocorax carbo* nesting on scaffolding around, and structure of Lakhota Palace in Lakhota Lake, Jamnagar.

Lesser Adjutant Stork and Stork-billed Kingfisher, additions to the birds of Kawal Wildlife Sanctuary, Andhra Pradesh

R. Sreekar, Ashwin Naidu, M. Seetharamaraju & C. Srinivasulu

Sreekar, R., Naidu, A., Seetharamaraju, M., & Srinivasulu, C., 2010. Lesser Adjutant Stork and Stork-billed Kingfisher, additions to the birds of Kawal Wildlife Sanctuary, Andhra Pradesh. *Indian BIRDS* 6 (6): 163–164.

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Manuscript received on 6 August 2008.

The Kawal Wildlife Sanctuary (19°05'45"N 78°45'10"E; henceforth Kawal WLS) is situated in Adilabad district in northern Andhra Pradesh, and is the oldest and one of the largest protected areas in the state, covering over 893 km². The sanctuary is situated on the northern banks of the Godavari River, and stretches across the Satmalai range of hills. The general vegetation of Kawal WLS consists of dry and moist deciduous forests interspersed predominantly with teak and bamboo plantations (Srinivasulu 2004). Kawal is linked to Tadoba–Andhari Tiger Reserve in Chandrapur district, Maharashtra, through a series of forested corridors stretching north across the Satmalai range. The Kaddam River, a major tributary of the Godavari, bisects the sanctuary towards its western fringes.

Through this note we report new site records and provide an update on the geographic range of two bird species. We relied on published literature for ascertaining previous geographic records of these two species.

Lesser Adjutant Stork

The Lesser Adjutant Stork *Leptoptilos javanicus* is a vulnerable species and is a rare visitor to Andhra Pradesh. The previous records of this species in Andhra Pradesh are from ICRISAT Asia Center, Rangareddi district (Hash *et al.* 1996; Hash & Peacock 1996; Pittie 2002), Manjeera dam, Medak district (Islam & Rahmani 2008), and Visakhapatnam and Vizayanagaram districts (Kumar 1981). Although Ali (1934a) did not come across this bird during his ornithological survey in the erstwhile Hyderabad State, he mentions its presence by quoting from Davidson & Wenden, "Wenden is sure that he has seen this bird on more than one occasion about the marshy tanks on the outskirts of the Nulwar jungles, Gulbarga, Karnataka. It is however a very rare visitant, and seen in the rainy season only" (Ali & Whistler 1934a).

The current records of this species come from Kawal WLS and Etunagaram Wildlife Sanctuary in the northern part of Andhra Pradesh. In Kawal WLS, a solitary Lesser Adjutant Stork was sighted in the reeds at a seasonal wetland right beside the left bank

canal emerging from Kaddam reservoir (19°07'N 79°03'E), near the Alinagar–Dongapally villages under the Jannaram Forest Range of Kawal WLS. It was sighted feeding on an Indian bull frog *Haplobatrachus tigerinus* after a heavy downpour on 28 July 2007 at 1500 hrs. Later the bird was observed perched on the top most branch of a tree which could possibly be its roosting site. This species has not been recorded from Kawal WLS prior to our sightings (Srinivasulu 2004).

A fair number of Lesser Adjutant Storks could be visiting the Kawal WLS and its surrounding corridors. The Gond (local tribal) trackers helping us in our studies informed about its sightings prior to our surveys within the sanctuary. Further investigations must be carried out on the bird's presence in the sanctuary, as it is a threatened species.

In Etunagaram Wildlife Sanctuary (18°19'N 80°25'E), Warangal district, a solitary Lesser Adjutant Stork was sighted on 6 November 2008, in a wet deciduous forest with some patches of seasonal waterholes. It flew right above us, less than 7 m from the ground, which made it very easy to identify. Its huge size with large bill and retracted neck while in flight was the main key for its identification.

From these records and Salim Ali's notes, it can be assumed that a few Lesser Adjutant Storks travel south to the northern parts of Andhra Pradesh (above Krishna River), mainly during the rains, when there are a good number of seasonal waterholes. They mostly prefer undisturbed moist forests with tall grass.

Stork-billed Kingfisher

Stork-billed Kingfisher *Halcyon capensis* is one of the six species of kingfishers that occur in Andhra Pradesh (Taher & Pittie 1989). The records of this bird in the state are from Uttoor and Asifabad in Adilabad district, Pakhal Lake in Warangal district (Ali & Whistler 1934b), Kambalakonda in Visakhapatnam district (Sekhar *et al.* 2009), Machlipatnam in Krishna district and Coringa in East Godavari district (Srinivasulu, *pers. obs.*).

A solitary Stork-billed Kingfisher was sighted twice at



Stork-billed Kingfisher distribution in Andhra Pradesh.



Lesser Adjutant Stork distribution in Andhra Pradesh.

Kaddam reservoir [19°06'48.98"N 78°48'09.46"E] on the western fringes of the Kawal WLS, on 30 July 2007. It was first sighted at 0700 hrs while it was in the process of feeding. The same bird was again sighted at 1000 hrs when it flew overhead and landed on a tree. The microhabitat consisted of densely wooded mixed forest with dense undergrowth. Our sighting adds the Stork-billed Kingfisher to the birds of Kawal WLS (Srinivasulu 2004).

Acknowledgements

We thank Aasheesh Pittie and Siraj A. Taher for commenting on the manuscript at various stages. We acknowledge Andhra Pradesh State Forest Department for granting us permission and logistic facilities. We also thank Jyotsna Bhagavatula, Farida Tampal and Bhargavi Srinivasulu for their constant encouragement and support.

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Gleanings

Ragupathy Kannan

Cunningham, S., Castro, I., & Alley, M., 2007. A new prey-detection mechanism for kiwi (*Apteryx* spp.) suggests convergent evolution between paleognathous and neognathous birds. *Journal of Anatomy* 211: 493–502.

Cunningham, S. J., Alley, M. R., Castro, I., Potter, M. A., Cunningham, M., & Pyne, M. J., 2010. Bill morphology of ibises suggests a remote-tactile sensory system for prey detection. *Auk* 127: 308–316.

In my Ornithology course at the University of Arkansas—Fort Smith, we use the most recent edition of Cornell Lab's *Handbook of Ornithology*: a lavishly illustrated and up-to-date tome. Yet, often in the past six years I had to go back to my lecture files to update my notes. Such is the flood of new information on bird biology. The way birds find food by use of special organs in their bill tips is the latest addendum to my lectures.

Ornithologists have long assumed that ibises and shorebirds rely on tactile senses in bill tips to physically touch and capture invertebrate prey from the wetlands they feed. I have always told my students that birds feel for their prey as they probe or jab into the squelch or litter and then snap them up. I have also used kiwis as a good example of the few birds that use the sense of smell to “sniff out” prey. Kiwis seem tailor-made to use smell not only because of their enlarged olfactory lobes, but also because their nares (“nostrils”) are placed at the very tip of their bills as opposed to the side of the bill in other birds. But experimental studies have not conclusively established the importance of smell in kiwi prey detection (the two major studies cited by the authors

in this regard—Jenkins 2001, and Flinn 1995—are unpublished works).

Two recent papers, one in an anatomy journal and the other in a leading bird journal, add fresh perspective on this. Both studies were spear-headed by Susan Cunningham of Massey University in New Zealand. The authors extensively examined bill morphology (including histology) of kiwis and ibises, and correlated this with habitat use information.

Susan and her colleagues report that these birds find food by detecting vibrations or pressure changes generated by prey movements and not by mere physical contact with prey. They use the term “remote touch” for this phenomenon and say that it is aided by special organs of mechano-reception (termed Herbst Corpuscles) embedded in the bone of the bill tips. They surmise that in kiwis this sense may either act as a supplement to olfaction or even be the predominant mode of prey detection. Among 11 species of ibises they found that the number of corpuscles increases in species with more aquatic habitat usage.

Also interesting is the fact that this “remote-tactile sensory system” appears to have evolved independently in two unrelated groups of birds, the kiwis and shorebirds, which belong to two different super-orders, Paleognathae and Neognathae, respectively.

Errata

Vol. 6 Nos. 4&5

Page 138, bottom row, both pictures are of Saunders's Tern *Sterna saundersi*.

The back cover picture was taken by Dhritiman Mukherjee, not Arpit Deo-murari, as credited. Our sincere apologies.

First confirmed record of Black Tern *Chlidonias niger* in Gujarat, India

Ketan Tatu

Tatu, K., 2010. First confirmed record of Black Tern *Chlidonias niger* in Gujarat, India. *Indian BIRDS* 6 (6): 165–166.
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Introduction

The Black Tern *Chlidonias niger* is a Holarctic species that breeds in Europe, North, and Central Asia, and North America, wintering in tropical Africa, and Central- and South America. Though the species is not globally threatened, its population trend appears to be decreasing (BirdLife International 2009). It is a strong migrant, travelling both, over land, and water.

It is a vagrant (Ali & Ripley 1981; Alfred *et al.* 2001; Kazmierczak 2006), or very rare winter migrant (Kannan *et al.* 2009) in India. There are only a few places in India from where this species has been reported. These are: Point Calimere (Tamil Nadu)—where Abdulali & Ambedkar (1984) recovered a ringed Black Tern in 1970, and S. Balachandran ringed several individuals between 1989 and 1991, during the BNHS Bird Migration Project (Balachandran 1994); Kaliveli Lake (Tamil Nadu), and Pulicat Lake (Sriharikota, Andhra Pradesh), where 17 birds (Balachandran 1994), and one individual (Kannan *et al.* 2009) were ringed respectively; Delhi, where H. G. Alexander sighted an individual in October 1949 (Ali & Ripley 1981).

From Gujarat, I had reported the occurrence of a few birds from a suburban marsh ecosystem in Ahmedabad (Gujarat) in 1991, subsequently noticed by Futehally (1991). However, Khacher (1996) did not include it in his ornithological overview for Gujarat though he mentioned that, “more intensive birdwatching may confirm that Gujarat is on itinerary of the migratory Black Tern (apart from Common Tern and Roseate Tern).”

Bhaskarpura wetlands

On 2 October 2009, I visited an inland marsh at Bhaskarpura, near Vithalgadh village (22°59'22"N 71°58'33"E) in Lakhtar taluk (tehsil) of Surendranagar district (Gujarat). It is located 24 km north-east of Lakhtar, and c. 76 km south-west of Ahmedabad. This wetland is known as ‘Bhaskarpura wetland’ among the birdwatchers of northern Gujarat / Saurashtra, and is a designated Important Bird Area (IBA) (Islam & Rahmani 2004). It is a largish shallow wetland having the depth of 50–75 cm (Anon. 1998). It is located c. 15 km from Nani Kathechi village (Anon. 1998), on the western shore of Nalsarovar Lake (Fig.1), which is a well-known bird sanctuary established in 1969.

On reaching the wetland, we noticed that on its western side there was a long bund that separated it from adjoining cotton fields. Thus, on the western side of the bund, there was a cotton field, and on its eastern side, Bhaskarpura wetland (Fig. 2). We walked on the bund for about 500 m, reaching a weir-like structure (Fig. 3). On one side of the weir was the Bhaskarpura wetland with a lot of emergent aquatic vegetation (EAV) dominated by sedges



Fig. 1. Location of Bhaskarpura wetland with respect to Nalsarovar lake-a bird sanctuary [Source: “Environmental Impact Assessment of Sardar Sarovar Project on Nalsarovar Bird Sanctuary”, A Technical Report of GEER Foundation (1998), Gandhinagar]

(i.e., plants of *Cyperaceae* family). On the other was a small, yet deep, pond that had emergent vegetation only along its edges, but had abundant submerged aquatic vegetation (SAV). This pond had a lot of fish of varying age, and size, i.e., from fingerlings to adults. A thin film of water flowed continuously over the weir, from the large wetland with abundant EAV to the small pond, a result of inflows from an ‘escape’ of a Narmada canal (Sardar Sarovar Project) that constituted the northern boundary of the large wetland.

To my surprise, I found that a large number of fingerlings were swimming across the weir from the SAV-dominated pond to the larger wetland. This continuous movement of fingerlings attracted some terns that apparently included around five River Terns *Sterna aurantia*, and an equal number of smaller-sized marsh terns. Undoubtedly, a couple of the latter were Whiskered Terns *Chlidonias hybridus*. However, three to four of the marsh terns had dark patches on



Fig. 2. A view of Bhaskarpura wetland.



Fig. 3. A weir with convex crest/top. Water flows in the form of thin film across the weir from the marshy wetland of Bhaskarpura (on right hand side) to a pond-like waterbody (on left hand side).

the sides of their necks, in front of the base of the wings. Their head pattern also appeared different from that of the Whiskered Terns. I saw these details only when the terns flew close to me, as I did not have a pair of binoculars. As I was aware about the possibility of the occurrence of the Black Tern in Gujarat, I took several digital photographs (12x optical zoom, 6.1 MP res.) whenever these terns flew closer to me.

Confirmation of identity

Later, on studying the pictures, I found that one was of Whiskered Terns in winter plumage. However, each tern in the other three photos (Figs. 4–6), had a dark patch on each side of its neck. Moreover, the head pattern of these terns was quite different from that of Whiskered Tern. Thus, I presumed that these were Black Terns.

However, my friend, Mr. Kandarp Kathju, who is a keen birder and naturalist, advised me to send the pictures to an expert for confirmation of my identification. I emailed the photographs to Dr. Taej Mundkur, Programme Manager - Flyways, Wetlands International Headquarters, The Netherlands. He wrote back saying that the terns in pictures sent by me appeared to be Black Terns to him and to his colleagues in office. For further



Fig. 5. Black Terns foraging over the convex shaped crest/top of a weir-like structure.

Fig. 6. Black Tern close to water surface to collect its prey.

confirmation he forwarded my pictures to Mr Jan van der Winden of Bureau Waardenburg Ltd. (Consultant for Environment and Ecology), the Netherlands.

After some days, Dr Mundkur received Jan's reply, "Very interesting indeed to receive some pictures from Black Terns in India. They are correctly identified as Black Terns. The pictures do not show adults in non-breeding plumage, but birds moulting from juvenile into first winter plumage". Dr Mundkur added, "This is an important observation for the region of west India (Gujarat state). There are a few records from across the country. And Simon Delany mentioned seeing numbers during south migration in the Himalayas many years ago."

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I am extremely thankful to Dr Taej Mundkur for his help. My thanks to Mr Jan van der Widen for confirming the identification of Black Terns based on digital pictures. Thanks to Mr. Kandarp Kathju for giving remarks/suggestions on Black Tern identification. I am indebted to Shantilal Varu for providing help with published literature. I also thank Kandarp Kathju for enthusiastically giving feedback on my digital pictures of Black Tern. Thanks also to Dr Amita and Avicahl for accompanying and helping me in the field.

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Predation of eggs and nestlings of pigeons (Columbidae) by the lion-tailed macaque *Macaca silenus* in the Western Ghats, India

Peroth Balakrishnan

Balakrishnan, P., 2010. Predation of eggs and nestlings of pigeons (Columbidae) by the lion-tailed macaque *Macaca silenus* in the Western Ghats, India. *Indian BIRDS* 6 (6): 167–168.

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Nest predation is an important factor in the population ecology of birds, and the major cause of egg and nestling losses (Ricklefs 1969; Martin 1993). However, our understanding of the identity of the predators, and their relative importance in the demography of tropical birds is poor. Although video surveillance monitoring of nest predators is now common in temperate habitats (Thompson 2007), due to the high cost of such equipment, a majority of the studies in the tropics rely on isolated direct observations of nest predation. Several species of mammals, birds, and reptiles were identified as nest predators of many Indian birds through direct field observations (Ali & Ripley 1987; Balakrishnan 2007).

In this note I report some observations of predation on the nests of Nilgiri Wood Pigeon *Columba elphinstonii*, and Mountain Imperial Pigeon *Ducula badia* by the endangered lion-tailed macaque *Macaca silenus* in the Western Ghats of southern India.

The Nilgiri Wood Pigeon is one of the 16 restricted range species endemic to the Western Ghats, India, and is restricted to the moist evergreen biotope (Ali & Ripley 1987; Stattersfield *et al.* 1998). It is currently listed as 'Vulnerable' due to habitat loss and hunting (BirdLife International 2009a).

The Mountain Imperial Pigeon is one of the largest columbids discontinuously distributed in the Indo-Malayan region (Ali & Ripley 1987; BirdLife International 2009b). The subspecies *Ducula badia cuprea* is endemic to the Western Ghats (Ali & Ripley 1987).

The instances of predation reported here were observed at the Silent Valley National Park (11°00' & 11°15'N 76°15' & 76°35'E; 700–2,283 m a.s.l.), and Muthikkulam Reserved Forest (10°56' & 10°59'N 76°41' & 76°45'E; 610–2,065 m a.s.l.) in southern India, during a field study (February 2002–May 2005) on the ecology of the Grey-headed Bulbul *Pycnonotus priocephalus* (Balakrishnan 2007). The vegetation at both the sites constitutes large stretches of wet evergreen, and montane shola forests.

I observed three episodes of predation by the lion-tailed macaque; one at a Nilgiri Wood Pigeon's nest, and the other at nests of Mountain Imperial Pigeons.

Nilgiri Wood Pigeon

The predation on the Nilgiri Wood Pigeon's nest was observed on 25 April 2003, in a patch of wet evergreen forest at Walakkad (1,260 m a.s.l.) in the Silent Valley National Park. At 0900

hrs, along with a field assistant, I located a group of lion-tailed macaques feeding on insects and fruits near the Nilgiri Wood Pigeon nest. The nest was placed at a height of 5.5 m in a 9 m tall *Clerodendrum viscosum*. The nest site was covered with several woody climbers. The brooding bird flew away when a male lion-tailed macaque approached to within five meters from the nest. Within two minutes the macaque moved towards, and sat near the nest. Then it picked up the four-day old nestling, detached its head with its teeth, and swallowed the entire body of the nestling.

Mountain Imperial Pigeon

The first instance of predation of a Mountain Imperial Pigeon's nest was on 12 March 2004 (1125 hrs) at Muthikkulam Reserved Forest (980 m a.s.l.). I found a group of macaques feeding on the fruits of *Cullenia exarillata*. On this tree I had noted a Mountain Imperial Pigeon's nest two days ago on 10 March 2004. The nest was placed at a height of 7.5 m. The incubating bird left the nest while a male lion-tailed macaque was feeding on *Cullenia* fruits by moving on a branch of a *Macaranga indica* tree (c. two meters down from the nest). Although the macaque noticed the departure of the bird, it continued feeding for about five minutes, till it finished the fruits on the branch. It then moved towards the nest, and snatched the single egg from it. With the egg in its hand it moved down to the *Macaranga* branch and then swallowed the egg.

The second instance of predation was on 23 April 2005 at Walakkad (1,180 m a.s.l.) in Silent Valley National Park. The nest was placed at a height of 4.2 m in a *Hopea parviflora* tree. At 1020 hrs a group of lion-tailed macaques was observed feeding at this site. When a juvenile macaque moved on a woody climber near the nest, the incubating bird flew away. An adult male followed the juvenile onto the climber, found the nest, and immediately caught the two-day old nestling and moved to a big tree. There the macaque killed the nestling and ate it.

Discussion

Faunal prey is an important part in the diet of the lion-tailed macaque, and includes frogs, lizards, bats, and several species of squirrels (Umaphathy & Prabhakar 1996; Kumara *et al.* 2000; Sushama & Singh 2008). Kumara *et al.* (2000) also reported predation of adult birds (White-cheeked Barbet *Megalaima*

viridis), and nestlings by lion-tailed macaque. However, this is the first report of predation on the nests of two large columbids by the lion-tailed macaque. A recent study identified only a single predator species, Large-billed Crow *Corvus macrorhynchos*, of the nests of Nilgiri Wood Pigeon, although about 80% of nests were lost by predation (Somasundaram 2006). To my knowledge there is no record of any other nest predators of Mountain Imperial Pigeon. The observations presented here indicate that the arboreal predators like macaques play an important role in the population dynamics of open nesters such as pigeons. Further intensive studies using video surveillance monitoring of predation may help in understanding the relative significance of macaques as nest predators of rainforest birds.

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Caspian Plover *Charadrius asiaticus* at Tal Chhappar: first record for Rajasthan

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Sangha, H. S., Bhatnagar, G., & Poonia, S. S., 2010. Caspian Plover *Charadrius asiaticus* at Tal Chhappar: first record for Rajasthan. *Indian BIRDS* 6 (6): 168–169.

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On receiving a message, and three images, of a 'new' plover from SSP, on the evening of 23 August 2009, HSS and GB dashed to Tal Chhappar Wildlife Sanctuary the next morning. Despite the poor quality of the images, they were quite confident that the 'new' bird was a Caspian Plover *Charadrius asiaticus*, a species never recorded before in Rajasthan. On 24 August 2009 HSS and GB looked for the bird where SSP had seen it in Tal Chhappar but they did not find it. However, on 25 August 2009 the bird was spotted at 0842 hrs, after a search of one hour. They observed it for about 20 min while it fed on sparsely covered ground.

Caspian Plover does not appear to have been previously reported from Rajasthan, and is rarely reported from across the Indian Subcontinent (Ali & Ripley 1980; Grimmett *et al.* 1998; Kazmierczak 2000; Rasmussen & Anderton 2005).

Description

The bird was an adult male in winter plumage. It still retained some of the strong markings of an adult male in breeding plumage.

Its crown, nape, mantle, and entire upper-parts were sandy brown while the tail-coverts were brown above, and white below. The feather fringes were almost pink-buff, almost rufous, being fresh.

The extensive greyish-brown unbroken breast-band showed vestiges of breeding plumage in the form of three-four rusty patches. Even the black edge, which is below the rusty band, was partially present. The forehead, lores, cheeks, supercilium, and throat were pure white; a small patch in front of the eyes appeared almost black. The supercilium was long, broadening behind the eye. The wing tips projected well beyond the tail-tip,

(whereas they are of equal lengths in Greater Sand and Lesser Plover).

Bare parts: Bill black, longish and rather slim. Iris dark brown. Legs longish and greyish-green.

Foraging/general behaviour

The Tal Chhappar bird was largely solitary, feeding over open seared patches of the grassland. At times it loosely associated with a flock of Indian Courser *Cursorius coromandelicus* and three–four Greater Sand Plover *C. leschenaultii*. Its feeding behaviour was almost like that of an Indian Courser, standing upright briefly, then running and stopping to peck at the ground. It was partial to patches where vegetation was very short and on the morning of 25 August we found it foraging where 'loonias' (*Portulaca* sp.), and 'moothia' (*Cyprus rotundus*) grew.

The bird was very approachable in a vehicle, at times down to c. 5 m. Only once did it fly a short distance when we were too close. It remained at Tal Chhappar for 13 days, until it was last seen on 4 September 2009.

Discussion

Historically the Caspian Plover has been treated as a vagrant in the Indian Subcontinent by various authorities (Ali & Ripley 1980; Grimmett *et al* 1988; Kazmierczak 2000; Rasmussen & Anderton 2005). However, Ali & Ripley (1980) speculate that it could actually be, "possibly less rare but overlooked".

Ali & Ripley (1980) documented that through most of the 19th century, and late into the 20th, sightings from the Indian Subcontinent have been sporadic: "a single specimen was shot near Ratnagiri" in c. 1880; one in Sri Lanka in February 1951, a pair in the Maldives Is. in November 1958, and another sight record in Sri Lanka (Norris 1964, *Loris* 10: 119). Sightings of this species have begun to occur with increasing frequency between 1985 and 2008 e.g., in Sri Lanka, there were "three in 1985, one in 1986, seven in 1987" (Hoffmann 1992); and Sri Lanka (Robson 1998).

From India, sightings have been reported from Delhi (Vyas 1996), Gujarat (Robson 2007; Sørensen & Tiwari 2009), Goa (Lainer 2004), Maharashtra (Prasad 2006), Pondicherry (Balachandran 1994), and Tamilnadu (Kazmierczak *et al.* 1993; Robson 1996).

One bird was sighted at Bajana jheel, Dasada, Little Rann of Kachchh (Gujarat) on 21 January 2007 (Arpit Deomurari *in litt.*).

Thus the species is probably not as rare as indicated in literature. Apparently very small numbers winter in the Indian Subcontinent, and occurrence of the Caspian Plover at Tal Chhappar is not entirely unexpected.

The local conditions also played a role for the bird to occur and stay at Tal Chhappar for few days. Usually the monsoon arrives in Tal Chhappar in the first / second week of July, and almost instantly the sanctuary is transformed into a lush grassland for a few months. Although the knee-high grass, teeming with grasshoppers and locusts attracts hundreds of harriers and buzzards to the sanctuary in late August and September, it is unsuitable for plovers to feed. However, thanks to early, but poor, rains this season, conditions were ideal for plovers, including Caspian Plover, during their autumn passage. Unexpected rains in June led to an early sprouting of grass, but this was followed by an extended dry spell in the sanctuary. The little grass that had grown was soon grazed by Black Buck *Antelope cervicapra*, and Blue Bull *Boselaphus tragocamelus*, and soon the sanctuary

appeared flat and dry by mid-August. Flat open areas with patches of sward attracted Kentish Plover *C. alexandrinus*, Lesser Sand Plover *C. mongolus*, Greater Sand Plover *C. leschenaultii*, and Caspian Plover during autumn passage.

In the last few years, a small number of birdwatchers have been actively using digital cameras and posting images on email groups. This has resulted in interesting information about the species and records. The Caspian



Caspian Plover *Charadrius asiaticus*.

H. S. Sangha

Plover at Tal Chhappar is an excellent example of this trend, as it was not merely reported as "seen on 23 August 2009," but was photographed, and the images posted with alacrity to HSS and GB, by SSP, that very evening, enabling positive identification! Judicious and sensitive use of digital bird photography will help advance ornithology in the Indian Subcontinent in the years to come.

Acknowledgements

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Story of a bird book: its journeys and owners¹

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Singh, Lieut. Gen. B., 2010. Story of a bird book: its journeys and owners. *Indian BIRDS* 6 (6): 170–172.
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"I have an idea that Khamba Jong has become a sort of scientific playground with botanists, geologists, ornithologists, mineralogists, etc., sticking their heads out behind every rock ..."

Reading that sentence in Lord Curzon's² letter to Lieut. Col. Francis Younghusband (the Political Commissioner of the British Expeditionary Force to Lhasa) in August 1903 (French 1994), one cannot fail to notice a certain sense of optimism and triumph concerning the British Mission underway in Tibet. Curzon handpicked several key functionaries of the Mission, and Capt. Herbert James Walton (1869–1938)^{3,4}, who had performed meritoriously as the medical officer during the relief of Peking in 1900, was one such appointee. Based on Walton's proven extra curricular abilities, Lord Curzon also assigned him the mantle of botanist-cum-ornithologist.

Walton was a dedicated professional, and had no difficulty in establishing the first three allopathic dispensaries in Tibet at Yatung, Gyantse, and Lhasa. But from the moment he entered the Khamba Jong plain on 28 September 1903, he realised that he was in a previously untrodden avian realm. Indeed, the first major reference book that also covered the ornithology of Tibet, the first part of H. E. Dresser's "*A manual of Palaearctic birds*," "... in order to furnish a complete account of the ornithology of the Palaearctic Region" had appeared on the bookshelves in London only around July/August 1902.

One copy of this book came in the possession of Walton, which bears the inscription in his hand on the top right corner of the title page "H J Walton | Khamba Jong | 1903." Our curiosity deepens considering the shipping time from London to Calcutta, and then to Gangtok, on to Thangu, over the Kongra La (5,242 m a.s.l.), and another 50 miles to Khamba Jong! Obviously, Lord Curzon was leaving nothing to chance, and his personal intervention alone could have made this first historic, and time-bound, journey of that book possible. Walton was among the last to withdraw from Khamba Jong in mid November 1903, and re-enter Tibet via the Chumbi Valley over the Yak La.

Unlike at Khamba Jong, this time the Tibetans contested the Expeditionary Force's march to Lhasa, first in the Chumbi Valley itself, and next at Gyantse. The Book, in a manner, also witnessed the action, which ultimately ended the month-long siege of the monastery, and Lieut. Grant of the Gorkhas won the VC. So the Book ultimately arrived a Lhasa, war weary, and much, much travelled, across the oceans, across the width of the Subcontinent, over the "roof-of-the-world", in full view of Kangchenjunga in the West, and Chomalhari on the Eastern flank (7,310 m a.s.l.), thence

across the Brahmaputra, ultimately reaching the "Forbidden City", under the shadow of The Potala, on 3 August 1904!

Approximately seven weeks later (23 September 1904) Walton, and the Book, retraced their steps back to India, but over a new pass, the Jelap La. We do not know for sure, but it would be most probable that the handpicked officers (Walton included) would have headed for Calcutta to be personally debriefed by Lord Curzon who had a job at hand to satisfy his peers at Whitehall, London about the achievements of his pet obsession.

Calcutta was least suited for a war-exhausted soldier to recoup and write a narrative of the past fifteen months. So Walton was stationed at Manipur from 1905-1908 to benefit from its salubrious surroundings and moderate climate. And it is most likely that the Book acquired its antiquated, new binding at the improvised weekly market of Manipur town!

The draft of "*Birds of Southern Tibet*" by Walton may have been completed in 1905, but before submitting it for publication in "*The Ibis*" Walton proceeded on home-leave, perhaps to consult the bird-skin-collections both, at Oxford, and the British Museum. The article was thus published in two installments in 1906.

Did the Bird Book make the 1905–06 to-and-fro journey also? There is no evidence but in all probability it did. However there is stronger probability that during the next home leave in 1909 (a) the Book did accompany Walton to London (b) Walton who was a member of the British Ornithologists' Union (He joined the BOU in 1899 & resigned in 1921) gave a talk on birds of southern Tibet (c) Hugh Whistler who had qualified for the Imperial Indian Police in 1909 met him at the BOU talk and (d) Walton passed on the Bird Book to Whistler, a budding ornithologist who in due course would append to his name F.L.S., F.Z.S., and M.B.O.U.!

Whistler, the Bird Book, and Walton leave London and journey to India between December 1909 and February 1910. Disembarking at Bombay, Walton spent the next four years at Saharanpur while Whistler reported at Phillour (the present day Punjab Police Training Academy) as he was assigned to the Punjab IP Cadre.

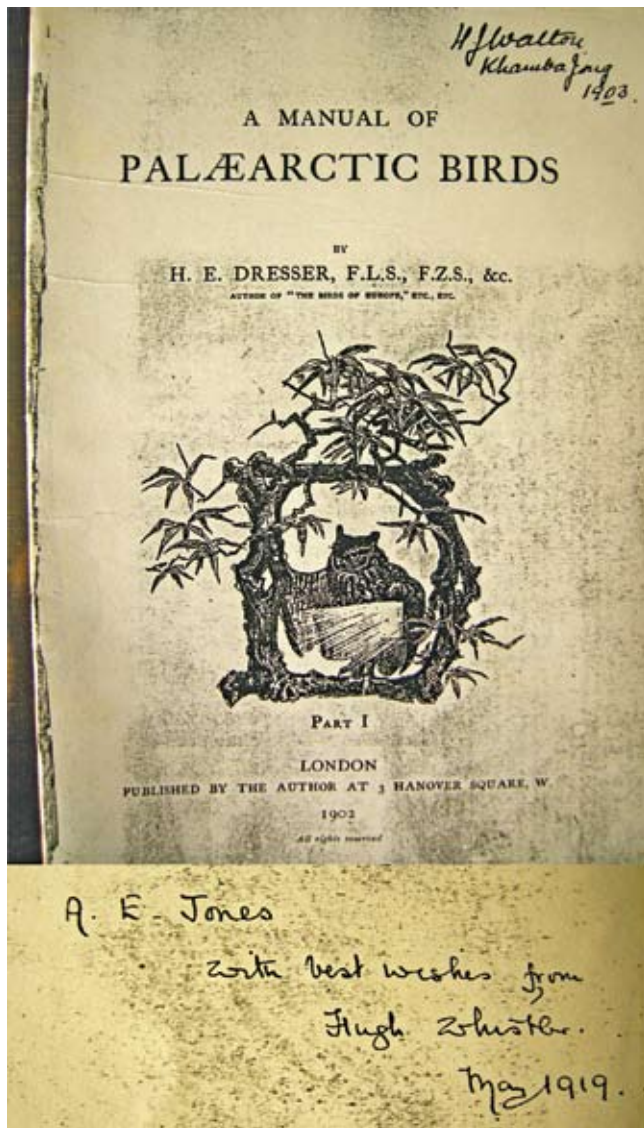
Walton now faded from reckoning and over the next few years, Whistler (a) "became the recognized authority on everything connected with birds in India, (b) those in authority did not discourage his hobby since the search for birds took him into out of the way places seldom visited by IP officers in the ordinary routine of duty (!), and (c) the great store of knowledge Whistler accumulated was periodically communicated to the Bombay Natural History Society and *The Ibis*". Little wonder that The late

¹ This is a partly historical, partly fictional recreation of the history of a book's journeys in South Asia. The meetings between Walton and Whistler, and Whistler and Jones, are a presumption by the author derived from the recorded dates of movements of Walton to UK and within India as also of Whistler between 1909 and 1920.

² Lord Curzon (1859–1925), Viceroy of India.

³ Wynne 1969.

⁴ Allen (2004) inexplicably refers to Capt. H. J. Walton as "Capt. H. G. Walton."



Inscriptions of H. J. Walton, and Hugh Whistler.

Salim Ali goes on record in his autobiography that Whistler was one of his Gurus and in fact reproduced at the end of the Book the detailed guide-lines that Whistler gave him for conducting Bird-Surveys in various regions of India!

In the process, the Book further journeyed extensively within India, that is NW Frontier Provinces, Kashmir, Kangra, Lahaul, Kullu, etc. Now the Book acquired its last known owner and the lead as to "when, where, how and who" is provided by Whistler in his own hand on the title page itself.

Whistler gifted the Book to Alexander Edward Jones (1878–1947) in May 1919. And the place of transference would have been Simla, by then the Summer Capital of the Raj under Lord Curzon's patronage. "A. E. Jones, Civil and Military out-fitters" catered to uniforms, formal and informal apparels for the Civil Services and the Army from an imposing shop on the Simla Mall, adjoining the 'Davicos,' an exclusive restaurant thronged by colonial big-wigs, and the princes of India. Much like the physicians bedside talk, A E Jones too would not be lacking in engaging Whistler, his client, in polite conversation.

Now Jones was in his own right more than an amateur

naturalist where birds and butterflies were concerned. But he would have further profited both from Whistler's conversations and also from the Book as a reference-check. So in 1919, Jones published the first exhaustive Checklist of the Birds of Simla (282 spp.) in the *Journal of the Bombay Natural History Society*.

I chanced upon the Book bearing the inscriptions of H. J. Walton from Khamba Jong (Tibet) 1903 and Hugh Whistler's to A. E. Jones of May 1919, in a Government office in 2002, which unfortunately holds only the first part of this two-volume work. By nightfall I had had it photocopied (500 pages) and dispatched one complete set to Aasheesh Pittie the bibliographer from Hyderabad.

Highlights from Walton's ornithological report:

- A. First of all Walton gave the most graphic and captivating description of Khamba Jong, "... a Tibetan fort about fifteen miles from the frontier ... The surrounding country consists of an undulating plain covered with low wormwood scrub and coarse grass. The Himalayas, with the conspicuous peaks of Mount Everest, Kinchenjunga and Kinchenjhau, close the view to the South. A chain of low hills forms the Northern boundary, separating the plain from the Sang P River Valley ... The mean elevation ASL is 15,200 ft."
- B. His checklist of the birds up to Lahsa is of 126 spp., and the number of skins/specimens collected were 2,047. Walton states, "... the following notes on the birds of Southern Tibet are very incomplete ... My professional work with the Commission claimed the greater part of my time ... given better opportunity, I should have been able to increase my list considerably ..."
- C. "It was a puzzle to me to account for the presence of such large number of Finches, certainly their diet can have had little of variety about it and must have consisted of no more than seeds of coarsest grasses, yet the birds kept fat and lively". And one which was new to science was named *Propasser Waltoni* (Sharpe, *Bull. Brit. Orn. Club*, XV, page 95, Jul 1905)."
- D. Walton expressed his gratitude among others, "... to Colonel Sir Francis Younghusband, K.C.I.E. for the active interest he took in my ornithological work." And rewards his benefactor with, "*Cinclus Younghusbandi* (Walton, *Bull. Brit. Orn. Club*, XV, page 02, Jul 1905)."
- E. "... The only species of Goose that I saw was the Bar-headed Goose ... The most numerous ducks were Pintails and Mallards ... Ruddy sheldrake were in immense numbers ... They were almost ludicrously tame ..."
- F. "... Presumably most of these wildfowl had wintered in India, but it is certain that few, if any of them had made their way to Tibet up the Chumbi Valley. In that case I could scarcely have failed to notice them a Tuna ... There can be little doubt that the main migration-route in Southern Tibet lies along the Tsang Po (Brahmaputra) Valley ... And Go via Assam ..."
- G. "... Lhasa itself was somewhat disappointing in that it yielded few new species. However, I saw and obtained there, for the first time in Tibet, Moorhens. Coots and Wrynecks ... the new Rose Finch (*Carpodacus Waltoni*) occurred also at Lahsa."
- I. Every specimen is painstakingly labeled, for instance:

"23. LANIUS TEPHRONOTUS

No.101.... adult. Khamba Jong, 15,200 ft, Sept 25, 1903.

No.1731...imm. Khamba Jong, 15,200 ft, Oct. 7. 1903.

No.1955... adult. Gyante, 12,000ft May 3, 1904.
No. 2019... adult. Lhasa, 12,200 ft Aug 24, 1904.

In full moult"

Thereafter follows a description: "... This was the only Shrike seen in Tibet. The Tibetan name is 'Jo-nak' ... "

Only if the Book could speak of its exotic, historical journeys, and extraordinary owners, leading to its present ignominy, a hundred and seven years after publication, what an enchanting, epochal narrative that would make.

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I would like to thank Edward Dickinson for putting me in touch with Ralfe

Whistler, Hugh Whistler's son. I would also like to thank Ralfe for trying to locate information for this note.

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Red-tailed Wheatear *Oenanthe chrysopygia* in Uttarakhand

Manoj Sharma & Deepak Chaturvedi

Sharma, M., & Chaturvedi, D., 2010. Red-tailed Wheatear *Oenanthe chrysopygia* in Uttarakhand. *Indian BIRDS* 6 (6): 172-173.

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The Red-tailed Wheatear *Oenanthe chrysopygia*¹ is a winter visitor to the Indian Subcontinent, where it occurs from the beginning of October till end of March. Its strongholds in India are the arid, semi-arid, and semi-desert areas (Ali & Ripley 1998). Baker (1924) described its winter distribution in the Indian Subcontinent as, 'North-West India, West of the Jhelum River, Sind, Cutch, Northern Guzerat and Rajputana as far East as Jodhpur'. Vagrants have been recorded as far south as Goa (Lainer 2004). The eastern-most records are from Nepal, where it has been recorded twice (Giri & Choudhry 1997; Inskipp 2006). There are a few records of the species from the Himalayan foothills, and nearby areas of northern India. A bird was collected on 29 September 1912 at Sairee, close to Shimla (Dodsworth 1913; Jones 1919). It was recently recorded at Chandigarh (Singh 2005). It has been listed for Rajaji National Park, Uttarakhand as winter visitor with unknown status (Pandey *et al.* 1994).

On 25 September 2006, at 0745 hrs, from atop a domestic elephant, MS briefly saw a wheatear with rufous in its rump and tail. It flew low, from boulder to boulder, in an almost-dry stream bed, known as Jhina Sot (29°26'55.19"N 78°53'36.33"E) at 316 m, situated at a distance of 100 m from Jhina forest resthouse, on the southern periphery of Corbett Tiger Reserve. On the morning of 26 September 2006 MS searched for the bird again. At 0810 hrs, he spotted it perched on a big boulder in the stream bed, where it had been seen the previous day. It regularly

flew down to the ground to pick up insects. MS observed it for an hour, while it fed within a radius of 50 m. A small pool of water in the semi-dry stream, and the surrounding area, was its feeding territory. The bird chased insects on ground, with wings, and tail, stretched open. Some of the big rocks and boulders were its favourite perches. It occasionally perched on the sand banks and nearby lantana bushes. If approached, while it was on the ground, it ran a little distance before flying low to a nearby rock or boulder. MS observed the bird again from 1510 to 1730 hrs, when DC also photographed it.

Red-tailed Wheatear is 'distinguished in all plumages from other wheatears occurring in the subcontinent by rufous-orange lower back and rump and rufous sides to tail' (Grimmett *et al.* 1998). The rump of the bird seen was rufous. The lateral basal panels on uppertail were same colour as rump, as described by Cramp (1988). Central black panel on the tail joined a broad black sub-terminal band. Pale rufous colour of the vent extended as prominent rufous on the basal two-third of the undertail before it joined the broad black sub-terminal. There were thin rufous terminal bands on uppertail and undertail as shown in the illustrations in Cramp (1988). The bird had a strong black bill, dark iris, glossy black tarsus, prominent dull white supercilium that was broader in front of the eye, black rear eye-stripe, rufous-brown ear-coverts, and dull white chin and throat. The upperparts were sandy, or grey-brown with greyer sides of the neck and shoulders and pale buffish breast, buffish belly and flanks.

This is the first record of occurrence of a Red-tailed Wheatear in Corbett Tiger Reserve, and the Kumaon Hills. It was not

¹ For long treated as a conspecific of *O. xanthopyrmyna*, but now elevated to full species level (AERC TAC 2003; del Hoyo *et al.* 2005; Rasmussen & Anderton 2005).



PHOTOS: Deepak Chaturvedi

Red-tailed Wheatear *Oenanthe chrysopygia*.

recorded in the work of (Lamba & Bhatnagar 1977-79, Kumar & Lamba 1985, Lamba 1987, Director Z. S. I. 1995, Sharma *et al.* 2003, Director Z. S. I. 2008). This is only the second record of the species for the state of Uttarakhand, the previous record being from Rajaji National Park (Pandey *et al.* 1994). This is also the earliest recorded date of the species' occurrence in India, during autumn passage migration. The previous record is of a bird collected on 29 September 1912 (Dodsworth 1913; Jones 1919).

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Great-tufted Myna *Acridotheres grandis*: new bird for West Bengal, India

Subhash Chanda

Chanda, S., 2010. Great-tufted Myna *Acridotheres grandis*: new bird for West Bengal, India. *Indian BIRDS* 6 (6): 174.

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The Great-tufted Myna *Acridotheres grandis* is found from north-eastern India, Thailand, Indochina, to south-western China. It was only known in India from Nagaland, Manipur, and Mizoram until a couple of decades ago (Ali & Ripley 1983). Subsequently, Choudhury (2000) reported it from Barail Reserve Forest in North Cachar Hills District, Assam (Choudhury 2000), and Singh (1999), from the eastern part of Arunachal Pradesh. Rasmussen & Anderton (2005) state that it is resident in the plains of Assam, and the southern Assam hills. Robson (2000) recorded it for the first time in Bhutan at Samdrup Jongkhar in April 1999.

I recorded the species for the first time at Kokrajhar (26°27'N 90°15'E), in western Assam, on 1 July 1995, and afterwards up to Sesapani a few kilometres west of Kokrajhar. I also recorded it from Sarpang (26°52'N 90°16'E) in Bhutan on 8 February 2006. The former I considered the western-most record for India. On 30 May 2009, while visiting an eco park at Kholta in West Bengal, I observed a Great-tufted Myna flying with a twig, in the deer enclosure of the park, and disappearing into the canopy of a teak *Tectona grandis*, infested with a *Ficus* sp. Kholta is c. 6 km SW of Alipurduar (26°30'N 89°35'E), on the way to Cooch

Behar, in northern West Bengal. I knew that the species had not been recorded earlier in West Bengal, and so I searched the area thoroughly, and was able to spot several pairs, and small flocks.

Other Sturnidae in the area were Common- *Acridotheres tristis*, Bank- *A. ginginianus*, and Jungle *A. fuscus* mynas, and Grey-headed- *Sturnus malabaricus*, and Asian Pied *S. contra* starlings. Apart from the first two, most of the other species were busy with breeding activities.

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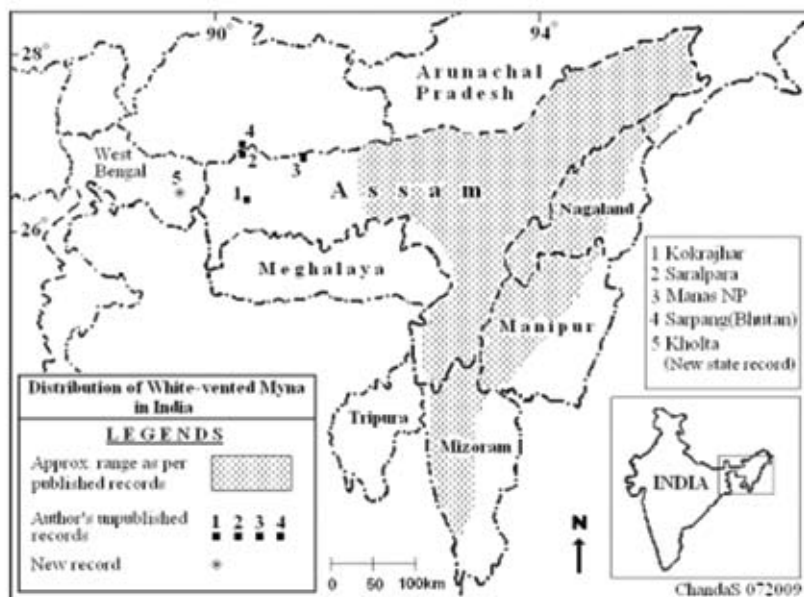
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Editor's note: *Acridotheres grandis* has been regularly reported from West Bengal since 2009. The western limit is now thought to be close to Sevak (26°53'24"N 88°28'23"E) in the Siliguri region, where Garima Bhatia photographed one bird on 27 November 2009 (<http://groups.google.co.in/group/birdphotoindia/msg/42cb7b018bfa8a6f2hl=en>). Since then, there have been other sightings from West Bengal but none have been recorded unequivocally from West Bengal before the date (30 May 2009) mentioned by the author. [The editor thanks Sumit Sen for his inputs.]



Distribution of Great-tufted Myna *Acridotheres grandis*.

Sighting of Blue-throated Flycatcher *Cyornis rubeculoides* in Pune, India

Pallavi Ghaskadbi

Ghaskadbi, P., 2010. Sighting of Blue-throated Flycatcher *Cyornis rubeculoides* in Pune, India. *Indian BIRDS* 6 (6): 174A.

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The Blue-throated Flycatcher *Cyornis rubeculoides* belongs to the family Muscicapidae, sub-family Muscicapinae, of the old world flycatchers. It breeds in the Himalayas from Kashmir to Arunachal Pradesh, and in the hills of Manipur (Kazmierczak 2000; Ali 2002; Grimmett *et al.* 2007). It winters south of Goa in the Western Ghats, and also in the Eastern Ghats. However, there is a published record of a vagrant bird from Rajkot, Gujarat (Ganpule 2009).

On 9 November 2009, at 1245 hrs, a very unfamiliar birdcall brought me to the window of my house on Prabhat road in the city of Pune (18°31'N 73°55'E; Maharashtra, India). I observed, and photographed a flycatcher which had a rufous breast, a white belly and a prominent blue throat, ruling out the possibility of its being the locally common, and con-generic Tickell's Blue Flycatcher *C. tickelliae*. The bird was observed perching either on a golden shower *Cassia fistula* tree, a crepe jasmine *Tabernaemontana divaricata* plant, or on a cement wall below them. It would frequently drop to the ground, and would also dart to the wall to catch insects. The bird was seen again on 10 November 2009 at 0950 hrs. This time there was a pair. The female had an olive-brown head and a rufous breast. Both the birds were heard calling out and were relatively oblivious to my presence.

Interestingly, the bird is generally known to inhabit well-wooded areas, and forests with plenty of undergrowth. Also this particular bird appears to be far away from its known range. To my knowledge, this is the first pair of Blue-throated Flycatchers recorded in Pune (Pande *et al.* 2003; Grimmett & Inskipp 2005).

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Blue-throated Flycatcher *Cyornis rubeculoides*, Pune, India.





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