

Flamingo

Newsletter of the Bird Conservation Society, Gujarat



Habitat Concerns....

Great Indian Bustard (GIB) epitomizes grassland but it equally requires agriculture fields, pasture land, fallow land etc. depending on its various requirements. In Gujarat, GIBs can be seen only in Kachchh, especially in the Abdasa taluka which also has a sanctuary called Kachchh Bustard Sanctuary - the smallest sanctuary of India. Owing to the small size of the protected area, the species is struggling to survive outside the Sanctuary, mainly in the revenue areas. These revenue areas are the prime bustard habitats - important refuge of GIB, Lesser Floricorn and MacQueen's Bustard, but regrettably they are considered as 'wasteland' in Government records.

Owing to jurisdictional limitations Forest Department is not authorised to manage such wastelands as 'bustard habitat'. So it becomes easy to alter such areas for infrastructural development, and this is how many of such prime bustard habitats have been given away for the installation of windmills, solar power plants, installation of high transmission power-lines etc. It is very crucial to note that research studies carried out abroad have revealed that bustards are predominantly prone to collide with power-lines because of their low height flight and comparatively small binocular field with large blind area. This renders them blind to the direction of flight while scanning below and makes them more susceptible to collision.

In last 15 years about six GIBs have died due to collision with the power-lines. Such power-lines have also been proven fatal for many other important bird species like flamingos, pelicans, storks, egrets, sarus, vultures etc. We need to understand that some green energy and the sparkling electricity have a dark side which is emerging as a fatal and serious threat to the wildlife. It is high time now, Government should either make the powerlines underground or mark it with bird diverters or reflectors, at least in and around the prime wildlife habitats.

- **Devesh Gadhvi**

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Bird Conservation Society, Gujarat (BCSG) was founded in 2000 with the objective of conservation of birds of the State through field research, documentation, training, awareness activities, networking with like-minded NGOs; and lobbying for protection of birds and their habitats. It is the only statewide network of bird-watchers, ornithologists and conservationists of Gujarat striving to achieve the above goal.

BCSG brings out a quarterly newsletter – 'Flamingo'. Articles, notes on bird-life of Gujarat, interesting bird sightings, knowledge about important bird areas, information / appeal regarding conservation issues, reports on society's events and activities are published in 'Flamingo'. For publication of articles/notes in the Flamingo, both the common English and scientific names must be given when a bird species is mentioned for the first time and later references, common English name only. Common English and scientific names should follow Richard Grimmett, Carol Inskipp and Tim Inskipp (2011), Birds of Indian Subcontinent, Second edition. Oxford University Press, New Delhi. If the nomenclature is adopted from other source, full reference should be given.

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Editorial....

Dear Readers,

Is sustainable development a myth? We all want more luxuries than what a comfortable lifestyle would demand. Analysis of our social psyche reveals that each one of us is indulging in materialistic opulence. Simplicity is no longer considered a virtue nor does it have any recognizable social value attached to it. Conversely there is a bitter race to acquire all that this tangible world has to offer. The irony is that all those who shout loud and high for cleaner environment and greener pastures are the forerunners in this race!

Do we have any solution for escalating population? Do we not want to take the basic facilities for a decent life to the citizen at the bottom who has as much right over natural resources as the more materially fortunate ones? And then arises the question – what should the average voter vote for; the Great Indian Bustard or round the clock electricity?!

So, has collective thought and action so far failed in generating eco-awareness at the grass root level? Have we collectively failed in generating Green Votes? Don't you think each one of us will have to start this lesson of awareness from our own home before taking it to masses? When will we ensure that people vote for GIB or Tiger rather than a political party?

Bending a railway track or lifting a road into a bridge to create green corridors for animals to travel between constricted natural habitats on either side, or declaring a water tank as a sanctuary because migrants are flocking it, which they were doing even otherwise since centuries, might postpone the inevitable for a few more years, but lasting sustainability is possible only if there is a green revolution of a different kind. A green revolution in collective consciousness that arises from the hearts of common men. And this is where we would want to see present day eco-preachers as the forerunners!

This Green vote cannot be created by political gimmicks but only through a genuine deep rooted understanding of every inhabitant of this planet about the intricacies of our coexistence with nature. We need to spread the awareness that we need Nature and its resources and not vice versa. It's time we make our own decisions even as we look at the policy makers for favours. Because this blame-game will take us nowhere, but to an end, the thought of which traumatizes us in the very first place and sustainable development will always remain a myth.

Bakul Trivedi