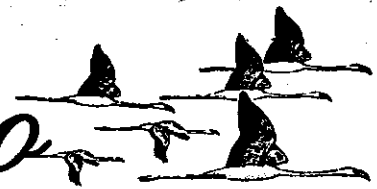




Flamingo



Newsletter of the Bird Conservation Society, Gujarat

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EDITORIAL

Gujarat is proud to have highest concentration of both the species of flamingos the Greater Flamingo *Phoenicopterus roseus* and the Lesser Flamingo *Phoenicopterus minor*. Both the species breed in the Rann of Kachchh during ideal habitat conditions. Unfortunately, 'ideal habitat conditions' are not created every year, which force them to skip breeding for years together. That is why Lesser Flamingos has been categorized as 'Near Threatened Species' in Asia as well as Africa.

Birdwatching is a hobby of leisure time and hence winter is the favoured season. As a result we have very little information on the flamingos during summer. Therefore, the data on flamingos and other waterbirds during summer published in

this issue is of great significance. Count of flamingos during summer has provided information on postbreeding dispersal pattern as well as their population size. Flamingo count was also done in January 2003 (Flamingo 1 (3 & 4) : 5-6, 2003) and October 2003). This was the result of collective efforts by all the members. Congratulations to all. The counts are being considered to revise population estimate for Asia by Wetland International.

Yet, there are many more things to be learnt about our flamingos. To ensure 'ideal habitat condition' for successful breeding should be the first conservation priority.

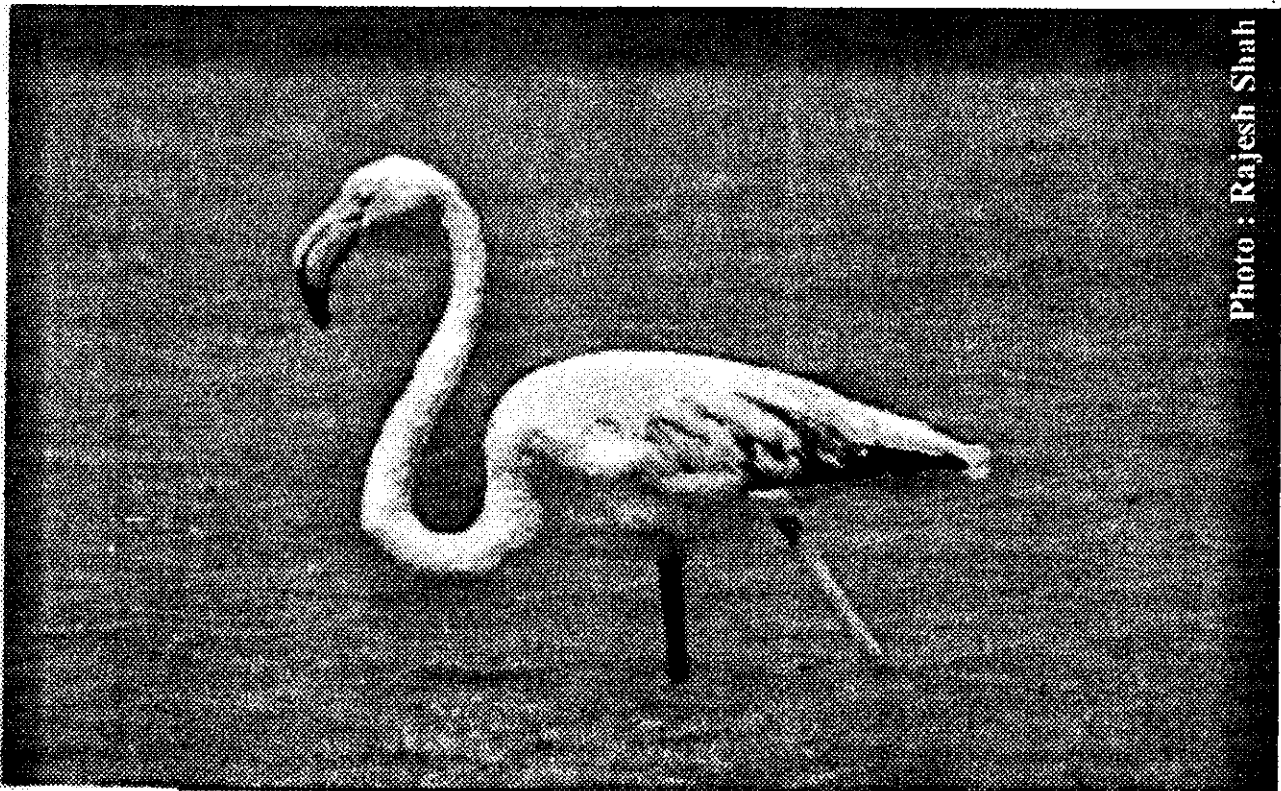


Photo : Rajesh Shah

Contents

Page No.

Editorial

Articles

Post-breeding Distribution of Flamingos and Their Population Estimation –
Anika Tere and B. M. Parasharya 2-5

Birding Notes

White-bellied Sea Eagle in the Great Rann of Kachchh - P. S. Thakker 6

Birdwatching in Gir - Ajit Bhatt 6

Wetland Protection Project by Nature Club Surat -Snehal Patel 7-8

Flamingos and Other Birds Around Port Victor During Summer - Pravin Gohil *et al.* 8-9

Flamingos and Other Waterbirds Around Porbandar During Summer - Bharat Rughani 9

Birding on Nandabet in the Little Rann of Kachchh - S. N. Varu 9

Waterfowl Census Around Bhavnagar During Summer - Vikas Trivedi and Viral Vaghela 10

Birding at Marine National Park, Jamnagar - Dishant Parasharya 10

Vulture Update 11

BCSG Programmes

Parakeet Counting at Vallabh Vidyanagar - B. M. Parasharya 12

Heronry Appreciation Programme at Rajkot - Rajdeep Jhala 12

Birdwatching and Stargazing at Thol Bird Sanctuary - D. N. Rank 13

Recent Publications on Birds of Gujarat 13

Some Interesting Bird Sightings 14

BCSG News 14

Letters to the Editor 15

From the President 16

Post-breeding Distribution of Flamingos and Their Population Estimation

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Introduction

Birds such as flamingos, having different feeding and breeding grounds show movements between these two sites. It is easy to record such movements in the birds, which are seasonal breeder (the birds which breed every year in a particular season). Flamingos are not seasonal breeder and they breed only when the habitat conditions become ideal. Therefore, the flamingos do not breed every year and their breeding activity has no association with any specific season. In January 2003, when both the Ranns had dried up highest concentration of non-breeding flamingos was recorded at Gulf of Khambhat (76.76 %) with substantial population in Gulf of Kachchh (10.58 %) and other coastal sites (12.66 %). Very few (0.03 %) flamingos were recorded at

inland wetlands and flamingos were totally absent from the Rann. (Jadhav and Parasharya, 2004). In October 2003, when the 'Ranns' were inundated, the flamingos were found to have converged from all different sites of Gujarat to the 'Flamingo City' and other breeding sites in the Great Rann of Kachchh. On the 'Flamingo City', the Greater Flamingo (*Phoenicopterus ruber*) initiated their breeding activity in October 2003 and terminated it in the last week of April 2004 (Tere, 2005). Hence, it becomes equally important to study their population size and distribution pattern during the post-breeding period.

Materials and Methods

Major sites supporting flamingos - the Ranns of Kachchh, the Gulf of Kachchh, the Gulf of Khambhat, other coastal sites and inland wetlands of Gujarat State

were surveyed from 4th May 2004 to 12th June, 2004. Flamingos were counted by using a spotting scope (20X80) and binoculars (10X50). "Block Method" described by Howes and Bakewell (1989) was used for counting the numbers. Flamingo counts were done personally on the wetlands around Khambhat, Ahmedabad, Dholera, Anand and Kachchh. Other sites which could not be surveyed personally were censused by other birdwatchers on personal request (Table 1) and the information regarding the presence and number of flamingos was gathered telephonically or by post. Whenever possible, a record of juveniles, sub-adults and adults was maintained separately. Only those counts which were done between 4th May 2004 to 12th June, 2004 were considered for greater accuracy.

Results

A total of 2,22,574 flamingos including 71,667 Greater Flamingo (*Phoenicopterus ruber*) and 1,50,907 Lesser Flamingo (*Phoenicopterus minor*) were counted at different sites of Gujarat during the post-breeding period. Highest concentrations was recorded in the Gulf of Khambhat (68.29%), followed by inland wetlands (12.27%) and other coastal sites (10.39%). Comparatively low numbers were recorded in the Ranns of Kachchh (04.58%) and along the Gulf of Kachchh (04.47%) (Table 2).

A total of 71,667 Greater Flamingos including 59,161 (82.55%) adults and 12,506 (17.45%) immatures were counted from different sites of Gujarat. The Greater Flamingos had almost equal distribution in the Rann of Kachchh (14.20%) and on inland wetlands (18.98%). Highest concentration of the Greater Flamingos was found in the Gulf of Khambhat (51.64%) with comparatively low numbers in the Gulf of Kachchh (06.45%) and other coastal sites (08.73%).

A total of 1,50,907 Lesser Flamingos including 1,45,240 (96.24%) adult birds and 5,667 (03.76%) immature were counted on the different sites of Gujarat. Highest concentration of the Lesser Flamingos was recorded in Gulf of Khambhat (76.19%). They were distributed equally on other coastal sites (11.17%) and on inland wetlands (09.09%). Very low numbers were recorded in the Gulf of Kachchh (03.54%) area and only 23 birds (0.01 %) were recorded from India Bridge, in the Great Rann (Table 2).

Discussion

17.45% of the Greater Flamingo (71,667) population was immature while only 3.76 % of the 1,50,907 Lesser Flamingos was immature. This suggests the successful breeding of both the species of flamingos during the preceding season.

In October 2003, at the commencing of the breeding period, the flamingos were found concentrated at and around their breeding sites in the Rann of Kachchh and had almost disappeared from all the non-breeding sites across the Gujarat. During the post-breeding count, the flamingos were again found distributed in all the different sites of Gujarat. Very low numbers of flamingos were recorded in the Ranns and the Gulf of Kachchh. Comparative count of breeding and post-breeding period suggests that as soon as breeding is over, the birds return to their feeding sites inhabited when not breeding.

Greater Flamingos occupied a large number of inland wetlands all over the Gujarat. It appears that Greater Flamingos utilize a wider range of habitats and are distributed in smaller flock size. The strategy might be useful in increasing the survival of their juveniles, by reducing competition for food (as against compact flocking) as well as in reduction in predation risk.

Lesser Flamingos did not occupied inland wetlands except the Nalsarovar and the Chhari Dhandh both brackish water bodies. These wetlands supported a large number of these flamingos. In summer, both the wetlands are shallow due to drying of water and hence, the water more saline (alkaline). During January 2003, both these wetlands were dry, and had no Lesser Flamingos which were absent from other inland wetlands as well.

It seems significant that the concentration of both the species of non-breeding flamingos was recorded in the Gulf of Khambhat during January 2003, and after the 2003-2004 breeding (Jadhav and Parasharya, 2004).

Acknowledgements

We are thankful to the Department of Space, Government of India for providing funds to carry out this study. We are grateful to the Border Security Force for permitting us to carry out research in the border areas of Kachchh and also for their kind hospitality. We also thank Department of Forests, Government of Gujarat for permission to work in sanctuary areas. We appreciate the help of the birdwatchers who took up field surveys at our request and provided us their findings.

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Table 1 : Distribution of Flamingos during Post-breeding period

Date	Place	Counters	GF	LF	Total
06-05-2004	Rann of Kachchh Flamingo City	B.M. Parasharya, B.M. Parasharya	9914	0	9914
05-05-2004	India Bridge	P.D. Chavda	266	23	289
	Gulf of Kachchh				
	Jamnagar				
09-06-2004	Charakala SP	Satish Trivedi	4219	2296	6515
28-05-2004	Valsura SP, Jamnagar	Mukesh Samani	18	3020	3038
09-06-2004	Aarambhada, Okha	Satish Trivedi	100	0	100
09-06-2004	Mithapur	Satish Trivedi	17	0	17
	Kachchh				
05-05-2004	Malia SP	Anika Tere, B.M. Parasharya	266	23	289
	Gulf of Khambhat				
	Ahmedabad				
08-06-2004	Dholera, GHCL SP	Anika Tere, D. J. Patel	1568	6143	7711
08-06-2004	Dholera, GHCL Coast	Anika Tere, D. J. Patel	0	15000	15000
08-06-2004	Rah talav coast	Anika Tere, D. J. Patel	0	0	0
	Anand				
02-06-2004	Khambhat Vadgam	Anika Tere, B.M. Parasharya, P.D. Chavda, N.A. Thakor	0	6019	6019
02-06-2004	Vasana Coast	" "	2700	11300	14000
02-06-2004	Vasana Coast	" "	0	3000	3000
02-06-2004	Near Navi Akhol	" "	1	0	1
	Bhavnagar				
22-05-2004	Nirma SP	Vikas Trivedi	15,975	11,839	27,814
22-05-2004	New Port SP	Vikas Trivedi	16,062	45,775	61,837
22-05-2004	Kumbharwada Sewage	Vikas Trivedi	700	15,900	16,600
	Other Coastal Sites				
	Amreli				
09-06-2004	Victor SP	Pravin Gohil	2175	10	2,185
09-06-2004	GHCL Bherai SP	Pravin Gohil	660	204	864
09-06-2004	Khera, Kathivadar	Pravin Gohil	295	5	300
07-05-2004	Chikhali SP	Amit Jethwa	400	1500	1900
	Bhavnagar				
	Mahuva, Pingleshwar	Jaidev Dhadhal	0	235	235
	Junagadh				
07-05-2004	Kodinar, Panchpipla TR	Amit Jethwa	0	800	800
	Porbandar				
12-06-2004	Birla Khadi	Bharat Rughani	230	5600	5830
12-06-2004	Jhavar Bandar SP	Bharat Rughani	2500	8300	10800
12-06-2004	Gosabara	Bharat Rughani	0	300	300

Inland Wetlands					
18-05-2004	Ahmedabad Chandola Talav	D. J. Patel	30	0	30
06-06-2004	Sarkhej Sewage	B. M. Parasharya, D. N. Rank	217	10	227
27-05-2004	Nal Sarovar	Anika Tere	5100	11130	16230
Amreli					
01-06-2004	Khodiyar Dam	Ajit Batti	111	0	111
Anand					
21-05-2004	Lambhvel Sewage	Anika Tere	392	0	392
Banaskantha					
18-05-2004	Dantiwada Dam	V. A. Pathan	7	0	7
Bhavnagar					
22-05-2004	Bor Talav	Vikas Trivedi	150	0	150
Jamnagar					
17-05-2004	Sinhan Dam	Jummabhai Moria	10	0	10
01-06-2004	Ranjit Sagar Dam	Jummabhai Moria	30	0	30
Kachchh					
06-05-2004	Chhari Dhandh	Anika Tere, Snehal Patel	5905	2575	8480
06-06-2004	Devisar near Rudra	Shantilal Varu	20	0	20
06-06-2004	Dhonsa behind Devisar	Ashwin Pomal	25	0	25
Kheda					
20-05-2004	Vadala Tank	B. M. Parasharya, G. M. Pandya	100	0	100
Mehsana					
27-05-2004	Thol BS	S. J. Pandit	500	0	500
Rajkot					
30-05-2004	Machhu Dam-Morbi	Ashok Mashru	40	0	40
03-06-2004	Lalpari Tank Dam	Ashok Mashru	313	0	313
03-06-2004	Aji-I	Ashok Mashru	10	0	10
Surendranagar					
07-06-2004	Bhaskarpura	Chiku Vora	600	0	600
16-05-2004	Virangam	Rajesh Kher	40	0	40
Vadodara					
05-06-2004	Vadhawana	B. M. Parasharya	1	0	1

Abbreviations : SP= Saltpans, TR = Tidal Regulator, BS = Bird Sanctuary

Table 2 : Distribution of Flamingos at Different Sites of Gujarat during the Post-breeding Census

Site	Greater Flamingo					Lesser Flamingo					Total
	Adult	SA	Juv	Total	%	Adult	SA	Juv.	Total	%	
(A) Coastal											
Rann of Kachchh	474	32	9,674	10,180	14.20	21	0	2	23	0.01	10,203
Gulf of Kachchh	4,086	32	502	4,620	6.45	5,000	0	339	5,339	3.54	9,959
Gulf of Khambhat	36,888	63	55	37,006	51.64	1,11,831	3,044	101	1,14,976	76.19	1,51,982
Other Coastal Sites	4,704	530	1,026	6,260	8.73	14,857	1,900	97	16,854	11.17	23,114
(B) Inland Wetland	13,009	65	527	13,601	18.98	13,531	0	184	13,715	9.09	27,316
Total	59,161	722	11,784	71,667	100	1,45,240	4,944	723	1,50,907	100	2,22,574
%	82.55	17.45			100	96.24	3.76			100	

Abbreviations: SA=sub-adults, Juv=juveniles

BIRDING NOTES

White-bellied Sea Eagle in the Great Rann of Kachchh

P. S. Thakker

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I visited the Great Rann of Kachchh on 5th June 2001 to collect water samples coming out from the earth as a result of 26th January 2001 Earthquake.

During my visit, I saw a black and white eagle having white head and underparts, at Chhapparbet on the way to Narveri B.S.F. Out Post. After reaching Narveri, I referred to the "Book of Indian Birds" by Salim Ali and found that the bird was a White-bellied Sea Eagle which is generally found along the sea coast of India south of Bombay down the west coast and up to the east coast to Bangladesh and beyond to Myanmar, and into Malaysia and the Indonesian islands.

After returning to Ahmedabad I referred to other books and found that there are only two records of this eagle in Gujarat. One by Shri Dharmakumarsinhji at the mouth of the Shetrunji River near Talaja in Saurashtra (Dharmakumarsinhji, 1955) and another by Shri

Harinarayan Acharya of Ahmedabad at Gobhlaj Lake on 9th February, 1936 (Acharya, 1936). The seacoast is about 80 km away from this lake. The same records are also mentioned by Ali and Ripley (1978). I surmise that this coastal eagle could, from time to time, stray north along the Gujarat coast. Seawater enter the Kori creek past Lakhpat reaching India Bridge and Punjabi Bridge during spring tides and high sea winds before the onset of the South-west monsoon. According to the B.S.F. Officials, this was the first time the seawater had reached Chhapparbet.

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Birdwatching in Gir

Ajit Bhatt

"Bhardwaj", Sardarnagar-1, Near S. T. Bus Station, Dhari-365 640.

Members of Hornbill Nature Club, Shree Sajubhai Jivani, Narendra Jotangiya and myself visited Hadala in the Gir Forest on 12th June 2005. There we heard the call of a Indian Pitta (*Pitta brachyura*) but could not locate the bird. At "golo", we saw a pair of Pied Crested Cuckoo (*Clamator jacobinus*) making atmosphere pleasant by their sweet calls and a female of Asian Paradise-Flycatcher (*Terpsiphone paradisi*) concealing herself on seeing us. In an open place at "Sakh Khodiyar", we saw a pair of Oriental Honey-Buzzard (*Pernis ptilorhynchus*) soaring. On a nearby "Saledi" tree, a pair of Brahminy Starling (*Sturnus pagodarum*) was seen entering and coming out frequently from a hole in the guarled trunk. Later, one went inside and the other sat outside guarding the entrance. We surmised the pair had a nest with eggs. We went further to an area called "Aral". While taking lunch we enjoyed seeing Small Bee-eaters (*Merops orientalis*)

in flight, a pair of Spotted Dove (*Streptopelia chinensis*) sitting on the branch of tree and a pair of White-breasted Kingfishers (*Halcyon smyrnensis*) feeding young ones. We could also hear the begging calls of the chicks inside the nest hole. An Indian Treepie (*Dendrocitta vagabunda*) was calling from a nearby "Karanj" tree. It was here that we saw a Indian Pitta foraging on the ground. My two friends were delighted to see the fascinating colours of the *Navrang*. I took a Photograph.

Then we went further into the forest. It was 2:35 p.m. By the Machhundry River we saw, a White-necked Stork (*Ciconia episcopus*) and some Cattle Egrets (*Bubulcus ibis*). We proceeded then to Ghodavadi passing Kaneknes and Mandvi. On our way we saw a Booted Eagle (*Hieraaetus pennatus*). We ended the day at Tulsishayam and exited the forest at the Jasadhar check post. It was a fruitful bird watching trip.

Wetland Protection Project by Nature Club Surat

Snehal Patel

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Gavier Lake is situated some 7 km from the bustling city of Surat. It is the source of water for some 7 villages along with the Gavier village close by. As it is very near to the city and the surrounding areas are rapidly developing into housing colonies, this lake has become a very important environmental issue. Earlier, it belonged to the Gavier village, but has now come under the jurisdiction of the Gujarat Water Supply and Sewage Board. Till 1990 the wetland housed many residential waterbirds and was visited by a greater number of migratory species. The surrounding areas of the lake had private farms so birds enjoyed a varied habitat. The avian utopia was quickly fading with housing colonies springing up on every side. The source of water to lake is from rain and a canal from the Kakrapar dam. The water spread has a circumference of one kilometer.

About 14 years back, the Gujarat Water Supply and Sewage Board wanted to deepen the lake so that more water could be stored. Nature Club Surat went to Court and got a stay on the project. The case was finally resolved through an out-of-court settlement. The Board made arrangements for plantation around a nearby lake while deepening a section to accommodate more water. But the Nature had its own way with the lake collecting more sediment over the years, making it again a wetland with two water bodies one belonging to the village and the other to Gujarat Water Supply and Sewage Board.

Members of Nature Club Surat regularly visit this place. The lake is one of the regularly being censused for the Asian Waterfowl Census for the last 18 years. It is noticed that the numbers of migratory and resident birds are on decline year after year. The last 3 years were the worst. So we thought of doing some thing constructive for the lake. Funds were a great problem but they were raised. It was planned to fence in the lake with a chain link fencing of 6 ft and to plant in the enclosed area trees like Banyan, Peepal, Umro, Indian Coral etc.

The fencing work was over by May 2004. On 5th June, the 'World Environment Day' tree plantation was started. On an average there is 20 ft of land between the waterfront and the fence. Volunteers of the Club visit the lake every Sunday to tend the trees. So far,

500 trees are planted. A full time watchman is employed to prevent the fencing from being robbed and to keep fishermen and bird trappers out.

Our efforts have started showing results from the very first month! Birds and butterflies made their presence felt. In month of September, 2004 we checklisted 74 different birds against 38 the previous year. Nesting birds have increased many folds from almost nil. From June 2004 we have been recording nesting by Baya Weavers (*Ploceus philippinus*), Asian Paradise-Flycatchers (*Terpsiphone paradisi*), Plain Prinias (*Prinia inornata*), Bronze-winged Jacanas (*Metopidius indicus*), Purple Moorhens (*Porphyrio porphyrio*), Grey Herons (*Ardea cinerea*), Red-vented Bulbuls (*Pycnonotus cafer*), Red Munias (*Amandava amandava*), White-throated Munias (*Lonchura malabarica*), Eurasian Golden Orioles (*Oriolus oriolus*), Jungle Crows (*Corvus macrorhynchos*) and Black Drongos (*Dicrurus macrocercus*). Our young volunteers are justifiably proud for their work.

Checklist of Birds at Gavier Lake :

1. Great Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax carbo*)
2. Little Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax niger*)
3. Indian Pond-Heron (*Ardeola grayii*)
4. Little Egret (*Egretta garzetta*)
5. Black-crowned Night-Heron (*Nycticorax nycticorax*)
6. Grey Heron (*Ardea cinerea*)
7. Purple Heron (*Ardea purpurea*)
8. Chestnut Bittern (*Ixobrychus cinnamomeus*)
9. Black Bittern (*Dupetor flavicollis*)
10. Cattle Egret (*Bubulcus ibis*)
11. Large Egret (*Casmerodius albus*)
12. Median Egret (*Mesophoyx intermedia*)
13. Western Reef-Egret (*Egretta gularis*)
14. Glossy Ibis (*Plegadis falcinellu*)
15. Spot-billed Duck (*Anas poecilorhyncha*)
16. Lesser Whistling-Duck (*Dendrocygna javanica*)
17. Cotton Teal (*Nettapus coromandelianus*)
18. Black Kite (*Milyus migrans*)
19. Western Marsh-Harrier (*Circus aeruginosus*)
20. Painted Francolin (*Francolinus pictus*)
21. Grey Francolin (*Francolinus pondicerianus*)

22. White-breasted Waterhen (*Amaurornis phoenicurus*)
23. Purple Moorhen (*Porphyrio porphyrio*)
24. Common Coot (*Fulica atra*)
25. Pheasant-tailed Jacana (*Hydrophasianus chirurgus*)
26. Bronze-winged Jacana (*Metopidius indicus*)
27. Red-wattled Lapwing (*Vanellus indicus*)
28. Whimbrel (*Numenius phaeopus*)
29. Little Stint (*Calidris minuta*)
30. Common Greenshank (*Tringa nebularia*)
31. Green Sandpiper (*Tringa ochropus*)
32. Wood Sandpiper (*Tringa glareola*)
33. Common Sandpiper (*Actitis hypoleucos*)
34. Common Snipe (*Gallinago gallinago*)
35. Gull-billed Tern (*Gelochelidon nilotica*)
36. River Tern (*Sterna aurantia*)
37. Little Tern (*Sterna albifrons*)
38. Blue Rock Pigeon (*Columba livia*)
39. Spotted Dove (*Streptopelia chinensis*)
40. Little Brown Dove (*Streptopelia senegalensis*)
41. Rose-ringed Parakeet (*Psittacula krameri*)
42. Asian Koel (*Eudynamis scolopacea*)
43. Asian Palm-Swift (*Cypsiurus balasiensis*)
44. Indian Roller (*Coracias benghalensis*)
45. Small Bee-eater (*Merops orientalis*)
46. Small Blue Kingfisher (*Alcedo atthis*)
47. White-breasted Kingfisher (*Halcyon smyrnensis*)
48. Blue-cheeked Bee-eater (*Merops persicus*)
49. Eurasian Golden Oriole (*Oriolus oriolus*)
50. Ashy-crowned Sparrow-Lark (*Eremopterix grisea*)
51. Rufous-tailed Finch-Lark (*Ammomanes phoenicurus*)
52. Red-vented Bulbul (*Pycnonotus cafer*)
53. Black Drongo (*Dicrurus macrocercus*)
54. House Crow (*Corvus splendens*)
55. Jungle Crow (*Corvus macrorhynchos*)
56. Ashy Prinia (*Prinia socialis*)
57. Plain Prinia (*Prinia inornata*)
58. Asian Paradise-Flycatcher (*Terpsiphone paradisi*)
59. Indian Great Reed-Warbler (*Acrocephalus stentoreus*)
60. Hume's Warbler (*Phylloscopus humei*)
61. Yellow Wagtail (*Motacilla flava*)
62. Common Starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*)
63. Rosy Starling (*Sturnus roseus*)
64. Brahminy Starling (*Sturnus pagodarum*)
65. Common Myna (*Acridotheres tristis*)
66. Bank Myna (*Acridotheres ginginianus*)
67. House Sparrow (*Passer domesticus*)
68. Baya Weaver (*Ploceus philippinus*)
69. Red Munia (*Amandava amandava*)
70. White-throated Munia (*Lonchura malabarica*)
71. Black-headed Munia (*Lonchura malacca*)

Flamingos and other Birds Around Port Victor During Summer

Pravin H. Gohil, Bholabhai Vagh, Mangabhai Dhapa

At. P. A. Victor, Tal. Rajula, Dist Amreli, Pin-365 555.

We counted flamingos and other waterbirds at three sites around Port Victor in first week of June 2004 (Table1). Surprisingly, during mid summer so called 'winter migrants' were still present!

Table 1 : Flamingos around Port Victor during June 2004

Site	Greater Flamingo			Lesser Flamingo			Total
	Adult	Juvenile	Total	Adult	Juvenile	Total	
Victor & Chanch Salt pans	1430+	745+	2175+	08	02	10	2185+
Bherai GHCL Salt pans Khera, Patva, Kathivadar,	462+	198+	660+	120+	84+	204+	864+
GHCL Salt pans	212+	83+	295+	04+	01	05	300
Total	2104+	1026+	3130+	132+	87+	219+	3349+

Other important waterbirds sighted during the count:

Victor, Chanch, Saltpans: Little Tern (*Sterna albifrons*) - 34; Western Reef-Egret (*Egretta gularis*) - 26+; Painted Stork (*Mycteria leucocephala*) -22+, Oriental White Ibis (*Threskiornis melanocephalus*) -18+, Little Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax niger*)- 300+, Small Blue Kingfisher (*Alcedo atthis*)-01, Gull-billed Tern (*Gelochelidon nilotica*) - 06, Eurasian Spoonbill (*Platalea leucorodia*)-02, Large Egret (*Casmerodius albus*)-14, Grey Heron (*Ardea cinerea*)-14, Spot-billed Duck (*Anas poecilorhyncha*) - 54.

Some winter visitor birds sighted: Eurasian Oystercatcher (*Haematopus ostralegus*)-01, Eurasian Curlew (*Numenius arquata*)-01, Kentish Plover (*Charadrius alexandrinus*)-01, Pied Avocet (*Recurvirostra avosetta*)-12.

Sakariya, Bherai Fresh water pond and saltpans: Little Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax niger*) - 1500+, Oriental White Ibis (*Threskiornis melanocephalus*) -03, Indian Pond-Heron (*Ardeola grayii*)- 02, Comb Duck (*Sarkidiornis melanotos*)- 02, Lesser Whistling-Duck (*Dendrocygna javanica*) -600+, Spot-billed Duck (*Anas poecilorhyncha*)- 28+ Little Grebe (*Tachybaptus ruficollis*)-14, Large Egret (*Casmerodius albus*) 12, Little Egret (*Egretta garzetta*)-10, Common Coot (*Fulica atra*) - 01, Painted Stork (*Mycteria leucocephala*)- 26, Little Tern (*Sterna albifrons*)-30, Common Sandpiper (*Actitis hypoleucos*)-25, Common Redshank (*Tringa totanus*) -18, Black-winged Stilt (*Himantopus himantopus*)-12, Large Egret (*Casmerodius albus*)-10, Lesser Pied Kingfisher (*Ceryle rudis*)-02.

Flamingos and Other Waterbirds Around Porbandar During Summer

Bharat Rughani

5, Wadi Plot, Opp. Kedareshwar temple, Porbandar-362575.

On 5th June 2004, I counted both the species of flamingos at Birla Creek, Javar Port and Saltpans and Gosabara around Porbandar. The flamingo count is tabulated below. Lesser Flamingos (*Phoenicopterus minor*) were greater in numbers to the Greater Flamingos (*Phoenicopterus ruber*). Adults of both the species of flamingos had bright plumage. Javar Port and Saltpans are spread over ca. 1700 acres. Besides flamingos, some other species counted were Eurasian Curlew (*Numenius arquata*)-12, Lesser Sand Plover (*Charadrius mongolus*)-?? Black-tailed Godwit (*Limosa limosa*) - ??, Caspian Tern (*Sterna caspia*) -15, Saunders's Tern (*Sterna saundersi*) - 05, Unidentified Terns (probably Common/ White-chicked Tern) - approx.

200- 300, Slender-billed Gull (*Larus genei*) - 10, Osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*) - 03.

Birla Creek

Lesser Flamingo 5000 Adults (bright plumage) including 600 sub-adults

Greater Flamingo 200 Adults including 30 subadults

Javar Port area and saltpans (1700 acre)

Lesser Flamingo 7000 Adults +1300 Sub-adults

Greater Flamingo 2000 Adults (bright plumage) +500 Sub-adults

Gosabara

Freshwater largely dried off- Lesser Flamingos-200-300

Birding on Nandabet in the Little Rann of Kachchh

S. N. Varu

Juna Vas, Temple Street, Madhapar, Bhuj-370 020.

I visited Nandabet on. 4th September 2005 with Shri T. B. Chhaya, M. B. Khatri and Ashvin Pomal. During our visit we saw the following birds:

Greater Flamingo (*Phoenicopterus ruber*) - 3000

Lesser Flamingo (*Phoenicopterus minor*) - 2000

Northern Shoveller (*Anas clypeata*) - 2000

Black-winged Stilt (*Himantopus himantopus*) - 06

Eurasian Curlew (*Numenius arquata*) - 03

Common Redshank (*Tringa totanus*) - 01

River Tern (*Sterna aurantia*) -12

Median Egret (*Mesophoyx intermedia*) - 01

Grey Heron (*Ardea cinerea*) - 01

There were large flocks of waders on the distant water which could not be identified.

Waterfowl Census Around Bhavnagar During Summer

Vikas Trivedi¹ and Viral Vaghela²

¹18-B, Room No. 2403, Bharatnagar, Shivnagar, Bhavnagar-364 001. ²8, Prarthna Park, Beh. Shrinathjinagar-I, Bharatnagar, Bhavnagar -364 002. e-mail: viral_1944@yahoo.co.in

On 22nd May 2004, we counted flamingos and other waterbirds at four important wetland sites around Bhavnagar. Besides a highly impressive count of flamingos, at least 15 species of resident birds were

recorded. A total of 1,07,917 waterbirds were counted which shows that the wetlands around Bhavnagar are heavens for waterbirds even during summer!

Waterbirds	Nirma Salt pans	New Port Salt pans	Kumbharwada Sewage Marsh	Bortalav Lake
Greater Flamingo (<i>Phoenicopterus ruber</i>)	15,975	16,062	700	150
Lesser Flamingo (<i>Phoenicopterus minor</i>)	11,839	45,775	15,900 (2,500 juv.)	—
Great Cormorant (<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>)	120+	21	—	—
Grey Heron (<i>Ardea cinerea</i>)	19	02	—	—
Western Reef-Egret (<i>Egretta gularis</i>)	30+	09	—	—
Eurasian Spoonbill (<i>Platalea leucorodia</i>)	70	72	—	106
Oriental White Ibis (<i>Threskiornis melanocephalus</i>)	02	09	50	—
Egrets	35	25	—	—
Painted Stork (<i>Mycteria leucocephala</i>)	04	19	—	150+
Pheasant-tailed Jacana (<i>Hydrophasianus chirurgus</i>)	—	—	02	—
Spot-billed Duck (<i>Anas poecilorhyncha</i>)	—	—	100+	70+
Black Ibis (<i>Pseudibis papillosa</i>)	—	—	35	—
Glossy Ibis (<i>Plegadis falcinellu</i>)	—	—	100+	—
Common Coot (<i>Fulica atra</i>)	—	—	—	250+
Comb Duck (<i>Sarkidiornis melanotos</i>)	—	—	—	16
Black-tailed Godwit (<i>Limosa limosa</i>)	—	—	—	200
Total	28,094	61,994	16,887	942

Birding at Marine National Park, Jamnagar

Dishant Parasharya

C/14, Nilam Park, Judges Bunglow Road, Bodakdev, Ahmedabad – 380 054.

I append bird observations made on 22nd, 23rd and 24th July 2004 during a birdwatching excursion to the edges of the Marine National Park, Jamnagar.

Narara Beyt Salt pans: Closest Settlement Kandla Port Trust colony. Date : 23rd July 2004, 3:30 p.m.

Lesser Flamingo (*Phoenicopterus minor*) -950 (juvenile-85), Greater Flamingo (*Phoenicopterus ruber*) – 2500 (juvenile-140), Black-tailed Godwit (*Limosa limosa*) –600, Eurasian Curlew (*Numenius arquata*)–10, Common Sandpiper (*Actitis hypoleucos*)–50, Eurasian Oystercatcher (*Haematopus ostralegus*)–12, Pied Avocet (*Recurvirostra avosetta*)– 300, Little Ringed

Plover (*Charadrius dubius*) – 50, Caspian Tern (*Sterna caspia*)– 25, Cormorant/ Shag – 150.

Narara Beyt, Reef area : Date : 23rd July 2004, 07:30 a.m.

Western Reef-Egret (*Egretta gularis*) – 1100, unidentified Egret (?)–1300, Painted Stork (*Mycteria leucocephala*)– 50, Grey Heron (*Ardea cinerea*)– 75.

Charakla Salt pans : Date: 24th July 2004, 11:00 a.m. Lesser Flamingo (*Phoenicopterus minor*)– 2800, Greater Flamingo (*Phoenicopterus ruber*)– 6000, Cormorant/ Shag (?) – 500, Western Reef-Egret (*Egretta gularis*)– 50, Caspian Tern (*Sterna caspia*) - 100+.

VULTURE UPDATE

This section is the compilation of feedback received from members of BCSG and other birdwatcher friends after the Vulture Workshop at Anand in September 2004.

Date	Place	Vulture spp	Activity	Bird watcher
12 th Jan. 2005	Near Deesa	EV-6	Soaring	U. A. Vora, Gandhinagar; B. N. Trivedi, Ahmedabad and B. M. Parasharya, Anand
4 th Jan. 2005	Space Application Center, Ahmedabad	EV-1	Soaring	P. S. Thakker, Ahmedabad
5 th Jan. 2005	Space Application Center, Ahmedabad	EV-2	Soaring	P. S. Thakker, Ahmedabad
10 th Jan. 2005	Kareda Pond, Ta- Ghogha, Bhavnagar	CV-1	Soaring	Darshan Andharia, Bhavnagar
10 th Jan. 2005	Race Course, Rajkot	WBV-1	Soaring	Ashok Mashru, Rajkot
16 th Jan. 2005	on Waghai to Bheskatri Road	WBV-5		Mukesh Bhatt, Surat
13 th March 2005	Dinbari, Shahuda, Ta:Kaprada : Valsad	WBV-8, LBV-3	Soaring. Other associated birds were: Brahminy Kite (<i>Haliastur indus</i>) -3, Black-shouldered Kite (<i>Elanus caeruleus</i>)-2, Booted Eagle (<i>Hieraaetus pennatus</i>) -1, Tawny Eagle (<i>Aquila rapax</i>) -1, Laggar (<i>Falco jugger</i>) -5(?)	M U Jat, Piyush Patel, Jignesh Joshi, ATUL
16 th March 2005	Mani. Rahore, Chawshala Ta:Kaprada Dist.:Valsad	WBV-11, LBV-3	Soaring. Other associated birds were: Tawny Eagle (<i>Aquila rapax</i>) -3, Black-shouldered Kite (<i>Elanus caeruleus</i>)-2, Common Kestrel (<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>) -2 Oriental Honey-Buzzard (<i>Pernis ptilorhynchus</i>) -1 flying across sky	M U Jat, Piyush Patel, Jignesh Joshi, ATUL
5 th April 2005	Vasna (Ahmedabad)	WBV-1		Rajdeep Jhala, Dhaivat Hathi, Miraj Patel, Rajkot.
18 th April 2005	Gadukpur village, Near Godhra	WBV-14	Feeding, Other associated birds were Jungle crow, Cattle Egret	Sunil Puwar, Godhra
4 th May 2005	Nageshri, Ta-Jafrabad, Dist.-Amreli	WBV colony (25-30 birds) with 3-4 nests		Vipul Laheri, Rajula (Source: Amit Jethva, Khambha)
05 th May 2005	Near Joshikuva village in Anklav Taluka, Anand	WBV-4	Feeding	Manish Gor, Vadodara
14 th May 2005	In Sabarmati Riverbed near Ahmedabad	WBV-1	Feeding	Dhaval Patel, Anand
14 th May 2005	Between Abu Road and Palanpur	EV-2	Soaring	Dhaval Patel, Anand
29 th May 2005	Uhra-Pada road, Near Limkheda	EV-2	Soaring	Sunil Puwar, Godhra
30 th May 2005	Ranipura village, Near Godhra	WBV-32, LBV-49	Feeding, other associated birds were Jungle Crow	Sunil Puwar, Godhra

Abbreviations : FV - Eurasian Griffon (*Gyps fulvus*) CV - Cinereous Vulture (*Aegypius monachus*)
WBV - Indian White-backed Vulture (*Gyps bengalensis*) LBV - Long-billed Vulture (*Gyps indicus*)

BCSG PROGRAMMES

Parakeet Counting at Vallabh Vidyanagar

B. M. Parasharya

AINP on Agricultural Ornithology, Biological Control Research Laboratory,
Anand Agricultural University, Anand – 388 110, e-mail: parasharya@yahoo.com

The Rose-ringed Parakeet *psittacula krameri* is a bird of serious concern for the farmers of central Gujarat. However, the farmers deal them with enormous sympathy. Shastri Ground, Vallabh Vidyanagar a very large roosting site for parakeet. An attempt was made on 10th and 11th December 2005 to estimate the population of Rose-ringed Parakeet arriving for night roosting at Shastri ground. Totally 40 volunteers participated in the programme. Counting was done by method used for Harrier counting. Thirteen points (highrise building or

open road) forming a circle around the roosting area were selected. Participants occupied their position by 17:15 hrs and counted the parakeets entering the circle during 17:30 to 18:30 hrs.

Totally 62,945 parakeet were recored arriving for roosting. This is probably the largest count of parakeets at a single site in the country.

The programme ended after brief discussion on on importance of such population estimations of birds.

Heronry Appreciation Programme at Rajkot

Rajdeep N. Jhala

“Ram-Nivas”, 38/B, Parnakuti Society, Rajkot-360001.

The Rajkot Chapter of BCSG organized a Heronry Appreciation Programme on 25th September 2005 at Ishwariya Lake and Aji-2 Dam near Rajkot. Twenty-two birdwatchers and students participated in the programme. Shri Ashok Mashru briefed the participants regarding activities of the BCSG and its Rajkot chapter. He explained importance of birdwatching with emphasis on occurrence and ecological importance of heronry. Handouts bearing literature regarding the heronry were also provided. Participants initially trekked to Ishwariya Lake through an undulating terrain of about 1.5 km observing grassland avifauna. There were six nests of Great Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax carbo*) in incubation stage on *Acacia nilotica* trees submerged in water.

Other birds such as Great Crested Grebe (*Podiceps cristatus*), Darter (*Anhinga melanogaster*), Grey Heron (*Ardea cinerea*), Purple Heron (*Ardea purpurea*), Painted Stork (*Mycteria leucocephala*), Glossy Ibis (*Plegadis falcinellu*), Eurasian Spoonbill

(*Platalea leucorodia*), Lesser Whistling-Duck (*Dendrocygna javanica*), Common Teal (*Anas crecca*), Spot-billed Duck (*Anas poecilorhyncha*), Northern Shoveller (*Anas clypeata*), Common Kestrel (*Falco tinnunculus*), Common Coot (*Fulica atra*), Blue-cheeked Bee-eater (*Merops persicus*), Spotted Flycatcher (*Muscicapa striata*) etc. were sighted by the participants.

Participants then visited the heronry located adjacent to Aji-2 Dam. Most of the nests were present on tall trees of *Peltophorum pterocarpum*, *Cassia siamea* (Kashid) and *Pithecellobium dulce* (Gorus Amli). Birdwatchers counted 119 nests of Cattle Egret, 8 nests of Little Egret and 2 nests of Little Cormorant. All the nests had grown up chicks.

More than 100 Whiskered Terns (*Chlidonias hybridus*) were seen flying over a small area to catch the fishes that congregated to up-swim the overflowing dam. Pond Herons and Little Egrets were also catching the fishes.

Birdwatching and Stargazing at Thol Bird Sanctuary

D. N. Rank

College of Veterinary Science and Animal Husbandry, A. A.U., Anand-388 001. email: dnrank@aau.in

A birdwatching programme followed by stargazing was organized by BCSG -Ahmedabad Chapter at Thol Lake on 8th October 2005. Birdwatchers from Ahmedabad, Gandhinagar and Anand participated in the programme. Common terrestrial and waterbirds were observed on and around the lake notables among them were Blue-tailed Bee-eater and Sarus Crane. Shri Kandarp Katju informed that Small Green-Heron is frequently seen here. A heronry with grown-up young ones was seen in the lake. Shri Katju also informed that the Glossy Ibis had also nested here this season. A large communal roost of cormorants, egrets and ibises was

also seen on the edge of the lake. Winter migrants were expected but their numbers were very low.

The sanctuary staff made sitting arrangement on the site where all the birdwatcher enjoyed tea and snacks provided by Dr. Samikshaben and other ladies members. The programme was followed by Stargazing. Shri Tanmay Vyas and Manoj Pai were the resource persons for stargazing.

Shri Lalsinh Raol encouraged the youngsters. Dr. Bakul Trivedi and Shri Jyotal Thakker coordinated the programme.

RECENT PUBLICATIONS ON BIRDS OF GUJARAT

1. Patel, S. (2005). Adaptations in nesting. *Newsletter for Birdwatchers* 45(2): 27.
2. Patel, S. (2005). Wetland protection project of Nature Club Surat. *Newsletter for Birdwatchers* 45(1): 6-7.
3. Patel, S., Nirmala and M. Bhatt (2005). Saving 200 vultures from probable death. *Newsletter for Birdwatchers* 45(3): 42.
4. Shah, Y., C. Vora and F. Chauhan (2005). A vagrant owl at Surendranagar. *Newsletter for Birdwatchers* 45(3): 48.
5. Thakker, P. S. (2005). White-bellied Sea Eagle in Great Rann of Kachchh, Gujarat. *Newsletter for Birdwatchers* 45(3): 46.
6. Tiwari, J. K. (2005). 300 Great Crested Grebes *Podiceps cristatus*. *Indian Birds* 1(3): 72.
7. Tiwari, J. K. and S. N. Varu (2005). Population outbreaks of Lesser Bandicoot-rat *Bandicota bengalensis* in Chhari-Dhand, and concentration of raptors. *Indian Birds* 1(3): 72.
8. Chhokar, J. S. (2006) Indian Pitta (*Pitta brachyura*) sighted at the IIM Ahmedabad Campus. *Newsletter for Birdwatchers* 46(2): 29.
9. Bhatt K. (2006) Notes on the nesting of Black-necked Stork (*Ephippiorhynchus asiaticus*) near the Marine National Park, Jodiya Range, Jamnagar. *Newsletter for Birdwatchers* 46(2): 29-30.
10. Anika Tete (2006) Sun-bathing by Yellow-legged Green-Pigeon *Treron phoenicoptera* at Vadodara. Gujarat, India. *Indian Birds* 2(2): 34-35.
11. Bhatt K. (2006) Black-necked Stork *Ephippiorhynchus asiaticus* nest with four chicks in Marine National Park, Gujarat, India. *Indian Birds* 2(2): 35.
12. Ghadhvi I.R. and P. P. Dodia (2006) Indian White-backed Vultures *Gyps bengalensis* nesting in Mahuva. Bhavnagar district, Gujarat, India. *Indian Birds* 2(2): 36.

Membership fees revised

Fees for Membership of BCSG is revised as under w.e.f. 1st April 2006.

Ordinary (Annual)	Rs. 200
Students (Annual)	Rs. 100
Life	Rs. 1000
Corporate (Annual)	Rs. 1000

THE INTERESTING BIRD SIGHTINGS

1. Sarus Crane (*Grus antigone*)-10 at Machhu-II Dam, Morbi on 30th May 2004 --Ashok Mashru, Rajkot.
2. White-necked Stork (*Ciconia episcopus*)-3, Sarus Crane-1 Surendranagar to Viramgama on 17th October 2004-Rajdeep Jhala, Rajkot.
3. Red-headed Falcono (*Falco chicquera*)-4 times, once 2 individuals (could be a pair?) during Dec. 2004, Jan. 2005 in Morvi -Prasad Ganpule, Morbi.
4. Indian Chat (*Cercomela fusca*)-2 on Meshwo dam near Shamlaji on 10th Jan. 2005 – U. A. Vora, Gandhinagar; B. N. Trivedi, Ahmedabad; B. M. Parasharya and Sanjay Paneliya, Anand.
5. Black-capped Kingfisher (*Halcyon pileata*) at Atul, Valsad-M. U. Jat, Atul, Valsad.
6. Alpine Swift (*Tachymarptis melba*)-a immense swarm, several hundreds at Ratan Mahal on 19th Feb.2006-Lalsinh Raol, Mahendrasinh Parmar, Lavkumar Khacher, Umakant Patel, Ahmedabad.
7. Alpine Swift (*Tachymarptis melba*) an injured bird received at Animal Helpline, Ahmedabad on 24th Nov. 2005-Dhires Joshi, Ahmedabad and Dhaval Patel, Vallabh Vidyanagar.
8. Grey Hypocolius (*Hypocolius ampelinus*)-35 in Kachchh on 25th October 2005 –Jugal Tiwari, Moti-Virani, Kachchh.
9. Brown Fish-Owl (*Ketupa zeylonensis*)-1 on Shingoda dam, Gir on 13th December 2004–Ashok Mashru, Rajkot.
10. Black-necked Stork (*Ephippiorhynchus asiaticus*) -1 Immature Aji-II Dam, Rajkot on 06th March-05– Ashok Mashru, Rajkot.
11. Asian Openbill-Stork (*Anastomus oscitans*) nearly 60 in a field besides Lake near Khirasara Vidi on 15th February 2005 -Rajdeep Jhala, Dhaivat Hathi, Miraj Patel, Rajkot.
12. Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata*-1, at Thol BS on 25th September 2005. Rajesh Shah, Ahmedabad.
13. Striolated Bunting *Emberiza striolata* at Thol BS on 4th Sept. 2005, Rajesh Shah, Ahmedabad.
14. Around 150 Raptors-Tawny Eagle *Aquila rapax*, Steppe Eagle (*Aquila nipalensis*) and Long-legged Buzzard (*Buteo rufinus*) during a single day drive from Fulay to Dhordo in Kachchh on 27th Nov. 2005-J. K. Tiwari, Moti-Virani, Kachchh.

BCSG NEWS

- **New Executive Committee formed:** Election for the members of the Executive Committee was held on 1st January 2006 at Pariej. Following members were elected for the next two years i.e. 2006 and 2007:
Shri Lavkumar Khacher, Shri Lalsinh Raol, Dr. B. M. Parasharya, Dr. Bakul Trivedi, Dr. D. N. Rank, Shri Snehal Patel, Shri Shantilal Varu, Dr. P. S. Thakker, Dr. C. K. Borad, Shri Pranav Trivedi, Dr. V. C. Soni.
The Executive Committee co-opted the following members: Shri Mukesh Bhatt (Surat); Shri Ajay Desai (Dahod); Dr. Rajendra Desai (Navsari); Dr. Indra Gadhvi (Bhavnagar); Shri Niraj Joshi (Ahmedabad); Shri Ashok Mashru (Rajkot); Shri Mayur Mistri (Vijaynagar); Dr. Geeta Padate (Vadodara); Dr. Piyush H. Patel (Valsad); Shri Bharat Rughani (Porbadar); Shri Jyotal Thakker (Ahmedabad), Shri Ajit Bhatt (Dhari), Shri Jaypalsinh Jadeja (Jamnagar) and Dr. Ranjit Devkar (Ahmedabad).
- A three day Workshop on “Birds of Gujarat” was organized by Prakruti Mitra Mandal, Dahod at Ratanmahal Wildlife Sanctuary on 17 –19 February 2006.
- A research project entitled “Survey of Houbara (*Macqueen's Bustard*) Habitats and Their Population in the State and Factors Affecting Them” sponsored by Dept. of Forests, Government of Gujarat is initiated by the BCSG. Dr. I. R. Gadhvi is the Principal Investigator of the Project. The members interested in joining the Houbara Survey in the next season may contact him.
- A Vulture Cell is created for conservation of vultures in the State. The cell is being operated by the Nature Club Surat. The cell has already started its activities at Surat and Mahuva vulture colonies. For further details and support please contact Shri Snehal Patel, President Nature Club Surat, 81, Sarjan Society, Athwa Lines, Surat-395 007 on 098250 57678.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

- Since "Flamingo" is published in English, it provides a valuable outreach for Gujarat birdwatchers. Those working at national and international levels get to know of our rich avifauna and of the large number of birdwatchers in the State. It should however, not be forgotten that we have to broad base our activities in Gujarat and this is what "Vihang" is doing as a Gujarati language newsletter. "Flamingo" should develop a synergy with "Vihang". Therefore, if feasible write-ups in "Flamingo" should provide Gujarati names of the birds in addition to English and scientific names. In this way the Gujarati names of our birds will be popularized and become standardized. Work done by pioneers in this field can be best utilised in this manner. Not only that, it will be a proper tribute to their very commendable efforts.

-Gambhirsinh Gohil, Bhavnagar

- *Lanius isabellinus phoenicuroides* (Schalow, 1875) is mentioned in the Checklist published by BCSG. Is it taxonomic adaptation? I request you to see the illustration in Inskipp. I have carefully observed a bird with very pale streaks on its back with a clear rufous tail and a comparative thin black stripe starting behind eye. The size was similar to a large warbler. It was flitting around perching on bushes on the margin of water.

- Ashok Mashru, Rajkot

- Here is information which I have been thinking of posting since last six months (ever since I came back to Kachchh from Eritrea, NE Africa). It is regarding *Prosopis juliflora* and the freedom to make charcoal in Kachchh. I appreciate the decision of the concerned departments to allow people to make use of this otherwise exotic weed. The drought relief programs, money-order economy and disaster relief funds were/ are the major source of dependency for rural Kachchh. Many thousand unemployed youths are now earning from Rs. 3000 to Rs. 10,000 per person per month making charcoal! While I support a much demanded systematic approach to charcoal making by locals, and presently, the "Black Gold" is keeping thousands of villagers busy, but there is a catch –the tendency is to cut the shoot system and leave the roots intact. The coppicing nature of *P. juliflora* makes the

problem more serious and the menace is not eliminated. The woody parts of the weed are used for making charcoal, the twigs are left to litter around making the forest floor an impenetrable ground. I have seen both prey and predator species limping, having passed through such thorn packed areas. While cutting the weed for making charcoal, the nearby indigenous trees are also cut many a time. The people engaged in charcoal making also kill the Sanda (Spiny-tailed Lizards) for food. The Grasslands of Banni are now hot spot for the charcoal "industry" and *Prosopis juliflora* is more rampant than before! The former Sedge and grassland of high value have become an exotic weedland. If the process of making charcoal is made such that the roots are also removed, we can then perhaps control of the menace.

We need a policy to employ people to make charcoal and at the same time remove the rootstock. Trees like *Salvadora persica*, shrubs like *Suaeda fruticosa* and herbs like *Cressa cratica* (all local halophytic desert plants) should be grown for the long term restoration of the traditional grasslands of Kachchh.

- Jugal Tiwari, Moti-Virani, Kachchh

- In continuation to my note on "Strange Feeding behaviour of ..." (Flamingo 2 (5-6)), I would like to add that I have observed around 70 Ruff (*Philomachus pugnax*) circling over a pond and picking up *Ganthia* as well as grain on 26th February 2005. White-breasted Waterhens (*Amaurornis phoenicurus*), Common Sandpipers (*Actitis hypoleucos*) and Black Drongos (*Dicrurus macrocercus*) were also among the feeding birds at the Ruva Pond, Bhavnagar. After 2 May 2005, Comb Duck (*Sarkidiornis melanotos*) have increased to more than 3 dozens. By start of June, the water level has receded and the numbers of the Comb Ducks and of other waders have decreased. Eurasian Spoonbill and Large Egret (*Casmerodius albus*) are around in large numbers on the water. One Lesser Pied Kingfisher (*Ceryle rudis*) is also seen since the last one week during 6:30 to 7:00 hours.

-N. C. Bhatt, Bhavnagar

FROM THE PRESIDENT

If water bodies and the vegetation associated with them are severely polluted and mismanaged or neglected, pressures on their very existence have increased. As such, it does become necessary to get them listed, prioritized and management procedures outlined. Water being what it is, an universal solvent and a substance with motility and penetration capacities, pollutants can spread and be carried far from their points of origin. Being the very substance of life and its support systems, rapid changes take place within a seemingly well protected water body. Birdlife very quickly gets influenced. Bird watchers then have a truly valuable contribution to make in keeping the authorities alerted for changes taking place. Too many Coots, for instance, suggest choking of the otherwise open water by aquatic vegetation. Such vegetation would proliferate beyond an optimum level required for fish. The plants may have to be removed as a management procedure.

Domestic animals, particularly water buffalos may, to a point, provide control by browsing off the plants yet, too many of the bovines would produce counter effects. Sewage and sediment draining into a water body may be beneficial up to a point yet, too much sewage can overload the water with nutrients resulting in massive growth of algae. Sedimentation would rapidly make the water shallow and reduce its storage capacity. Periodic disiltation would be needed. Keeping a mix of deep and shallow water, with part of the water free of vegetation and landscaping the surrounding with trees makes it attractive to a verity of bird species. A pleasing ambiance, as often as not, suggests a well kept water unit be it a pond, a reservoir or a river.

Since water is in high demand by agriculturists, there will immediately arise a conflict of seeming interests. For instance, should water be drawn from a declared sanctuary for irrigation? Water under large colonial nesting colonies gets charged with high grade fertilizer quality thanks to the guano raining down into the water from above. This water would be greatly coveted by farmers and should be used to develop a bond between them and the birds. Perhaps, it may also be to advantage to permit water levels to drop so that seasonally land is made available for agriculture. Conservation by cordoning off the birds from the general population is to be thoroughly deplored and is counter productive. If you and I are sensitive to the beauty of birds and delight in their presence, surely it is arrogance to think that a farmer, a grazier or an average citizen can not be charmed and develop a concern to limit his use of a resource so that birds are not driven away. If anything, the continued existence of a noble bird like the Sarus or a scintillating one like the peacock will depend on vitalising existing sentiments.

Even as we strengthen protective measures around the notified sanctuaries, the challenge will be to carry the public with us, so that for instance, crop damage by peafowl or crane is condoned. A tea stall owner under a tree loaded with egret nests needs tremendous patience not to develop an antipathy for perpetrators of the continual rain of guano from above. Wherever such stories continue to carry forward our Gujarati traditions of sanctity of all Life regardless of the irritants, we need to recognize centers of the humane civilization we are heir to. Such individuals need our gratitude.

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