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Flamingo



Newsletter of the Bird Conservation Society, Gujarat

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EDITORIAL

It is a pleasure to present combined issue of the second year of our newsletter. Its publication is slightly delayed but we hope that you will relish its content.

In this issue, there are three articles on waterfowl census at Nalsarovar. Besides getting an opportunity of birdwatching, participants involved themselves in a scientific census exercise. Participants should keep on writing about what they saw and counted and should also make a comparisons with what is known about the bird species and their number at Nalsarovar and elsewhere. Over period, this will form a concrete database. We appeal to the Nalsarovar Bird Sanctuary Authority to publish detailed census report and make it available to everyone interested. Total bird count as well as count of certain species can be highlighted to promote our site as Ramsar site.

A note on Grey-headed Flycatcher (*Culicicapa*

ceylonensis) by Dishant Parasharya in the last issue provoked Shri Shantilal Varu and Lavkumarsaheb to put up their observations on record. This further provoked B. M. Parasharya and D. N. Rank to do literature survey and collect unpublished records of this species from friends. As a result, with compiled information published in this issue, they have been able to establish its distribution status in Gujarat state. This is an example of positive role of a newsletter like "Flamingo" or "Vihang".

In this issue, we also have a report of Water Rail (*Rallus aquaticus*) sighting near Surat. The record is also substantiated with an excellent colour photograph. This species is certainly an addition to the checklist of the birds of Gujarat State. We congratulate our friends for their keen observations and an excellent photograph. Though marshland birds are difficult to locate, it is important to pay more attention to them.



Water Rail (*Rallus aquaticus*)

Photo By: Rajesh Jadhav

Water Rail (*Rallus Aquaticus*) Sighted Near Vav, Surat

SIDDHARTH SHAH

Arihant, Opp. Kakadiya Complex, Ghod Dod Road, Surat – 395 007

On 1st February 2004, members of BCSS (Birds Conservation Society of Surat) Mr. Debasis Jadia, Mr. Rajesh Jadhav & Mr. Bharat Patel visited Vav village, 25 km from Surat for birding where they found Water Rail (*Rallus aquaticus*) foraging in the marshland in the early morning. This is probably the first authentic record of the species for Gujarat. Fortunately our group member Mr. Rajesh Jadhav could take a record shot.

[(According to Ripley (1982), the Water Rail (*Rallus aquaticus*) is a resident species, breeding in Kashmir and Ladakh (?). It is a winter visitor to Pakistan and northwestern India from Kohat to northern Baluchistan, Rawalpindi, Punjab, Bahawalpur, Ambala and Dehra Dun. Has strayed to Sindh and Madhya Pradesh. The Water Rail (*Rallus aquaticus*) has never been recorded in Gujarat State. Punjabi (1997) recorded it near Mumbai, which was considered to be the southern most record of this species. However, recently it is reported from

Sriharikota, Nellore District, Andhra Pradesh by Manakadan and Sivakumar (2004). The current record suggests that the species might be more widely distributed in the Indian Subcontinent than believed. This is a very important report and we appreciate the birdwatcher friends for taking excellent photograph and sharing this valuable information. We need to pay more attention to our marshland birds. - Eds.

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Waterfowl Census at Nalsarovar

NANDITA MUNI

7/2540, Shantivan Society, Opp. Talaja Octroi Point, City Circular Road, Bhavnagar-364 002

On 24th and 25th January 2004, Gujarat Forest Department organized Waterfowl Census at Nalsarovar and Thol, in which I was fortunate enough to participate. We (Dr. I. R. Gadhvi, Shri Mohitbhai Andhariya, Shri Harbhadrasinh Sarvaiya, Shri Darshan Andhariya and myself) started for Nalsarovar early in the morning on 24th January. On way to Nalsarovar, we saw usual birds one expects to see on a winter morning. I especially loved seeing White-necked Storks (*Ciconia episcopus*) foraging in fields between Dholera and Nalsarovar. A couple of them took to their wings and gracefully glided parallel to our vehicle for a few beautiful moments! We also saw a big snake lazily basking in the sun near the hedge of a field. Some friends tried to make a better acquaintance of this magnificent animal, but apparently it had other plans for the morning.

When we reached Nalsarovar, the orientation session was just about to start. Shri Udaybhai Vora briefed all the participants about the exercise and then after the lunch, everyone was off to their respective zones. The area was divided into 33 zones; and I along with my partner Ms. Tana Mewada was allotted Zone 27. This zone was more or less

in the very heart of Nalsarovar. This area had two main islands: Panhoti and Kothariya. Also included was area to the west of Kothariya up until Gadhevada and Vanela islands.

There is a well-known saying that journey is no less important than destination. This was certainly true of our boat ride to and from our zone. *En route* we feasted our eyes on the delightful scenery. Reeds being reflected on gently moving surface of the lake and the rich aquatic vegetation underneath reminded of Claude Monet. As if to confirm this observation, here and there lovely white or lavender water lilies would be nodding their assent. We also saw many birds on the way, among which Common Coots (*Fulica atra*) appeared to be the most numerous. Whenever disturbed, their flocks would take to the air in their characteristic fashion, by initial running on the water to gain necessary momentum. For a few moments, not much would be audible but the pattering of their feet and the swish of their wing beats.

On first day's exercise we counted 24 species of birds, and the total number of birds was 503. On the way back, the setting sun had set the lake afire, and the evening sky was

adorned by lines upon lines of Glossy Ibises (*Plegadis falcinellus*) flying to their roosts. Moon, and lovely Venus nestling close by her side, had appeared in the dark night sky by the time we returned. After dinner, there was a campfire and musically gifted participants regaled everyone with songs. It was very tempting to spend the whole night right there around the campfire; but as next morning's work was to start really early, reluctantly everyone called it a day.

Next morning we started for our destination at 5:30 AM. Again, we were treated by the sight of lines upon lines of Glossy Ibises. By the time we reached our zone, the avian world was already going about its business. There were countless Sand Martins (*Riparia riparia*) flitting around each little clump of reeds; and Asian Openbill-Storks (*Anastomus oscitans*) were flying about everywhere, often carrying Apple Snails (*Pyla* sp.) in their bills. Some buffaloes disturbed a distant flock of waders, which we estimated numbered about 3,000. As they were too far to be correctly identified, we contented ourselves with watching their beautiful synchronized flight. On the second day, we counted 26 species of birds. The total number of birds counted was 9690. On our way back, we saw a Pallas's Gull (*Larus ichthyaetus*), easily recognized by its size as well as by the distinctively patterned beak. We were also treated by the sight of a lone Little Gull (*Larus minutus*). On our way back to Bhavnagar, we saw a pair of Sarus Cranes (*Grus antigone*) in a field between Nalsarovar and Dholera.

All in all, this was an experience always to be cherished for me.

1. Little Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax niger*)
2. Little Egret (*Egretta garzetta*)
3. Grey Heron (*Ardea cinerea*)
4. Purple Heron (*Ardea purpurea*)
5. Large Egret (*Casmerodius albus*)
6. Median Egret (*Mesophoyx intermedia*)
7. Cattle Egret (*Bubulcus ibis*)

8. Asian Openbill-Stork (*Anastomus oscitans*)
9. Glossy Ibis (*Plegadis falcinellus*)
10. Black Ibis (*Pseudibis papillosa*)
11. Northern Shoveller (*Anas clypeata*)
12. Black-winged Stilt (*Himantopus himantopus*)
13. Northern Pintail (*Anas acuta*)
14. Garganey (*Anas querquedula*)
15. Common Teal (*Anas crecca*)
16. Western Marsh-Harrier (*Circus aeruginosus*)
17. Pallied Harrier (*Circus macrourus*)*
18. Purple Moorhen (*Porphyrio porphyrio*)
19. Common Coot (*Fulica atra*)
20. Pheasant-tailed Jacana (*Hydrophasianus chirurgus*)
21. Little Ringed Plover (*Charadrius dubius*)
22. White-tailed Lapwing (*Vanellus leucurus*)
23. Red-wattled Lapwing (*Vanellus indicus*)
24. Black-tailed Godwit (*Limosa limosa*)
25. Common Redshank (*Tringa totanus*)
26. Common Sandpiper (*Actitis hypoleucos*)
27. Grey Wagtail (*Motacilla cinerea*)
28. Pallas's Gull (*Larus ichthyaetus*)*
29. Little Gull (*Larus minutus*)*
30. Gull-billed Tern (*Gelochelidon nilotica*)
31. River Tern (*Sterna aurantia*)
32. White-breasted Kingfisher (*Halcyon smyrnensis*)
33. Sand Martin (*Riparia riparia*)*
34. Common Starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*)
35. Bank Myna (*Acridotheres ginningianus*)

(* Sign indicates that the species is not recorded in the publication entitled "Environmental Impact Assessment of Sardar Sarovar Project on Nalsarovar Bird Sanctuary" prepared by GEER Foundation, Gandhinagar, 1998. -Eds.)

Workshop on Current Status of Vultures in Gujarat

19th September 2004

A one-day workshop will be held on 19th September 2004 at the B.A. College of Agriculture, Anand. The programme will commence at 10:00 hrs. All the members are invited to participate in this workshop which will help to determine current status of vultures in our state and plan out conservation action plan. Those who are unable to attend the workshop are requested to send their data by post/e-mail, so that the same can be incorporated in the status paper. Those who want to attend, should confirm their participation to the Hon. Secretary, BCSG by 11th September 2004.

Waterfowl Census at Nalsarovar Bird Sanctuary: Some Important Records

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State Forest Department with the help of volunteer birdwatchers conducted Waterfowl Census at Nalsarovar and Thol Bird Sanctuary on 24th and 25th January 2004. It was a well-organized census effort, much improved with the experience.

We started for Nalsarovar on 24th January in the early morning and looked for the Sarus Crane (*Grus antigone*) between Tarapur and Bagodara. We saw one pair with a juvenile whereas other two pairs were without juvenile. However, between Bagodara and Nalsarovar, our attention was drawn by the birds of prey. We saw Greater Spotted Eagle (*Aquila clanga*) – 4, Short-toed Snake-Eagle (*Circaetus gallicus*) – 1, Steppe Eagle (*Aquila nipalensis*) – 1, Black-shouldered Kite (*Elanus caeruleus*) – 5 and Western Marsh-Harrier (*Circus aeruginosus*) – 1. We reached little late in the orientation programme, as we made several halts for raptor watching.

Shri N. A. Thakor and myself (BMP) were allotted zone number 16, which covered Dharji Zopali edge up to Zopala bet in the south and up to Babheth bet in the west. Since it was reedy area, we were asked to cover the area by boat also. After lunch, we visited our site but it did not appear to be promising. The only important sighting was of Black-headed Bunting (*Emberizea melanocephala*). About 1000+ birds were perching on *Prosopis cineraria* and *Prosopis juliflora* for night roosting. Some small passerines were also entering in the Typha growth for roosting but could not be identified. At night when we reported about our zone, we hardly had any thing to report about waterbirds.

On next day, 25th morning we reached to our site by jeep much before the sunrise. This gave us an opportunity to see some of the roosting birds leaving the wetland; i.e. Common Crane (*Grus grus*), Glossy Ibis (*Plegadis falcinellus*), Greylag Goose (*Anser anser*), etc. But most fantastic scene was that of small passerines numbering more than 10,000 flying above the reeds, making a huge cloud. It was clear that the passerines used the reed bed as night roost and they were performing pre-dispersal display.

We spent initial one and half hour moving on the edge and counting birds, which came out of the reeds or those which flew and left the wetland. Till then the species

with significant number were Glossy Ibis (1,157), Comb Duck (*Sarkidiornis melanotos*) (231), Black-tailed Godwit (*Limosa limosa*) (183) and Collard Pratincole (*Glareola pratincola*) (753). We had very good opportunity to see pratincoles sitting on the ground as well as flying overhead. All of them were Collard Pratincole (*Glareola pratincola*) only and non-was Oriental Pratincole (*Glareola maldivarum*) as expected by the forest department.

After finishing count at the edge, we entered the reedy area by boat; stopped at a few points and counted birds. From Zopali temple we went to Arunathali and Rojaki area and walked in the marshy area. Here we had most rewarding bird count. Some of the striking figures are as follow: Glossy Ibis (2,385), Comb Duck (4,500), Asian Openbill-Stork (*Anastomus oscitans*)(775), White-tailed Lapwing (*Vanellus leucurus*) (27) and Collard Pratincole (2,002).

In fact flocks of ducks and ibises had drawn our attention in the early morning. Since the birds were settling back in the same area, N. A. Thakore and a boatman walked interior to investigate. Due to the disturbances, both the Comb Duck and Glossy Ibis flew overhead which made our counting task easy.

To conclude, we counted more than 12,000 birds of 29 species. But that was not the only significance. Some significant noteworthy records for our area are as follows:

Asian Openbill-Stork- 879; Glossy Ibis – 3,542; Comb Duck – 4,731; Collard Pratincole – 2,755; White-tailed Lapwing – 39.

The Collard Pratincole is considered to be a straggler in winter into India (Ripley, 1982). I could clearly distinguish the species because it breeds around Pariej, Narda and Kanewal reservoirs (Kheda and Anand districts) and moreover, I had examined skins of both the species (*Glareola pratincola* and *G. maldivarum*) at BNHS museum in 1996. Hence, count of 2,755 Collard Pratincoles is a record breaking figure for India. It seems that normally we do not compare the characters but just follow the fieldguide or the checklist provided to us. Comb Duck figures are also surprising and highly significant as its South Asian population is estimated to be 6,000 birds only (Wetland International, 2002). In this reference, significance of Nalsarovar is very high. Glossy Ibis figures were also significant. This was second largest

concentration of Glossy Ibis recorded in India after the first record of 3859 ibises at Lambhvel sewage, Anand by Anika Jadhav (2003).

It was also noteworthy that there was not a single flamingo of either species and only 46 pelicans were counted during the census. For both the species, more ideal habitats were somewhere else where they were busy feeding and breeding.

The waterfowl count figures reported here are the values of only one zone, but it would be more meaningful, if all the participants know total figures of each and every species for entire Nalsarovar. We hope that detailed report of the census of both the sanctuaries will be published and distributed to all those concerned to establish ornithological

significance of Nalsarovar as Ramsar site. If we do not make efforts to highlight our site, it will take long time to draw global attention to this important natural wetland and conservation of its birdlife.

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Waterfowl Census at Thol and Nalsarovar Bird Sanctuaries; 2004

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Following are the brief results of waterfowl census at Thol and Nalsarovar Bird Sanctuaries conducted on 24th and 25th January 2004.

Population estimation of Thol Bird Sanctuary (24/25th January 2004)

S. No.	Group	Number
1	Grebes	2
2	Pelicans	4
3	Cormorants & Darters	830
4	Hérons & Egrets	479
5	Storks	83
6	Ibises & Spoonbills	768
7	Geese & Ducks	1,753
8	Cranes	380
9	Rails, Crakes, Gallinules & Coots	21
10	Shorebirds & Waders	13,839
11	Gulls, Terns & Skimmers	199
12	Kingfishers	10
13	Eagles & Harriers	4

Population estimation of Nalsarovar Bird Sanctuary (24/25th January 2004)

S. No.	Group	Number
1	Grebes	129
2	Pelicans	46
3	Cormorants & Darters	1,031
4	Hérons & Egrets	2,129
5	Storks	3,241
6	Ibises & Spoonbills	8,341
7	Geese & Ducks	82,024
8	Cranes	1,702
9	Rails, Crakes, Gallinules & Coots	58,035
10	Jacanas	407
11	Shorebirds & Waders	23,795
12	Gulls	643
13	Terns & Skimmers	3,610
14	Kingfishers	16
15	Wagtails & Pipits	5,647
16	Eagles & Harriers	235
17	Additional Species	7,063

Newsletter for Ornithologists launched

'Newsletter for Ornithologists' an ornithological newsletter is launched from Hyderabad. Its Emeritus Editor is Zafar Futehally and editor is Aasheesh Pittie. Six issues will be published annually. Subscription for the individual is Rs. 100 (annual) and Rs.300 (three years). DD/ Cheques to be made in favour of "Newsletter for Ornithologists", adding Rs. 25 for outstation cheques and sent to P.O. Box. 2, Banjara Hills, Hyderabad - 500 034.

Status of Grey-headed Flycatcher (*Culicicapa ceylonensis*) in Gujarat

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A recent note on sighting of Grey-headed Flycatcher (*Culicicapa ceylonensis*) in Ahmedabad (Parasharya, 2003) compelled us to verify the distribution map of this species in recently published fieldguides, compile the published and unpublished information about the sightings of this species to update our knowledge about its status in Gujarat state. The following account with a map should help to establish its status in Gujarat state.

Salim Ali (1955) could collect only two specimens as mentioned above and made a remark that he did not note the species elsewhere in Gujarat, Saurashtra or Kachchh. Probably only these two sightings have been shown on the distribution map by Grimmett *et al.* (1998). Kazmierczak (2000) has slightly improved on the distribution map, but it is largely incomplete. Dharmakumarsinhji (1955) considered the species to be a local migrant to Saurashtra during the winter months but recorded its absence in Kachchh.

Looking to the available records (Table 1 and fig. 1), it is very clear that the species has wide distribution over entire Gujarat state during winter. Moreover, number of published records suggest that its occurrence is also not as rare as it was believed. Monga and Naoroji (1984) had found the species extremely common in Rajpipla forest and speculated its breeding there as the birds were seen there even in the month of June. Friends working in the forests of eastern Gujarat should keep watch on the species to substantiate nesting record in our territory.

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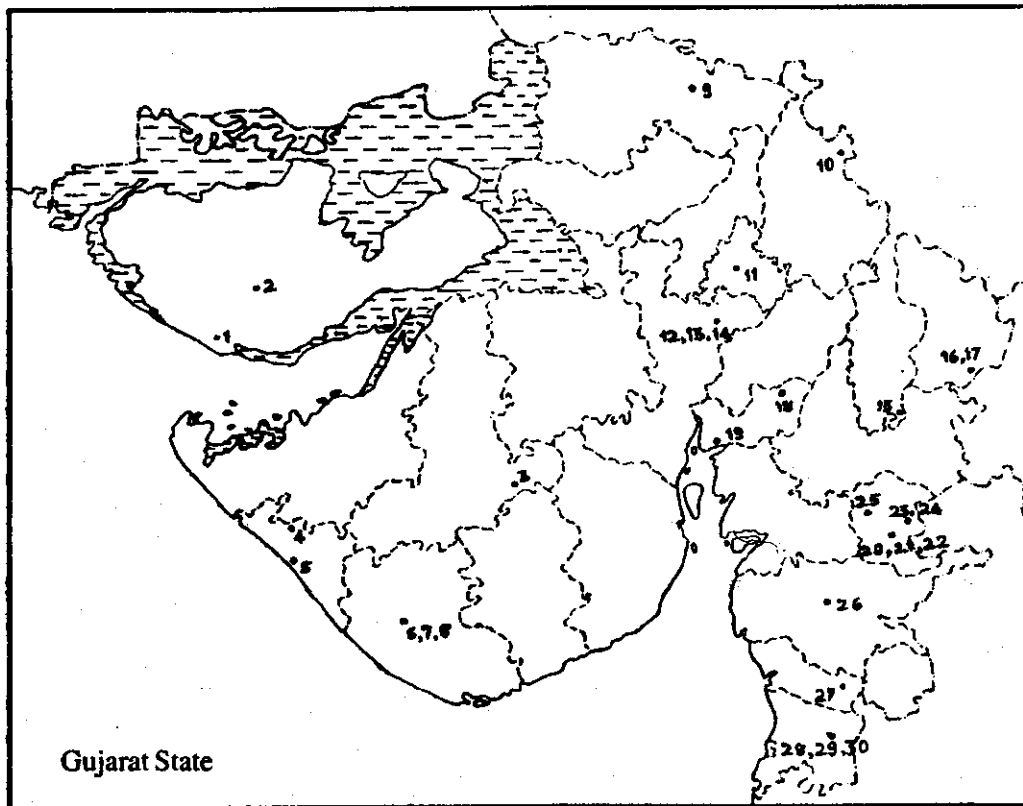
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Table 1. Records of Grey-headed Flycatcher in various parts of Gujarat state

S.No.	Place	District	Date	Observer	Reference
1	Mandvi	Kachchh	1948, 1956	M. K. Himmatsinhji	Himmatsinhji, 1958
2	Bhuj	Kachchh	1989 & 1990	S. N. Varu	Varu, 2004
3	Jasdan	Rajkot	?	Lavkumar Khacher	Khacher, 1996; 2004
4	Kileshwar, Barda WS	Porbandar	14 th Dec. 2003	Rajdeep Zala, Bhavesh Trivedi, Rajan Jadav, R. V. Deokar	Zala <i>et al.</i> , 2004
5	Porbandar	Porbandar	2002-2003	Jaidev Dhadhal, Bharat Rughani	Unpublished
6	Gir NP & S	Junagadh	?	R.M. Naik <i>et al.</i>	Anonymous, 1990
7	Gir NP & S	Junagadh	?	Lavkumar Khacher	Khacher, 1996; 2004
8	Gir NP & S	Saurashtra	?	R. S. Dharmakumarsinhji	Dharmakumarsinhji, 1955
9	Hathidhara	Banaskantha	19 th Jan. 1946	Salim Ali	Ali, 1955
10	Polo Forests, Vijaynagar	Sabarkantha	Regular	B. N. Trivedi	Unpublished
11	Indroda Park, Ayurvedic Garden	Gandhinagar	Regular	Uday Vora	Unpublished
12	Ahmedabad	Ahmedabad	Jan. 2002, Dec. 2003	B. N. Trivedi	Unpublished
13	Ahmedabad	Ahmedabad	20 th Nov. 2003	Dishant Parasharya & Dishith Mehta	Parasharya, 2003
14	Ahmedabad	Ahmedabad	?	Lavkumar Khacher	Khacher, 1996; 2004
15	Jambughoda WS	Panchmahal	Dec. 1999	B. M. Parasharya	Unpublished
16	Ratanmahal WS	Dahod	1999-2001	Pranav Trivedi & Ketan Tatu	Singh <i>et al.</i> , 2002
17	Ratanmahal WS	Dahod	20 th Feb. 2000	B. M. Parasharya	Unpublished
18	Anand	Anand	Dec. 1988	B. M. Parasharya	Unpublished
19	Khambhat	Anand	6 th Dec. 1945	Salim Ali	Ali, 1955
20	Shoolpaneshwar WS	Narmada	Dec. 1989-1992	Isha Desai	Desai <i>et al.</i> , 1993
21	Shoolpaneshwar WS	Narmada	1990-1997	D. S. Narve, C. D. Patel, N. P. Pandya	Narve <i>et al.</i> , 1997
22	Shoolpaneshwar WS	Narmada	?	S. A. Chavan	Chavan, 1998
23	Sagai (Shoolpaneshwar WS)	Narmada	11 th -12 th Sept. 2002	B. M. Parasharya	Unpublished
24	Sagai (Shoolpaneshwar WS)	Narmada	8 th -12 th Feb. 2002	Yagnesh Bhatt	Bhatt, 2003
25	Juna Rajpipla, Namgir (Shoolpaneshwar WS)	Narmada	Jan., June, Dec. 1982; Dec. 1983	S. G. Monga & Rishad Naoroji	Monga & Naoroji, 1984.
26	Mandvi	Surat	3 rd Jan. 2003	Mukesh Bhatt	Bhatt, 2004
27	Vansda NP	Navsari	1998-2000	Ketan Tatu	Singh <i>et al.</i> , 2000
28	Mahal (Purna WS)	Dang	27 th /30 th Oct. 2003	Volunteers of BCSG & Nature Club, Surat	Joshi <i>et al.</i> , 2003
29	Mahal (Purna WS)	Dang	6 th Nov. 2002	Shyama Shodhan, Chaula Patel, Narendra Shodhan	Shodhan <i>et al.</i> , 2003
30	Mahal (Purna WS)	Dang	3 rd Nov. 2000	Mukesh Bhatt	Bhatt, 2001

NP = National Park, WS = Wildlife Sanctuary, S = Sanctuary

Fig. 1. Records of Grey-headed Flycatcher in various parts of Gujarat state (for numbers refer Table 1)



First Record of Brown Wood Owl (*Strix leptogrammica*) from Gujarat: A Clarification

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Nocturnal birds of prey - the owls are widespread and known as controllers of rodents. 11 owl species have been recorded from Gujarat (Ali, 1954-55; Khacher, 1996), with one more potential species in question mark i.e. the Forest Owlet (*Heteroglaux blewetti*). The distribution of most species however is not well documented in the state.

I sighted Brown Wood Owl (*Strix leptogrammica*) - a new species for the state on three occasions during the study of avifauna of Purna Wildlife Sanctuary (PWS), Dangs district. The three sightings (twice a pair and once a single individual) were obtained in Dulgha locality in Bardipada Range of PWS between January to April 2002. It was sighted in dense bamboo brakes of *Bambusa arundinacea*, interspersed with mixed moist deciduous and teak forest. On one occasion, in March 2003 during the nocturnal bird survey; I also suspect having heard its call in Borumal area of PWS. I reported the sightings in my report to GEER Foundation (Trivedi, 2003, p. 20). This apparently was the first record of the species in Gujarat.

I am writing this note on reading three pieces in *Flamingo* Vol. 1, No. 5 & 6 (editorial, Mashru A. & Joshi A.) mentioning their sighting as the first record of Brown Wood Owl from Gujarat. The reported sighting occurred in Octo-

ber 2003, much later compared to my sighting (January-April 2002) and its subsequent reporting (April 2003). Therefore, sightings made by me in early 2002 should be treated as first record and the latter (i.e. those in *Flamingo*) as confirmation of the same.

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Luna Heronry in Kachchh

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This has reference to an article on 'Nesting of Glossy Ibis at Luna, Kachchh' by Ashwin Pomal in Flamingo Vol.1 No. 5 & 6, 2003.

His mention about breeding of Glossy Ibis (*Plegadis falcinellus*) at Ningal Tank is not correct. Such a note is not published in 'Flamingo' (Vol. 1 No. 3&4) as mentioned by him. This year nesting colony of Painted Storks (*Mycteria leucocephala*) was seen at Ningal Tank. Actually Glossy Ibis colony at Luna was discovered by Mr. J. K. Tiwari in the year 1992 and not by me (*We regret for the error- Eds.*). I visited this place on 7th August 1994 with Mr. Tiwari and saw heronry including nesting of Glossy Ibis. Thereafter, Mr. Tiwari and I saw 5 nests with 6 young birds at Pathapir dam near Baranda in Abdasa taluka on 28th September 1999.

In the year 2003, single nest with one young bird was seen at a check dam near Vazira Vandh on 31st August. There can be more nests but it could not be verified because the nests were located in the interior part of *Prosopis juliflora* growth. My visit to Luna Jheel with friends on 21st September, 2003 was not in vain. It was an exiting and interesting experience. Though we could not reach near the colony due to excessive water depth but heard voice of chicks and saw movement of waterbirds going for feeding and bringing nesting material. 25-30

Glossy Ibis were seen bringing food and some birds carrying nesting material in their beak. 3-4 Purple Herons (*Ardea purpurea*), 6-7 Eurasian Spoonbills (*Platelea leucorodea*), 3 Darters (*Anhinga melanogaster*), 8-10 Little Cormorants (*Phalacrocorax niger*), 10-12 Oriental White Ibises (*Threskiornis melanocephalus*), 25-30 Cattle Egrets (*Bubulcus ibis*), 4-5 Median Egrets (*Mesophoyx intermedia*) and 6-7 Black-crowned Night-Herons (*Nycticorax nycticorax*) were seen busy in above activity. Thus, this heronry was active with other waterbirds also.

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A Red Alert: Birds' Trade

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Recently I came to know about illegal trade of various bird species being carried out in some of the areas of Ahmedabad like Victoria Garden, Delhi Chakla, Gomtipur etc., especially in Sunday-market 'Ravivari'. Individuals of certain communities stand somewhere in the corner with empty cages in their hands as an indication of a 'bird business'. They attract persons interested in buying birds by murmuring strange codes like birdcalls, twittering, fluffing and fluttering sounds. If any person approaches, first they confirm their identity and profession. After confirming that the purchaser is not from the forest department or from any bird rescuing team, they take them to some distant huts, where caged birds are already kept. They show both indigenous as well as exotic bird species and fix up the rate after hard bargaining. An average price for an individual bird species varies from Rs. 200 to 300 for young one and Rs.

500 to 800 for an adult bird, depending upon its origin, type, availability, demand and market values.

Some of the bird species they deal with are munias, lorikeets, parakeets, parrots, macaw, owls, falcons etc. In addition to this, Alexandrine Parakeets are also sold here. Formal talk with traders revealed that they catch resident species from forest area while exotic species are brought here with the help of a strong network of persons engaged in such trade. As an adult bird is very difficult to trap, they prefer to catch young ones, and rear them for sale at a proper time.

All bird-lovers and NGOs working for the cause of conservation, should work together to prevent bird trade. Bird trade should not become a cause of extinction of our birds. Let's make some joint efforts to prevent the illegal trade of the birds.

Bar-headed Goose at Mahisagar River, Vasad

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A morning trek from Umeta to Vasad along the bank of Mahisagar river was organized by Nature Club of Veterinary College, Anand on 21st March 2004. Water was just released from the dam hence, the river had enough water flowing. At about 11:00 hrs we saw 4 Bar-headed Geese (*Anser indicus*) at just 50 feet distance near shore, approx. one km away from Mahisagar temple. As the volunteers approached near they took short flight and settled in the midst of flowing river. Bar-headed Geese are not reported in this area earlier (B. M. Parasharya, pers. com.). Shree Lalsinh Raol (*Vihang* 21: 30, 2004) has mentioned about the changing distribution pattern of this species. It was considered to be a rare winter visitor to Gujarat (Ali, 1955). Grimmett *et al.* (1998) have not shown its distribution in central and south Gujarat however, Kazmierczak (2000) has shown its distribution over entire Gujarat, except Kachchh and eastern border of the state. In recent past, there are several reports of its sightings from Saurashtra as well as north Gujarat and Kachchh (Gadhavi and Zala, 2000; Thakker, 2001; Varu, 2003). Except two recent sightings at Ambali dam near Mandavi, Surat (Bhatt, 2001, 2004), there are no records of its occurrence, from central and south Gujarat. I had an unconfirmed report of Bar-headed Geese occurring on Dev dam in Panchmahal district. Hence current report is a bridging observation establishing that the species now occurs all over Gujarat state

The other important sightings were the presence of hundreds of Citrine (*Motacilla citreola*), Yellow (*Motacilla flava*) and Grey Wagtails (*Motacilla cinerea*). White Wagtails (*Motacilla alba*) and Large Pied Wagtails (*M. maderaspatensis*) were also present but in small number. Presence of large number of other waterbirds also made the trek enjoyable.

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BIRDING NOTES

Nesting of River Terns (*Sterna aurantia*) at Nyari -I, Rajkot

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Around 1500 River Terns (*Sterna aurantia*) were estimated, some of them were sitting on the islands and showing breeding behaviour. There might be about 700 nests; however I could not count, as they were far off on 3 different islands. Some chicks were crawling on the island. I visited the site again on 22nd February 2004. I saw at least 1000 River Terns flying with their young ones and a few adults still sitting on the islands (presumably incubating). Some birds were engaged in mating activity also. Nesting activity had started in mid October 2003 hence there are chances of repeated clutches. Dr. Taej Mundkur had done extensive study of

River Terns nesting at Nyari-I dam during 1985 to 1990. I had a chance to ring the chicks of River Tern and Eurasian Spoonbill with him. We used to approach island by boat. At that time about 100 nests were there on a small island.

In other dams around Rajkot city, there were large numbers of ducks in January as there was good amount of water compared to the last year. There were 2500 Common Teals (*Anas crecca*) at Lalpari and 1500 Common Coots (*Fulica atra*) at Sat Hanuman. We also sighted 3 Eurasian Griffons (*Gyps fulvus*) there.

Heronry at Nyari -I, Rajkot

ASHOK MASHRU

A-7, Alap Heritage, Kalawad Road, Rajkot-360 005

I visited heronry at Nyari-I dam on 10th January 2004. The water level of the dam had depleted considerably. Ganda Baval (*Prosopis juliflora*) patch on the margin of the reservoir had almost dried up and also become thinner hence, a clear view of the heronry was possible. Nest records were as follows:

Little Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax niger*) -127 nests; Eurasian Spoonbill (*Platalea leucorodia*) -14 nests; Grey Heron (*Ardea cinerea*)-1 nest with one chick; Purple Heron (*Ardea purpurea*) -1 nest with two chicks (not in the heronry but little away). Nesting of Grey Heron and Purple Heron are the first records around Rajkot city.

Sighting of Indian Plaintive Cuckoo

JIGNESH JOSHI

“Padmadhara”, Behind Desaiwadi, Mograwadi, Valsad-396 001.

On 22nd April 2004 in hot hours I was on the terrace of my house, lying under the shade of a beautiful Peepal tree. Suddenly I heard a strong and cheerful call of a bird, which I had never heard before. Through my binoculars, I located a small cuckoo-like grey bird hiding within the foliage. Its breast was grey without bars while the tail was barred. After referring bird book, I recognized it as a male Indian Plaintive Cuckoo (*Cacomantis passerinus*). My friend Mohammed Jat also confirmed identity of this bird.

(According to Ali and Ripley (1983) this species

occurs at Mount Abu and eastern Gujarat, but not recorded elsewhere in Gujarat. The distribution map of the species given in the recent books by Grimmett et al. (1998) and Kazmierczak (2000) show its distribution on the eastern fringe of our state. The species is even not recorded in the biodiversity study of Ratanmahal Wildlife Sanctuary and Vansda National Park carried out by GEER Foundation. Hence it is worth recording. Readers are requested to send their records of this species to determine its exact distribution status. -Eds.)

Birding at Khirasara Vidi and Nyari Dam, Rajkot

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In early morning on 14th March 2004, we headed for ‘Khirasara Vidi’, 22 km from Rajkot. Birds such as Eurasian Eagle-Owl (*Bubo bubo*) (2), Red-headed Falcon (*Falco chicquera*), Pallid Harrier (*Circus macrourus*), Bonelli’s Eagle (*Hieraetus fasciatus*), Painted Francolin (*Francolinus pictus*), Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse (*Pterocles exustus*) etc. were notable species in the Vidi.

On the way back from Khirasara Vidi to Nyari dam, adjacent to the road a very large flock of Comb Duck (*Sarkidiornis melanotos*) along with Demoiselle Crane (*Grus virgo*) was seen flying over a field. Gradually it settled in the field. Both the species started feeding on the wheat grains left out on the ground after harvesting. The Comb Ducks were around 250 in numbers while the number of Demoiselle Cranes was nearly 300. This was probably first time that that Demoiselle Cranes were seen around Rajkot

in this winter. Seven Common Cranes were also present. In the same field we saw a Jungle Cat (female) with two kittens.

After spending a fair time in the field, we reached to Nyari dam. 11 Darters (*Anhinga melanogaster*) were flying over us in a circular fashion. We also saw 2 adult and 2 juvenile Purple Herons (*Ardea purpurea*) perching on the branches of ‘Ganda Baval’ (*Prosopis juliflora*) near the nest. The ‘Ganda Baval’ was half submerged in water. Other birds seen in and around the dam were Painted Stork (*Mycteria leucocephala*), Spot-billed Duck (*Anas poecilorhyncha*), Little Grebe (*Tachybaptus ruficollis*), Cotton Teal (*Nettapus coromendelianus*), Great Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax carbo*), Western Marsh-Harrier (*Circus aeruginosus*) etc. During this winter, numbers of River Terns (*Sterna aurantia*) and Little Cormorants (*Phalacrocorax niger*) were quite high as compared to the last two years.

Status of Grey-headed Flycatcher in Kachchh

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As per "Birds of Kutch" by Salim Ali (1945), Grey-headed Flycatcher (*Culicicapa ceylonensis*) is not recorded in Kachchh. But Shri M. K. Himmatsinhji (1958) has recorded this bird at Vijay Vilas, Mandvi in month of January 1948 (glimpse of bird) and on 24th December 1956 (3 or 4 birds). Thereafter I saw a single bird at Wadi of Shri Himmatsinhji at Bhuj on 28th November 1989. As intimated to me by

Himmatsinhji, this bird again visited this Wadi on 9th November 1990 and stayed around up to 12th December 1990. Only single bird was seen. Thus this is worth recording.

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A White Little Grebe at Muval

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As a part of our Asian Waterfowl Census 2004, we were at Muval Village tank on 15th January 2004, where we sighted a white Little Grebe (*Tachybaptus ruficollis*); one of the rare sightings. This was confirmed by Dr. Geeta

Padate who was with us. Other team members include Tana Mewada, Sonal Deshkar and Jagruti Rathod. The same bird was sighted again at Muval by several other birdwatchers of Vadodara on 26th January 2004.

Birding at Pariej and Kavi

MOHMMED U. JAT

3, Anand Colony, Poultry Farm Road, First Gate, Atul - 396 020

It was a nice experience during Waterfowl Census (24 & 25 January 2004) at Nalsarovar. After overnight stay at Tarapur (Anand District) we went early in the morning to Pariej reservoir. We saw a solitary Great Crested Grebe (*Podiceps cristatus*) there. There were also Common Coot (*Fulica atra*), Common Pochard (*Aythya ferina*), Northern Shoveller (*Anas clypeata*), Spot-billed Duck (*Anas poecilorhyncha*), Little Grebe (*Tachybaptus ruficollis*), Gadwall (*Anas strepera*), Northern Pintail (*Anas acuta*), Lesser Pied Kingfisher (*Ceryle rudis*)(2), Western Marsh-Harrier (*Circus aeruginosus*)(5), Osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*)(2), Brahminy Shelduck (*Tadorna ferruginea*),

etc.

Thereafter we went to Kavi-Kamboi, 26 km far from Jambusar, near Stambheshwar Temple. We observed 25,000 Lesser Flamingos (*Phoenicopterus minor*) on the opposite side of the Gulf, near Khambhat. We also saw 64 Greylag Geese (*Anser anser*), 5 Great White Pelicans (*Pelecanus onocrotalus*) including one juvenile. We also observed Eurasian Curlew (*Numenius arquata*), Little Ringed Plover (*Charadrius dubius*), Kentish Plover (*Charadrius alexandrinus*), Common Greenshank (*Tringa nebularia*) etc.

Houbara in Wild Ass Sanctuary

NANDITA MUNI

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My trip to the Little Rann of Kachchh for Wild Ass Census (31 January- 1 February, 2004) was very exiting one, as it was my first trip to the Little Rann. We (Dr. Indra Gadhvi, Sh. H. I. Sarvaiya) were asked to count Houbara (*Chlamydotis undulata*). We saw about a hundred different species of birds in two days, including

six Houbaras (at Pung Bet, Odu-ni-dhassi) -a lifebird for me- and three Sarus Cranes (*Grus antigone*) near Narali. We also saw various waterfowls at the Tundi wetland near Bajana. Also saw two Indian White-backed Vultures (*Gyps bengalensis*) over there. Of course, we saw about 200 Wild Asses too. All in all, it was a weekend in heaven!

A Trip to Vansda National Park in Summer

JIGNESH JOSHI ¹ AND MOHAMMED JAT ²

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Every year we visit the Vansda National Park in winter, but this time we decided to go for bird watching in summer. We visited the park on 8th April 2004. A group of Jungle Babblers (*Turdoides striatus*) welcomed us. Loud call of Brown-headed Barbet (*Megalaima zeylanica*) was heard everywhere!! Small *nala* is the all time favorite place of White-rumped Shama (*Copsychus malabaricus*). We saw three of them (race: *c. m malabaricus*). After passing “talavdi” we saw a female Lesser Golden-backed Woodpecker (*Dinopium benghalense*). Suddenly a flash of red colour occurred in the bamboo canopy. It was a beautiful male Malabar Trogon (*Harpactes fasciatus*). Later we found two females with it. In Bharadi area we observed Tickell’s Blue-Flycatcher (*Cyornis tickelliae*),

Black-napped Monarch-Flycatcher (*Hypothymis azurea*), Common Tailorbird (*Orthotomus sutorius*), Indian Treepie (*Dendrocitta vagabunda*), Greater Racket-tailed Drongo (*Dicrurus paradiseus*), White-bellied Drongo (*Dicrurus caerulescens*) and Asian Paradise-Flycatcher (*Terpsiphone paradisi*). We heard a call of Indian Cuckoo (*Cuculus micropterus*) from a distance. It was getting hot so we decided to take rest near watchtower No. 2. A small group of Gold-fronted Chloropsis (*Chloropsis aurifrons*) was up on a “Mahuda” tree. We could smell fragrance of its flowers everywhere. A small group of Indian Scimitar-Babblers (*Pomatorhinus horsfieldii*) was crawling around us. We really enjoyed summer birding and returned to Valsad in the evening.

STOP PRESS

Flamingos at Bhavnagar: During the summer count of flamingo on 22nd May 2004 in Bhavnagar District, we were stunned by a large number of flamingos especially at three sites, Kumbharwada (Lesser Flamingo -16,000 out of which 2,500 were Juveniles), New Port salt pans and

seacoast (Lesser Flamingo -45,775, Greater Flamingo -16,062), Nirma Salt pans (Lesser Flamingo -11,839, Greater Flamingo -15,975). It is almost 2-3 times more than the average regular count. Reason of this concentration is not known.- **Vikas M. Trivedi and Viral Vaghela**, Bhavnagar.

SOME IMPORTANT SIGHTINGS

- **White-backed Vulture** (*Gyps benghalensis*) on 13th March 2004: One bird on a tree about 3 km from Jambughoda on Bodeli road. Two birds in flight close to Sagthala village on Tejgadh-Devghadbaria road. **Snehal Patel**, Anand.
- **Black-capped Kingfisher** (*Halcyon pileata*) at Panvad Bet, Nalsarovar since 18th February 2004. **Kasam Sama**, Nalsarovar.
- **Houbara** (*Chlamydotis undulata*) three birds near Mithapur in January 2004. **Satish Trivedi**, Mithapur.
- **Mallard** (*Anas platyrhynchos*) 2 males and 2 females at Khodiyar dam, near Dhari on 20th February 2004. **Black Stork** (*Ciconia nigra*) 16 birds a week before at the same site. **Ajit Bhatt**, Dhari.

BCSG NEWS

BCSG Newsgroup Started: Recently, a BCSG newsgroup has started. Members who have access to internet may join this newsgroup and communicate with other members for quick exchange of information. Please send your mail to BiCoSoGuj@yahoo.com

Or to **Shailesh Master**, Surat: masterseles@yahoo.com

Appeal for Notes by e-mail: All readers who have internet access are requested to send their observations/ notes for publication in “Flamingo” through e-mail. This will certainly reduce our efforts of typing and composing the matter.

Moreover, querrier if any, it can be solved immediately. We would also appreciate a typed written manuscript rather than a hand written one. Illegible handwriting may create new confusion. Hence all are requested to help the editors.

Appeal For Subscription Renewal: Many memberships have become due for renewal. We are enclosing membership forms with “Flamingo” and hope that you will renew your membership in time. If you have already renewed your membership, please ignore this reminder.

RECENT PUBLICATIONS ON BIRDS OF GUJARAT

1. Jadhav, A. and B. M. Parasharya 2004. Population count of the flamingos at some selected sites of Gujarat state, India. *Waterbirds* 27(2): 141-146.
2. Khacher, L. 2003. Sarus Crane: An emblem of failure of India's conservation movement? *J. Ecological Society* 16: 47-48.
3. Lad, P. M. 2003. Will history repeat itself in flamingo city? *Hornbill* October-December 2003:26.
4. Tiwari, J. K. 2003. The pink city of Gujarat. *Hornbill* October-December 2003:22-24.
5. Aeshita Mukherjee, C. K. Borad and B. M. Parasharya 2002. A study of the ecological requirements of waterfowl at man-made reservoirs in Kheda district, Gujarat, India with a view towards conservation, management and planning. *Zoos' Print J.* 17(5): 775-785.
6. Borad, C. K., Aeshita Mukherjee, S. B. Patel and B. M. Parasharya 2002. Breeding performance of Indian Sarus Crane *Grus antigone antigone* in the paddy crop agroecosystem. *Biodiversity and Conservation* 11:795-805.
7. Mukherjee, Aeshita, C. K. Borad and B. M. Parasharya 2002. Breeding performance of the Indian Sarus Crane in the agricultural landscape of western India. *Biological Conservation* 105(2): 263-269.
8. Parasharya B. M. 2002. Standardized bird names: who will use them? *Newsletter for Birdwatchers* 42 (5): 101.

LETTER TO THE EDITORS

- Just received Vol. 1, No. 5 and 6 2003. My immediate impressions -a very qualitative improvement in layout and in editing though the latter will require a continual endeavor. Also during 2004, do ensure that the numbers come out regularly. I would urge you to start publishing your papers in "Flamingo". While the rather long editorial may be excused this one time do ensure that it does not dominate the issues. In this issue however, you had raised very pertinent points and I must congratulate you.

The Grey-headed Flycatcher while possibly being restricted of late is a regular winter visitor to places with tall shady trees specially with water nearby. I have seen it at Jasdan in the former gardens/orchards and would be surprised if a few birds do not continue visiting Asgarbhai's "God's Acre". Several individuals used to be seen by me regularly at "Sundarvan" in Ahmedabad. The cheery call is a give away which once linked with the lively little flycatcher can be a useful indicator of its presence.

For your record, Black-capped Kingfishers have been seen on several occasions by me on the overflows of the Khijadiya Bird Sanctuary, Jamnagar. They appeared to be making the most of the fresh water on one side and saline tidal water on the other. You are right; we have not kept regular notes.

Now that I am stirring my memories I recollect being

surprised at the Golden Oriole not being recorded as breeding bird for Gujarat because invariably on my way to the Himalayas during summer, the long wait for the connecting train at Mehsana was relieved of boredom by the liquid calls emanating from the large trees outside the railway yard where our bogey would be shunted. I also remember hearing the Large Green Barbet. What has become of this species? -**Lavkumar Khacher, Rajkot.**

- Many thanks for the "Flamingo" that arrived yesterday. I am very pleased to learn about the establishment of the Bird Conservation Society of Gujarat and to read this issue. Congratulations on Bakulbhai's and your efforts and those of the other executive members. It is so very important to produce newsletters and disseminate information regularly and by its format and content, I am sure this will become a very popular medium of communication.

I recollect reading in JBNHS that there were records of the Black-capped Kingfisher in Pakistan as well. But it would appear that Gujarat-Pakistan is probably the western limit of the range of this species. I remember seeing it many a time at Khijadia. The increase in Black-necked Grebes is just amazing. I would certainly like to continue receiving this, especially once I return to India. -**Dr. Taej Mundkur, Malaysia**

I thank you for sending issues of Vol.1 of 2003. I have read them critically. Now that you have decided to serve the cause of ornithology in this state, you will have to observe strict norms in this regard. After all you would be dealing with a subject which is very much scientific in all its aspects and so there will have to be absolute accuracy of observations and reporting. It is only then that you would measure up to international standards.

Having set forth the above preliminary remarks I shall correct the impression of Ashok Mashru regarding what appeared to him 'strange' in the feeding behaviour of the White Pelican. I am sorry, I inadvertently corroborated his impression. In actual fact it was the well-known feeding behaviour of the species in shallow water. In this case there were only two birds involved, however when they are in a larger group, it is great fun watching them driving a shoal of

fish with bill open, wings extended towards shallower water and the fun begins when the fish turn around to escape back into deeper water. This is when these grotesque birds excitedly gobble up the fish entering into their open bills with much wing flapping and bills snapping with body action similar to, but not exactly the same, upending pintails.

And lastly, I must mention here that it was a great matter of pride and pleasure for those of us from this part of the country who were present that evening last November in Mumbai to witness the award being given to our President, Lavkumar Khacher. I do not have words to describe my own feelings at his receiving the award of Excellence in Ornithology along with scientist like Dr. George Schaller, T. J. Roberts and others. We must take full advantage of his deep knowledge and experience that he has gained over the years. - **M. K. Himmatsinhji, Bhuj.**

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Bird watching, like so much in life, should be enjoyed. Far too many of us appear to be going around with some "chip on our shoulders". True, a scientist doing some research on birds –now a day there are "ornithologists", research students and research scientists in growing numbers, –may feel he or she is more qualified. Seminars and workshops funded by government or international funding agencies are being organized with greater frequencies and these tend to instill seriousness in what earlier was essentially a lighthearted pass time. Being seen at these "jamborees" and specially being invited to give "Key Note" addresses or serve as a "pundit" adds to one's prestige. I for one find much of this quite amusing because we Indians have yet to instill lightness in serious matters even as greater methodology in the pursuit of a relaxing hobby is necessary. More often as not, with the general degradation of habitats all around and growing pressures on the notified Sanctuaries and National Parks, their effective management is cause for much concern and during such gatherings, concerns get voiced, which are seen as criticism by the wildlife managers. Whereas, earlier the government tended to disregard public opinion of amateurs, today, government representatives expect to be invited—as indeed they should –and there often is a palpable atmosphere of confrontation. The organizers, more often than not, are compelled to play balancing role. A good deal of the acrimony spill over beyond the four walls of the gathering venue warping what should be a sharing of the sheer joy of being out in the country and enjoying the exuberance of the avian population.

Puzzling out the identities of the larks, pipits, warblers or waders, all add a flavoring of seriousness to the essential pleasure. Keeping careful notes improve ones capacity just as writing a letter is much more involving than making a phone call to express ones affection!

The purpose of my spending so much time on the previous paragraph is to draw attention to something we all should beware of because such gathering are extremely in keeping with the times and there must be frank exchange of ideas, concerns and criticisms. They can help to mould public opinion, but above all, develop an understanding between what I see as a triangular grouping – the amateur birdwatchers, the scientists and the managers. If the triangle could become a circle, it would be appreciated that we all are concerned about the same problems and indeed can strengthen one another. Criticisms have to be aired and listened to; problem solutions worked out and the difficulties in enforcing regulations explained and appreciated. My most enjoyable moments were spent discussing research possibilities with the late Dr. Ramesh Naik who was the then Head of the Bioscience Department, Saurashtra University – on the one hand and outlining proposals for the notification of the Gulf of Kachchh Marine Sanctuary and National Park with M. A. Rashid, IFS the then Chief Wildlife Warden, Gujarat State.

Very sensitively drawn up concepts have to be outlined and initiated with great imagination if we want to bring about any positive changes in the current trends. Entire ecosystems have to be carefully managed if there are to be any significant conservation successes. The human induced pressures have assumed Himalayan proportions and

all of us interested in our birds and their habitats have got to close ranks and work in a synchronized manner. Himmatsinhji, Shivbhadrasinhji, Ranjitsinhji and myself have considerable experience to pass on. All four of us will agree that it is easier to get sanctuaries notified but it is after the formalities have been completed that the real task becomes difficult, since very few of the enthusiasts give much thought to a powerful, all pervasive lobby, the general public. We have singularly failed in building conservation programmes on the traditional sentiments of the general public. While the larger mammals do need areas set aside for their specific use, birds are best provided for within the human environment. I therefore, have realized the great role we can play in evolving popular awareness and towards that, not only should our messages be clear and unambiguous, but the joys of bird watching should be apparent so that more and more people get involved. The illustrated field guides, the excellent binoculars and telescopes now available and affordable, along with the fine photographic equipments one sees people carrying around all add up to making a morning's outing as enjoyable as in the days of partridge beats and duck shoots. We are, indeed, on the threshold of a renaissance of field sport where the trophies are the photographs, the quarry continuing to live on for another occasion's sport!

We just do not have to go around with poker faces rolling up checklists and looking for Red Data Book species. We should enjoy the opportunity to be out in the country, in clear air and with congenial society. Fortunately, for those who can not go for, birds can be induced to come to gardens and around homes. Suitable trees, shrubs and climbers, the provision of water and food and putting up nest boxes can make a suburban garden a vibrant bird sanctuary. Experience should not only make one aware of a birds'

"jizz", we should also become aware of its specific preferences. For instance, to have the Grey-headed Flycatcher, the Tickell's Blue Flycatcher, the White-browed Fantail-Flycatcher and the Spotted Fantail Flycatcher all happily living in an acre of garden, tall dense foliaged trees, tangled under growth, a moist spot with dripping water and a *sandappled patio* would all be required. By carefully observing each species preference the concept of niche would become clear – several closely related species living together each in its preferred location or niche prevent competition yet optimize use of an area. This understanding is essential when management of wilderness areas is brought into perview specially so when areas are small and are being set aside for some particular, highly threatened species. Developing fine tuned understandings is what makes an average bird watcher into a respected ornithologist.

To conclude this section, dear friends, let us remove chips off our shoulders and share our observations, pleasures and problems. Let us remember it is not something to rejoice about seeing a vagrant into our area, rather the plentitude of our common species that should delight us. As I jokingly told an enthusiastic young acolyte, the day you see a penguin waddle up our beach, be sure there is a great disaster in the offing. I would rather have River Terns nesting on the reservoirs, around Rajkot than get all excited at seeing an Arctic Tern there. Even as we make additions to Gujarat's checklist, are we maintaining a tally of those that have dropped off it? You will understand why I am least excited about proving the existence of the Kashmere Flycatcher in the Dangs yet a really concerned at the absence of the formerly plentiful species.

(Errata: Please refer the last issue, page 12: please read "jizz" and not "fizz". We regret for the misprint –Eds.)

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