



Flamingo



Newsletter of the Bird Conservation Society, Gujarat

Vol. 1, No. 5 & 6 : 2003

EDITORIAL

We apologize for the delay in this issue. However, we have tried to compensate it by adding more pages and notes. It carries articles on the field programmes of our Society at Dang forest and Velavadar. Both the programmes were well organized and quite satisfactory.

Checklists of the birds seen during these field-programmes are given alongwith. By and large, there is nothing new in these lists and it does not add much to our existing knowledge. Updating the checklist of a particular area and its comparison with an existing data is an essential exercise. The basic questions are: 'What is our existing knowledge?' and 'Where does the knowledge exist?'. Salim Ali's monumental work on the 'Birds of Gujarat' and 'Birds of Kutch' and that of Dharmakumarsinhji's 'Birds of Saurashtra' are still considered to be 'existing knowledge'. During last 50 years, quite a lot has been added to our existing knowledge, which has been reviewed by Mr. Khacher (1996).

Recent 'field-guides' to the birds of Indian Subcontinent do not quote Dharmakumarsinhji's work, probably because the book has never reached the hands of the foreign authors of these books! This has led to very serious gaps in the distribution maps of some of the bird species. Commonest bird like Golden Oriole *Oriolus oriolus* is not shown breeding in Gujarat State in the book by Grimmett *et al.* (1998), probably because Salim Ali (1955) has considered it a winter migrant. Ali and Ripley (1983) have shown it breeding over entire India, including Gujarat. Kazmierczak (2000) improved distribution map of this species and also showed it breeding in Gujarat. There could be two reasons for such serious lapses in the information provided by Grimmett *et al.* (1998).

1. When Salim Ali surveyed Gujarat state, there was no Golden Oriole breeding around (and so he considered it to be a winter migrant) and that might have been the only document referred to for preparing its distribution map.
2. After Salim Ali's work (1955), none of us has written about the breeding activity of Golden Oriole except Raol (1964) who wrote about its breeding in Rajkot and some of the records published in 'Vihang' in recent times. On the other hand, the fact is that most of us know about

its distribution, timing of breeding, nesting associates etc. Still we have not written anything about it in any of the newsletters. It is at this juncture that the second question arises, *i.e.* 'Where does the knowledge exist?'

Gujarat is fortunate to have a large number of nature lovers and birdwatchers. More over, birdlife is abundant and relatively less disturbed in our state compared to other states of India. Many of us write notes/ articles on birds in the journals and newsletters of national repute. But whatever published is only a tip of the iceberg! Ninety percent of our information / knowledge remains hidden. This happens largely because we do not compare our own data with published literature. We compare our information / knowledge just with that of other birdwatcher friends and then conclude that particular information is 'known' and so does not require to be published. Now here is the mistake. Such a decision is most damaging. Oral information shared with other birdwatcher friends is certainly not the 'existing knowledge'. One's knowledge or information has no value unless it is published. Remember, only the published information is recorded and quoted at the time of compilation. Let us make our birdwatching activity more meaningful by recording each and every event in our diary, comparing it with available literature, and getting it published in any of the ornithological journal or newsletter.

There was a time when we had very little option to publish our observations. But now, the situation has changed. Now in Gujarat itself, we have 'Vihang' and 'Flamingo' through which we are trying to encourage each and every member to write about their observations. Every observation has its own value. We realize it when we try to compile information on any bird species, bird fauna of any protected area or conservation issues. There are several species about which our knowledge has not progressed beyond what Salim Ali or Dharmakumarsinhji wrote. So we request you all to send your observations in the form of notes, articles, sightings to either of these two newsletters and actively participate in the process of conservation. Unless we know about the status and distribution of our birds and their habitat, we will not be able to frame conservation options.

In this issue, we have notes on Black-capped Kingfisher and Greyheaded Flycatcher. We have seen both the species at several locations (so there is no new information).

Greyheaded Flycatcher is also in the checklist of the birds of Dang forest published in this issue. But unfortunately, there are few published records from Gujarat. We are happy that members have started comparing their observations with published literature to some extent. Hence, such notes are welcome. Sighting of a Brown Wood Owl *Strix leptogrammica* in Dang forest is the first record from Gujarat State. Since the bird was seen by several of us, there is no question of putting it under "question mark". If some one locates it again, they should substantiate the first record and then we can certainly include it in our regular checklist. Occurrence of this species in Dangs is nothing else but the northern most extension of its distribution in Western Ghats.

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BIRDWATCHING TRIP TO DANG: Ashok Mashru
A-7, Alap Heritage, Kalawad Road, Rajkot-360 005.

On 26th October, while I was travelling in the train on my way to Surat during Diwali vacation, I was dreaming with open eyes and had started wandering in the imaginary bamboo jungle, which I was to visit for the first time. It took almost three hours to reach Purna Sanctuary in Dang district by bus from Surat. While travelling, I came across gigantic, heart throbbing wild bamboo growth. We reached the campsite having walked for the last 1.5 km stretch of natural trail going parallel to river "Purna". The flow of the water was generating harmonious music. The place was surrounded by tall dense bamboos. Lush green canopy of evergreen forest on either side of the river was quite pleasing.

We were in Dang to join the first camping field programme of Bird Conservation Society of Gujarat. The trip proved to be very memorable to all of us as we could locate several bird species, typical of evergreen forest. At the end of this programme, I added 6 new species of birds in my life-list. Everyday morning, birds would wake me up. One morning

Greater Racket-tailed Drongos (*Dicrurus paradiseus*) were singing in group as if they were competing with each other. They were mimicking other birds. The atmosphere was filled up with joy and tranquility.

Our birdwatching began with sighting of a pair of Scarlet Minivet (*Pericrocotus flammeus*) which was frequently moving to a dry tree standing among other green ones. Thereafter we spotted several other birds; viz. Ashy Drongo (*Dicrurus leucophaeus*), Black-headed Oriole (*Oriolus xanthornus*), Brown-capped Pygmy Woodpecker (*Dendrocopos nanus*) and Small Bee-eater (*Merops orientalis*) perching on the same tree. We were able to trace a few more after real hard efforts. Due to good monsoon, there seems to be sufficient food available for the birds throughout the forest and that could be the possible reason for the uniform distribution of the birds in the forest. The birds were seen only on the top branches of the tree. They were not coming down on the lower branches, closer to human beings! They might be scared due to the usual hunting activity of the tribal. Marching ahead along the bank of the river the high pitch, sharp, ascending calls from the jungle side attracted our attention. Dr. Bakul Trivedi spotted the tiny beauty of Dang - Heart-spotted Woodpecker (*Hemicircus canente*). It was perching on a horizontal branch of the tree. Afterwards I came to know from "Van-Upvan na Pankhi" by Lalsinh Raol that this woodpecker can sit over a branch like any other perching bird keeping its body at right angle to the axis of the branch. On the way we also had a glimpse of beautiful Crimson Sunbird (*Aethopyga siparaja*). We walked further along a stream merging in the main river and rested in the river-bed for a while. Suddenly a pair of Oriental Honey-Buzzard (*Pernis ptilorhynchus*) passed overhead, chasing each other and then lost in the canopy.

Next day morning we were on the way to Duldha village to explore other part of the jungle. The alarm calls of the birds from the road-side valley made us to halt and observe carefully. We found that the calls were mainly of Lesser Golden-backed Woodpecker (*Dinopium benghalense*), Greater Racket-tailed Drongo (*Dicrurus paradiseus*), Indian Treepie (*Dendrocitta vagabunda*) and Large Cuckoo-Shrike (*Coracina macei*). Mr Akshay Joshi traced out the secret of alarm calls. He saw an unknown owl in the dense canopy. It was identified as Brown Wood-Owl (*Strix leptogrammica*). On the return journey some of us were lucky to observe it at nearby place and confirm its identification. This was a new addition in the checklist of the Dang forest and that of the Gujarat state too. By the afternoon we were able to add two more species in our list, the first one was Indian Cuckoo (*Cuculus micropterus*) identified by its call *Bo..Ko..Ta..Ko.* and other call was that of Indian Scimitar-Babbler (*Pomatorhinus horsfieldii*). Dr Bakul Trivedi noticed a White-rumped Shama (*Copsychus malabaricus*) moving

silently in the bushes. In the late evening we heard a prolonged sharp, ascending call. Despite the light fading away, we could identify Greater Golden-backed Woodpecker (*Chrysocolaptes lucidus*) on the top of the tree. A flock of Yellow-legged Green-Pigeons (*Treron phoenicoptera*) passed overhead, on their way to the roosting site.

On last day I was little disappointed for not having seen chloropsis. But then on the way back to camp site after having a morning round, Dr. Bhavbhuti Parasharya drew my attention to Gold-fronted Chloropsis (*Chloropsis aurifrons*) hiding in a tree. After waiting for a long time at last I was able to locate this hyperactive green beauty, continuously chirping like a bulbul. I was really thrilled, as it was my first sighting of chloropsis.

To summarize, we recorded a total of 57 bird species in this trip. Besides birds, we saw colourful butterflies and moths flying around making an atmosphere alive. Volunteers of Nature Club, Surat had identified about 30 species of butterflies and moths during that camping period. We also saw Giant Wood Spiders, waiting patiently for the prey to fall in their large web.

A checklist of the birds of Dang forest, which we prepared during our three-day stay, is as under.

A CHECKLIST OF THE BIRDS SEEN DURING DANG CAMP, 27-30TH OCTOBER 2003: Akshay Joshi, Karmavir Bhatt, Snehal Patel, Ashok Mashru, Bakul Trivedi, Samiksha Trivedi, Nandita Muni, D. N. Rank, B. M. Parasharya and volunteers of Nature Club, Surat.

1. Little Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax niger*)
2. Indian Pond-Heron (*Ardeola grayii*)
3. Little Egret (*Egretta garzetta*)
4. Large Egret (*Casmerodius albus*)
5. Cattle Egret (*Bubulcus ibis*)
6. Black Ibis (*Pseudibis papillosa*)
7. Oriental Honey-Buzzard (*Pernis ptilorhynchus*)
8. Indian White-backed Vulture (*Gyps bengalensis*)
9. Common Sandpiper (*Actitis hypoleucos*)
10. Yellow-legged Green-Pigeon (*Treron phoenicoptera*)
11. Spotted Dove (*Streptopelia chinensis*) call only
12. Rose-ringed Parakeet (*Psittacula krameri*)
13. Alexandrine Parakeet (*Psittacula eupatria*)
14. Plum-headed Parakeet (*Psittacula cyanocephala*)
15. Indian Cuckoo (*Cuculus micropterus*) call only
16. Greater Coucal (*Centropus sinensis*)
17. Brown Wood-Owl (*Strix leptogrammica*)
18. Small Bee-eater (*Merops orientalis*)
19. Brown-headed Barbet (*Megalaima zeylanica*)
20. Coppermith Barbet (*Megalaima haemacephala*)
21. Greater Golden-backed Woodpecker (*Chrysocolaptes lucidus*)
22. Brown-capped Pygmy Woodpecker

- (*Dendrocopos nanus*)
23. Heart-spotted Woodpecker (*Hemicircus canente*)
24. Yellow-fronted Pied Woodpecker (*Dendrocopos mahrattensis*)
25. Lesser Golden-backed Woodpecker (*Dinopium benghalense*)
26. Grey Wagtail (*Motacilla cinerea*)
27. White Wagtail (*Motacilla alba*)
28. Yellow Wagtail (*Motacilla flava*)
29. Oriental Tree Pipit (*Anthus hodgsoni*)
30. Large Cuckoo-Shrike (*Coracina macei*)
31. Scarlet Minivet (*Pericrocotus flammeus*)
32. Red-vented Bulbul (*Pycnonotus cafer*)
33. Gold-fronted Chloropsis (*Chloropsis aurifrons*)
34. Oriental Magpie-Robin (*Copsychus saularis*)
35. White-rumped Shama (*Copsychus malabaricus*)
36. Indian Scimitar-Babbler (*Pomatorhinus horsfieldii*) call only
37. Jungle Babbler (*Turdoides striatus*)
38. Leaf Warbler (*Phylloscopus* sp.)
39. Red-throated Flycatcher (*Ficedula parva*) call only
40. Tickell's Blue-Flycatcher (*Cyornis tickelliae*)
41. Asian Paradise-Flycatcher (*Terpsiphone paradisi*)
42. Tickell's Flowerpecker (*Dicaeum erythrorhynchos*)
43. Grey-headed Flycatcher (*Culicicapa ceylonensis*)
44. Black-naped Monarch-Flycatcher (*Hypothymis azurea*)
45. Great Tit (*Parus major*)
46. White-throated Fantail-Flycatcher (*Rhipidura albicollis*)
47. Crimson Sunbird (*Aethopyga siparaja*)
48. Purple Sunbird (*Nectarinia asiatica*)
49. Eurasian Golden Oriole (*Oriolus oriolus*)
50. Black-headed Oriole (*Oriolus xanthornus*)
51. Black Drongo (*Dicrurus macrocercus*)
52. Ashy Drongo (*Dicrurus leucophaeus*)
53. Greater Racket-tailed Drongo (*Dicrurus paradiseus*)
54. White-bellied Drongo (*Dicrurus caerulescens*)
55. Jungle Crow (*Corvus macrorhynchos*)
56. Indian Treepie (*Dendrocitta vagabunda*)
57. Common Tailorbird (*Orthotomus sutorius*)

Hunting Party

1. Brown-headed Barbet (1)
2. Brown-capped Pygmy Woodpecker (1)
3. Eurasian Golden Oriole (1)
4. Black-headed Oriole (3 males + 1 female)
5. Large Cuckoo-Shrike (2)
6. Scarlet Minivet (2 males + 1 female)
7. White-bellied Drongo (1)
8. Ashy Drongo (1)
9. Tickell's Blue-Flycatcher (2)
10. Common Tailorbird (1)
11. Asian Paradise-Flycatcher (1 male + 1 female)
12. Crimson Sunbird (1)
13. Gold-fronted Chloropsis (2)

HARRIER COUNT AND BIRDWATCHING AT VELAVADAR: D. N. Rank, 5, Vishrut Park-III, Jitodia Road, Anand - 388 001

I knew Velavadar as Blackbuck Sanctuary and National Park only. I had several occasions to see the Blackbucks while passing by the sanctuary area on Tarapur-Bhavnagar or Bagodara-Vallabhipur road. But when I received the invitation to participate in harrier count during 22nd & 23rd November 2003 at Velavadar, I was thrilled to experience Velavadar in a different context. On invitation of the State Forest Department, members of the Bird Conservation Society, Gujarat (BCSG) were to participate in the harrier census.

As we (myself, Dr. B. M. Parasharya, Baa, Anika Jadhav and Gaurav Pandya) approached the sanctuary from Adhelai side, we could see herds of Blackbucks in the dry grassland. Suddenly, a herd of Nilgai appeared making their way through 'Ganda Bavai' (*Prosopis juliflora*). When we reached Velavadar, it was 14:30 hrs. We had already devoted around 2-3 hours visiting two Painted Stork colonies on the way, one still active and another deserted. However, we were relaxed as we were just in time.

We joined a strong group of 35 birdwatchers eagerly waiting for harrier count to commence. Shri L. N. Jadeja, ACF (BBNP) welcomed the volunteers and expressed his happiness over BCSG participating in the count. Dr. Indra Gadhvi and Sh. Vijay Rathod (RFO) briefed all the volunteers regarding this annual exercise and the importance of the event, which has put this place on the world map of prey birds. They explained the modalities of the count. The volunteers grouped into pairs took positions over 17 points before 16:15 hrs. We were facing outward, waiting for harriers entering the area flying over our heads. Our pair desperately waited gazing at the sky up to 18:00 hrs, with hardly any harrier entering the park. For a while, I doubted the numbers given to us (around 2000 harriers roosting in this area). But, suddenly dark spots started appearing from the horizon and started approaching us in the gloomy sky. I identified them as harriers as they came nearer. The count that was solitary until now suddenly started climbing intensely between 18:00 and 18:15 hrs. Although, we were advised to identify, if possible and record the species, it was not possible to identify the species in the dim light. It was really a thrilling experience to see hundreds of harriers gathering at one place and circling before landing on the ground.

We returned to our boarding hall with harriers gliding *en mass* imprinted in our minds. There was enough time to interact with participants before dinner. We totaled our count it was 1855. Mine was 31. Dr. Bakulbhai requested

Lavkumar Saheb for *Ashirvachan*. He in his lucid speech addressed the volunteers. He was happy to see bird watchers coming from cross-section of the society. He advised that only Velavadar cannot protect these birds but it is our moral duty to preserve their natural habitat even outside the protected area for their conservation. He also advised upcoming birdwatchers not to be too much enthusiastic in reporting a new species, but to enjoy and get pleasure out of birding around them. He hoped bright future for birdwatching and bird conservation in Gujarat with so many potential budding birdwatchers taking up this as a hobby. Shri Lalsinh Raol in his polite speech offered some tit bits on birdwatching, particularly of pre-independence era. We enjoyed both the speeches. We also exchanged our views on harrier count and today's experience. A view emerged that accuracy of the count can be further improved if the counting points are increased. A few harriers, which roosted outside the demarcated boundary but within the visual field of the enumerator, should be considered. After an excellent traditional dinner there were two films on Velavadar Blackbuck Sanctuary; one by National Geographic Society and another by Dept. of Forest, Govt. of Gujarat.

Next day early morning we occupied our positions at 06:00 hrs and repeated the exercise, but this time the volunteers were facing inward to count the harriers flying away and leaving the park area. Based on my evening experience, I was bit relaxed and spent some time observing Nilgai and Blackbucks moving in the grassland. As I was just focusing my binocular on the moon, I suddenly found myself caught unaware. There was heavy flux of the birds in faint red background of sky, leaving the park area. Their departure was so spontaneous and sudden that within 5 minutes, majority of birds left the area and then there was pretty long time without any appreciable harrier movement. Sunrise time was around 07:00 hrs, but before that most of the harriers had left the roosting site. We also enjoyed watching playful flocks of larks, camouflaged on the ground. This time, I returned to the hall with satisfaction. We tallied the count. It crossed 2000 mark, exactly 2270.

Before returning to the hall, many of us visited a small *talavdi* within the park. Notable birds on the *talavdi* were Black Stork (2), Bar-headed Geese (4), Lesser Spotted Eagle (1) and Isabelline Chat (1).

After tea and breakfast Sh. Yogendra Shah showed his recent series of photographs. I was particularly impressed by his photograph of Plum-headed Parakeets taken at Ranthambhor and that of a Lioness resting on a tree trunk in Gir forest. Shri Bhusan Pandya took our group photo. We departed before noon with full satisfaction and memories with a determination to visit the place again for the harriers and floricans.

A CHECKLIST OF THE BIRDS RECORDED AT BLACKBUCK NATIONAL PARK, VELAVADAR ON 22-23rd NOVEMBER 2003 (Observations by Dr. I. R. Gadhvi, Ashok Mashru, Dr. Bakul Trivedi, Dr. D. N. Rank, Dr. B. M. Parasharya)

1. Grey Heron (*Ardea cinerea*)
2. Cattle Egret (*Bubulcus ibis*)
3. Painted Stork (*Mycteria leucocephala*) (15)
4. Black Stork (*Ciconia nigra*) (2)
5. Oriental White Ibis (*Threskiornis melanocephalus*)
6. Black Ibis (*Pseudibis papillosa*) (4)
7. Eurasian Spoonbill (*Platalea leucorodia*)
8. Bar-headed Goose (*Anser indicus*) (4)
9. Brahminy Shelduck (*Tadorna ferruginea*) (4)
10. Northern Shoveller (*Anas clypeata*) (200)
11. Northern Pintail (*Anas acuta*)
12. Common Teal (*Anas crecca*) (350)
13. Black-shouldered Kite (*Elanus caeruleus*)
14. Western Marsh-Harrier (*Circus aeruginosus*)
15. Pallid Harrier (*Circus macrourus*)
16. Montagu's Harrier (*Circus pygargus*)
17. Shikra (*Accipiter badius*)
18. Lesser Spotted Eagle (*Aquila pomarina*) (1)
19. Grey Francolin (*Francolinus pondicerianus*)
20. Common Crane (*Grus grus*) (20)
21. Common Coot (*Fulica atra*)
22. Red-wattled Lapwing (*Vanellus indicus*)
23. Black-tailed Godwit (*Limosa limosa*) (4)
24. Eurasian Curlew (*Numenius arquata*) (150)
25. Marsh Sandpiper (*Tringa stagnatilis*) (4)
26. Common Sandpiper (*Actitis hypoleucos*)
27. Little Stint (*Calidris minuta*) (75-80)
28. Ruff (*Philomachus pugnax*)
29. Black-winged Stilt (*Himantopus himantopus*) (325)
30. Pied Avocet (*Recurvirostra avosetta*)
31. Gull-billed Tern (*Gelochelidon nilotica*) (2)
32. River Tern (*Sterna aurantia*)
33. Eurasian Collared-Dove (*Streptopelia decaocto*)
34. Little Brown Dove (*Streptopelia senegalensis*)
35. Rose-ringed Parakeet (*Psittacula krameri*)
36. Greater Coucal (*Centropus sinensis*)
37. Spotted Owlet (*Athene brama*)
38. Ashy-crowned Sparrow-Lark (*Eremopterix grisea*)
39. Rufous-tailed Finch-Lark (*Ammomanes phoenicurus*)
40. Sykes's Crested Lark (*Galerida deva*)
41. Short-toed Lark (*Calandrella sp.*)
42. Rufous-tailed Shrike (*Lanius isabellinus*)
43. Common Stonechat (*Saxicola torquata*)
44. Isabelline Wheatear (*Oenanthe isabellina*)
45. Black Drongo (*Dicrurus macrocercus*)
46. House Crow (*Corvus splendens*)

HARRIER COUNT AT BLACKBUCK NATIONAL PARK, VELAVADAR : I. R. Gadhvi ¹ and V. A. Rathod ²:

¹ Zoology Department, Sir P.P. Institute of Science, Bhavnagar. ² R.F.O, Blackbuck National Park, F-12, Bahumali Bhavan, Bhavnagar.

Introduction

Harriers, the *Circus* genus, are diurnal raptors of slim built, with a longish tail and very long wings relative to the body weight. Their buoyancy in the air allows them to forage for extended periods. They can fly as low to the ground as necessary, thereby maximizing their chance of catching insects, small birds, mammals and reptile prey unaware. The number of species of harriers worldwide is thought to be ten of which most species are migratory. The northern hemisphere species occupy southern parts of their ranges in winter (Clarke 1990). Of these, four species are recorded in Blackbuck National Park (BBNP), Velavadar i.e. Montagu's Harrier (*C. pygargus*), Marsh Harrier (*C. aeruginosus*), Pallid Harrier (*C. macrourus*) and Hen Harrier (*C. cyaneus*) (Clarke 1996).

Outside the breeding season, a harrier's existence is based around the communal roost. Speculation is rife, as to the function of communal roosting in birds, with warmth, mutual warning of approach of a predator and an exchange of information on good feeding areas being the most discussed. Although many types of birds roost communally at regular sites, harriers' roosts are different to most because they are situated on the ground, amongst rank vegetation. Since the same sites are used nightly, it becomes dangerous and bound to attract predators. However harriers' good hearing device is doubtlessly an important protection and the strongly communal nature of these roosts may facilitate some sort of mutual warning mechanism important for survival. The harriers roost individually, in gaps in the vegetation and on flattened patches or tussocks; often a few meters apart from each other, but sometimes much further apart. They gain no warmth from each other, but the choice of terrain and vegetation at sites seems to be governed, at least partly, by consideration of shelter.

More than 1500 harriers were counted roosting in BBNP in November 1991, which appears to be the largest roost of harriers recorded in the literature since nineteenth century observations of thousands of Montagu's Harriers roosting after breeding season and before migration at a marsh in the west of France (Clarke 1996).

The harrier roost in Velavadar Park is the largest and well-known roost of the world. "Harrier Count" is carried out by the park authority, in November every year. They start migrating to India in August and leave by the end of March. In November, during peak grass season three species of

harrier roost communally within the park in large numbers. The annual count is very important to:

1. estimate their population in the park
2. compare the population size with sites in other countries
3. establish importance of grassland habitat for their conservation
4. correlate their role as predator of insect pest in agriculture

Methods

Census of wintering harriers in the BBNP was held on 22nd and 23rd November 2003. Thirty volunteers from Bird Conservation Society, Gujarat (BCSG) were invited by the Park authority for the census. Staff of the Department was also involved in the exercise. The programme was organized under the supervision of Mr. L. N. Jadeja, ACF, BBNP.

The volunteers gathered at 14:30 hrs at the Blackbuck National Park, Velavadar. All of them were briefed regarding the method during 15:00 to 16:00 hrs. Total 17 points were decided on the periphery of the grassland (Fig. 1) to monitor the incoming and outgoing harriers. The area encircled was the patch of grassland regularly used by the harriers for roosting. The distance between two points varied between 1.0 – 1.5 km. Two volunteers were placed at each point. Volunteers at one point counted the harriers passing between their point and the preceding point. Both evening and morning counts were recorded. During the evening count, all the volunteers counted the harriers entering into the grassland, while the harriers leaving the grassland were counted next morning.

The evening count was carried out from 1600 to 1900 hrs on 22nd while the morning count was done on 23rd morning from 06:00 to 08:00 hrs. The numbers of harriers entering in the park and leaving the park were counted in 15 minutes blocks (Table 1).

Results & Discussion

Total 1855 harriers were counted in the evening count and 2270 in the morning count (Table 1). In the evening arrival started from 16:15 hrs, with maximum number of birds arriving during 18:00 to 18:15 hrs. In the morning, majority of the harriers departed between 06:30 to 06:45 hrs (Fig. 2 & 3). Departure from the roost was sudden and more synchronous than their arrival.

The difference in the number of the harriers counted in the evening and morning was 415. This difference was probably due to the difference in the mode of flight while coming to the roost and leaving the roost. The harriers flew very low while coming to the roost but were quite up in the sky while leaving the roost site. Hence, a few birds flying very low might have escaped from the observer's sight.

Table: 1 shows that large number of birds entered from the

points no. 1, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16 and 17. Similarly they departed in large number from the same points. This suggests that the major food source was towards the western fringe of the Park (Fig. 1).

The Forest Department, Government of Gujarat carries out census of harriers since last three years. Fig. 4 shows the correlation between annual precipitation and maximum harrier population roosting within BBNP. The graph reveals that except in the year 2003 the harrier population increased along with the precipitation. In the year 2002 the precipitation was 507mm and the harrier population was 2515, whereas in 2003 the precipitation was 593mm but the harrier population had gone down to 2270 which suggest that the harrier population does not only correlate with the amount of precipitation but it might also depend upon distribution of rain with reference to time, the timing of precipitation, the crop pattern in the surrounding area and insect pest population, etc.

Acknowledgements

We thank Ms Anika Jadhav for making all the graphics and to Sh. J. J. Jani for improving the manuscript.

References

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Table 1: Harrier Count at Velavadar National Park on 22-23 November, 2003

22-11-03 Time	No. Arriving	23-11-03 Time	No. Departing
16:00-16:15	0	05:30-05:45	0
16:16-16:30	3	05:46-06:00	0
16:31-16:45	21	06:01-06:15	4
16:46-17:00	14	06:16-06:30	114
17:01-17:15	44	06:31-06:45	1732
17:16-17:30	58	06:46-07:00	360
17:31-17:45	81	07:01-07:15	32
17:46-18:00	268	07:16-07:30	20
18:01-18:15	1060	07:31-08:00	8
18:16-18:30	273	-	-
18:31-18:45	33	-	-
18:46-19:00	0	-	-
Total	1855	Total	2270

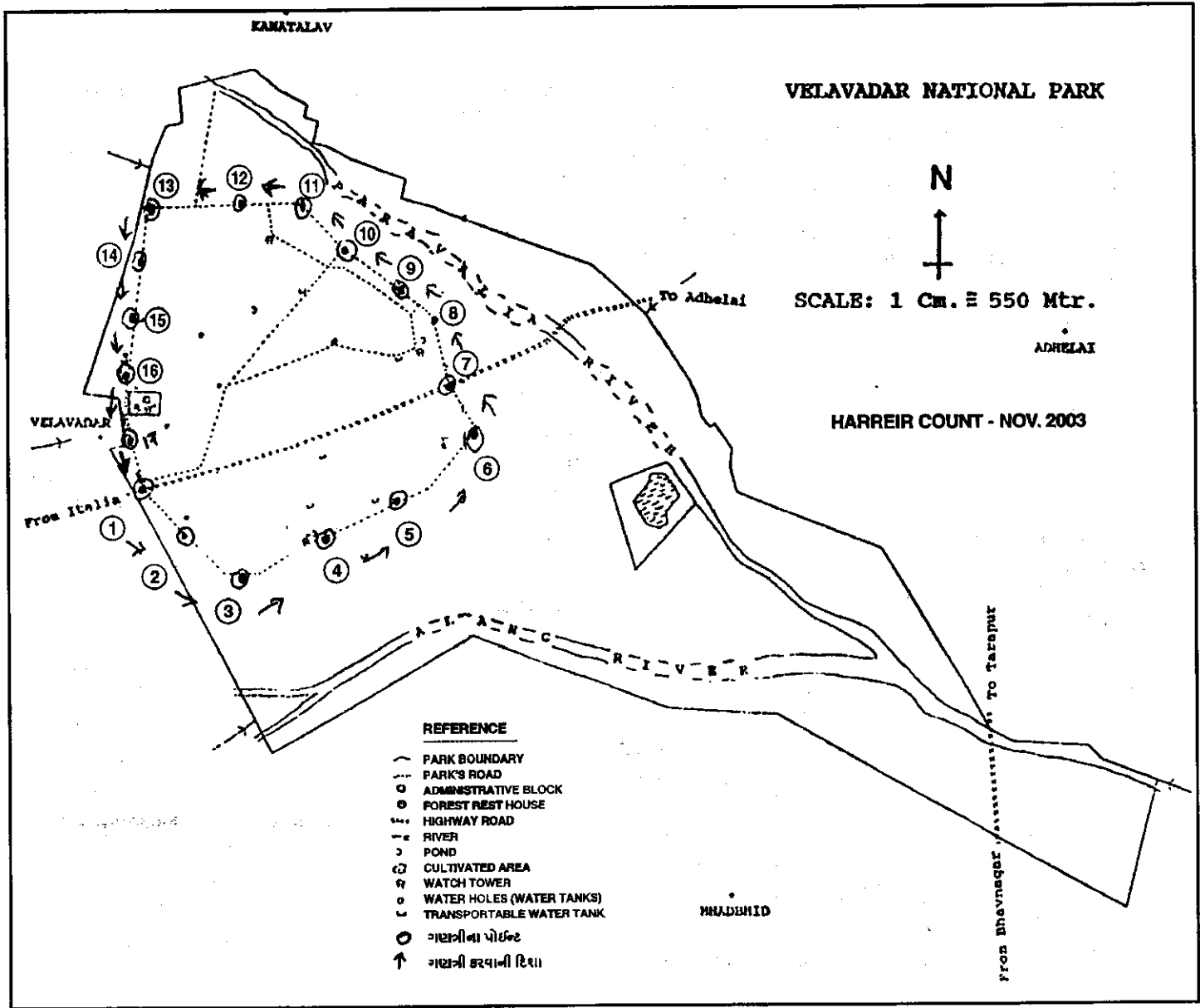


Fig. 1 : Roost Count Poings (1-17) in north-western part of Valavadar National Park

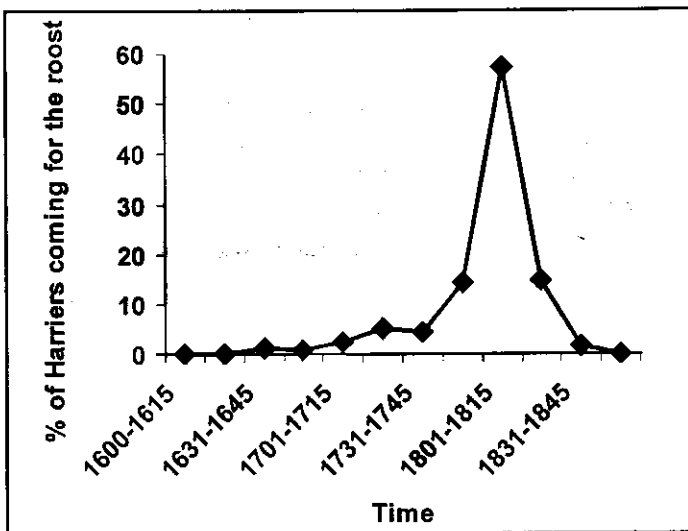


Fig. 2 : Arrival pattern of harriers for roosting

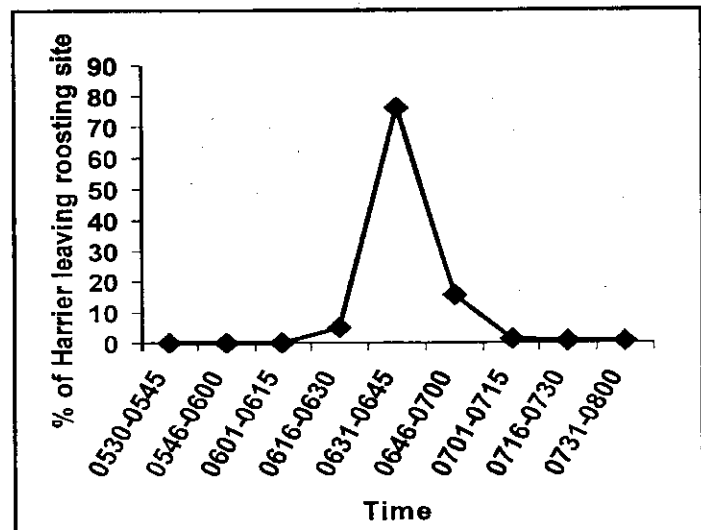


Fig. 3 : Departure pattern of harriers for roosting site.

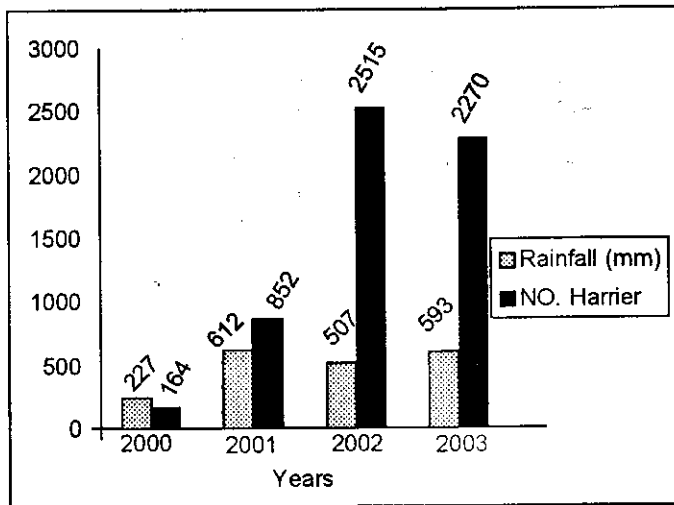


Fig.4 : Correlation between precipitation and harrier population

BREEDING OF WHITEBACKED VULTURE *GYPSS BENGALENSIS* IN KACHCHH: Hiren Soni, Pankaj Joshi and Justus Joshua, Gujarat Institute of Desert Ecology (GUIDE), Opp. Changleshwar Temple, Mundra Road, Bhuj - 370 001

The Whitebacked Vulture *Gyps bengalensis* is the commonest vulture found throughout the Indian subcontinent (Ali 1996). But recently its population is rapidly declining due to reduction in size of food supply, availability of perching and nesting sites, increase in the use of Organochlorine pesticides in agriculture practices and outbreak of some unknown viral disease (Prakash 1999).

In Kachchh, this species was widespread (Ali 1945) till last 4 to 5 years. But their numbers have drastically crashed within last 2 years, so we thought that present information on its nesting could be of interest. Presently its small population is surviving in some pockets of Kachchh.

We saw a nest of White-backed Vulture on *Prosopis cineraria* (Khejri) on 27th November 2002, near Rabviri village (23° 49' 53.5" N; 69° 49' 48.7" E), 96 km away from Bhuj, in Pachcham valley fringing the Rann. The nest tree was close to the main road at a distance of 50 to 60 m, in a ploughed agriculture field. The height of the tree was about 7 to 8 meters and the nest was constructed on the top of the tree. The canopy cover around the nest was 80 to 90%, while the cover above the nest was only 10 to 20%. It was a large messy platform composed of dry twigs. When we saw the bird, it was sitting quietly on the nest. But as it felt our presence, it started flying around the nesting tree. The bird was very cautious and slightly disturbed, probably due to the presence of early chicks inside the nest. After confirming that there is no disturbance by us, it came down and sat again on the nest. On that day, we could not confirm the nest content.

We visited the nest site again on 23rd February 2003 and saw a young one sitting inside the nest, which was

completely unaware of our presence. But the parent bird showed a restless behaviour by jumping from one branch to another and even flying around the nest four to five times a minute. This behaviour lasted for about ten minutes. After conforming safety from us, it moved into the inner part of the nest and sat in such a way that we could not see it properly except its wing feathers.

There were few *Prosopis juliflora* (Gando Baval) and *Calotropis procera* (Akado) bordering the hedge of agricultural field. As it was a drought year, 80 to 90% trees of *Prosopis cineraria* and few *Acacia nilotica* (Babul) had been lopped completely for fodder use. Thus lopping was identified as a major threat in that area, which could reduce the cover to the nest and availability of big platform trees with good canopy cover. Although the nest tree was lopped fully from sides, local people had not disturbed the topmost canopy on which the nest was placed, thus showing their concern for the bird and ensuing safety to the bird, its nest and the fledgling inside.

In order to conserve and protect the existing population of this species, following steps should be taken:

- (1) Rapid Assessment Surveys (RAS) should be carried out in areas where the population already exists to know its breeding status and problems faced during nesting season.
- (2) Creation of awareness among local people to carry out the plantation of native tree species e.g. *Prosopis cineraria* and *Acacia nilotica* to provide more perching and nesting substrates to the bird.
- (3) Execution of fodder plantation programme to safeguard existing tree species from being lopped for fodder use, which are also cut for fuel wood consumption.
- (4) A systematic, in-depth and long term monitoring should be carried out in all potential habitats to check breeding performance.

References

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 Ali, S. (1996). The Book of Indian Birds. 12th Revised and Enlarged Centenary Edition. Bombay Natural History Society. Oxford University Press, Bombay.
 Prakash, V. (1999). Status of Vultures in Keoladeo National Park, Bharatpur, Rajasthan, with special reference to population crash in *Gyps* species. *J. Bombay nat. Hist. Soc.* 96 (3): 365-378.

VET DRUG 'KILLING ASIAN VULTURES'

Scientists believe they have identified the main cause behind the catastrophic decline seen in Asian vulture numbers.

In the past 10 years, population losses of more than 95% have been reported in three raptor species across many areas of the Indian sub-continent. Lindsay Oaks' research team

has now shown that the birds are dying after eating the carcasses of livestock treated with the common veterinary drug diclofenac.

Dr Oaks, backed by The Peregrine Fund, reports his work in *Nature* magazine. "This discovery is significant in that it is the first known case of a pharmaceutical causing major ecological damage over a huge geographic area and threatening three species with extinction," the US researcher from Washington State University said.

The three species are the Oriental White-backed Vulture (*Gyps bengalensis*), the Long-billed Vulture (*Gyps indicus*) and the Slender-billed Vulture (*Gyps tenuirostris*). All three are now classed as critically endangered.

Experimental work

The birds succumb to kidney failure and visceral gout. Early signs that the raptors are affected can be seen from the way they hang their heads down to their feet for long periods.

Such has been the alarming decline in bird numbers that international organizations have pumped hundreds of thousands of pounds into research to track down the cause of all the deaths.

Now, Dr Oaks and colleagues have found high residues of diclofenac in dead vultures in the field. They have also been able to produce similar patterns of disease in experimental vulture colonies fed the drug either directly or via carcasses of buffalo or goat that had been treated with diclofenac. Other possible causes of death, such as poisoning by mercury or arsenic or infection by viruses, have been investigated and ruled out. Diclofenac is a non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug that has been in human use for pain and inflammation for decades. The veterinary use of diclofenac on livestock in South Asia has grown in the past decade.

Pivotal role

The *Nature* report has led ornithological and other conservation groups to call for the immediate withdrawal of diclofenac from use.

"Vultures have an important ecological role in the Asian environment, where they have been relied upon for millennia to clean up and remove dead livestock and even human corpses," said Dr Munir Virani, a biologist for US-based Peregrine Fund, and who coordinated the massive field investigations across Nepal, India, and Pakistan.

"Their loss has important economic, cultural, and human health consequences." One immediate impact has been the explosion in feral dog populations, which have moved into areas no longer scavenged by vultures.

Britain has invested significant research time and money on the vulture problem through its Darwin Initiative for the Survival of Species.

Dr Debbie Pain, a research scientist at the Royal Society

for the Protection of Birds, said: "In the 1980s, [*Gyps bengalensis*] was thought to be the most abundant large bird of prey in the world, but in little over a decade, the population has crashed by more than 99%, with the loss of tens of millions of birds. "The decline of Asian vultures is one of the steepest declines experienced by any bird species, and is certainly faster than that suffered by the dodo before its extinction. If nothing is done these vulture species will become extinct."

From: BBC News/ Science/ Nature (information available on internet was supplied by Nandita Muni and Chandresh Borad)

BIRDING NOTES

BROWN WOOD OWL *STRIX LEPTOGRAMMICA* – AN ADDITION TO THE BIRDS OF GUJARAT: Akshay Joshi, 501, Mahan Terrace, Ajasan Road, Surat - 395 009.

Two Brown Wood Owls (*Strix leptogrammica*) were observed in tall trees near Crab Falls on 29th October 2003. They were being harassed and chased by Tree Pie (2) and Racket-tailed Drongo (1). This species is not recorded earlier from Gujarat State. Nearest place of its occurrence is Western Ghats. It also occurs locally in Himalayas from Jammu and Kashmir east to Arunachal Pradesh, NE India and Bangladesh, Eastern Ghats and Sri Lanka (Grimmett *et al.* 1998).

Ref.: Grimmett, R., C. Inskipp & T. Inskipp (1998). *Birds of the Indian Subcontinent*. Oxford University Press, Delhi.

GREYLAG GOOSE AT KHIJADIA BIRD SANCTUARY: Kamal Bhatt, Opp. Dayaram Library, Ranjit Rd., Jamnagar-361 001.

I saw eight (8) Greylag Geese (*Anser anser*) at Khijadia Bird Sanctuary, Jamnagar on December 2, 2003 at 07:30 hours. This is the first ever record of Greylag Goose at Khijadia. I am sending you a photograph taken by me in which seven of them can be seen clearly.

BLACK CAPPED KINGFISHER AT MAHUA: Jaidev Dhadhal & Flamingo Nature Club, Mahuva.

White-breasted Kingfishers and Common Kingfishers are regularly found on the sea shore and rocks around, but to our great surprise we saw one Black-capped Kingfisher *Halcyon pileata* today (4th January 2004) at Pingaleshwar near Mahuva, Bhavnagar District. The place is situated on the coast of the Gulf of Khambhat.

(This is certainly an important sighting as the Black-capped Kingfisher occurs singly in the coastal region of Gujarat and there are only a few published reports of the same. However, several of us have seen it at various locations. All the readers are requested to send their sightings with date and place so that we can publish a compiled report and determine its status and distribution in Gujarat. – eds.)

SYNCHRONIZED FLIGHT OF JUNGLE CROWS:
Ashok Mashru, A-7, Alap Heritage, Kalawad Road,
Rajkot-360 005.

On 31st October 2003 I saw two to three groups of Jungle Crows (*Corvus macrorhynchos*) flying in groups at sunset point of Saputara hill station of Dang district, Gujarat. They were flying synchronously with sudden ups and downs in the valley. The flight resembled that of Rosy Pastors. The crows were also resting for a while on rocks and again resuming such flight. I saw such behaviour of Jungle Crows for the first time. Hugh Whistler writes about flying skill of Jungle Crow in his Popular Hand Book of Indian Birds. "In the hills, this crow is very fond of soaring and circling at a great height in the air and twenty or thirty often do this in company, exhibiting complete mastery of all the arts of flying."

NESTING OF GLOSSY IBIS AT LUNA, KACHCHH:
Ashwin Pomal, Panchvati, Panchmukhi Street, Bhuj-370 001.

Today (30th October 2003) I visited Luna Jeel (Luna wetland) at Luna village, 110 km north-west of Bhuj. It is a fresh water body spread over 20 sq km area. From Luna village, I walked into the Jeel having 3-4 feet water depth and succeeded to reach near the heronry. I was very happy, as I could reach the place. My earlier attempt to visit the heronry with Shantibhai Varu in September had failed because of excessive water-depth. Luna seems to be a regular nesting site for the Glossy Ibis, at least in the years of good rains. Earlier, J. K. Tiwari and S. N. Varu had discovered large scale nesting of Glossy Ibis at Luna in 1996 (Tiwari and Rahmani 1998). In current year, nesting of Glossy Ibis is recorded from Ningal tank, Kachchh and Krishnakunj lake, Bhavnagar [see Flamingo 1(3 & 4)].

Approximate number of nests and number of chicks of the species in the heronry is given below.

Glossy Ibis (*Plegadis falcinellus*) 350+ (150+ chicks)
Little Egret (*Egretta garzetta*) 250+ (100+ chicks)
Median Egret (*Egretta intermedia*) 250+ (100+ chicks)
Grey Heron (*Ardea cinerea*) 20 nest (50+ chicks)
Purple Heron (*Ardea purpurea*) 20+ nest (30+ chicks)
Little Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax niger*) 50+ nest (100+ chicks)

Ref.: Tiwari, J. K. and Rahmani, A. R. 1998. Large heronries in Kutch and nesting of Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus* at Luna Jeel, Kutch, Gujarat, India. J. Bombay Nat. Hist. Soc. 95(1): 67-70.

GREYHEADED FLYCATCHER IN AHMEDABAD:
Dishant Parasharya, 1792-C, Srinagar Soc., Sardarnagar,
Bhavnagar-364 002.

On 28th November 2003 Sh. Dishith Mehta and myself spotted and identified a Greyheaded Flycatcher (*Culicicapa cydonensis*) near Zoology Department of Gujarat University, Ahmedabad. Last year in winter Sh. Chittaranjan Dave had recorded the same species in this

area. Grimmett *et al.* (1998) shows individual records of this bird in north Gujarat and in Gulf of Khambhat. Hence, this sighting is worth recording.

Ref.: Grimmett, R., C. Inskipp & T. Inskipp (1998). Birds of the Indian Subcontinent. Oxford University Press, Delhi.

GREAT CRESTED GREBE AT KUCHHADI: N. A. Thakor, 5, Navi Colony, Agriculture Campus, Anand -388 110.

On 5th November 2003, while passing besides Kuchhadi wetland (near Porbander), I saw unusual concentration of Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus*. About 250 to 300 grebes were swimming in small flocks. Since many years we are recording this grebe on the wetlands around Anand, but I have never seen such a huge concentration before. Other birds on the wetland were Common Coot (*Fulica atra*)-300, Great White Pelican (*Pelecanus onocrotalus*)-200, Common Crane (*Grus grus*)-2000+ and unidentified ducks-3000+. Surprisingly, either species of flamingos were absent.

VULTURES IN ANAND: Shri Dhaval Patel informed that a pair of Whitebacked Vultures (*Gyps benghalensis*) has settled on a Coconut tree within Anand city on 17th November 2003. Dhavalbhai and Ms Avani Patel - owner of the house, took extreme care to avoid disturbance to the birds. The pair attempted to make nest on the canopy and the volunteers provided nest material also on the terrace. Unfortunately the pair failed to construct a sturdy nest platform. After 15-20 days efforts, the pair vitiated the coconut tree. On 15th December 2003 Sh. Dhaval Patel saw 4 Whitebacked Vultures near Bedva- Sarsa.

STOP PRESS: BLACK-NECKED GREBE: Shri Jummabhai Moria of Jamnagar informs that he saw 3500+ Black-necked Grebe (*Podiceps nigricollis*) at Charakla salt pans near Dwarka in January 2004. This is the highest number ever recorded in the Indian territory. About 1405 grebes were recorded at the same site by Anika Jadhav, B. M. Parasharya and Bharat Rughani in January 2003 [Flamingo 1(2):3].

SOME IMPORTANT SIGHTINGS

1. Houbara Bustard *Chlamydotis undulata* (2) near Suigam on 14-12-2003, Common Raven *Corvus corax* (1, 2) north of *Nada Bet* in Great Rann, Rufous-tailed Wheatear *Oenanthe xanthopyrma* (several) around Dholaveera on 21-12-2003; Anika Jadhav & B. M. Parasharya (Anand).
2. Mallards *Anas platyrhynchos* (8) on Sipu dam, Banaskantha dist.; Common Raven (1) on Taranagar dam near Patan; White Pelicans (3000+) north of *Nada Bet* in Great Rann on 11th-12th January 2004. Uday Vora (Gandhinagar).
3. Cinereous Vulture *Aegypius monachus* (1) near Bhavnagar found injured and treated on 13 December 2003. I. R. Gadhvi and Vishubha Raol (Bhavnagar).
4. Black Stork *Ciconia nigra* (3) on Hadmatia dam

(Deridam) in Banaskantha district since December 2003. **Uday Vora** (Gandhinagar), **V. A. Pathan**, **B. M. Parasharya** (Anand).

5. Black Stork *Ciconia nigra* (1) near Suigam (Banaskantha district) on 12 Dec. 2003. **Anika Jadhav**, **B. M. Parasharya**, (Anand), **P. S. Thakker** (Ahmedabad).
6. Sarus Crane *Grus antigone* (2) adults in an empty crop field near Harij, Harij-Radhanpur road on 1-12-2003. **Snehal Patel** (Anand).
7. Sarus Crane *Grus antigone* pair with two young ones on Deridam in Banaskantha district on 5-6 November 2003. **Raju Vyas** (Vadodara).
8. Black-necked Stork *Ephippiorhynchus asiaticus* (1) female near Vijaynagar on 6-12-2003. **Mayur Mistri** (Vijaynagar).

RECENT PUBLICATIONS ON BIRDS OF GUJARAT

1. Varu S. N. and M. H. Trivedi 2003. Recovery of a ringed Demoiselle Crane *Grus virgo* in Kutch. *J. Bombay Nat. Hist. Soc.* 100 (2&3): 624-625.
2. Mashru A. 2003. Whitebreasted Kingfisher feeds on a young Wiretailed Swallow. *News. Birdwatch.* 43(5): 74.
3. Mashru A. 2003. Magpie Robin nesting among office files. *Newsletter for Birdwatchers* 43(5): 74-75.
4. Dhadhal J. 2003. Blue-footed Booby in Gujarat. *Newsletter for Birdwatchers* 43(5): 75.
5. Khacher L. 2003. Random notes. *Newsletter for Birdwatchers* 43(2): 26-27.
6. Annon. 2003. Report. Bird Census Vansda National Park 2001-2002. *W. W. F. -India, Valsad Division.* 28pp.

BCSG NEWS

BCSG NEWSGROUP STARTED: Recently, BCSG newsgroup is started. Members who have access to internet should become a member of this newsgroup and communicate with other members for quick exchange of information. Please send your mail to the following Id BiCoSoGuj@yahoo.com Or send a mail to Shailesh Master, Surat: mastereles@yahoo.com

APPEAL FOR SUBSCRIPTION RENEWAL: Many memberships have become due for renewal. We are enclosing membership forms with "Flamingo" and hope that you will continue to remain member of BCSG. If you have already renewed your membership, please ignore this reminder.

VULTURE WORKSHOP PROPOSED: As it is already known, population of vultures has declined drastically all over the Indian Subcontinent. However, the decline is not uniform over the entire country. Though disappeared from most parts of Gujarat, we know that in some pockets, they still exist in appreciable number. We also get occasional information about their nesting. Through a column on

'Vulture Watch' in "Vihang", we publish available information but that is not sufficient. We intend to compile all the available information on vultures from entire state. To achieve this, we intend to hold a one-day workshop in June 2004 to evaluate the current status of vultures in our state. Members who have data on vulture sightings in last three years are requested to compile their information in the following format for final compilation. If the information is gained from a reliable source can also be added. On the day of workshop, we will entrust responsibilities to some of our members representing the area to do region/ district-wise presentation of the status and the members attending the workshop will add their inputs and help to finalize the status. We will also discuss the conservation issues and the conservation measures to be taken up. The discussion of the one-day workshop will be compiled and published. The format in which the information is to be compiled is as follows:

Sr. No.	D a t e	P l a c e	Number of						Activity	Other associated birds
			White backed	Long billed	Cine rous	Giffon	Scav-anger	King		
1										

Activities: Feeding on Caracas, roosting on trees, soaring

LETTER TO THE EDITORS

Congratulations for a really satisfying issue of "Flamingo 3 & 4". Immediately on receipt, I read it at the first sitting. The standard of the articles published is high and worthy, comparable to any All-India publication of repute. You will have to strive hard to emulate the example set by yourself! I am sure you will do it. **Lalsinh Raol**, Ahmedabad.

Your society is doing wonderful job in bird conservation. It was a need of the time to have such a society in our state. **Jaysinh V. Gohil**, Bhavnagar.

I would like to congratulate on forming BCSG. We need such organization to put up the cause strongly to the deaf and adamant Government officials and ministers. **K. D. Vaishnav**, 297, K. K. Nagar, Sector -3, Ranna Park, Ghatlodia, Ahmedabad-380 003.

I am immensely happy to know that your society is engaged in conservation of birds in the state. I am also associated with many such organizations involved in bird and animal conservation. We can work together with more concerted efforts for bird conservation. **Pankaj Buch**, Sector- 28, Block 31/4, GH type, Gandhinagar - 382 028 .

We are running a nature club and conducting several activities dedicated to nature and environment under this club. We are maintaining a bird feeder, a library and organizing nature camps. **Vishva Mangalam Ashram**,

Badodara - 393 030, Dist: Bharuch.

I am a resident editor in local daily "Daman - Ganga Times". I am developing bird watching as a hobby. I will be happy to join your society. Vikas Upadhyay, Vapi.

I am a member of various organizations such as "Peoples for Animals", BNHS, "Beauty Without Cruelty". Having bird watching as my hobby, I am interested in becoming a member of your society. Kartik N. Juthani, Mehta Nivas, Rajput para, lambda lane, Jamnagar - 361 001.

Heartily congratulations for establishing such a nice society, which is need of the time. Anil N Bhatt, A/3, Hardik Park, Behind: Navyug College, Nr. Honey Park, Rander Road, Surat - 395 009.

Often there are cases of poaching of resident and migratory birds visiting our state. Please inform concerned government offices and suggest necessary steps to prevent poaching. We will be happy to participate again in "Asian Waterfowl Census". Pravin Gohil, Coordinator, Eco-club, J. N. Mehta High School, Dungar, Dist: Bhavnagar.

LETTER FROM LAVKUMAR KHACHER

Since birds inhabit a wide spectrum of habitats, there can be no strictly followed conduct codes by them, but each species, occupying some distinctive location, does have highly evolved behavior patterns and requirements so that familiarizing ones self to these makes for "expertise" or, what I would like to call experience. In our early days, one had to spend far more time gaining the basic experiences precisely because there were no illustrated pocket guides. To that extent, the several well-illustrated books one sees with every birdwatcher have encouraged a tendency for quick identifications. Even so, there is no substitute for careful observing of the bird in the bush and developing familiarities with the "Fizz" of each species. This ("Fizz") is a word difficult to explain and the best I can suggest is to observe your bird carefully to understand what its "Fizz"

is. For individual human beings, we would have mannerism (Fizz) that is peculiar to the individual.

Half a century ago, youthful enthusiasm while being encouraged was prevented from making one go overboard by an absolute respect for our elders. The sort of brashness one sees today in an age of "instant coffee" was never tolerated. Since one had to rely on guidance of ones peers, considerable caution had to be exercised even by the most cocky youth. Opportunities to circumvent evaluation have also increased manifolds thanks to the availability of illustrated field guides. These are extremely useful tools, but certainly not final authorities, which of course they never claim to be. Even the best illustrations do fall short precisely because, more often than not, the illustrator has a stuffed museum specimen to work from and a dead bird, howsoever well preserved, cannot provide the "Fizz". Then, the colour rendering is not always true, the error being that of the artist or the printer.

In earlier days, there were no publications like 'Vihang', 'Newsletter for Birdwatchers' or this 'Flamingo' to accept quick observations and, however good one may have been, a claim had to pass through critical scrutiny of some bellicose editor, who was, more often than not, an authority in his or her, rights. We certainly were not over fond of these individuals and agreed that the "seniors" were trying to prevent "young talents" from posing a challenge to their positions. With greater acceptance of claims by editors, it becomes a duty of each individual to lay down very strict norms voluntarily. In Gujarat, the report of the occurrence of "rare Black Flamingos" should always be a warning. I also, had the personal experience of deleting a "Laughing Thrush" from Mt. Abu's check list! It had got included on the strength of the identification made by an individual who fancied himself an "expert". Let us all remain "enthusiasts" and never aspire to be "experts". Time in the pursuit of our hobby will invest each of us with that halo!

For private circulation only: For information, write to: Hon. Secretary, BCSG, B-8, Veterinary Staff Quarters, Nr. Jagnath, Anand-388 001, India.

Editors: B. M. Parasharya (02692-262214) & Bakul Trivedi (079-2686 1878).

E-mail: parasharya@satyam.net.in; vihangujarat@yahoo.co.in

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