Novel drinking behaviour of a Comb Duck *Sarkidiornis melanotis* in the National Chambal Sanctuary, Uttar Pradesh

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n the National Chambal Sanctuary, I observed several Comb Ducks *Sarkidiornis melanotis* bathing in the Chambal River on the evening of 9 April 2009. One of the ducks next to a bathing individual raised its neck and held its beak open obviously drinking the water splashed high (Fig. 1). Ducks usually drink by scooping up water in its lower mandible and raising the neck allowing the water to run down the neck; I could find no published reference to ducks drinking in this unusual way.

The majority of birds drink water by the scoop-and-tilt-head method. Specialized drinking methods include nectar-feeding using protrusive, grooved, or trough-like tongues (as in Nectariniidae), lapping water with tongues (as in Psittacidae), sucking using the whole beak as a straw (as in all Columbidae, Pteroclididae (Cade et al. 1966), rarely in Estrildinae and Sylviidae, and Mousebirds (Cade & Greenwald 1966)), and drinking dew drops from a leaf’s surface (Black-chinned Hummingbird *Archilochus alexandri* (Baltosser & Russell 2000)). Pelicans very rarely drink by holding their beaks open in the rain (http://www.stanford.edu/group/stanfordbirds/text/essays/Drinking.html).

**References**


Fig. 1. One duck’s bath water is another one’s drink. Comb Ducks in the National Chambal Sanctuary display an unusual behaviour.