

Newsletter for Birdwatchers

Vol. 33 No 5 September – October 1993



Landmark agreement in Pakistan

In June, tribes in Bar (upper) Palas, the Pakistani valley in which the largest known population of the globally threatened Western Tragopan occur, signed a landmark agreement with the BirdLife International/WWF Himalayan Jungle Project. The agreement marks a new approach to the integration of conservation and development in Pakistan.

Under the agreement, the Bar Palasis formally recognise the concept of designating Palas a 'Special Area for Conservation and Development', and agree to take the issue to all Palas Jirga (tribal council). Given the Palasis' violent internal feuds and notorious hostility to outside intervention, this commitment to dialogue is a significant achievement, reflecting the confidence the tribes now place in the project.

The Bar Palasis have also established 22 'jirga committees' to work with the project on future conservation and development activities. In a notable goodwill gesture, they have agreed to stop hunting of protected wildlife, including the Western Tragopan and Musk Deer.

In return the project, with funding from the North West Frontier Province (NWFP), British and Canadian Governments and the local Trust for Voluntary Organisations, is implementing a major rehabilitation programme to repair damage done during floods in September 1992. The project is now reconstructing footpaths and foot-bridges, watermills and irrigation channels.

The Agreement was approved by over 200 tribal elders at a jirga, with VIP's including Secretary Forests, Additional Secretary Planning and Chief Environment NWFP, Deputy Commissioner Kohistan and WWF-Pakistan's Chief Executive flying in by helicopter to witness the occasion.

Petrel shooters prosecuted

Following the international protest over the shooting of Barau's Petrel in Reunion Island, two hunters have been arrested and are being prosecuted.

Endemic to the island of Reunion and with a total world population of just 3,000 pairs, Barau's Petrel is a protected species and shooting it is against the law. Other suspected shooters are currently being investigated and it is likely that there will be more arrests.

Close surveillance by the authorities has stopped any further killing, and the government has mounted a publicity campaign, informing people of the need to protect the species and the penalties killing or harming it would invoke.

Cover : Male Purplerumped Sunbird (*Nectarinia zeylonica*) feeding its fledgling. This active bird visits flower gardens with a delightful song *tit you tit you tit tit*, as it excitedly opens and closes its wings and tail and pivots from side to side. Particularly fond of nectar of the Drumstick and Hibiscus flowers. It sucks out the nectar with its long tubular tongue.

Photo : S. Sridhar, ARPS

Bobcats deal blow to crane programme

The programme to save the Whooping Crane from extinction is suffering mixed fortunes, with the death of nine of the 14 birds that were released into the wild in Florida in February. The nine birds were eaten by Bobcats.

Reduced to just 16 birds in 1941, there are now around 158 Whooping Crane in the wild, about 150 of which are in one flock that migrates between Canada's Northwest Territories and the Gulf Coast of Texas, USA.

The Florida release, which used captive-bred birds from the US Fish and Wildlife Service's Patuxent Wild-life Research Center in Maryland and the International Crane Foundation's facility in Wisconsin, is an experiment to test methods for establishing another, non-migratory wild population.

Meanwhile, another captive flock is being established in Calgary, using birds transferred from the two captive flocks mentioned above.

Navigating to a nightmare

Proposals to develop a complex 3,440 km navigation system in the Parana/Paraguay River system, the second largest river system in South America, are threatening the diverse wildlife of the area, including the Pantanal.

The 15 million ha Pantanal is one of the largest continuous wetland systems in the world and is host to hundreds of thousands of waterbirds. The area is also important for the globally threatened Hyacinth Macaw.

The project, known as Hidrovia, would allow year-round passage of large ships along the water courses, facilitating the movement of goods in Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay. It would involve substantial dredging of waterways, rock excavation, the stabilisation of channels, some channel realignment and other similar works.

According to a preliminary report by Wetlands for the Americas, effects of the scheme would include alteration of the hydrological regime of the area, reducing the regulatory effect of the Pantanal and potentially leading to severe flooding further downstream. The effects on the birds of the region are likely to be serious.

Wetlands for the Americas is calling for the full environmental impacts of this potentially disastrous scheme to be examined by the authorities currently considering the proposal.

Courtesy : World birdwatch, September 1993

Editor : ZAFAR FUTEHALLY, No. 2205, Oakwood Apartments, Jakkasandra Layout, Koramangala 3rd Block, 8th Main, Bangalore 560 034

Printed and Published Bi-Monthly by S. Sridhar at Navbharath Enterprises, Seshadripuram, Bangalore 560 020, for Private Circulation Only.

Vol. 33 No. 5 September - October 1993

CONTENTS

Editorial

- Seminar on Bird Ecology and Conservation
- Birdlife International
- Wetlands
- The Houbara Bustard

Articles

- Birds of Dandeli Wildlife Sanctuary, by S. Karthikeyan, M.S. Jayanth, J. Hemanth and G.S. Sanjay
- Birds of Palni Hills, by Harkirat S. Sangha
- Bird of Thiashola (Nilgiris), by Meena Unnikrishnan and B. Rajasekhar
- Need to Preserve Bordoibam Wetland, by Bihab Kumar Talukdar
- Synopsis of thesis on Ecology and Biology of barbets, by Hafiz Shacque Ahmad Yahya
- Synopsis of thesis on Comparative Ecology of Resident Ducks in Keoladeo National Park, by U. Sridharan

Correspondence

- The Beautiful Nuthatch, by R. Jayapal
- Birdwatching in the Palnis, by Andrew Robertson
- Tips for the Identification of Common Barn owl nests, by R. Nagarajan, P. Neelanarayanan and R. Kanakasabai
- Occurrence of Lesser Crow Pheasant in Neyyar, by V. Philip
- A Flock of Kentish Plovers and a Tern, by Manoj V. nair
- Rufousebellied Hawk-Eagle at Kemmangundi, by L. Shyamal
- Notes from Udaipur, by Satish Kumar Sharma
- Large Clutch of House Sparrow, by Jugal Kishor Tiwari
- Territorial Fight among Grimson Breasted Barbet, by Dr. Ashok Kumar Sharma
- Sighting of Lapwing-like Bird in Ropar, by Jaspreet Singh Chadha
- Nesting of Pied Myna on Telegraph/Electric Poles, by D.N. Misra Raj
- Where are all the dead Birds? by T.V. Jose
- Ostercatcher feeding Ecology, by Jamil Urfi
- Environmental Education in Rural Areas, by V.J. Rajan

Seminar on Bird Ecology and Conservation

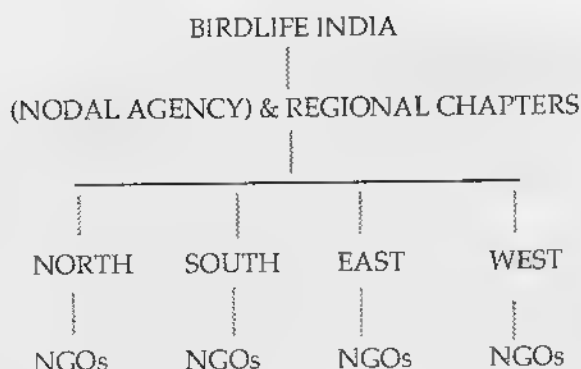
Time flies and the Seminar is now upon us. The number of papers received is impressive (70 to date), and so also are the number of registrations (180). The support (financial and administrative) of the Government of Karnataka specially of Mr. A.N.Yellappa Reddy, Special Secretary in the Department of Environment and Forests, has made the task of the organisers easy. Face to face meetings are most important for the progress of any movement, and I am sure ornithology in India will get a lift as a result of this Conference. So we look forward to getting better acquainted with many of our readers on the 12th November in Bangalore. I am sure that organisers have kept all intending participants posted with arrangements for accommodation, reception, etc.

Birdlife International

In our previous issue (July/August) Theodore Baskaran wrote about the SACON Meeting in Coimbatore from 3rd to 5th August this year, and he referred to a proposal from Birdlife International (the successor to ICBP) to join hands with a partner in India for the promotion of Ornithology. This is a splendid idea and I hope regional, personal or institutional jealousies will not come in the way of this development. Bird life International is already in operation in thirty countries and we hope India will soon be a part of this worldwide network. At the moment it seems that the Birdlife International partner in India will be a Working Group consisting of BNHS, SACON and Regional chapters of birding NGOs in the country.

Aasheesh Pittie was also present at the SACON meeting and he has made some suggestions relating to the partnership between NGOs in Indian and the international partner of birdlife. He says :

- A. NGOs working with birds throughout India have to be involved and represented fairly on the Working Committee. This is absolutely necessary.
- B. The working structure for NGOs interacting with the central organisation will be through Regional Chapters.
- C. Each Regional Chapter will have 'n' number of birding NGOs as its members who will send one representative from an NGO to a Regional Chapter meeting.
- D. In turn, each Regional Chapter will send one representative to the meeting at the central organising body.



I am sure that these suggestion will be carefully considered at the next planning meeting of Birdlife International.

Wetlands

Wetlands are very much in the news these days not merely for their natural beauty and for the bird life they harbour, but also because of their function in improving the climate and water availability of surrounding areas. Here are some useful facts presented by Mr K V Narendra, Centre for Science and Technology, 111/1 (New 56), 6th Main, Malleswaram, Bangalore - 560 003 :-

Hydrological Values : They serve to check rapid water flows in the valleys and prevent the severity of droughts during dry months.

Drinking Water : They play a key role in ground water recharge and they also act as a filter for certain kinds of waste and soluble contaminants.

Protecting Wetlands : The optimum urban density of our city is estimated to be 12,500 persons per sq. km. UNESCO has recommended that 40% of land should be kept free from plastering to allow rain water to percolate into the ground. For the needs of the local population 4.54 million kilolitres per year is required for the city. 50% of city dwellers are completely dependent on ground water.

Temperature : 1 sq. km. expanse of water absorbs enough solar heat to get warmer by 3°C in day time. Compare this with land and concrete which gets heated by 8°C and 12°C respectively. The formation of heat islands in the city is due to the inability of concrete to transfer absorbed day time heat to the air in the evening.

Oxygen : Bangalore is facing a shortage of open space which has resulted in a shortage of oxygen in the air. A person inhales up to 6 litres per minute or 8640 litres per day, and it requires 127.3 sq. metres of water surface to produce this amount of oxygen. Hence, for a population of 45 lakhs we require at least 5,72,000 sq. km. of open space. The tank beds are the only significant open lands which we have in the city.

Recycling of material : Tanks are zones where raw material and decaying organic matter are recycled endlessly through the food chain. Wetlands also act as a sink to prevent nitrate build up which could lead to eutrophication.

Aesthetic Values : Clean water in a city is one of its most important aesthetic assets apart from providing shelter to dozens of species of birds and other valuable aquatic life.

The Houbara Bustard

In the March/April issue of this year we reprinted (Courtesy : The New Yorker of Dec. 14, 1992) the article by Mary Anne Weaver on the hunting of this bird by falcons in Pakistan. The article said that the Houbara Bustard (*Chlamydotis undulata*) was declared an endangered species in 1975, but in the deserts of Pakistan each year Arab royals kill at least 6000 of the birds through their falcons, and by the use of the most highly developed technology including radar for tracking the birds.

Manohar Malgonkar writing in an Indian newspaper give further information :

"Gone are the days when the hunters used to come looking for the houbara on their camels; now they come in specially designed hunting cars and equipped with the latest electronic gadgets. Radar and computers are used to track it, and infra-red light to locate it while it sleeps at night. Incredible as it might seem, even the falcons that accompany them are fitted - if that is the right word - with tracking and homing devices : a microscopic battery implanted under their skins plus a needle-like metal serial sending out beeps which can be monitored over a radius of 12 km.

Some of the Sheiks are known to have brought more than a hundred falcons on their hunts."

Apparently, in the past couple of years the Sheiks are said to have killed 6000 houbaras every Winter, and the estimated cost of this killing is \$100 million.

I have received two protest letters in connection with the Houbara article published in the Feb/Mar., issue of 1993. Faisal A Dean, Rt. 2, Box 2607, Front Royal, Virginia 22630, USA, says that the Sheikhs are not worse than the European hunters who, until very recently, indulged in senseless slaughter in many continents. "What then makes the Sheikhs of today any different from the white hunters of yesterday?". There is, however, now a new movement towards conservation in the Arab States and this may bear fruit in the years to come. In Jordan, King Hussain supported the establishment of The Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature, while in Bahrain, Sheikh Hamad bin Isa Al-Khalifa championed Al-Areen Wildlife Park.

So let us hope that Faisal Dean's expectation that conservation will win in the end, and the houbara will cease to be slaughtered.

There is also a letter from Shahul Hameed, No. 17, 17th Lane, Colombo 3, Sri Lanka, again protesting against the article referred to above. He writes :-

Falconry is an age old practice in the Arabian culture and it has been practice in a fully sustainable manner, but changes in the socio-economic life has weakened the sustainability to some extent. Falconry by Gulf nationals not only in Pakistan but also in countries like Algeria, Tunisia and Egypt, sometimes exceed the levels of sustainable harvesting.

It is exactly for the above reason Saudi Arabia's National Commission for Wildlife Conservation and Development (NCWCD) is presently seeking to develop an international Agreement and management plan for Houbara Bustard Conservation within the framework of the Bonn Convention. Towards this they have already developed a draft Agreement in cooperation with ICBP and, understandably, is further working on this."

Let us hope that ecology will win over economics in the end.

BIRDS OF DANDELI WILDLIFE SANCTUARY

S. KARTHIKEYAN, 24, Opp. Banashankari Temple, 8th Block, Jayanagar P.O., Bangalore - 560 082.

M. S. JAYANTH, J. HEMANTH, C/o. Merlin Nature Club, 13, 8th Cross, 30th Main, I Phase, J P Nagar, Bangalore - 560 078.

G. S. SANJAY, 2208/B, Sadhana Road, K R Extension, Tumkur - 572 101.

Dandeli Wildlife Sanctuary, which consists of forests ranging from moist deciduous to semi-evergreen, is spread over an area of 835 sq. kms. of undulating terrain in the Uttara Kannada district of Karnataka. Many rivers wind their way through these forests, the most important being the Kali. There are a number of settlements existing in the areas, including tribals. Owing to human activities, there is diversity in habitat (eg. agricultural fields, reservoirs, etc.)

But the sanctuary is far from safe. A host of hydel projects like Supa and Kali have submerged vast forest tracts. Also pressures like cattle grazing, teak monoculture (commercial forestry) and mining are gradually effacing the sanctuary. Additionally, paper mills in the area are causing extensive destruction of bamboos and also discharging effluents into the rivers endangering life therein.

The sanctuary boasts of a rich assortment of wildlife, especially the avifauna. Three brief visits to the sanctuary form the basis of the present article. MSJ and JH visited the sanctuary between 3 and 16 April 1988, and MSJ between 4 and 15 April 1989. With Ambikanagar as the base camp, forays were made into neighbouring areas. SK and GSS visited the sanctuary between 21 and 23 November 1992. Stationed at Kulgi, observations were made.

Significant observations are :

1. In just one day in April 6 species of woodpeckers - Pigmy, Rufous, Mahratta, Lesser Goldenbacked,

Heartspotted and Small Yellownaped were seen around the colony of Ambikanagar.

2. A sight of eight Great Pied Hornbills over Kali valley, at sunset with the Western Ghats in the backdrop. Also occurrence of 3 species of Hornbills is held to be significant.
3. The Peregrine Falcon was seen gracefully flying over the massive Supa dam.
4. The Hobby was seen hawking insects during dusk inside the Ambikanagar colony.
5. The Yellowbacked sunbird was the star attraction, usually seen flitting among flowers in the colony, its long tail and iridescent colours being conspicuous.
6. Whiterumped Spinetail Swifts were seen in groups of 20, balling about.
7. The Lesser Adjutant Stork was seen feeding at a water-hole during mid-day.
8. Great Black Woodpecker, Yellowbrowed Bulbul, Black Eagle, Forest Eagle Owl, Collared Scops Owl were recorded by SK only.
9. Sighting of 5 species of Drongos is also very interesting.

The checklist which follows is by no means comprehensive since it is based on only three visits during which a small area of the sanctuary was covered.

Checklist

Family Podicipedidae

001. Little Grebe *Podiceps ruficollis*

Family Phalacrocoracidae

002. Little Cormorant *Phalacrocorax niger*

Family Ardeidae

003. Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea*
004. Pond Heron *Ardeola grayii*
005. Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis*
006. Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*

Family Ciconiidae

007. Lesser Adjutant *Leptoptila javanicus*

Family Anatidae

008. Lesser Whistling Teal *Dendrocygna javanica*

Family Accipitridae

009. Honey Buzzard *Pernis ptilorynchus*
010. Pariah Kite *Milvus migrans*
011. Brahminy Kite *Haliastur indus*
012. Shikra *Accipiter badius*
013. Crested Hawk-Eagle *Spizaetus cirrhatus*
014. Black Eagle *Ichinaetus malayensis*
015. Greyheaded Fishing Eagle *Ichthyophaga ichthyactis*
016. Whitebacked Vulture *Gyps benghalensis*
017. Scavenger Vulture *Neophron percnopterus*
018. Crested Serpent Eagle *Spilornis cheela*

Family Falconidae

019. Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus japonensis*
020. Hobby- *Falco subbuteo*

Family Phasianidae

021. Grey Junglefowl *Gallus sonneratti*
022. Common Peafowl *Pavo cristatus*

Family Rallidae

023. Whitebreasted Waterhen- *Amaurornis phoenicurus*
024. Coot *Fulica atra*

Family Charadriidae

025. Redwattled Lapwing *Vanellus indicus*

Family Laridae

026. Indian River Tern- *Sterna aurantia*

Family Columbidae

027. Greyfronted Green Pigeon *Treron pompadora*
028. Common Green Pigeon *Treron phoenicoptera*
029. Jerdon's Imperial Pigeon- *Ducula badia*
030. Blue Rock Pigeon- *Columba livia*
031. Spotted Dove- *Streptopelia chinensis*
032. Emerald Dove- *Chalcophaps indica*

Family Psittacidae

033. Blossomheaded Parakeet *Psittacula cyanocephala*
034. Bluewinged Parakeet *Psittacula columboides*
035. Indian Lorikeet- *Loriculus vernalis*

Family Cuculidae

036. Common Hawk-Cuckoo *Cuculus varius*
037. Indian Cuckoo *Cuculus micropterus*
038. Banded Bay Cuckoo *Cacomantis sonneralii*

039. Plaintive Cuckoo *Cacomantis passerinus*
040. Koel *Eudynamis scolopacea*
041. Coucal *Centropus sinensis*

Family Strigidae

042. Collared Scops Owl *Otus bakkamoena* (HO)
043. Forest Eagle Owl *Bubo nipalensis* (HO)
044. Barred Jungle Owlet *Glaucidium radiatum*
045. Spotted Owlet *Athene brama*

Family Caprimulgidae

046. Jungle Nightjar *Caprimulgus indicus* (HO)

Family Apodidae

047. Whiterumped Spinetail Swift *Chaetura sylvatica*
048. House Swift *Appus affinis*
049. Crested Tree Swift *Heiniprocne longipennis*

Family Alcedinidae

050. Pied Kingfisher *Ceryle rudis*
051. Whitebreasted Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*
052. Whitebreasted Kingfisher *Halcyon smirnenensis*

Family Meropidae

053. Chestnutheaded Bee-eater *Merops leschenaultii*
054. Green Bee-eater *Merops orientalis*
055. Bluebearded Bee-eater *Nyctornis athertoni*

Family Coraciidae

056. Indian Roller *Coracias benghalensis*

Family Upupidae

057. Hoopoe *Upupa epops*

Family Bucerotidae

058. Malabar Grey Hornbill *Tockus griseus*
059. Malabar Pied Hornbill *Anthraceros coronatus*
060. Great Pied Hornbill *Buceros bicornis*

Family Capitonidae

061. Small Green Barbet *Megalaima viridis*
062. Crimsonthroated Barbet *Megalaima rubricapilla*
063. Crimsonbreasted Barbet *Megalaima haemacephala*

Family Picidae

064. Rufous Woodpecker *Micropternus brachyurus*
065. Small Yellownaped Woodpecker *Picus chloropus chlorigaster*
066. Lesser Goldenbacked Woodpecker *Dinopium benghalense*
067. Malherbe's Goldenbacked Woodpecker *Chrysocolopates lucidus*
068. Great Black Woodpecker *Dryocopus javensis*
069. Heartspotted Woodpecker *Hemicircus canente*
070. Mahratta Woodpecker *Picoides mahrattensis*
071. Pigmy Woodpecker *Dendrocopus nanus*

Family Pittidae

072. Indian Pitta *Pitta brachyura*

Family Alaudidae

073. Ashycrowned Finch Lark *Eremopterix grisea*

Family Hirundinidae

074. Dusky Crag Martin *Hirundo concolor*
075. Common Swallow *Hirundo rustica*
076. Wiretailed Swallow *Hirundo smithii*
077. Redrumped Swallow *Hirundo daurica*

Family Laniidae

078. Grey Shrike *Lanius excubitor*
 079. Rufousbacked Shrike *Lanius schach*
 080. Brown Shrike *Lanius cristatus*

Family Oriolidae

081. Golden Oriole *Oriolus oriolus*
 082. Brown Shrike *Oriolus xantharnus*

Family Dicruridae

083. Grey Drongo *Dicrurus leucophaeus*
 084. Whitebellied Drongo *Dicrurus caerulescens*
 085. Bronzed Drongo *Dicrurus aeneus*
 086. Haircrested Drongo *Dicrurus hottentotus*
 087. Racket-tailed Drongo *Dicrurus paradiseus*

Family Sturnidae

088. Blyth's Myna *Sturnus malabaricus blythi*
 089. Blackheaded Myna *Sturnus pagadorum*
 090. Common Myna *Acridotheres tristis*
 091. Jungle Myna *Acridotheres fuscus*
 092. Hill Myna *Gracula religiosa*

Family Corvidae

093. Common Treepie *Dendrocitta vagabunda*
 094. House Crow *Corvus splendens*
 095. Jungle Crow *Corvus macrorhynchos*

Family Campephagidae

096. Pied Flycatcher Shrike *Hemipus picatus*
 097. Large Wood Shrike *Tephrodornis virgatus*
 098. Common Wood Shrike *Tephrodornis pondicerianus*
 099. Large Cuckoo Shrike *Coracias novaehollandiae*
 100. Blackheaded Cuckoo Shrike *Coracias melanoptera*
 101. Scarlet Minivet *Pericrocotus flammeus*
 102. Small Minivet *Pericrocotus cinnamomeus*

Family Irenidae

103. Common Iora *Aegithina tiphia*
 104. Goldfronted Chloropsis *Chloropsis aurifrons*
 105. Goldmantled Chloropsis *Chloropsis cochinchinensis*
 106. Fairy Bluebird *Irene puella*

Family Pycnonotidae

107. Redwhiskered Bulbul *Pycnonotus jocosus*
 108. Redvented Bulbul *Pycnonotus cafer*
 109. Yellowbrowed Bulbul *Hypsipetes indicus*

Family Muscicapidae

110. Spotted Babbler *Pellorneum ruficeps* (HO)
 111. Slatyheaded Scimitar Babbler *Pomatorhinus horsfieldi*
 112. Blackheaded Babbler *Rhopocichla atriceps*
 113. Jungle Babbler *Turdoides striatus*
 114. Quaker Babbler *Alcippe poioicephala*
 115. Brown Flycatcher *Muscicapa latirostris*
 116. Redbreasted Flycatcher *Muscicapa parva*
 117. Tickell's Blue Flycatcher *Muscicapa tickelliae*

118. Verditer Flycatcher *Muscicapa thalassina*
 119. Whitebrowed Fantail Flycatcher *Rhipidura aureola*
 120. Whitespotted Fantail Flycatcher *Rhipidura albicollis*
 121. Paradise Flycatcher *Terpsiphone paradisi*
 122. Monarch Flycatcher *Hypothymis azurea*
 123. Streaked Fantail Warbler *Cisticola juncidis*
 124. Franklin's Wren Warbler *Prinia hodgsoni*
 125. Jungle Wren Warbler *Prinia syloatica*
 126. Tailor Bird *Orthotomus sutorius*
 127. Blyth's Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus dumetorum*
 128. Greenish Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus trochiloides*
 129. Magpie Robin *Copsychus saularis*
 130. Shama *Copsychus malabaricus*
 131. Pied Bush Chat *Saxicola caprata*
 132. Indian Robin *Saxicoloides fulicata*
 133. Blueheaded Rock Thrush *Monticola cinclorhynchus*
 134. Blue Rock Thrush *Monticola solitarius*
 135. Malabar Whistling Thrush *Myiophonus horsfieldii*
 136. Whitethroated Ground Thrush *Zosterops citrina cyanotus*

Family Paridae

137. Grey Tit *Parus major*
 138. Yellowcheeked Tit *Parus xanthogenys*

Family Sittidae

139. Velvetfronted Nuthatch *Sitta frontalis*

Family Motacillidae

140. Tree Pipit *Anthus spp.*
 141. Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea*
 142. Large Pied Wagtail *Motacilla maderaspatensis*

Family Dicaeidae

143. Tickell's Flowerpecker *Dicaeum erythrorhynchus*
 144. Nilgiri Flowerpecker *Dicaeum concolor*

Family Nectariniidae

145. Small Sunbird *Nectarinia minima*
 146. Loten's Sunbird *Nectarinia lotenia*
 147. Purple Sunbird *Nectarinia asiatica*
 148. Yellowbacked Sunbird *Aethopyga siparaja*
 149. Little Spiderhunter *Arachnothera longirostris*

Family Zosteropidae

150. White-eye *Zosterops palpebrosa*

Family Ploceidae

151. House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*
 152. Yellowthroated Sparrow *Petronia zanthocollis*
 153. Baya *Ploceus philippinus*
 154. Whitebacked Munia *Lonchura malabarica*
 155. Spotted Munia *Lonchura punctulata*

(HO) indicates species identified by calls.

Participate in Asian Mid-winter Waterfowl Census, January 10 - 26, 1994

for details and count forms contact your Regional Coordinator

BIRDS OF PALNI HILLS

HARKIRAT S SANGHA, B-27, Gautam Marg, Khatipura, Jaipur - 302 012

I visited the Palni Hills from April 18 to April 25, 1993 for the purpose of learning bird ringing techniques from Dr. Balachandran and Alagar Rajan, coordinators at the bird ringing camp. The bird ringing camp was organised by the Bombay Natural History Society (B.N.H.S.) at Poombrai and Berijam. The B.N.H.S. had carried out bird ringing in the area during the summer of 1970, 1982 and 1984 and under the Bird migration Project, organised bird ringing both in winter and summer months in 1990-91. The objective of bird ringing in these hills was to monitor species composition to establish altitudinal movement among resident species and to find out the winter migrate passing through the area.

Our first camp was at Poombrai (1800m). It has mixed vegetation with some shola forest. The main habitats at Poombrai are shola forest, scrub jungle, secondary forest and forest department's plantations of eucalyptus, pine and wattle. Around Poombrai village are fields and a few fruit trees. The juxtaposition of different habitats is responsible for the diversity of birdlife at Poombrai. Tree felling and encroachment is common in the area and erosion is noticed on some hills. According to old times the destruction of forest has made Poombrai more warm. In consequence Hoopoe *Upupa epops* moves up from the plains earlier now.

The second bird ringing camp was organised at Berijam (2200). It is a lovely area with original shola forests and grasslands. There are plantations also belonging to the forest department. The area is in good condition. The department is aware of the trials to the area and recently they have imposed entry restrictions. Usually to nature lovers entry is not refused. During our stay at Berijam (April 20 and 21) a Dutch group was camping there.

On reflection, eight days of bird ringing and birdwatching in the Palnis were absolutely absorbing. Handling birds for ringing and watching them closely proved invaluable in the field. It was so revealing to compare the plumage of birds in hand with the illustrations depicted in various books. Learning bird ringing techniques was the main purpose of my visit and this activity kept me quite busy. Nevertheless, I found time to watch birds and keep notes of my observations. Altogether 45 species were recorded including migrants. The following list is drawn from my field notes and observations during bird ringing operations.

Systematic List

1. Little Grebe *Podiceps ruficollis*

On April 20 and 21 three birds were observed at the Berijam lake.

2. Little Green Heron *Ardeola bacchus*
I disturbed one individual while walking around the Berijam Lake. As it flew away, its yellow feet were clearly visible. Not recorded by Nichols and Fuller. Apparently first record of the bird from the Palnis (20.4.93)
3. Paddy bird *Ardeola grayii*
Only two birds were observed at the Berijam Lake. (April 20 and 21).
4. Crested Honey Buzzard *Pernis ptilorhynchus*
Two birds were seen near the Forest Rest House, Poombrai. Fuller describes it as common at Shembagnur in winter only. Tail pattern of both birds was similar but quite different from what is shown in the field guides.
5. Shikra *Accipiter badius*
A pair was seen soaring very high on April 19 at Poombrai. One bird was seen again on April 24 at Poombrai.
6. Crested Serpent Eagle *Spilornis cheela*
Observed regularly at Berijam on all days.
7. Grey Junglefowl *Gallus sonneratii*
The first call in the morning was heard at 5.45 both at Poombrai and Berijam, Observed regularly at both places common.
8. Nilgiri Woodpigeon *Columba elphinstonii*
Two birds were seen on a bare tree at Berijam (21.4.93) Not seen at Poombrai.
9. Spotted Dove *Streptopelia chinensis*
Observed in groups of 5-6 at both places. Commonly seen on forest roads.
10. Emerald Dove *Chalcophaps indica*
Only one bird was trapped at Poombrai (24.3.93)
11. Crow Pheasant *Centropus sinensis*
Twice seen at Poombrai. On April 21 close to the fields and in the shola on 24th, was heard calling almost everyday.
12. Indian Jungle Nightjar *Caprimulgus indicus*
Heard everywhere both at Poombrai and Berijam throughout my stay. Once I heard one calling as late as 6.10 in the morning. On 24th evening at 7.30. I located one bird calling from the top of a pine tree. After flying in a circle it perched again on another tree to resume calling.
13. Chestnut-headed Bee-eater *Merops leschenaulti*
A single bird was seen on April 23 at Poombrai in degraded area close to the fields.
14. Hoopoe *Upupa epops*
Three records from Poombrai near the village. (April 19, 23 and 25)

15. Whitechecked Barbet *Megalaima viridis*
It was heard calling throughout the day at Poombrai and Berijam. 2 or 3 birds were mistnetted. It was not an easy bird to handle with its formidable bill.
16. Indian Goldenbacked threefoed Woodpecker *Dinopium javanese*
Two pairs were observed on pine trees on April 24 at Poombrai. One male afforded good observation while preening itself.
17. Nilgiri House Swallow *Hirundo tahitica*
Commonly seen at Poombrai and Berijam. One old nest was discovered under a bridge near the Berijam lake. Dr. Balachandran showed me another nest containing two chicks a few kilometres from Poombrai.
18. Rufousbacked Shrike *Lanius schach*
One bird was observed on April 23 at Poombrai close to the fields.
19. Jungle Myna *Acridotheres fuscus*
Common at Poombrai and Berijam. A noisy bird to handle for ringing.
20. Jungle Crow *Corvus macrorhynchos*
Common at Poombrai and Berijam. From Jungle crows were observed soaring on April 21 in very windy conditions at Zamindar shola, Berijam.
21. Red Whiskered Bulbul *Pycnonotus jocosus*
Common at Poombrai and Berijam.
22. Black Bulbul *Hypsipetes madagascariensis*
Surprisingly only one bird was seen at Poombrai on April 19.4.93.
23. Slatyheaded Scimitar Babbler *Pomatorhinus schisticeps*
Mostly heard. 2 were recorded near the Berijam lake. 3 were observed in a pine plantation. (21.4.93) 2 more were observed in the shola on April 24, Poombrai.
24. Jungle Babbler *Turdoides striatus*
6-7 birds were observed regularly near Forest Rest House, Poombrai. not observed at Berijam.
25. Whitetrested Langhing Thrush *Garrulax jerdonii*
Perhaps one of the most abundant species in the Palnis, Common at Poombrai and Berijam.
26. Black and Orange Flycatcher *Muscicapa nigrorufa*
Atleast five pairs were recorded at Poombrai and Berijam in the sholas. Interestingly, one pair was observed in a pine plantation where a few bushes were also growing. Poombrai (April 24,93) Nichols says it is found in the thickest bushes of the darkest sholas.
27. Nilgiri Flycatcher *Muscicapa albicaudata*
Common at Poombrai and Berijam. Evidently, more confiding than the other flycatchers. One pair was regularly observed from the verandah of the Forest Rest House. One very young bird was mistnetted at Poombrai. It was released without taking measurements as its feathers were growing.
28. Greyheaded Flycatcher *Calicicapa ceylonensis*
Common at Poombrai and Berijam.
29. Jungle Wren Warbler *Prinia sylvatica*
Mostly observed in the degraded forest area and grassy patches at Poombrai and Berijam. 5 birds were observed in the grass growing around the Berijam lake. (April 21)
30. Blyth's Red Warbler *Acrocephalus dumetorum*
This migrant was quite common at Poombrai and Berijam between April 19 to 24,93.
31. Largebilled Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus trochiloides*
A single bird was mistnetted at Poombrai on April 19,93.
32. Eastern Greenish Warbler *Phylloscopus trochiloides*
One bird was recorded on April 21 at Berijam. Another one wearing a ring mistnetted on April 22. On checking record it was found that the bird had been ringing only five days ago in general moulting conditions. In a short span of five days the bird had grown new feathers.
33. Tickells Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus affinis*
One bird was recorded at Berijam on April 21, 93.
34. Rufousbellied Shortwing *Brachyopteryx major*
Observed regularly at Poombrai and Berijam.
35. Blue Chat *Erithacus brunneus*
One female was mistnetted at Berijam on April 20, 93.
36. Magpie Robin *Copsychus saularis*
Fuller described it as rare and recorded a single bird at Kodaikanal. 2-3 birds were regularly seen by me at Poombrai close to the Forest Rest House.
37. Pied Bush Chat *Saxicola caprata*
Observed mainly in scrub area and close to the fields, Poombrai. One was observed at the Berijam Lake (22.04.93) This species appears to have become rare (Dr Balachandran).
38. Malabar Whistling Thrush *Myiophonus lonsfieldii*
At the stream behind the Forest Rest House, 3-4 birds were regularly observed.
39. Blackbird *Turdus merula*
In the Sholas and pine plantations at Poombrai and Berijam.
40. Yellowcheeked Tit *Parus xanthogenys*
Common. Poombrai and Berijam.
41. Velvetfronted Nuthatch *Psitta frontalis*
Only 2 birds on 22.04.93 at Berijam.
42. Nilgiri Pipit *Anthus nilghiriensis*
A single bird on 22.04.93 near the Berijam Lake.

43. Pied Wagtail *Motacilla maderaspatensis*
A single bird on the Berijam Lake. April 20 and 21.
44. Plaincoloured Flowerpecker *Dicaeum concolor*
In groups of 3-4 at Poombrai and Berijam.
Common.
45. White eye *Zosterops palpebrosa*
Possibly the most abundant species in the Palnis.
On April 21, eight birds were mistnetted in one of
the mistnets. Very common.
46. Common Rosefinch *Carpodacus erythrurus*
No sight record. One male was mistnetted at
Poombrai.

I am grateful to Dr S Balachandran for sharing his interesting observations and knowledge about the birds of

the Palni Hills and Tourist and Wildlife Society of India, Jaipur (TWSI) for sponsoring my visit to the Palni Hills for the bridringing camp.

References

- Ali. S. and S. D Ripley., (1983) *Handbook of the Birds of India and Pakistan* Oxford University Press, Delhi.
- Balachandran S., *Bird Ringing Activities at Kodai Hills Newsletter* No. 7 & 8, Vol. 32.
- Fuller N. A., *Additions to the Birds of the Palni Hills, South India*, JNBHS, Vol. 53.
- Nichols E. G., *The Kodaikanal Birds and how to name them* JBNHS, Vol. 39.

BIRDS OF THIASHOLA (NILGIRIS)

MEENA UNNIKRISHNAN & B RAJASEKHAR,
Salim Ali School of Ecology, Pondicherry University, Kalapet, Pondicherry.

Our search for a summer project took us right to the high reaches of the Nilgiris. Approximately 220m above mean sea level lies one of the largest patches of shola Thiashola. We were the Indian Institute of Science team, that was looking at certain aspects of vegetation here.

Characteristic of the tropical montane wet evergreen rain forest, the vegetation was stunted with moss and lichen covered trunks and a lot of orchids. Some of the commoner trees were *Daphniphyllum* sp., *Litsaea* sp., *Neolitsaea* sp., *Ilex* sp., *Michelia nilagirica* etc. (H.S.Suresh., Pers.comm.) The following is a list of some of the birds we came across over 2 week period just before the onset of the monsoons.

Compared to a moist deciduous forest or similiar low altitude forest habitats where a similiar effort gave us a list of over 100 species the shola do seem to be poorly represented. One reason for this could be the very dense canopy, where one usually only hears the birds. In fact much of this list was made from calls which were later confirmed by sightings. The Crested Hawk Eagle which we suspected to have heard but never saw has been deleted from the list. Similarly there were other birds like a raptor seen in over head flight which could not be identified. This means that the following list is not complete and more effort shall add to it.

Apart from the high altitude and extreme climate, the patchiness/fragmentation of the habitat could be responsible for the poor species richness. Thus lists for individual patches of shola, in the long run will not only

serve birdwatchers but also Island biogeographers. Though birds are not good representatives of insular characteristics, certain more or less sedentary species do exist.

ORDER Falconiformes STATUS/ABUNDANCE

Family ACCIPITRIDAE

1. Shikra *Accipiter badius* R

ORDER Galliformes

Family Phasianidae

2. Grey Jungle Fowl *Callus sonneratti* R

order COLUMBIFORMES

Family Columbidae

3. Nilgiri Wood Pigeon *Columba elphinstonii* O
4. Spotted Dove *Streptopilia chinensis* C+

order STRIGIFORMES

Family Strigidae

5. Brown Wood Owl *Strix leptogrammica* R

order APODIDAE

Family Apodidae

6. Alpine Swift *Apus melbas* O
7. House Swift *Apus affinis* O+

Order PICIFORMES

Family Capitonidae

8. Small green barbet *Megailama viridis* C

Family Picidae

9. Larger goldenbacked woodpecker *Chrysocolaptes lucidus* R

Order PASSERIFORMES

Family Hirundinidae

10. Dusky Crag Martin *Hirundo concolor* R⊕
11. Common Swallow *Hirundo rustica* O+

Family Lanidae

12. Rufous backed Shrike *Lanius schach* R+

Family Sturnidae

13. Indian Myna *Acridotheres tristis* O+
14. Jungle Myna *A.fuscus* O

Family Corvidae

15. House Crow *Corvus splendens* R+
16. Jungle Crow *C.macrorhynchos* R+

Family Campephagidae

17. Pied flycatcher Shrike *Hemipus picatus* F

Family Pycnonotidae

18. Red whiskered Bulbul *Pycnonotus jocosus* O+
19. Red vented Bulbul *P.cafer* All except 1 sighting below 1750m msl +

20. Black Bulbul *Hypsipetes madagascarensis* C

Family Muscicapidae

21. Jungle Babbler *Turdoidae striatus* C
22. Nilgiri Laughing Thrush *Garrulax cachinaans* O
23. Nilgiri Quaker Babbler *Alcippe poioicephala* O
24. Black and Orange Flycatcher *Muscicapa nigrorufa* C
25. White bellied Blue Flycatcher *M.pllipes* R
26. Tickell's Flycatcher *M.tickelliae* R
27. Nilgiri Verditer Flycatcher *M.albicaudata* A
28. Greyheaded Flycatcher *Culicicapa ceylonensis* C
29. Magpie Robin *Copsychus saularis* R+
30. Rufousbellied Shortwing *Brachypteryx major* C+
31. Nilgiri Pied Buschat *Saxicola captrata* A+

Family Paridae

32. Blackbird *Turdus merula* C
33. Grey Tit *Parus major* O
34. Yellow checked Tit *P.xanthogenys* R

Family Sittidae

35. Velvet fronted Nutatch *Sitta frontalis* O
36. Nilgiri Pipit *Anthus nighiriensis* R⊕

Family Dicacidae

37. Nilgiri Flowerpecker *Dicaeum concolor* C

Family Nectarinidae

38. Small Sunbird *Nectarina minima* O
39. White eye *Zosterops palpebrosa* A+
40. House Sparrow *Paser domesticus* A+
41. Roufous bellied Munia *Lonchura kelaarti* R⊕

Key to status, figures are Relative Abundance indices for different species.

<	0.6%	Rare	(R)
0.6%	<	3.0%	Occassional/Few
3.0%	<	6.0%	Common
6.0%	<	Abundamnt	(A)
		Sec only in tea plantations	(*)
		More common in tea plantations	(+)
		Seen in grasslands nearby	⊕

The list is more or less a subset of the one by Mohamed Ali Reza Khan (1979, JBNHS) with the exception of the Common Swallow, Nilgiri laughing Thrush and the Indian Myna. Some of the sightings are new records for altitudinal limits. The Nilgiri Flowerpecker according to the Handbook of Indian Birds by Salim Ali and Dillon Ripley is found up to only 1000m while here at 2200m it was fairly common. Same is the case with the Brown wood Owl(1800m in the Handbook), the large Goldenbacked Woodpecker(1600m-) and the Whitebellied Blue Flycatcher(1700m) were seen in the Shola at altitudes over 2000m. Also the White Eye seen here might be the Nilgiri subspecies.

I would like to thank the Indian Institute of Science team and our hosts at Thiashola estate for making this trip possible. We also would like to thak Matarishwa, Salim Ali School of Ecology for partially funding the trip.

ICBP/ BLI Publications:

Cormorants, Darters, and Pelicans of the World

Paul A. Johnsgard

In this first worldwide survey of Cormorants, Darters, and Pelicans, Johnsgard summarizes the status and biology, providing a colour illustration of nearly every species and a variety of anatomical drawings.

1993, 32 colour, 81 line illus., 37 maps 448p details from Smithsonian Institution Press, 8 New Industrial Rd, Singapore 1953

NEED TO PRESERVE BORDOIBAM WETLAND

BIBHAB KUMAR TALUKDAR, "EVER GREEN" Samanway Path (Survey) PO: Beltola, Guwahati, ASSAM 781 028.

The Bordoibam Wetland (27.32N, 94.45E approximately), situated in the Dhemaji District of Assam, is a good habitat for many species of birds. The area of the Wetland is 11 sq.km. and the Forest Department of Assam has submitted a proposal to make the Wetland into a Bird Sanctuary. The present status of the Wetland is a proposed Bird Sanctuary and is looked after by Lakhimpur Forest Division. However, the wetland is still controlled by the Revenue Department of Assam and fishing lease is granted to fishermen every year. The disturbances caused by fishermen in the wetland specially during winter, are gradually destroying the natural habitat of many bird species. If urgent steps are not taken to protect and conserve the wetland for the diversity of birds, the area will soon become degraded and in the process a great diversity of fauna will be lost. The Bordoibam wetland is known as the breeding ground of Large Whistling Teal, Purple Moorhen, Bronze Winged Jacana. White Breasted Waterhen and Watercock.

During January 1993, a survey was conducted at Bordoibam by the author and Mr.R.K. Das D.F.O. (Social Forestry Division of Lakhimpur, Assam) and a Bird Watching Camp was also organised at Bordoibam, where basic training was provided to some local enthusiastic youths regarding bird identification. During the survey at Bordoibam, the following bird species were recorded. However the list of birds given here is by no means comprehensive and prolonged observation will definitely add some more rare species of birds to the list.

A list of Birds found at Bordoibam, Assam

Family: Alcedinidae

- | | |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 01. White Breasted Kingfisher | <i>Halcyon smyrnensis</i> |
| 02. Lesser Pied Kingfisher | <i>Ceryle rudis</i> |
| 03. Stork billed Kingfisher | <i>Pelargopsis capensis</i> |

Family: Anatidae

- | | |
|--------------------------|----------------------------|
| 04. Large Whistling Teal | <i>Dendrocygna bicolor</i> |
| 05. Shoveller | <i>Anas clypeata</i> |
| 06. Mallard | <i>Anas platyrhynchos</i> |
| 07. White Eyed Poachard | <i>Aythya nyroca</i> |

Family: Spodidae

- | | |
|---------------|------------------|
| 08. The Swift | <i>Apus apus</i> |
|---------------|------------------|

Family: Ardeidae

- | | |
|------------------|-----------------------|
| 09. Little Egret | <i>getta garzetta</i> |
| 10. Cattle Egret | <i>Bubulcus ibis</i> |
| 11. Large Egret | <i>Ardea alba</i> |

- | | |
|------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 12. Greyc Heron | <i>Ardea cinerea</i> |
| 13. Pond Heron | <i>Ardeola grayii</i> |
| 14. Night Heron | <i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i> |
| Family: Charadriidae | |
| 15. Red Wattled Lapwing | <i>Venellus indicus</i> |
| 16. Grey Headed Lapwing | <i>Venellus cinereus</i> |
| Family: Ciconiidae | |
| 17. Lesser Adjutant Stork | <i>Lepoptilos javanicus</i> |
| Family: Columbidae | |
| 18. Spotted Dove | <i>Streptopelia chinensis</i> |
| Family: Coraciidae | |
| 19. Hoopoe | <i>Upupa epops</i> |
| Family: Glareidae | |
| 20. Small Indian P ratincole | <i>Glareola lactea</i> |
| Family: Hirundinidae | |
| 22. Pheasant Tailed Jacana | <i>Hydrophasianus chirurgus</i> |
| 23. Bronze Winged Jacana | <i>Metopidius indicus</i> |
| Family: Laridae | |
| 24. Indian River Tern | <i>Sterna aurantia</i> |
| 25. Black Headed Gull | <i>Larus ridibundus</i> |
| Family: Meropidae | |
| 26. Green Bee Eater | <i>Merops orientalis</i> |
| Family: Motacillidae | |
| 27. White Wagtail | <i>Motacilla alba</i> |
| 28. Forest Wagtail | <i>Motacilla indica</i> |
| Family: Oriolidae | |
| 29. Black Headed Oriole | <i>Oriolus xanthornus</i> |
| Family: Phalacrocoracidae | |
| 30. Cormorant | <i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i> |
| 31. Little Cormorant | <i>Phalacrocorax niger</i> |
| Family: Podicipedidae | |
| 32. Great Crested Grebe | <i>Podiceps cristatus</i> |
| Family: Podicipedidae | |
| 32. Great Crested Grebe | <i>Podiceps cristatus</i> |
| Family: Rallidae | |
| 33. Purple Moorhen | <i>Porphyrio porphyrio</i> |
| 34. Watercock | <i>Gallicrex cinerea</i> |
| 35. White Brested Waterhen | <i>Amaurornis phoenicurus</i> |
| Family: Sturnidae | |
| 36. Common Myna | |

News from Birdlife International

Almost 250 pairs of binoculars have been provided by Birdlife to conservation and educational projects in Latin America and the Caribbean. Thanks to RSBP and British Airways assisting Nature Conservation.

SYNOPSIS OF THESIS ON ECOLOGY AND BIOLOGY OF BARBETS

H.S.A. YAHYA, Centre of Wildlife Biology and Ornithology, AMU, Aligarh - 202002

A comparative study of ecology and biology of barbets, *Megalaima* spp (Capitonidae : Piciformes) with special reference to *Megalaima virdis* (Boddaert) and *M. rubricapilla malabarica* (Blyth) at the Periyar Tiger Reserve, Kerala.

Submitted to the University of Bombay for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Zoology, by Hafiz Shaeque Ahmed Yahya, under the guidance of Dr. Salim Ali, D.Sc., F.N.A. Head of the Department of Field Ornithology, Bombay Natural History Society, Bombay.

Barbets are a prominent group of hole-nesting birds with a pantropical distribution. The ecology and biology for several American and African species have been studied, whereas a similar study on any of the Asiatic barbets is yet to be reported. The present study was initiated particularly to fill the gap in our knowledge of the group.

In the present study the ecology and biology of some of the Indian barbets in several parts of our country were studied. *Megalaima virdis* and *M. rubricapilla malabarica* were intensively studied at the Periyar Tiger Reserve, Thekkady (Kerala) between March 1978 and 1980.

The ecological study surveys the habitats of barbets, their status and distribution in the study area, and their relationship with the local flora and fauna. The study of food and feeding habits comprises a discussion of food items, food preference, method of feeding, feeding cycle, competition for food and ecological isolation based on feeding habits. Since *virdis* has been reported as a minor pest on coffee, an attempt has been made to assess the

extent of damage, if any, by this barbet on coffee plantations.

Owing to their hole-nesting habits, very little is known about the breeding biology of barbets in comparison with other groups of birds. In the present study first hand data have been collected on almost all aspects of breeding biology of *virdis* and *rubricapilla*. The courtship and pair formation, nest site selection and excavation, egg laying and hatching, incubation period, percentage of incubation, fledging - fledgling period and parental care, breeding success and ecological isolation have been discussed.

Data collected on behaviour other than feeding and breeding namely calling, roosting, preening, drinking and bathing have been discussed in detail.

The study suggests that the barbets are economically important since they help in seed dispersal and feed on several harmful insects including the Teak defoliator caterpillar, *Hyblaea puera* which is a serious pest on the Teak plant in the study area. The study also suggests that far from being a minor pest on coffee, *virdis* plays a significant role in controlling a major pest of coffee, the white borer, *Zygotrechus quadripes*.

The study also tends to support Huxley's (1942) postulation that size difference between congeneric species of birds is a means of ecological isolation. The comparative study on food and feeding habits of several species of barbets suggests that, as food is the primary requirement of an animal, for the successful coexistence of two closely related species in a single habitat, divergent morphological and structural adaptations could be a process of natural selection.

SYNOPSIS OF THE THESIS ON THE COMPARATIVE ECOLOGY OF RESIDENT DUCKS IN KEOLADEO NATIONAL PARK, BHARATPUR

U. SRIDHARAN, Ministry of Environment and Forests, 194, Kharavela Nagar, Bhubaneswar - 751 001 (Orissa)

Submitted to the University of Bombay for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Zoology, by Mr U Sridharan, under the guidance of Mr J C Daniel, Department of Field Ornithology, Bombay Natural History Society.

Of the 23 species of ducks recorded from Keoladeo National Park, Bharatpur, four are resident ducks, namely the Lesser Whistling Teal (*Dendrocygna javanica*), Spotbill

Duck (*Anas pocilorhyncha*), Cotton Teal (*Nettapus coromandelianus*) and Comb Duck (*Sarkidiornis melanotos*). No systematic studies have been carried out on the ecology of these ducks in the past in India. A comparative study on the ecology of these four species was therefore undertaken from January 1984 to December 1986. Population, habitat utilisation, food and feeding habits, activity pattern time

budget and breeding biology of each species was studied.

The population was assessed by directly counting the birds in all the aquatic blocks using the dykes as transects. Habitat utilization of each species was studied by regularly surveying the entire aquatic area and recording the number of birds seen in each particular vegetation type of habitat. Food and feeding habits were studied by the micro-histological examination of the droppings. "Focal animal sampling method" and the "Scanning method" were adopted for studying the activity pattern. Regular observations on behaviour and periodic nest search was carried out for studying the breeding seasonability.

The population of Whistling Teal and Spotbill Duck varied from 1 to 98 and 9 to 290 respectively. In the case of Cotton Teal and Comb Duck it fluctuated from 8 to 562 and from 1 to 101 respectively. The population of all the species was the lowest in high summer and autumn as they disperse for breeding. There is a significant correlation between the population of the resident ducks and the total quantum of water supplied into the Park and to the depth of water inside the Park. Besides this, the population of the Spotbill Duck and Cotton Teal has a high correlation with the total biomass of floating and submerged vegetation. The latter has a high relationship with the total biomass of aquatic macrophytes and the water input. Availability of sufficient water resulting in the growth of aquatic macrophytes appear to be the major factor influencing the fluctuation of population of resident ducks. The pattern of fluctuation of population is significantly different among the four species, since they differ in habitat requirements and, food and feeding habits. However, because of the relationship in habitat preference and feeding habits the same pattern of fluctuation was observed between the Whistling Teal and Comb Duck, and Spotbill Duck and Cotton Teal.

Although the habitat preference shows seasonal variation according to the availability of habitat, the most preferred habitat of the Whistling Teal is the rooted floating vegetation where as in the case of Spotbill Duck it is open water, in Cotton Teal open water and open water with floating vegetation and in Comb Duck grass patches. Niche breadth for feeding habitats of the four species is 0.451, 0.376, 0.328 and 0.349 for the Whistling Teal, Spotbill Duck, Cotton Teal and Comb Duck respectively. Cotton Teal seems to be more selective as it has the smallest niche size. All the four species of resident ducks are having some overlap in their feeding habitats, the overlap between Whistling Teal and Comb Duck was the least. But between Spotbill Duck and Cotton Teal it was high since their highest preferred habitat was the same.

Eventhough, habitat overlap does occur among the four species, competition is avoided by preferring different types of food. The seeds of *Nymphoides* from the highest preferred food of Whistling Teal, Spotbill Duck fed mostly on *Chara* sp., cotton Teal fed on *Hydrilla* sp. and *Spirodela*, and Comb Duck fed mostly on Wheat and the seeds of *Echinochloa* sp. The former from the surrounding villages. However, seasonal variation in the food consumed was observed in all the four species.

Significant variation in the time budget was noticed among the four species. Whistling Teals and Spotbill Ducks spent 23 %, 22 % of the day light hours respectively for feeding, whereas Comb Duck spent only 6%. Cotton Teal spent as much as 81% of the day light hours. Obviously the first three species must be spending more time at night feeding. Seasonal variation in the time budget was also noticed in all the four species.

Whistling Teal, Spotbill Duck and Comb Duck spent more time for feeding in the early hours of the day. These species have an increased resting period in the afternoon hours. Cotton Teal fed throughout the day in large numbers. Spotbill Duck and Whistling Teal, Spotbill Duck and Comb Duck, Whistling Teal and Comb Duck have more or less a similar activity pattern.

The resident ducks of Keoladeo National Park breed during August- September, the rainy season. The Lesser Whistling Teal and Spotbill Duck breed during summer also. Breeding habitat varied considerably in all the four species of resident ducks. The Lesser Whistling Teal was found nesting on mounds, grassy patches and the utilized nests of Pied Myna on *Acacia* trees. Spotbill Ducks utilize mounds and grassy patches and between them mounds were used more. Cotton Teals used tree holes. Production rate was more in the case of Cotton Teals compares to all other resident ducks. No active nest of Comb Duck was seen in the Park during the study period.

Provision of water input at a single stretch during monsoon, retention of water in one block during summer; avoidance of disturbance to mounds and grassy patches, ban on tree thinning operations during breeding seasons, protection of big trees and provision of more holes on trees are suggested for the increased breeding output of resident ducks.

CORRESPONDENCE

THE BEAUTIFUL NUTHATCH. R. JAYAPAL, 77-A, Kosa Annamalai Street, Gudiyatham, N.A.A (dt), Tamil Nadu 632602

This is with reference to your editorial on SACON meeting held in Coimbatore between 3rd and 6th August 1993 (NLBW vol:33 No:4, Aug-Sep '93) in which you have

queried about the Beautiful Nuthatch (*Sitta Formosa*).

It is for your kind information that as a matter of fact Beautiful Nuthatch (*S. Formosa*) is altogether a separate species different from both its velvet-fronted and chesnut bellied cousins. According to S.D Ripley, ('Synopsis', 1982) Beautiful Nuthatch is a rare and locally distributed species found in Sikkim, Bhutan (?), Arunachal Pradesh and south in the hills to Meghalaya, Manipur and the chittagong region. It inhabits deep, wet semi-evergreen and evergreen forest, between 1500 and 2400m in summer and 330 to 2000m in winter.

Incidentally you have raised your deep concern about the frequent changing of the English common names of birds, which, I am sure would be equally shared by all.

We could, to some extent, understand the occasional changes in the scientific names of birds as the revision of binomial nomenclature is often necessitated by a host of convoluted factors known to the taxonomists. But it is still Greek to us why the common English names have also to be revised, that too when they have a well-established usage after many standardization works of such great pioneers as Salim Ali and Ripley.

BIRDWATCHING IN THE PALNIS. ANDREW ROBERT SON, 2 St. Georges Terrace, Blockley, Moreton-in-Marsh, Glos. GL56 9BN, England

Last winter I managed to spend a few days in the Palnis with Kumaran Sathasivam, and we had some good birdwatching. The cliffs between Pillar Rocks and Berijam lake were good for swifts and we encountered a flock of 100+ House Martins as well. There were also Nilgiri Pipit, apparently quite at home within a patch of grassland hardly one hectare in extent and quite surrounded by shola and plantations. In the Nilgiris I found them in similar circumstances and was encouraged that pairs can seemingly survive on such remnants of grassland. Added excitement came from close encounters with gaur and a solitary wild dog, and in Bombay shola there were Nilgiri Wood Pigeon.

Our most ambitious trek was from Kodaikanal down to the base of the hills. We set off too slowly and had to hurry the last part in order not to be caught in the dark, which was a pity since the lower slopes were far more interesting than the upper. There were more birds and butterflies than we had time to look at, including a pair of black eagles that provided us with the best views of the species at close range that either of us have ever had, and we surprised a Crested Hawk-Eagle on the fresh carcass of a Rusty-spotted Cat. There was also an encounter with a group of men lunching

off an even fresher carcass of Grey Langur! For most of the day we followed an old pony track, originally built with great skill along the steep slopes but sadly in need of repair. What a pity that such an asset is being allowed to deteriorate, but then part of the beauty was in the virtual absence of humans.

TIPS FOR THE IDENTIFICATION OF COMMON BARN OWL NESTS. R. NAGARAJAN, P. NEELANARAYANAN and R. KANAKASABAI, Division of Wildlife Biology, A.V.C. College (Autonomous) Mayiladuthurai - 609 305, Tamil Nadu.

A survey was made to suggest clues for the identification of nesting/roosting sites of Common Barn Owl, *Tyto alba*, a predatory bird of rodent pests. This was carried out during January 1993 in Nagapattinam Quaid-e-Millath District, Tamil Nadu. for the present study the indirect signs of barn owls viz., pellets (regurgitated balls contain the fur and bones of the prey eaten), remains of the prey, droppings and calls were used. The search was made in the temples, tree holes, dilapidated buildings, unused barns and buildings. We observed the barn owl's droppings frequently and the pellets rarely under the perching sites. The droppings of barn owl were white in colour and they spread on the walls of the sanctum sanctorium and on the floor. The pellets were greenish black in colour. After recognising their droppings and pellets under the perching sites, an intensive search was made to locate the animals, inside the temples and they were usually observed in the inner side of the temple entrance towers, crevices or gaps behind the statues of gods and goddesses on towers i.e., over the sanctum sanctorium, unused barns and unused rooms. Interestingly, all such suspected searches were successful and the birds were observed. Thus, the barn owl's droppings and pellets may be used as clues for the identification of its nests/roosts.

Our observations also revealed that the regurgitated pellets were observed only at the nesting/roosting sites. Further, it was also inferred that the most preferred nesting/roosting sites for barn owls were the places having easy accessibility, less human disturbance and adequate space for the breeding.

OCCURENCE OF THE LESSER CROW-PHEASANT CENTROPUS TOLOU IN NEYYAR. V. PHILIP, Environmental Resources Research Centre, P.B.1230, Peroorkada, Trivandrum 695 005

On 29 July 1993, I was in Neyyar Wildlife Sanctuary, as the guest of the Assistant Wildlife Warden. The sanctuary is located between 8°30' and 8°38' N. Lat. and 77°17' E. Long. covering an area of about 128 km². Natural forests range from montane sub-tropical and tropical evergreen to degraded moist types. The mean annual

rainfall is 2,800mm. The sanctuary harbours very diverse birdlife. Darter, Little Cormorant, Large Cormorant, Hill Myna, Little Green Heron, Brahminy Kite, Racket-tailed Drongo, Emerald Dove and Grey Jungle Fowl are a few among the other common birds.

On 30 July'93, accompanied by two forest watchers, I undertook a boat ride followed by a trek to Meenmuttery, where a magnificent waterfall is located and we were to stay in the rest house in the wild. The trek was exciting but tiring and time consuming due to the intermittent showers. At one of our routine halts under trees, a weak avian call of 'woot', 'woot', 'woot'... was heard. As we moved closer to the source, we could see that the avian vocalists were a pair of Lesser Crow-pheasant (*Centropus toulou*). They were apparently feeding on insects and worms among the dense bushes and permitted us to approach as close as 5 meters.

The bird's wings and upper half of the back were a dull chesnut colour. The tail feathers were brownish-grey with 'creamy' tailtips. The tail was shorter than the bird's body length. The legs, eyes, and beak were black. Visually they seemed smaller than an Indian House Crow in size.

A FLOCK OF KENTISH PLOVERS AND A TERN. MANOJ V.NAIR, 34 Thoppil Nagar, Kumarapuram, Trivandrum, Kerala PIN 695011

On September 9, 1993 at 0715 hrs. while watching birds at Aakkulam lake near Trivandrum, a curious behaviour or a flock of Kentish plovers (*Charadrius alexandrinus*) caught my attention.

Apart from numerous pond herons, Little grebes, Little Cormorants, Wisps of Median and Little egrets and a few purple moorhens, Bronze-winged Jacanas and Pheasant-tailed jacanas, a solitary Gull-bellied tern (*Geochelidon nilotica*) was quartering the lake back and forth, occasionally plunging into the water for small insects and fishes. As the tern reached the right extremity of the lake, a flock of Kentish plovers which had been feeding on the mudbanks rose up and started flying after it. The flock which consisted of 12 birds kept following the tern which was flying at a height of approximately 2.5 metres above the water-surface. At every plunge the tern made, the group of plovers scattered but soon regained their formation. It was a very interesting sight to watch the little flock, twisting and turning as they followed the tern doggedly. The tern did not appear to be the least concerned and made no effort on its part to drive the little followers away. This curious 'avian-formation flight' continued for the next 16 minutes. Later the 'formation' flew around a jutting piece of coconut grove to disappear in the next arm of the lake.

RUFIOUSBELLED HAWK-EAGLE AT KEMMANGUNDI. L.SHYAMAL, D-206, I.I.Sc. Campus, Bangalore 560 012

Kemmangundi (13 33'n, 75 45'E) formerly an iron-ore mining area, is a hill resort in the Bababudan range of the Western Ghats. The vegetation is largely degraded forest with good growth mostly in the valleys. The hill top is lightly wooded with some undergrowth interspersed with grassy patches. The lower slopes have Eucalyptus and Coffee plantations. While here on 16th February 1993, I got to see my first Rufousbellied hawk-eagle *Hieraaetus kiennerii*. It was 2pm and in that overhead lighting the bird looked more dark brown than rufous. The white on the throat, upper breast and cheek contrasting with the black cap was distinctive. It soared over the forest in an adjoining valley and went out of view in a few minutes.

The altitude at which I saw it was probably a little more than 1500 metres above mean sea level. The occurrence of the species in a nearby area at about the same altitude was reported by Karthikeyan in NLBW, Vol.32, Nos.7&8, p.15. Although several authors suggest a height limit of 1200 metres above MSL (Brown & Amadon, Ali & Ripley) it obviously can occur at higher elevations (see Henry, G.M.) where suitable habitat exists judging by Salim Ali's sighting of the species at Kumarikaimalai at an altitude of 2150 metres (+MSL) (in Birds of Kerala, 1969, p.62).

Among the other birds Black Bulbuls, Blue winged parakeets, Lorikeets, Indian tree-pipets and Rufous babblers were most detectable. I also got to see a pair of Black Eagles, several Indian Blue chats and a Small Sunbird.

References:

- Brown, L. & Amadon, D. (1968); Eagles, Hawks and Falcons of the World, Vol.2, pp.686-687
- Henry, G.M. (1955); A Guide to the Birds of Ceylon. p.208
- Salim Ali (1969); The Birds of Kerala. p.62
- Salim Ali & Dillon Ripley (1987); Compact Handbook of the Birds of India and Pakistan, p.737

NOTES FROM UDAIPUR. SATISH KUMAR SHARMA, Range Forest officer, Jhadol Forest, Udaipur 313702

During the month of April 1993, I located a nest of Egyptian Vulture *Neophron percnopterus* (linn.) placed on the cornice of an old watch-tower at Banki Forest Research Farm, Udaipur. The nest was placed by the bird on the cornice of the eastern wall and not on the western side. During April to June, strong currents of warm wind locally called "loo" are experienced from the western side. Similarly, heavy dust storms are also experienced from the western side in the same season. Perhaps to avoid the

"loos" and dust storms, the nest is placed by the bird on the well sheltered eastern side.

I observed the presence of cow-dung inside the nest. According to Ali & Ripley (HANDBOOK OF THE BIRDS OF INDIA AND PAKISTAN, 1983) *Neophron percnopterus* may line its nest with rags, matted hair, scraps of mammals' skin, and other rubbish including sometimes dried dung of carnivores. The presence of cow-dung in the nest is an interesting phenomenon an worth recording.

LARGE CLUTCH OF HOUSE SPARROW JUGAL KISHORE TIWARI, Scientist 'A' BNHS, Grassland Ecology Project, Fulay-chhau, Nakhtrana, Kutch, Gujarat 370665

On 27 August 92 I examined a nest of house sparrow *Passer domesticus* in our field station building at Fulay, Kutch and found seven eggs in it. According to Handbook of the Birds of India and Pakistan Ali (1983) usually a clutch of four eggs is laid by the house sparrow and the maximum clutch size according to it is six.

However Dodsworth in Simla once took eight eggs from a nest of a house sparrow (Stuart Baker E.C. 1994, The Hifidification of the birds of Indian Empire Vol III p75)

The present observation of mine on the clutch size of house sparrow, therefore seems to be second known maximum clutch size for the species. However I must mention here that this year, we have recieved an unusually good rainfall in Kutch (600 to 700mm). Kutch district is drought prone i.e 300 to 400mm rainfall zone. As a result of good rains insect life was at its peak. I therefore presume that the large clutch was a result of abundant food.

House Crow Taking Hair Of Cattle For Nest Lining

On 22.6.1993, I observed a pair of House Crows *Corvus splendens* in Udaipur city which were pulling the hair from the tuft of the tail of a stray cow. They carried three beak-fulls of hair in 5 minutes to line their nest, on a neem tree. Many stray cattle in our cities possibly provide a ready source of nest lining material to the nesting crows.

Barred Jungle Owlet In Udaipur District

Barred Jungle Owlet *Glaucidium radiatum* is reported from Mt. Abu area in Aravalli Range (Ali. and Ripley, 1983). On 13.7.1993 at about 2pm, I captured a sick Barred Jungle Owlet from a medium sized *Ficus benghalensis* tree in Adivas Forest Block of Udaipur Forest Division near village Dhala. The tree was in the foot hills of the Adivas Forest Block. The area is fill of seasonal nallahs and has good vegetation cover.

Perhaps this species is widely distributed on southern and south-eastern part of the State of Rajasthan. Vyas (1992) has also reported this species from Kota, a south-eastern district of State.

References:-

ALI, S. & RIPLEY, S.D. (1983) Handbook of the birds of India and Pakistan. Oxford University Press.

VYAS, R. (1992) Checklist of the birds of Kota district in south-east Rajasthan. Newsletter for bird watchers. 32(11&12):8-10

TERRITORIAL FIGHT AMONG CRIMSON BREASTED BARBET. DR. ASHOK KUMAR SHARMA, Kr. Rajpal Singh, D-67-A, Sawai Madho Singh Road, Bani Park, Jaipur 302 016, Rajasthan

In Jaipur the crimsonbreasted barbet *Megalaima haemacephala* starts its nesting activity at the beginning of March. Courtship feeding is then comonly seen and is followed by copulation.

On 8 March, 1993, we saw two crimsonbreasted barbets sitting about 20 cms apart, facing each other, on a branch of a neem tree *Azadirachta indica*, about 15m above the ground. They were flicking their tails up and down and quivering their wings. Their beaks were half open and they were stretching and pulling back their necks facing each other. This was repeated many times. Then they moved forward and locked their beaks and tried to twist and pull each other. Sometimes they flew up from their perches. In mid air they locked their beaks and cartwheeled down for a few metres. This continued for about ten minutes and we did not hear any calls during this period.

This was probably a territorial fight between males. Similar behaviour among koels *Eudynamis scolopacea* has been described in Newsletter for Birdwatchers Vol 32, No. 3&4, March - April 1992, Page 13, 14.

SIGHTING OF LAPWING-LIKE BIRD IN ROPAR. JASPREET SINGH CHADHA, General Secretary, The District Environment Society, Ropar (Punjab)

I saw an unusual bird in the company of Redwattled Lapwings and Cattle Egrets. It was about the size of a Redwattled Lapwing but its colour was purely white. This bird was moving like other Lapwings and was wading in a pond formed by a flash flood in this region. Could it be an albino Redwattled Lapwing?

NESTING OF PIED MYNA ON TELEGRAPH /ELECTRIC POLES. D.N. MISRA RAJ, 33/2, New Palasia, Indore - 452 001.

The report of the nesting of Pied Myna, *Sturnus contra*, on telegraph poles by Tiwari, in Newsletter No. 2-3/12, Vol. 32, is nothing unusual. No doubt the Hand book of Birds (Salim Ali 1983, 1987) mentions that this bird nests in trees but I have seen it nesting on electric/telegraph poles at Bhopal, Gondia (District Bhandara, Maharashtra) Jabalpur,

Bayana (Dist. Bharatpur, Rajasthan) and along the Delhi - Noida road, Delhi. The nesting site is always near garbage dumps and the nest is constructed between the metallic bars holding the porcelain insulators. The nest is shapeless, made of twigs straws and strands from garbage and is high up and large so that birds roosting in it are not visible and difficult to photograph.

I reported my first sighting of one such nesting site, at Ram Nagar, Shamla Hills, Bhopal, to Salim Ali in my letter dated 26-7-1984. Salim Ali acknowledged this report in his letter dated 2-8-1984 and said "If you found the nest on an electric pole it is an unusual occurrence, as the birds normally nest in tree". As such this, should be regarded as the first record of the sighting of the nesting of Pied Myna on electric/telegraph poles. Since I have seen dozens of such nests at each of the stations mentioned, it can hardly be regarded as unusual. Interestingly the bird is characteristically absent in the Malwa - Nimar region of Madhya Pradesh.

WHERE ARE ALL THE DEAD BIRDS ? T.V. JOSE, 8, Reena Apartments, Chincholi Bunder, Bombay - 400 064.

A letter writer brings to the notice of the readers of Times of India (28th June 1993) that we see daily hundreds of birds around us sparrows, pigeons, parakeets, etc. We all know they being living beings like us should play their parts and exit the stage. However, the fact that he has yet to come across a bird lying dead poses a challenge against this common knowledge, and that must have been troubling his inquisitive mind for quite a long time. It is not that he has not groped for an answer but the one he got that bigger birds of prey could make short work of their smaller and weaker brethren has failed to convince him. Evidently, he has not seen predatory acts causing death to so many birds as to justify their not being seen dead. At last, he could not but doubt: "Do they choose a particular spot to put an end to their lives?"

I should share his surprise as well as his sense of sheer dissatisfaction that compelled to write this letter. This question arising out of not seeing any dead birds or acts of their being chased and killed had troubled my teen age mind, too; and I by and by came to the conclusion (unlike that of the letter writer) that natural animals do not die of old age or of any disease, which is the lot of humans whose artificial life must account for that.

At this ripe age I feel, whether animals lead natural or unnatural life, death is a necessity for the survival of species. The following is the explanation I can offer to the query of the letter writer. The relevance here is that some of the readers may have the same query though not expressed.

1. Birds are certainly killed, particularly when they are too young or too old and infirm by birds of prey and other animals as well.
2. Those die of old age or of disease are quickly disposed of by scavenging agents nature has posted everywhere.
3. Compared to mammals, birds are small in size and their dead bodies can easily escape our attention.
4. Birds being extremely mobile creatures, their death could be taking place and their dead bodies lying scattered in an area too wide for us to detect.
5. We do come across in a city like Bombay a dead crow here and a rock pigeon there moving fast towards its termination point, and of course, sometimes our attention is drawn to a squeaking sparrow being crushed and killed between the corvian bills.
6. At last as the answer to the doubt of the letter writer I say that I have not come across any spots (for example, a cemetery in the style of humans) birds using to die, and I do not believe there can be a cemetery anywhere chosen by birds and exclusively for them.

Hope somebody can offer better explanation and I would like to be better informed.

OYSTERCATCHER FEEDING ECOLOGY.
JAMIL URFI, A/270, Jamia Nagar, New Delhi, 110 025

My work on Oystercatcher feeding Ecology is doing quite well. I have now become quite familiar with a variety of field methods and approaches and hope to put their experience to some good use for the study of Indian water birds. I have still 6 more months to go before I can wind up and return to India.

I am writing this letter from Oxford where I have come for a week to work at the Edward Grey Institute and consult the library. I have come across several interesting articles about birds of the Indian sub-continent.

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION IN RURAL AREAS. V.J. Rajan, MNS, 36, IV main, R A Puram Madras 600 028

Madras naturalists' Society has received a grant from the University of Philadelphia for taking environmental education to rural areas and to conduct a study of the pesticides use in rural areas and their effect on environment. Members who have contacts with village authorities in the neighbouring districts are requested to contact them and find out if they can help us in the study. A team of Members will go to a village and study for 2 or 3 days and return.

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY in the City of New York | New York, NY 10027, U.S.A.
DEPARTMENT OF BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES

WALTER J. BOCK, BOX 37, SCHERMERHORN HALL
Tel. 1-212-854-4487 Fax. 1-212-865-8248

TO: Members of the International Ornithological Committee
FROM: Walter Bock, Secretary IOC
SUBJECT: Report and request for information for the XXI Congress, 1994
DATE: 24 August 1993

**REPORT TO MEMBERS OF THE
INTERNATIONAL ORNITHOLOGICAL COMMITTEE**

The XXI International Ornithological Congress, Hofburg in Vienna, Austria, 20-25 August 1994 is just a year away, and it is time to provide members of the IOC with necessary information about the congress and to request information from each of you. As you know the most important role of the IOC occurs during its meetings at the congress, and I hope that every member will be able to attend the congress. President Christopher Perrins and I look forward to seeing all of you at the congress. Please contact either President Perrins or me if you have any questions about the IOC and/or future congresses. A full accounting of the past activities of the IOC, of the PEC and other committees of the IOC will be provided to you at the IOC meetings at the XXI congress.

(1) For information about the XXI congress, and for answers to all questions about the congress, including information about the final brochure, housing, support for members of the congress, post-congress tours, etc, please contact the Secretary-General: Professor Dr. John P. Dittami

Secretary-General, XXI IOC
Interconvention
Friedrichstrasse 7
A-1043 Vienna, AUSTRIA
Tel: + 43 - 1 - 58800-106
Fax: + 43 - 1 - 5867260

Do not write to me about questions dealing with the 1994 Vienna congress as I almost certainly will not know the answers to anything but the most general questions, and will have to refer you to Professor Dittami.

Planning for the congress appears to be on target. Note that the site of the congress has been changed from the Austrian Center to the Hofburg. This change is an excellent one as the Hofburg is in the center of the city and close to the major museums, shopping, etc., rather than being a 10 minute metro ride from the center of the city. Note that there will be no free day in the middle of the congress week; this would have made planning far more difficult. Registration will begin at 9:00 hours on Saturday, 20 August, and the opening meeting will be at 19:00 hours on Saturday, 20 August at the Rathaus. The closing ceremonies and Final Get-together will begin at 16:00 hours Thursday, 25 August. The final brochures have been mailed out to all interested persons early this year. If you have not received one, please contact the S-G at once. Please complete the registration form as soon as possible and arrange for your hotel reservations. And do not forget to register for a post-congress tour if you wish to take part in one. Please check carefully with your travel agent about the need to obtain visas for Austria and for any countries to be visited on a post-congress tour. The program of plenary lectures and symposia has been completed by the SPC and symposia conveners. The forms for contributed papers and for Round-table discussions are available in the final brochure. I urge all members of the IOC to complete these forms as soon as possible if they wish to take part in the program. And please urge all other ornithologists to do so without delay if they wish to take part in the congress. Chairpersons of Standing Committees should apply for a Round-table discussion if they wish to have a meeting of their committee; please note whether these committee are open to all interested members of the congress. Meetings of the IOC will most likely be scheduled for the evenings of Monday, 22 August and Wednesday, 24 August. Please keep these evenings free as attendance at the two IOC meetings is essential for all IOC members. EC meetings will probably be on Saturday, 20 August, all day and on Tuesday, 23 August, evening.

(2) Please check the address on the envelope and inform me of any changes, including city codes and country name. Also please inform me of any changes in your telephone number, including city codes, and in your fax number. If you have an E-mail number, please provide me with it. An information form is enclosed for those members of the IOC who have not yet returned it to me. Please do so as quickly as possible, as the requested information is most useful to me.

(3) I would appreciate knowing whether you will or will not be able to attend the Vienna congress. Also I would

appreciate it if you can provide me with any change in your status as a member of the IOC, as for example whether you will have reached the age of 65 by 31 August 1994 or whether you wish to resign from the IOC because of missing two successive congresses or any other reason. I would also appreciate being informed of the deaths (including dates) of any member of the IOC and any other ornithologists with an international reputation. We would like to continue the practice begun at the 1990 congress of announcing the names of our colleagues who are no longer with us.

At present there are 40 senior members and 120 regular members plus 7 permanent (nonsenior) members of the IOC. The statutory limit for regular members of the IOC is 140. I expect that several members will have reached Senior status by 1994 and that several regular members may resign. Hence, we are able to fill about 25 positions in the ranks of members of the IOC at the 1994 congress.

(4) If you feel that other ornithologists from your country or any other country, especially one which is not represented in the IOC, should be considered for election to the IOC, please provide me with that person's name, address, and a brief résumé about his/her ornithological activities, including education, degrees and years obtained, and major publications. I should emphasize that all such nominations for new members of the IOC should be in my hands six months prior to the congress. I will set the deadline date for receiving such nominations as 1 March 1994. I must also point out that a requirement for election to the IOC is attendance in at least one ornithological congress which can be the one at which the person is elected. Please remember that to be effective in the IOC, members must attend congresses, hence nothing is gained by electing members who are unable to attend congresses on a regular basis.

(5) I would like to collect information on countries which should be represented on the IOC and the relative representation of each country. Part of this is necessary because of the formation of many new countries, especially in eastern Europe and Asia since the 1990 congress. Note that the Article 2 of the Statutes states: "The membership shall be representative of the international distribution of ornithologists, and the number of members from each country shall be proportional to its ornithological activity." Attached is a list of countries represented on the IOC. Please add countries you feel should be represented and the names of ornithologists from these countries with the necessary information for nominating them as potential members of the IOC. Just giving the names of countries is of no assistance to me. Second, please rank the ornithological activity of each country as you judge it. The rankings should be from "1" for the least amount of ornithological activity to "10" for the maximum.

(6) I would also like to collect information on the best times of the year to hold congresses. This problem arises every four years when the site and date of the next congress is decided. It is best to arrange congresses at times when ornithological field work is at its lowest ebb (many northern hemisphere ornithologists doing field work during the breeding season object to congresses from late May to early July) and at times outside of the academic year. I realize that it will not be possible to have congresses at a time which will please everyone, but we should try to aim at a time which is good for most ornithologists. Enclosed is a sheet (reverse of the sheet with countries) dividing the year into 24 periods. Please mark those periods which are good or bad for you and other ornithologists from your country to attend congresses and indicate the reasons for the bad times (such as, "f w" for field work; "a y" for academic year; "o" other, including personal reasons such as major religious holidays, etc.). I would appreciate it if these surveys are returned to me as quickly as possible.

(7) If there are any items which you would like to be placed on the agenda of the EC and IOC meetings, I would appreciate having this information sent to me well in advance of the congress. Please include a full discussion for the reason you would like to have the item discussed. Chair-persons of all Standing Committees are requested to be prepared to present a short summary of the work of their committee over the past four years, and to have a written report ready for publication in the Proceedings. I would also appreciate it if the chair-persons of the Standing Committees would provide me at the congress with the proposed composition of their committee for the 1994-8 period. I will need names, addresses, telephone and fax numbers of proposed members. Any members of the IOC wishing to participate in the work of any of the Standing Committees or wish to propose members of these committees, should contact the chair-persons of these committees or me. If any members wish to organize a new Standing Committee, please contact me with the details as soon as possible. Any proposed amendments to the Statutes and By-Laws must be signed by the necessary number of members of the IOC (see the published Statutes and By-Laws) and submitted to me as quickly as possible -- immediately if not sooner.

(8) At this moment no formal invitations for the 1998 congress have been submitted, but discussions have been underway with several countries. Any ornithologists interested in hosting the 1998 or the 2002 congress, should contact me immediately. I will provide you with a set of instructions and other information. If you are seriously interested in submitting an invitation for the 1998 congress, time is of the absolute essence. It would be best to arrange for a visit by me to your country to meet with ornithologists, to visit possible congress sites and to discuss the invitation and planning of the congress.