

## Unusual nests of Red-rumped Swallow *Hirundo daurica* in Ratnagiri district (Maharashtra, India)

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**R**ed-rumped Swallows *Hirundo daurica* construct a retort-shaped nest with mud. Both sexes take part in this construct. They collect pellets of wet mud in their beaks and stick these to the roof of a veranda, temple, under a bridge, etc. First they make a retort-shaped outline of the nest and then paste mud pellets, a pellet at a time, to make an egg chamber. After that the birds make an entrance tunnel. The outer surface of the nest is rough. After completing construction, they give a soft lining of fine grass, twigs and feathers to the egg chamber.

We give below two observations on unusual nests from Chiplun city (17°31'N 73°31'E) and Pimpali village.

### Chiplun

Vindhyawasini is a famous Hindu temple in Chiplun. Here a pair of Red-rumped Swallows regularly builds a nest attached to the roof of the temple and someone frequently breaks the nest. The birds rebuild it at the same place.

On 23.vi.2004 we observed that the nest had been completely broken. Only a mud outline remained and two hatchlings lay dead on the ground. Both adult birds were wandering around the place.

On 7.vii.2004 we observed a very unusual nest of at the same place. It had two entrances at opposite sides. The normal-sized nest was shaped like the "head of a bison". After an hour's observation we realized that both birds were busy lining the nest. They used only one tunnel for entering and leaving it. Later we climbed up to the nest and saw that one tunnel was blocked on the inside.

### Pimpali

Pimpali is a small village 8 km from Chiplun. Here Red-rumped Swallows *Hirundo daurica* had attached their nest to the roof of the "Gramdevata" temple, which was under renovation. During painting, the painters started to break the nest. Mr Jayant Kanade (President of Sahyadri Nisarga Mitra), who is a resident of Pimpali, advised them not to break the nest but to paint over it. The roof was painted white as was the nest. Now the nest was fully 'camouflaged'. Both birds accepted their painted over nest and used it for three years! In 2004 they built a new nest, attaching it to the coloured one.



Unusual nest of Red-rumped Swallow *Hirundo daurica* in Vindhyawasini (Chiplun).

## White-backed Vultures *Gyps bengalensis* in Gujarat

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**W**ould like to place on record some observations, of vultures, made in 2004 in Gujarat. Near Mahuva, Bhavnagar district, a few farms with coconut plantations, had about 125–140 roosting White-backed Vultures *Gyps bengalensis*. I was told that about 50 nests were present during the breeding season. Local farmers recalled a larger number of roosting birds. They said that about eight years ago there was a high rate of mortality among the birds.

These birds faced several threats. Apparently their presence reduced the production of coconuts and spoilt the

palm fronds. The birds were constantly disturbed by people, who not only threw stones at them, but also used firearms to scare and even kill the birds.

The nesting birds were also threatened by egg collectors. Vulture eggs are in demand locally as a cure for tuberculosis and asthma.

Advocacy for the protection of vultures, among the coconut farmers, has educated them to the extent that they have agreed not to harass roosting birds nor disturb those nesting.