

Mountain Imperial-Pigeon *Ducula badia*
 Red-breasted Parakeet *Psittacula alexandri*
 Brainfever Bird / Large Hawk Cuckoo
Hierococcyx varius/ sparverioides
 Indian Cuckoo *Cuculus micropterus*
 Banded Bay Cuckoo *Cacomantis sonneratii*
 Rufous-bellied Plaintive Cuckoo *C. merulinus*
 Drongo Cuckoo *Surniculus lugubris*
 Large Green-billed Malkoha *Phaenicophaeus tristis*
 Greater Coucal *Centropus sinensis*
 Oriental Scops-Owl *Otus sunia*
 Collared Owlet *Glaucidium brodiei*
 Asian Barred Owllet *G. cuculoides*
 Brown Hawk-Owl *Ninox scutulata*
 White-rumped Needletail-Swift (?)
Zoonavena sylvatica
 Asian Palm-Swift *Cypsiurus balasienis*
 Pacific Swift *Apus pacificus*
 House Swift (?) *A. affinis*
 Red-headed Trogon *Harpactes erythrocephalus*
 Blyth's Kingfisher *Alcedo hercules*
 Small Blue Kingfisher *A. hercules*
 White-breasted Kingfisher *Halcyon coromanda*
 Blue-bearded Bee-eater *Nyctyornis athertoni*
 Indian Roller *Coracias benghalensis*
 Oriental Broad-billed Roller
Eurystomus orientalis
 Common Hoopoe *Upupa epops*
 Oriental Pied Hornbill *Anthracoceros albirostris*
 Great Barbet *Megalaima virens*
 Lineated Barbet *M. lineata*
 Golden-throated Barbet *M. franklinii*
 Blue-throated Barbet *M. asiatica*
 Fulvous-breasted Pied Woodpecker
Dendrocopos macei
 Rufous Woodpecker *Celeus brachyurus*
 Small Yellow-naped Woodpecker
Picus chlorolophus
 Large Yellow-naped Woodpecker *P. flavinucha*

Black-naped Green Woodpecker *P. canus*
 Lesser Golden-backed Woodpecker
Dinopium benghalense
 Bay Woodpecker *Blythipicus pyrrhotis*
 Long-tailed Broadbill *Psarisomus dalhousiae*
 Common Swallow *Hirundo rustica*
 Striated Swallow *H. striolata*
 White Wagtail *Motacilla alba*
 Oriental Tree Pipit *Anthus hodgsoni*
 Large Cuckoo-Shrike *Coracina macei*
 Black-winged Cuckoo-Shrike *C. melaschistos*
 Scarlet Minivet *Pericrocotus flammeus*
 Pied Flycatcher-Shrike *Hemipus picatus*
 Large Woodshrike *Tephrodornis gularis*
 Red-whiskered Bulbul *Pycnonotus jocosus*
 Red-vented Bulbul *P. cafer*
 White-throated Bulbul *Alophoixus flaveolus*
 Brown-eared Bulbul *Hemixos flavala*
 Black Bulbul *Hypsipetes leucocephalus*
 Common Iora *Aegithina tiphia*
 Gold-fronted Chloropsis *Chloropsis aurifrons*
 Orange-bellied Chloropsis *C. hardwickii*
 Asian Fairy-Bluebird *Irena puella*
 Brown Shrike (?) *Lanius cristatus*
 Rufous-backed Shrike *L. schach*
 Grey-backed Shrike *L. tephronotus*
 Blue Whistling-Thrush *Myiophonus caeruleus*
 Oriental Magpie-Robin *Copsychus saularis*
 Black-backed Forktail *Enicurus immaculatus*
 Slaty-backed Forktail *E. schistaceus*
 Green Cochoa *Cochoa viridis*
 Common Stonechat *Saxicola torquata*
 White-crested Laughingthrush
Garrulax leucolophus
 Rufous-necked Laughingthrush *G. ruficollis*
 Spotted Babbler *Pellorneum ruficeps*
 Lloyd's Scimitar-Babbler
Pomatorhinus ochraceiceps
 Yellow-breasted Babbler *Macronous gularis*
 Plain Prinia *Prinia inornata*

Mountain Tailorbird *Orthotomus cuculatus*
 Common Tailorbird *O. sutorius*
 Dusky Warbler *Phylloscopus fuscatus*
 Yellow-browed Warbler (?) *P. inornatus*
 Striated Marsh-Warbler *Megalurus palustris*
 Slaty-blue Flycatcher (?) *Ficedula tricolor*
 Rufous-bellied Niltava *Niltava sundara*
 Pale Blue-Flycatcher *Cyornis unicolor*
 Large-billed Blue-Flycatcher *C. banyumas*
 Black-naped Monarch-Flycatcher
Hypothymis azurea
 Sultan Tit *Melanochlora sultanea*
 Chestnut-bellied Nuthatch *Sitta castanea*
 White-tailed Nuthatch *S. himalayensis*
 Velvet-fronted Nuthatch *S. froalis*
 Yellow-vented Flowerpecker
Dicaeum chrysorrheum
 Little Spiderhunter *Arachnothera longirostra*
 Streaked Spiderhunter *A. magna*
 Oriental White-eye *Zosterops palpebrosus*
 House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*
 Eurasian Tree Sparrow *P. montanus*
 Grey-headed Starling *Sturnus malabaricus*
 Asian Pied Starling *S. contra*
 Common Myna *Acridotheres tristis*
 Jungle Myna *A. fuscus*
 Common Hill-Myna *Gracula religiosa*
 Black-headed Oriole *Oriolus xanthornus*
 Maroon Oriole *O. traillii*
 Black Drongo *Dicrurus macrocercus*
 Ashy Drongo *D. leucophaeus*
 Crow-billed Drongo (?) *D. annectans*
 Bronzed Drongo *D. aeneus*
 Lesser Racket-tailed Drongo *D. remifer*
 Spangled Drongo *D. hottentottus*
 Greater Racket-tailed Drongo *D. paradiseus*
 Grey Treepie *Dendrocitta formosa*
 Black-browed Treepie *D. frontalis*
 House Crow *Corvus splendens*
 Jungle Crow *C. macrorhynchos*

Recoveries from the *Newsletter for Birdwatchers (1969)—17*

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For the benefit of new readers of *Indian Birds* I would like to mention that I retired as editor of the *Newsletter for Birdwatchers (NLBW)* in December 2003, having announced this fact in the annual get-together at Dodda-Gubbi on 4.i.2004. From then onwards Aasheesh Pittie and V. Santharam started a new journal called *Newsletter for Ornithologists*. Having run this for a year, they found the name inappropriate, as the contents consisted of serious articles relating to the birds of our country, and the emphasis was not on birding news. From 1.i.2005 *Indian Birds* came into being.

The editor thought that it would be interesting for the younger generation to read about the atmosphere and the

events relating to birdwatching in its earlier years, as recorded through the pages of the *NLBW*. This I have tried to do by digging chronologically into past issues of that newsletter. Having come this far (January 1969 from December 1959, when the *NLBW* commenced) and considering my prospects at 87, I am reminded of the famous lines of the poet Sir Mohammad Iqbal, which translated read, "How would it help to ask the wise what my Beginning was, when the fear within me says, My end, what will it be". Looking at the distance yet to be covered I must increase my pace and in the process skip over many interesting contributions

In the March 1969 issue, Robert Grubh (of the BNHS, known for his useful research on bird-aircraft collisions) wrote "about 55 Siberian Cranes [*Grus leucogeranus*], which reportedly arrived (in Bharatpur) on 13th January [1969] and were expected to stay in the Sanctuary at least for a month." Alas these birds have vanished, none arriving there in recent years. In the same issue, Sudhir Vyas (now a famous member of our Foreign Service) says "The city of Lucknow is to me far more interesting in its avifauna than in its aristocracy...A dark bird suddenly erupts glistening blue wings and proclaims itself to be a Blue Jay...A mixed hunting party is busy, chestnut-bellied nuthatches, paradise, verditer, and grey-headed flycatchers, minivets and innumerable warblers flit among the leaves...as it is getting dark I turn homeward...a kestrel over the La Martiniere...and a crested lark begins to sing as I enter the city and cross the road dodging a jeep".

Usha Ganguli (one of the keenest and most reliable birders of Delhi) speaks about the many excellent monographs on birds written by prisoners during the Second World War. "John Buxton collected his material on the Redstart while he was a prisoner of war for 5 years in the hands of the Germans. As prisoners of war, other ornithologists have also made studies of the Swallow, Wryneck, Goldfinch..." As a 'prisoner' for two months in the AIIMS in Delhi, Usha saw or heard 13 species from her hospital bed and wrote very knowledgeably about them.

One keen birder in Bombay was S. V. Nilakanta. He started life in the Army Corps of Electrical and Mechanical Engineers and ended by joining Dynacraft, the company that provided my bread-and-butter and also helped with producing the *Newsletter*. Vasant is a good artist too and he sketched several birds on the covers of the *NLBW*. The April 1969 issue has an interesting piece by him on the Indian Pitta *Pitta brachyura* under the title 'The Pitta that came to stay'.

"On the first of November the Pitta... was caught by a cat when the bird landed in the verandah. As is customary with these felines it held the bird without damaging it allowing the victim to escape for a moment and catch it again. The bird was rescued and kept in a large cage. It was on macaroni and the white of eggs, and was ringed for identification. The next morning was a Sunday and any attempt to sleep late was spoilt by the noise of the Pitta jumping up and down from its perch (within the cage). The cage was taken to the side of the house and the door was opened. The bird flew straight out...It was around in the garden for a month before retiring for the night "every evening without fail it gave out its characteristic double whistle or call".

As I have mentioned before, some of the keenest supporters of our *Newsletter* were British, and among them was S. K. Reeves, who had spent many years in India and who after his departure continued to keep in touch. In the July 1969 issue Reeves reported on his fortnights holiday in Tunisia since "I thought that readers of the *Newsletter* might be interested to hear of some of the birds...which can also be seen in India". I can only quote some paragraphs from this fine 5,000-word article to give you a flavour of Tunisia.

"We took our holiday during the last two weeks of April, so that we should be able to see the spring migrants as they

moved up to the North African coast from the body of Africa, preparatory to flying across the Mediterranean to Europe, the British Isles and the far North. In this we somewhat miscalculated. We failed to realize that the birds would not be concentrated at particular spots, but would be advancing on an enormously broad front, in fact along the whole extent of the North African coast. In consequence, although we saw quite a variety of birds, including a very generous leavening of rarities, the actual numbers seen were comparatively small. If one wishes to see a large number of birds of many different species, it is obviously best to be on the 'receiving end' as it were, at a point which causes the birds to become concentrated, such a headland, towards which birds tired after a long sea crossing will make, or a sheet of water or a marsh or isolated clumps of bushes or trees which either provide cover and shelter or good feeding. Furthermore, one is likely to see more birds during the autumn than the spring migration. The former is far more leisurely, the birds tend to remain feeding and resting for longer periods at the stopping places en route. Another contributory factor is that, in addition to the old birds, which have bred, there are the young that they have produced during the past breeding season which augment the numbers. The spring migration is a very hurried one. The urge to reach the northerly breeding stations, to establish territories, pair and commence breeding seems to be an impelling one. The birds only stay just as long as it is necessary to rest, preen and feed and then move on. We particularly noticed this. Time and again birds seen one day had gone the next. We often noticed also that the birds appeared nervous, and frequently when disturbed they would fly right away as though we had caused them to press on with their migratory journey. The numbers of birds on spring passage also tends to be smaller because many will have perished during the previous autumn migration and during their stay in their winter quarters.

"We stayed at a small seaside town called Hammamet at the northern end of the Golfe de Hammamet in the northeastern corner of Tunisia. Hammamet is a small, but very old Arab town, complete with Medina, Rabat and Mosque, and set in a highly cultivated area. The predominant crops being oranges, lemons, olives and vines. Incidentally, the abundance of Eucalyptus or Blue Gum trees was a happy reminder of the Nilgiris, where the species also grows plentifully. Other plants which aroused nostalgic memories were bougainvillea, which seemed to thrive and added a glorious splash of purple to the brilliantly white buildings; oleanders and hibiscus which grew in the grounds of our hotel, but of which only the latter was in bloom; lantana which we occasionally came across; and cactus which grew in profusion and was just fruiting and which was used for hedges and also for food for the camels and for the poorer people. The wild flowers were magnificent, growing in such abundance and variety. Practically every piece of waste ground or fallow field was carpeted with them. Although we were unable to identify them, I regret to say, they formed a distinct feature of the holiday and we thoroughly enjoyed them."