

Table 1. The Indian White-backed Vulture *Gyps bengalensis* population in and around Sayaji Baug Zoo & Garden

No.	Location	Tree species	Number of Vulture Nest			
			1986	1991#	1996	2004
1	Sambar enclosure	'Haldarvo'	1 (R)	TF	---	
2		Palm	1	1	0 (TF)	0
3		Palm	1	1	0	0
4		Palm	1	1	0	0
5	Blackbuck enclosure	Palm	1	1	1	0
6		Palm	1	1	0	0
7	Primate section	Palm	1	1	0	0
8		Palm	1	1	0 (TF)	0
9		Palm	1	1	0 (TF)	0
10		'Ambali'	0 (R)	0 (R)	0 (R)	0
11	Bear section	Palm	1	1	1	R
12	Tiger section	Palm	1	1	0	0
13		Palm	1	0	0	0
14		'Peepal'	1	1	0 (R)	0
15	Nursery	'Naliyeri'	1	1	0 (D)	0
16	Garden	Palm	1	1	0 (D)	0
17		Palm	1	1	0 (D)	0
18	Traffic center	(?)	0	0	1*	0
19		'Haldarvo'	0	0	1*	0
20	Opposite gate 3	'Kanazo'	0	0	1*	0
		Total	16 (36)	14 (16)	5 (11)	0 (R)

R=Roosting; TF=Tree-felling; D=Tree dead; *=Nesting pairs shifted; #=Source: Walker 1992.

Table 2. List of trees used by Indian White-backed Vultures *Gyps bengalensis* for nesting and roosting at Sayaji Baug Zoo & Garden (1985–2004)

No	Species	No. of trees	Activity [No. of nests / Roosting]
1	Palm or "Pankha Tad" <i>Borassus flabellifer</i>	13	13 / Roosting
2	"Naliyeri" <i>Cocos nucifera</i>	1	1 / Roosting
3	"Peepal" <i>Ficus religiosa</i>	1	1 / Roosting
4	"Kanazo" <i>Holoptelea integrifolia</i>	1	1 / Roosting
5	"Ambli" <i>Tamarinus indica</i>	1	0 / Roosting
6	"Haldarvo" <i>Adina cordifolia</i>	2	2 / Roosting
7	Unidentified	1	1 / Roosting
8	"Shankar Jata" <i>Caryota urenus</i>	1	0 / Roosting
	Total	20	

A visit to Nandi Hills, Karnataka, India

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As a keen birder who gets to visit Bangalore each year, I like to visit some of the local birding hot spots when I come. The morning of 8.iii.2006, I decided to take advantage of the fact that all my meetings were after lunch and head up to Nandi Hills, which are about 60 km north of the city. Of course, being Bangalore, I subsequently managed to work a ten-hour day despite the late start!

The remnant forest in the fort here holds a few Nilgiri Wood-Pigeons *Columba elphinstonii*, which I hoped to see better views of than in my previous visits. In addition, the Nandi Hills have a record of attracting interesting wintering and migrant species such as Pied Thrush *Zoothera wardii* and Ultramarine Flycatcher *Ficedula superciliaris*. It seems likely that the isolated hill-top forest concentrates migrants

from quite a wide area and since birds should likely be on the move by March, I was hopeful something of interest might show up.

On arrival I headed straight into the fort to check out the forest there. There was no sign of any Nilgiri Wood-Pigeons and initially I saw just some of the typical residents and winter visitors: Spotted Babbler *Pellorneum ruficeps*, Blue-headed Rock-Thrush *Monticola cinclorhynchus*, Ashy Drongo *Dicrurus leucophaeus*, and Asian Paradise-Flycatcher *Terpsiphone paradisi*. I decided to head into a somewhat more open glade with smaller trees where I had seen a Verditer Flycatcher *Eumyias thalassina* on a previous visit. This 'glade' is behind the back of the reservoir and contains a small nursery. I didn't have any luck with interesting flycatchers on this visit, but the 'glade' still turned up some nice birds. After viewing singles of 'Nilgiri' Blackbird *Turdus simillimus*—birds here are of the 'black-capped' form rather than the 'black-headed' form found in the real Nilgiris—and Tickell's Blue-Flycatcher *Cyornis tickelliae*, both local residents, I enjoyed cracking views of a male Indian Blue Robin *Luscinia brunnea* sitting right out in the open—a few of these handsome birds winter at Nandi Hills—and saw a total of three on this visit.

The smaller trees in the glade offer the opportunity to get some close views of *Phylloscopus* sp. warblers. Although I've only seen the regularly wintering Greenish Leaf-Warbler *Phylloscopus trochiloides* and Tickell's Warblers *P. affinis* at the Nandi Hills on previous visits, I always check close birds because there are several other species that winter in SW

India that might be expected to show up on migration occasionally. This time my luck was in as I noticed a 'phylloscopus' low down in the small trees. It was a Tytler's Leaf-Warbler *P. tytleri*—a lifer for me. I had very good views and saw the long, all-black bill, black legs, and the lack of wing bars. Incredibly, while looking at this I kept seeing another warbler that was obviously a 'Yellow-browed' type. After the Tytler's disappeared, I relocated this bird and had good looks at it. Hume's Warbler *P. humei* and Yellow-browed Warbler *P. inornatus* can be very tricky to ID, but the call, a slightly slurred 'too-it', was a bit different from the clear 'tsueet' of a Yellow-browed Warbler. And the bird was pretty dull with a slight buff tinge to the supercilium. Based on this, I believe it was a Hume's Warbler.

About ten minutes after seeing these warblers, I had incredible looks at an Indian Pitta *Pitta brachyura* (also a lifer) that obligingly fed right by the path, in the open, for as long as I wanted to look. Subsequently on a visit to Kerala, I learned that Indian Pittas are primarily active at night and to see one there we had to look for them in the half light at dawn and then spotlight one perched in a bush. It was only then I realized how lucky I was to see one feeding openly in broad daylight.

Checking the open woodland at the very top of the hill proved somewhat anticlimactic, with just a group of Oriental Tree Pipits *Anthus hodgsoni* to add to the list. A last look around the woods in the lower part of the fort produced a somewhat out of place Hoopoe *Upupa epops*, which I tracked down after mistaking its call for some kind of cuckoo.

Recoveries from the Newsletter for Birdwatchers (1967)—14

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1967 was a particularly good year for the *Newsletter* and for me as these notes will show. The "AGM" was held on 17th December 1966 and "there were a large number of people present...undoubtedly (due) to the attraction provided by the showing of E.P. Gee's films later on." The annual subscription was retained at Rs 5 per annum.

The January issue was dominated by the article "From a Train" by the evergreen KS Lavkumar. He overcomes the problem of the shaking train, and hence the ineffectiveness of the binoculars by, "the compensation (provided) by the great area covered..." A total of a hundred species were listed, seen from trains, starting from the common house crow and ending with bar-headed geese. "The slower trains are an advantage in the greater opportunity they give to identify the bird. I have watched a pair of Sarus Cranes caring for their young, and another pair...standing over an egg on a heaped nest of rushes, Pied Kingfishers hovering over a lily-choked lake near Hyderabad, Whiskered Terns skimming edges of a tidal mud (bank) near Bombay, Blue-cheeked Bee-eaters rising in hundreds one early September morning from

an acacia in Marwar, solitary Kashmir Rollers buoyantly flying south on their autumn migration to Africa." In short, Lavkumar misses no bird even without his binoculars and even reported seeing "a migration flight of White-eyed Buzzards."

The *Newsletter*, being the only one of its kind in those days, was an effective tool for motivating amateurs to write about their experiences. I did not realise though that I was such a dreaded creature as E.D. Avari seems to suggest. "A psychological dread of appearing in print has enabled me to live happily, alas, until the letter arrived from the Editor of the *Newsletter*..." '...a long article / short article / review / letter, etc...' "I still shudder as I frantically type this after a hurried consultation of my moth-eaten notes."

But like many shikaris of the old days Avari was deeply interested and well informed as these extracts will show. "Two trips to Tibet during my school days come to mind. By and large I have found that the bird life of the hill areas is common to Bhutan, Sikkim, Nepal and this district, which spreads its dense tropical foliage throughout the base of the