

ABSTRACTS



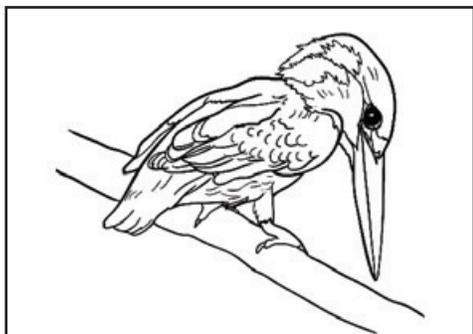
Breeding of Short-toed Snake Eagle: 'Breeding biology of the Short-toed Snake Eagle' by Devvratsinh Mori et al., *Indian BIRDS* 12 (6): 149-156.

The authors carried out a detailed study on the breeding ecology of the Short-toed Snake Eagle (*Circaetus gallicus*) near Wadhwan, Surendranagar. A breeding pair was studied over three seasons and nesting activity monitored. Nest building was observed in January - March, with eggs being laid in February - March. Observations on incubation period, hatchling growth and time taken till fledging were noted. Detailed study on its diet was made and it was found that toads, snakes, lizards, birds and mammals were taken, with reptiles forming a majority of its diet. New data on growth and behaviour of fledglings was reported in this study.



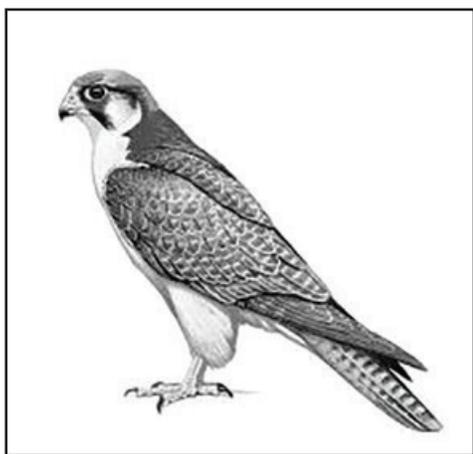
Diet of Jerdon's Leafbird chick: 'Notes on the diet of Jerdon's Leafbird chick' by Reshma Solanki et al., *Indian BIRDS* 13 (3): 69-73.

A study on the diet of a Jerdon's Leafbird (*Chloropsis jerdoni*) was made by the authors in Jambughoda Wildlife Sanctuary, wherein observations were made for 19 days and the prey given to the chick was documented. The hatchling was fed 14-15 times a day and 12 species of invertebrates were given as food to the hatchling. It was also noted that the Jerdon's Leafbird mimicked 17 species of birds and one mammal (northern palm squirrel *Funambulus pennantii*). Out of the 17 bird species mimicked by the Jerdon's Leafbird, 12 were not documented previously and were noted for the first time in this study.



Oriental Dwarf Kingfisher: 'Does the Oriental Dwarf Kingfisher breed in southern Gujarat?' by Vishal Mistri et al., *Indian BIRDS* 13 (3): 82.

The authors report on a sighting of an Oriental Dwarf Kingfisher (*Ceyx erithaca*) in Dang district, southern Gujarat. They observed an Oriental Dwarf Kingfisher attempting to dig a burrow near a stream. The authors suggest that, the species probably breeds in the area and it is likely that it could be a regular breeding visitor to the Dang forest. The authors also discuss other records of the species from Gujarat and state that it could be classified as a summer/breeding visitor to southern Gujarat.



Red-naped Shaheen: 'The identification of Red-naped Shaheen' by Nirav Bhatt & Prasad Ganpule, *Indian BIRDS* 13 (4): 85-92.

The authors carried out a study on the identification of Red-naped Shaheen (*Falco peregrinus babylonicus*) and its separation from the migratory Tundra Peregrine Falcon (*F. p. calidus*). The study was conducted mainly in north-western India. Special emphasis was made in separation of juvenile Red-naped Shaheen from the juvenile Peregrine Falcon. A host of features are required to be studied; plumage, state of moult, observations of bare part colour etc. to identify juvenile birds and even then, some individuals may not be safely separable in the field to the sub-species level. The Red-naped Shaheen is given to be a rare winter migrant to north-western India; sightings from Gujarat are mainly from the Little Rann of Kachchh and Greater Rann of Kachchh.

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“ As late as in the Fifties and Sixties of the last century we used to have a pair of Neophrons, and one of Laggars nesting on the Hingolghadh Castle. The Laggars finally chivvied the Neophrons away, themselves continuing to nest each year well into the Nineties. Now, they have also gone! Why? There are plenty of pigeons and parakeets to prey on and absolutely no disturbance to their nest. Strangely a pair of Bonelli’s Hawk eagles continues breeding on trees overhanging the steep eastern escarpment of the large plateau nearby. Where the sky overhead invariably had several vultures quartering it along with one or two of the larger eagles, today it is empty except for the circling flock of House Swifts that nest under an arch of one of the castle gates. The decline was so sudden that honestly, the near total crash in raptor population was never anticipated. I for one am still stunned. The reasons should have been clear to have shaken us out of our complacency since the reasons leading to the stunning collapse were developing all around: felling of traditional nesting trees, total degradation of the countryside, especially the rich, well preserved grasslands, mono-culture in agriculture of groundnut, heavy use of pesticides and the disturbance of vultures at carcasses by huge numbers of feral dogs and human beings can all be attributable reasons. The latest is the series of veterinarian medicines that seem to be lethal to vultures. What can we do aside from lamenting the loss? Public opinion, very carefully articulated is to my mind, of very immediate importance. All of us need to evolve a common understanding to the dangers facing specific species and bird-life in general. Some prioritization has to be made for action to be initiated. Above all, we all must close ranks behind the professionals in the field of conservation even as they, in turn, unhesitatingly involve enthusiastic amateurs in official and unofficial programs that are being rather belatedly initiated.

The many promising birdwatchers in Gujarat must start maintaining careful diaries of observations of all birds and start compiling data on a species-wise basis. Given the simplification of tabulating data with the help of computers, it should be possible to develop an impressive information store from which trends in populations of different species can be quickly charted and action considered well in advance. We already do possess considerable knowledge of species’ requirements and even individuals can do a great deal to help birds in their immediate neighborhoods. Food and water, nest boxes, planting of selected shrubs and trees all can go a long way to help.

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- Lavkumar Khachar

