



Unusual Feeding Behaviour by Isabelline shrike *Lanius isabellinus*

On the morning of 30th December 2023, I visited Navagam wetland in Kheda. The lake was teeming with fish, and as usual, it attracted many birds and they were busy feeding. Painted Storks *Mycteria leucocephala*, egrets, cormorants, and River Terns *Sterna aurantia* were there along with other birds. Everything was normal and I enjoyed capturing some lively actions with my camera. However, at around 10 am, my attention was drawn towards two birds at the wetland, both trying to secure their meals. One was an Isabelline Shrike *Lanius isabellinus*, and the other was a House Crow *Corvus splendens*. Though Isabelline Shrike is a scrubland bird and it prefers areas in close vicinity to the wetlands, yet its presence was conspicuous because of its distinct feeding behaviour at this site. As the fishes were abundant in the pond River Terns were active and catching them from the water surface, but some individuals did not grip it well, thus causing the fish to drop on the ground. Seeing this as an opportunity, Isabelline Shrike and House Crow, both quickly moved to grab the victual. I spent the next half hour observing this behavior and documenting the scene. Though there were three crows in the area, the Isabelline Shrike persistently competed with them for the dropped fish. While the crows were usually more successful, the shrike managed to secure a catch twice. I was fortunate enough to capture one of those moments when the shrike grabbed a fish and swiftly flew away. Considering the fact that Isabelline Shrike is almost insectivorous with rare instances of taking on small lizards and small birds, scavenging on fish is really surprising. This interesting feeding behaviour demands further study.

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Recovery of the Indian Pitta *Pitta brachyura* in Wadhwan

On June 19, 2024, Surendranagar Forest Division at Wadhwan made a commendable work which can be considered as a significant conservation effort. A bird rescuer informed the department that two residents has kept couple of Indian Pittas *Pitta brachyura*. On inquiring it was disclosed that they had obtained the birds from Ahmedabad bird market, which is infamous for its trade in exotic avian species. The forest department acted swiftly, recovered the birds and ensured the safe return into their natural habitat. This commendable action by Surendranagar Forest Division validated their commitment to wildlife conservation. During the thorough investigation, it was revealed that this was the first documented case of illegal trade involving Indian Pitta in Gujarat. This incident highlighted the critical issue of wildlife trafficking, particularly involving protected species. The Indian Pitta, known for its striking plumage and distinctive vocalizations, is protected under the Indian Wildlife Protection Act, 1972. This case serves as an important reminder to the significance of conservation initiatives and the proactive role of authorities in conserving vulnerable species.

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