

I was a member of Sri Bhuvanendra Nature Club and at that time, I used to accompany the birdwatching troupe very often. Once, we went to Agumbe forest which lies on the Western Ghats. I had the golden opportunity of seeing the most beautiful and prestigious bird, the Paradise Flycatcher from a close distance. As a birdwatcher, I can never forget this bird as it has occupied the front cover of Dr. Salim Ali's magnum opus "*The Book of Indian Birds*". In the world of birds, the male is always beautiful and it is true in case of the Paradise Flycatcher. It reminds me of a Christian bride adorned with a long white dress. The female is saffron coloured. A pair of flycatchers always visited the bamboo groves near my house. I had the privilege of showing them to my family members who also shared my jubilation on sighting the pair.

I am very much pained to say that the adjacent land has been bulldozed recently and the ecosystem is completely destroyed. Trees, bushes and the bamboo groves have been removed using a JCB. I was observing the leveling activities which went on for almost a month. On a particular day, in front of my house the bamboo grove which had given the

shelter to many birds was being pulled down. I was watching the pulling down operations of the bamboo grove with much grief. Suddenly, a Paradise Flycatcher came from nowhere and sat on one of the fallen bamboo branches. The bird was surveying the whole situation with anguish and it seemed as if the bird was very much agitated at the sudden disappearance of its chosen habitat. After a while, I saw the bird flying off to the nearby tree in the next compound and uttering a loud helpless cry. In the beginning, when we learnt that the grove was slated for removal, we thought that it was a good idea because the grove was blocking our view. But as soon as it was removed, we felt very sad over this insensitive act. On the next day morning, the Magpie Robin sat on the stone pole facing the ground, and was crying continuously. But there was no one to listen to the cries of the Magpie Robin. The soliloquy of the robin went on and on, but all in vain.

You too can watch a variety of birds living around your locality provided you have a taste for watching them. Birds live in the midst of nature. Hence, grow trees which welcome the birds to live in. Protect and preserve nature.

CORRESPONDENCE

RECENT RECORDS OF MASKED BOOBY (*Sula dactylatra*) ALONG THE WESTERN COAST OF INDIA

by RAJU KASAMBE, Bombay Natural History Society, Shaheed Bhagat Singh Road, Mumbai-400001, Maharashtra

I found some important records of the stray sightings of Masked Boobies (*Sula dactylatra*) along the western coast posted on the internet. Here, I have tried to put these records together from the internet birding groups. Most of these records are from peer birders and some were with photographs attached to them and hence are reliable. As these records are important as far as the distribution of the species is concerned, I am presenting those compiled records here.

Masked Booby at Mumbai, Maharashtra:

Mr. Pankaj Jadhav found a Masked Booby (*Sula dactylatra*) at the famous Juhu beach in Mumbai on 20th June 2010. The bird was not injured but couldn't fly and was being mobbed by crows. He took the bird to Veterinary College, Parel for treatment. But, when he went there to enquire about its recuperation, he was told that the bird had died two days after admission.

When he told Mr. Saurabh Sawant about it and sent him some pictures, the bird was confirmed as a Masked Booby. However, the exact reason of its death could not be ascertained (as posted on birdsofbombay@yahoogroups.com on 25th June, 2010 by Saurabh Sawant).

Masked Booby at Malvan, Maharashtra:

On 4th July 2010, I saw news on a Marathi TV channel that one Masked Booby has reached the coastal village, Malvan in Sindhudurg district of Maharashtra. They showed the footage

of the bird being treated by veterinarians and as per the channel's report the bird was supposed to be released after it could fly (as posted on maharashtrapakshimitra@yahoogroups.com on 5th July 2010, by Raju Kasambe).

Reports of Masked Booby from Kerala:

An injured juvenile Masked Booby was found at the Asramam, Kollam, in Kerala on 20th June 2010. Masked Boobies reach Kerala coast occasionally during monsoon season. Then the bird was sent to Thiruvananthapuram Zoo. (As posted by C. Susanth on keralabirder@yahoogroups.com on July 1st 2010)

A Masked Booby was reported from Chavakkad beach in Thrissur district of Kerala on 6th February 2008 by Mr. P. P. Sreenivasan. The earlier report of a Masked Booby sighting was during July 1992. It is interesting to note that all the earlier reports of Masked Booby from Kerala coast coincided with the arrival of South-Western Monsoon.

Here is a brief summary of earlier reports of Masked Booby from Kerala: 1. Kadalundi, Malappuram in July 1987 and in September 2002. 2. Chaliyam, Kozhikode in August 1988.

3. Udma and Thaikadppuram, in Kasaragod district in August 1994 and July 1998. 4. Mattul beach, in Kannur district in July 2004. 5. Thaikadappuram at Kannur in August 2006. (As posted by Mr. Ommer Nameer on keralabirder@yahoogroups.com on 7th February, 2008)

Munjpara *et al.* (2008) had reported a Masked Booby at the coast in Kachchh in Gujraht.

Earlier Andheria (2001) and Kinnear (1912) had reported it from the Mumbai shores.

Wait (1933) had reported them at sea 350 miles from Mumbai. Kurup (1990) had reported it from the coasts of Kerala and Madhyastha (1987) reported it from coastal Karnataka.

Tiwari (2009) reported it from the Pingleshwar coast, Kachchh. According to Rasmussen (2005) it is a casual offshore visitor from Mekran coast (SW Pakistan) to Sri Lanka. It is vagrant and once was reported inland (at Nashik, Maharashtra).

Thus, there are few records of the species from the western coast of India. Presumably, pelagic birds stray towards the shores of Mumbai and as far as Kachchh due to strong monsoon winds during the months of July to September and are often mobbed by crows to exhaustion leading to death.

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SPARROWS AT BANGALORE INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT by S. DEVASAHAYAM, "AKSHAYA", Maloorkunnu Cross Road, Marikunnu P. O., Calicut-673 012, Kerala.

With numerous articles in various print media focusing on the decline of sparrows (*Passer domesticus*) and the probable reasons for the same fresh in my mind, I was pleasantly surprised to hear the familiar chirping of sparrows echoing in the departure lounge of the new Bangalore International Airport on 18 May 2010. Obviously the sparrows were very much at home in their new surroundings since some were picking up crumbs from the floor near the food counters while others were busy with their courtship movements on the floor and were hopping and quivering their wings. A few were even carrying nesting materials high up on the corners of the roof of the airport. The nesting materials were ingeniously out-sourced from within the airport itself by shredding the tender leaves and stems of rattans (*Calamus* spp.?) that were grown as indoor plants. New buildings especially those in which aluminum, steel and glass are predominantly used are often cited as one of the main reasons for the decline of sparrows in the urban environment as they provide little opportunity for sparrows to nest and find adequate food. I wonder whether the sparrows were able to successfully raise their brood in this new swanky environment.

SIGHTING OF NESTING OF BLACK BAZA (*Aviceda leuphotes*) IN TINSUKIA DISTRICT OF UPPER ASSAM. by MD. IMRAN, C/o. Eden Shoe, Station Road, Tinsukia, Assam, India.

I received the information about the nesting of Black Baza (*Aviceda leuphotes*) from Prahlad Kakati, a keen birder, conservationist and science teacher by profession. I rushed to the nesting place to take a look at the raptors that had bred two chicks successfully near Rupai of upper Assam. But unfortunately due to the gusty winds on the stormy night of 25th of July 2010, the nest had fallen on the ground. But luckily the chicks were mature enough to survive the stormy night and gave the impression that they were quite healthy.

So when we reached the place we were fortunate enough to see both the male and female raptors which were calling frequently. We even saw a parent bird carrying a prey to its chicks. Prahlad informed me about the chicks which he had observed at least for a week before the nest fell to the ground. Though we could not find the chicks nearby on that day we were quite sure of their presence, because of the food carried by one of the parents and the frequent alarm call given to them by the parent birds. We were there for two hours and we could never locate the chicks and ultimately we left the place without disturbing them. It was really a nice birding day we had on that day.

Regarding the status of this raptor in this region I had gone through many guide books. This is a very rare raptor in this region and according to Pamela C. Rasmussen's guide book, *Birds of South Asia the Ripley Guide*; this is a breeding visitor to this region along with two-way migration. Though the nesting of this bird has been reported from Panbari near Kaziranga, this is the first nesting record of Black Baza from upper Assam.

It is also important to note that a pair of Shikra (*Accipiter badius*) also made their nest nearby and they had successfully bred two chicks.

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- Rishad Naoroji *Birds of Prey of the Indian subcontinent*.
- Salim Ali *Field Guide to the Birds of the Eastern Himalayas*

Cover Photographs

Avifauna of Kuldiha Wildlife Sanctuary, Orissa, India, by Sunit K. Das, Nibedita Dash, R.A. Ahmed and S.D. Rout, (page 49 to 55)

- 1) Black Redstart (*Phoenicurus ochruros*)
- 2) Black-headed Oriole (*Oriolus Xanthornus*)
- 3) Eurasian Collared-dove (*Streptopelia Decaocto*)
- 4) Large-tailed Nightjar (*Caprimulgus Macrurus*)
- 5) Rose-ringed Parakeet (*Psittacula Krameri*)
- 6) Crested Serpent Eagle (*Spilornis Cheela*)
- 7) White Wagtail (*Motacilla Alba*) (back cover)
- 8) Grey-headed Starling (*Stumus Malabaricus*) (back cover)

9) Masked Booby (*Sula dactylatra*) found along the Western coast of India by Raju Kasambe (page 59)

10) & 11) Black Baza (*Aviceda Leuphotes*) in Tinsukia district of upper Assam by MD. Imran, (page 60)



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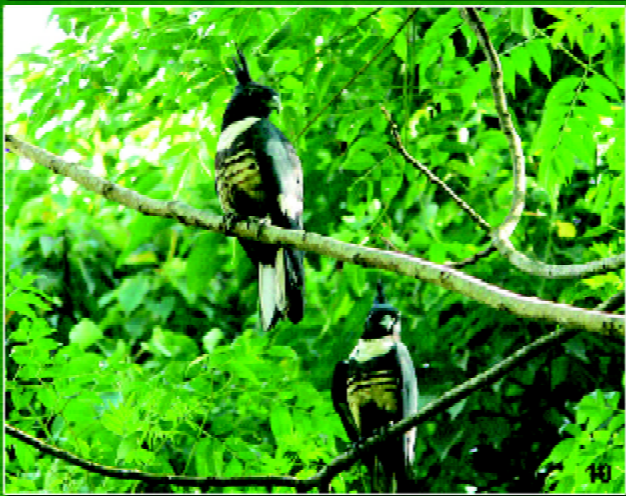
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