

But it's not all doom and gloom. Conservation does work and there are some great examples in this year's BirdLife/IUCN Red List. In Brazil, Lear's Macaw *Anodorhynchus leari* has been downlisted from Critically Endangered. Named after the English poet, this spectacular blue parrot has increased four-fold as a result of a joint effort of many national and international non-governmental organisations, the Brazilian government and local landowners. In New Zealand, Chatham Petrel *Pterodroma axillaris* has benefited from work by the New Zealand Department of Conservation and

has consequently been downlisted from Critically Endangered. And in Mauritius, the stunning Mauritius Fody *Foudia rubra*, has been rescued from the brink after the translocation and establishment of a new population on to a predator-free offshore island. It has now been downlisted to Endangered. Similar work is now also underway for 32 Critically Endangered species as part of the BirdLife Preventing Extinctions Programme. Courtesy: *Birdlife International Press Release*. [www.birdlife.org](http://www.birdlife.org).

## — Correspondence —

Of all the 'special issues' published by *Indian Birds* to date, the 'Bhutan special' (4: 6, November–December 2008) is by far the most attractive, both in terms of the excellent visuals and the matching good text.

The lead article, 'On the wings of the Peaceful Dragon', will rate among the best birding-writing anywhere. A pity though that unnecessary comments crept in, on the personal life of His Majesty Jigme Singye Wangchuk, the Fourth Druk Gyalpo.

Let us not forget that in 1972, he was the toast of the international diplomatic corps as the 'gallant-knight'. For, at the SAARC summit at Colombo, due to a protocol faux pas, there was no one to escort Mrs Indira Gandhi to her seat. Of all the heads of state in that hall, it was HM Jigme Singye Wangchuk who alone noticed Mrs Gandhi's discomfiture, instinctively got up, and gallantly walked her up the red carpet to her seat.

In the 1960s, when Dr Salim Ali wanted to survey the birds of north-eastern India, it was His Majesty's grandfather who volunteered logistics (tented camps, food, porters, etc.) at state expense. He even ventured to persuade Salim Ali for an exclusive book on the birds of Bhutan. However, when the ornithologist explained that there was little difference in the avifauna of Bhutan and the north-east, the king understood his logic, but nevertheless stood by the commitment of free logistics and even agreed to buy 500 copies of the first edition to recompense the cost of publication.

So it is not by accident but by the Wangchuk dynasty's choice that over the past 60 years forests and birds have thrived in Bhutan. Not birds alone, but India's national animal the tiger too, has been accorded total state protection in a manner that India has been unable to provide. In 2003 when Ruth Padel, Darwin's great grand daughter asked the Bhutanese PM, 'what are the long-term chances of the tiger's survival in Bhutan,' (or words to that effect),

his prompt reply was, 'we have pledged to protect the tiger, and its future in Bhutan is non-negotiable'!

If the tiger and its habitat thrive in Bhutan so shall its avifauna, thanks to the kings of Bhutan.

— Lt. Gen. Baljit Singh, Chandigarh

Further to the Editor's note appended to the article on inter-specific feeding involving White-eyes by Balar (2009. *Indian Birds* 4: 164), I found two interesting articles involving White-eyes and inter-specific feeding. In Thailand, Pierce (2005) observes a Little Spiderhunter feeding nectar to White-eye fledglings of *Zosterops* species in the wild. Interestingly, this feeding behaviour was observed again a minute later in the presence of the adult parent White-eyes, which maintained calm, while still holding grub in their beaks. The author writes about the lack of any notes on inter-specific feeding from Asia, while claiming that his is perhaps the first account of such behaviour. This publication is however after Grusen (2004), listed under your Editor's note. Eddinger (1970) records adult non-breeding mature White-eyes feeding nestlings of House Finch *Carpodacus mexicanus* and House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*, albeit not in the wild. The author notes that this may be because the White-eyes were raised in aviaries.

Eddinger, C. R. 1970. The White-Eye as an interspecific feeding helper. *The Condor* 72 (2) 240 (<http://www.jstor.org/pss/1366644>).

Pierce, A. J. 2005. Interspecific feeding of a White-Eye fledgling by a Little Spiderhunter. *The Natural History Journal of Chulalongkorn University* 5 (1): 41, May 2005 (<http://www2.biology.sc.chula.ac.th/web%20of%20NHJCU%20PDF/5-1,41.pdf>).

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## — In memoriam —

*David William Snow 1924–2009*

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