

the BNHS or WWF-India. These include reports by Erach Bharucha on Army establishments around Pune and on the Field Firing Ranges at Deolali; by Prakash Gole on CME, Kirkee; by Lavkumar Khachar on the Army's establishments at Pulgaon and a few in North Sikkim. The BNHS has similar information on many estates of corporate houses such as that of Godrej at Vikhroli mangroves, Tata's (Telco) land near Pune, Indian Oil Corporation's refineries at Mathura and Panipat, and so on. The BNHS has a fair idea of the habitat status at Sriharikota, at several Indian Air Force facilities and in the Indian Navy's training establishment at Chilika. These reports need to be studied to see whether they support the ideas presented here.

2. If the conservation potential of these areas matches what I have claimed above, the search should be broadened. IBCN partners and other interested organisations and individuals should submit the names of sites they consider suitable. A preliminary evaluation of key areas could be carried out. This should include discussion with the management of these areas to identify opportunities, and to listen to their

suggestions. It will be particularly important to the success of such a scheme to design it in a way that maximises the cooperation of those who are in charge of these areas.

3. It is likely that we will need a way to confer some sort of recognition on these areas, perhaps by calling them "Special Sites of Conservation Interest" or "Special Bird Preserves"—basically, a way to generate a little publicity, and reward organisations for their conservation efforts. The management of the selected sites could be given "Conservation Stewardship Awards", for example.
4. We will have to decide on a set of criteria by which to judge an area's conservation value, and to decide whether it is worth pursuing for conservation goals. These criteria could include the size of the area, the intactness of habitat, the commitment of the management to some form of conservation, and the number and species of birds that use the area (including for nesting, roosting, and so on).
5. We also need a way to regularly monitor the sites, and to provide conservation advice and consultancy to the management of the sites. This

will also provide a mechanism to upgrade or downgrade sites accordingly (there could be different levels of conservation value, for example).

6. In carrying out these steps, all interested individuals should be encouraged to contribute to the discussion and implementation of these ideas, and a nationwide consultation is desirable. In this, the lead should be taken by organisations like the BNHS, with discussion and debate being facilitated by publications like *Indian Birds*.

References

- Islam, M.Z. & Rahmani, A.R. 2004. Important Bird Areas in India: priority sites for conservation. Indian Bird Conservation Network: Bombay Natural History Society and BirdLife International (UK). Pp. xviii + 1133.
- Singh, B. 2000. A bird haven in an army cantonment. *Newsletter for Birdwatchers* 40 (4): 49-51.

Lt. General Baljit Singh has been interested in nature conservation for the past 50 years and has been a Trustee of WWF-India and a member of the advisory committee at BNHS. He was instrumental in getting officers of the Indian Army actively involved in nature conservation.

Recoveries from the *Newsletter for Birdwatchers* (1964) – 9

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In 1963 the *Newsletter* was sent to 415 people though the total subscribers were only 165. The complementary copies must have helped to create a growing interest in birdwatching. The total expenses for the year amounted to Rs 2,888/-, which was underwritten by a business house. The annual subscription remained at Rs 5/-.

In the January 1964 issue there is a fine article by Horace Alexander, the internationally acclaimed Quaker, a great supporter of Mahatma Gandhi as well as a keen ornithologist and a friend of Salim Ali. On his return to Delhi on 25.x.1963 he said, "We had a brief outing with General Harold Williams. Mrs. (Usha) Ganguly had advised us that we might do well to visit the River Jamuna (= Yamuna) above Delhi, near the new bridge. So thither we went. Before we even reached the river, we found a vast concourse of Terns beating up and down over the dirty brook that flows past the

ancient mosque just before Timapur. It was impossible to estimate exact numbers, especially as the population was constantly changing. But as we stood beside the stream, with the birds flying to and fro within a few yards, I concluded that three hundred would not have been an over estimate. The great majority was River Terns, but one Gullbilled Tern came close past, already in winter plumage with almost white head, and at least two much smaller Whiskered Terns, one of them still showing slight flakings of its dark breast plumage. After a time a single Brownheaded Gull appeared in the throng. Perhaps it had that moment arrived from further north."

Brother Navarro SJ of St. Xavier's High School, Bombay, during his visit to Mussoorie, was delighted with the sight of White-capped and Plumbeous Redstarts, and forktails; but it was the Brown Dipper which thrilled him. "It was a most amusing

sight to see the ease with which they used to dip into the stream. Sometimes it looked as if by accident the dipper had slipped from the boulder and fallen into the water. Their entrance into the water was effortless and certainly there was not a single time when the act of submerging could be called a dive. The legs were always first when touching the water and the rest of their bodies followed without a change in this position. The dipper appears at the surface of the water as easily as it submerges and then jumps to the boulder. This operation is performed so neatly that it looks as if the dipper springs from the bottom of the stream to the top of the boulders in a single continuous action as if there were no water at all. This is a different way from that of the divers and other aquatic birds which rise from the surface of the water."

Another note by Br. Navarro was about "Round the Clock Vigil at a Coral Tree". This

tree was in the compound of the school in crowded Bombay, and yet 22 species were recorded.

In light of the remarkable growth in the number of birders in Gujarat in recent years, this note sent by K.S. Lavkumar, then at Rajkumar College, Rajkot is of some interest. He wrote, "You will be gratified to read that the cautious beginning of a Birdwatchers' Group we had formed here has been successful and our second meeting saw 15 people, all genuinely keen. We are all going out to see duck on 29th December morning. I have to discuss the future of this little group and give you my report which I should have done during the Annual General Meeting."

The material chosen by birds for nest making is of some significance, but if S.V. Nilakanta is right the birds also have fore knowledge of how the leaf will eventually shape. The Tailor Bird *Orthotomus sutorius*, as an example, uses a leaf of the Indian almond tree *Terminalia catappa*, only at a particular period during the growth of the leaf. He said, "The bird had chosen a leaf which: a) Was tender enough for the edges to be drawn together and stitched, b) Had grown to full area, c) Could be predicted to grow to the correct pendant position in a given time, d) Could become less conspicuous with the growth of additional leaves and, e) Could be guaranteed to remain strong and firm till nesting was completed." Quite remarkable, this knowledge, of the tree's phenology.

He concluded by reporting that, "on 9th February the fledglings had left the nest and were perching on various other trees and bushes in the compound."

Salim was fortunate in finding several keen birders to assist him in his ringing operations. One such was Julian P. Donahue who arrived in February 1964. He remained devoted to Salim and was of great help in the ringing and migration studies. "I wish to specially thank Dr. Ali for introducing me to several 'life listers' at the Sanctuary, including Marshall's Iora and the Spotted Grey Creeper." He produced a carefully researched list of 163 species of birds seen during that period in Bharatpur.

Gift Siromoney of the Madras Christian College participated in one of the bird ringing camps in the Rann of Kutch. He was an exceptionally keen naturalist, and it is a tragedy that he died so young... I reproduce his note on the migration of butterflies, which appeared in the March 1964 issue of the *Newsletter*.

A plea for the study of migration of butterflies

There was an interesting report by Mrs. Ganguli in the *Newsletter* (October 1963) about bulbuls in Delhi feeding their young ones with certain common butterflies, with wings and all. There have been reports of butterflies being eaten by birds such as bee-eaters and drongos (Wynter-Blyth, *Butterflies of the Indian region*: 52). The fact that the bulbuls were feeding their young ones with the common species like the Plain Tiger or the Danaid Eggfly shows that it is not an accident. It is very likely that butterflies form a regular part of the diet of the young ones, if not the adult birds. Mrs. Ganguli's report is also interesting from the fact that the Plain Tiger is commonly believed to be a species 'distasteful' to its predators and the Danaid Eggfly is said to get protection from the predators because of its striking resemblance to the former species. If the bulbul had taken the plain tiger then the bulbul did not mind the taste or on the other hand, if it had been the Danaid Eggfly that was caught, the bulbul had recognized the Eggfly in spite of the mimicry!

Several species of birds have been observed to eat butterflies in migration (C.B. Williams, *Insect migration*: 177-178) and we know that the availability of food, plays an important factor in the migration of birds. Very little is known about the migration of insects in India and the study of migration of marked butterflies may prove to be a useful venture, which amateur naturalists can easily undertake.

The author has recently started marking butterflies with paper labels, each label has a registration number and the legend 'Inform Christian College, Madras-45' and a record is kept with the date of marking and the name of the species for each marked individual with its registration number. We adopt the method (Williams, *Insect migration*: 201) of folding the paper and sticking the label soaked in 'quikfix'. The adhesive soaks through the wing when

some pressure is applied and the label is waterproof. The author has chosen two main species, namely the Blue Tiger (*Danaïus lemnice*) and the Common Indian Crow (*Euploea core*), which are known to be migratory (R. Reuben, *J. Bombay Nat. Hist. Soc.* 58: 815). These butterflies are tough and easy to catch as they congregate on *Crotalaria* plants and settle down on flowers.

In other parts of the world marked butterflies have been recovered even at a distance of 850 miles from the place of marking and most butterflies have a life span of several months. Readers of the *Newsletter* are asked to look for marked butterflies and to start projects of their own. The author shall be equally grateful for bird notes connection with butterflies.

Gift Siromoney, Madras Christian College, Madras

Not many police officers these days indulge in birdwatching, but Pratap Singh, SDO of Morena district, M.P., found time to do so in that dacoit-infested district. On 19.x.1963 he observed a bird that intrigued him and he thought it was a Striolated Bunting *Emberiza striolata*. But on 2.iv.1964 he was able to see the bird from just 1 m and was sure that it was a Wryneck *Jynx torquilla* when it "thrust forth a black tongue and started pecking ants from the ground."

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