

MADRAS NATURALISTS' SOCIETY

BULLETIN

Vol.33 No.6, June 2010

Programme: June 13th at 9.00 am

Venue: Olcott memorial school Besant Nagar

Topic: Annual General Body meeting

Member's Trip Reports

Walking in Shimla

There were a number of lovely walks around the Indian Institute of Advanced Studies (IIAS) in Shimla. There were plenty of birds and bird calls and a 40 minute walk would easily become one of a couple of hours duration.

Every time I'd stop to investigate a bird call - peer into the undergrowth or up the trees, I'd have a bunch of interested onlookers gather around me wondering what I was upto. The ragtag group would usually consist of a couple of blue whistling thrushes, streaked laughing thrushes, great barbets, one family of Rhesus macaques and at times even a few Langurs! The feathered group would haunt the nearest rock/tree and pass rude comments to each other about my appearance and then come tantalisingly close. I would then scramble around for my camera and just when I'd have everything ready the whole bunch would mysteriously vanish! And as soon as my camera came out the monkeys would get ready to snatch it off... and I would have to then make a quick getaway from that place! This was my standard walking routine...

Still I managed to spot quite a few birds - many first timers for me, including the Khalij pheasant, the great barbet, the green backed and black throated tits, and the woodpeckers - grey-headed wp, lesser yellow nape, grey capped and brown capped pygmy wp, fulvous breasted wp...

I spent many minutes listening to the songs and watching the antics of the rufous sibia and the verditer flycatchers. The blue whistling thrushes were nesting in the roof of my cousin's quarters, so we got to hear their melodious calls day and night and watch the parents feed the chicks.. There was a Tulip tree in the institute campus which had a beautifully furrowed bark. As I sat admiring it, a pair of noisy chattering bar-tailed tree creepers came and held me spell bound for quite sometime. The other birds that I saw were the grey headed flycatcher, the long tailed minivet (I remembered Preston's lesson on the wing patterns), Eurasian jay, slaty headed parakeets, Eurasian blackbird, white wagtail, himalayan bulbuls, red collared doves, russet sparrows... I think my bird list was about 35. As usual there were a number of small yellow-olive coloured birds flitting around that I couldn't identify at all!

There were a number of packs of dogs running around all over the hills. I saw one pack chase a barking deer one morning. There were no house crows and mynas were few in number. There were a number of jungle crows though. I think I saw more whistling thrushes than crows there!

The really sad thing about the hills was the amount of deforestation and rampant road building and constructions; on our way up we were shocked to see bare hills with very few trees and the mountain sides looking as if they'd collapse at the slightest of winds. And to top it all this was the hottest summer ever for the Shimla-ites.

Chithra

Tadoba

Hey, Just came back from an amazing trip to Tadoba Andhari Tiger Reserve in Central Maharashtra. Initially 5 of us planned to go then after a lot of cancellations it was just Gnanaskandan and me. It was sweltering hot, sometimes reaching 50°C but the sightings made it all worth while, the highlights were Tiger, Sloth Bear and exquisite bird sightings, especially The Indian Pitta, Black-naped Monarch and the Orange-headed Ground Thrush, which we saw in the 100's. The trip was very well organized by my friend Shalik Jogwe <http://tadoba-tiger.blogspot.com/>. Being my first Tiger sighting in the wild, it was a very special trip for me, Looking forward to seeing Tadoba in the rainy season soon.
Sripad and Gnanaskandan

Sightings

Red Headed Falcon (two of them) sighted @ Siruthavoor Lake on 11th April 2010

Indian Courser with Chick @ Siruthavoor Lake on 11th April 2010

White winged Black Tern and Grey Plover sighted @ Kelambakkam backwaters on 18th April 2010

Collared Pratincole May 23rd siruthavoor

All by GK and Sripad

Events

1. A selection of writings from Blackbuck is being published by Penguin as a book titled The Sprint of the Blackbuck. This anthology is edited by Mr. Theodore Baskaran the well-known naturalist-writer. The book is scheduled to be released in Madras on Thursday, June 10 Nagar Club, (see attached invite)
The book will be available at the venue at a special discount of 30%, against a cover price of Rs.299. As the copies available will be limited, please send an email to reserve a copy
2. **Art for the Environment- World Environment Day 5th June -11th June Exhibition of paintings by Paris Mohan Kumar artist and green activist at the Sheraton Chola Hotel, Chennai**
3. **World environment day at British Council
Special books display 1-5th June and Special preview of films produces under UK Environment Film Fellowship awards**
4. The book release of " A Concise Field Guide to Indian Insects and Arachnids" will be on 5th June 2010 at the EVS Hall, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Race Course Road, Bangalore at 4:30 pm. Mr. Theodore Baskaran (Trustee, WWF) has kindly consented to release the book

News

1. Guidelines issued for preparing people's biodiversity register.
The National Biodiversity Authority has issued guidelines and local bodies have been entrusted with the task of preparing, maintaining and validating people's biodiversity register (PBR) in consultation with local people

2. The man who spotted a pair of Great Indian Bustards, a dwindling species and the State bird of Rajasthan, in Jodhpur after a gap of seven years, was felicitated this weekend. Conservationist NGOs and nature loving Bishnoi organisations hailed the work of forester Om Prakash Vyas, as "rediscovery" of the bird in the desert terrain..Mr. Vyas, who is posted at Phalodi in Jodhpur district, spotted the pair consecutively for the past two years during the annual wildlife census, each time in the Oran (sacred grove) near Khara village towards west of Phalodi. This year he did it on March 30.
3. Recent studies by BirdLife International and BNHS (Bombay Natural History Society) in India have revealed that the list of threatened bird species in the country has risen from 149 in 2008 to 154. Destruction of habitat is the prime reason for all these disappearing species. According to BirdLife studies in Asia, the condition of Great Slaty Woodpecker has deteriorated from "Least Concern" to "Vulnerable", while that of Rufous-backed Bunting has deteriorated from "Vulnerable" to "Endangered".

Resources

1. Link to the documentary film on the vultures of Ramnagaram-----
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hWNLwTu_wbA or
<http://vidarbhawildlife.blogspot.com/>
 Awaiting Death - Vultures are scavengers, and their life depends on a death. Today, it seems like they are awaiting their own demise. Can we stem the tide?
 A short documentary that showcases various aspects of the problem. What follows is a story of one of the last few breeding populations of vultures in southern India. We hope that immediate steps are taken to save this landscape and its inhabitants.
2. The Tree Identification Guide of Gandhi Nagar , by Nizhal team led by Chithra. These are now available with Nizhal, for a contribution (by cheque drawn in favour of Nizhal, or cash) , as an e-copy (Rs.150) and as a book (Rs.300). Others interested, please email nizhal.shade@gmail.com

A request to the members to come up with suggestions and contributions for the bulletin "editor"

Invite to the book release function



Penguin Books India

Dear Sir / Madam,

Blackbuck, the journal of the Madras Naturalists' Society, is a unique publication that focuses on the natural history of southern India.

A selection of writings from Blackbuck is being published by Penguin Books India as a book titled *The Sprint of the Blackbuck: Writings on Wildlife and Conservation in South India*.

This anthology is edited by Mr. Theodore Baskaran the well known naturalist-writer.

The book is scheduled to be released in Madras on Thursday, June 10 at the Gandhi Nagar Club, Adyar at 6 00pm.

The first copy will be released by Mr. Gopalakrishna Gandhi, former governor of West Bengal, and received by Chairman of Chennai Snake Park Trust Mr. B.Vijayaraghavan, IAS (retired).

You are invited to be present on this happy occasion.

C. Ramakrishna
President
Madras Naturalists' Society

K.V. Sudhakar
Honorary Secretary

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