



## Blue-tailed Bee-eaters are ‘winter migrants’ in and around Mumbai

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Blue-tailed Bee-eater (*Merops philippinus*) a colourful bee-eater larger than Small Green Bee-eater (*Merops orientalis*), has a black stripe through the eyes, deep chestnut throat and breast, bright blue rump and tail (Ali, 1996). It resembles Blue-cheeked Bee-eater (*Merops superciliosus*) in appearance.

The author has reported breeding of Blue-tailed bee-eaters in Central India and had studied them (Kasambe, 2004 & 2005) and is following the local migration of the birds with the help of internet.

Internet and the web-groups of birdwatchers on the internet is an ocean of stored data contributed by different individuals, which can be easily accessed and analysed. For this article, an inventory search on the birding web group ‘birdsofbombay’ was done and e-mails which reported the sightings of Blue-tailed Bee-eaters in and around Mumbai were searched for. Data for six years from January 2001 to December 2006 was searched. Also mails were posted by the author to various other birding groups requesting veteran birders to inform about their sightings of Blue-tailed Bee-eaters anywhere in India. Even details were sought from the birdwatchers about the sightings if they failed to mention them in the web group postings. Then the sighting reports were sorted according to the location and month of sighting. However year of sighting was taken into account.

Surprisingly, in the sighting reports of the ‘birdsofbombay’ web group I realized that Blue-tailed Bee-eaters were reported in and around Mumbai from 10<sup>th</sup> October up to 29<sup>th</sup> March, which is the full span of winter in the area (see Table).

There are two interesting sightings, out of winter, one by Adesh on 21<sup>st</sup> April 2006 at Bheemashankar and another by Mr. Sunjoy Monga on 30<sup>th</sup> July 2001 at Mumbai. The first may indicate breeding of Blue-tailed Bee-eaters near Bheemashankar and the second might be a sick bird staying back in Mumbai even after the winter was over.

**Table: Sightings of Blue-tailed Bee-eaters in and around Mumbai in monthly order**

Message No	Sighted on	Location	Sighted by
5782	8/10/05	Bheemeshwari	Lalit Narkhede
4068	17/10/06	Uran & Andheri	Shashank Dalvi
5673	9/10/05	Uran, Rewas, to 19/10/05	(4 times in 10 days) Sewri Adesh Shivkar
4081	23/10/06	Uran, KN B*	Adesh Shivkar
4193	3/11/04	Uran	Venkateswaran Krishna
1604	4/11/01	Mumbai	Sunjoy Monga
5778	6/11/05	Mumbai	Ravi Vaidyanathan
5828	15/11/06	Mumbai	Kanwar B. Singh
1769	8/12/01	Mumbai	Sunjoy Monga
4363	16/01/05	Mumbai	Sunjoy Monga
6268	27/01/06	Mumbai	Carolann Pais
6277	28/01/06	Mumbai	Bindu Kapadia
6281	29/01/06	Mumbai	Adesh Shivkar, Charanya Ganesh
6279			
6396	21/02/06	IIT, Powai	Adesh Shivkar
6400	23/02/06	IIT, Powai	Survashis Sarkar
6423	8/03/06	Mumbai	Ravi Vaidyanathan
3562	28/03/04	Mumbai	Sunjoy Monga
3576	29/03/04	Vashi	Adesh Shivkar
3569	29/03/04	SGNP*	Ajay Bhawnani
3571	29/03/04	SGNP*	Kiran Srivastava
6606	21/04/06	Bhimashankar	Adesh Shivkar
1423	30/07/01	Mumbai	Sunjoy Monga

\*Abbreviation: SGNP: Sanjay Gandhi National Park, Borivali, Mumbai  
KNB : Karanja Naval Base



Abdulali (1981) has mentioned the species as ‘passage migrant’ in and around Mumbai. After this checklist all the subsequent publications (Monga, 2006) and internet communication have mentioned the species to be a ‘passage migrant’ in and around Mumbai. Whereas, the checklist of birds of Nashik by Raha *et. al.* (2004) mentions the status

of Blue-tailed Bee-eaters at Nashik (not at Mumbai) as 'migrants' clarifying 'migrant' means birds which temporarily resides in Nashik district and best time to see them is from end of September to March.

We hereby, like to emphasize and correct the status of Blue-tailed Bee-eaters as 'winter migrants' from the prevailing 'passage migrant' in and around Mumbai.

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## Nesting colony of Asian Open-bill Stork *Anastomus oscitans* in Kanki Village, Korba District, Chhattisgarh.



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#### Introduction

Ali (1979) and Ali & Ripley (1989) described status, distribution and breeding biology of Asian Open-bill *Anastomus oscitans* in the monumental publications 'The Book of Indian Birds' and "Compact Handbook". Chaudhry & Chakrabarti (1973), Kahl (1970), Law (1926) and Mukhopadyaya (1980) have also described the breeding biology of Asian Open-bill.

Asian Open-bill is widely distributed and breeds in India. Several thousand pairs breed in Keoladeo National Park, Rajasthan (Ali & Ripley: 89). Datta & Pal (1993) studied the effect of human interference on nesting of Asian Open-bill. Subramanya (1996) compiled 40 nesting sites of Asian Open-bill in different parts of India. In central India nesting colony of Asian Open-bill have been identified in Bamhri Banjar near Kanha National Park Madhya Pradesh (Eric D'cunha & Ali: 2001), Pimpari village near Nawegaon National Park in Maharashtra (Joshi et al.: 2008) and Danapur in Bihar (Choudhary Et al.: 2008). Agasimani (2009) made a preliminary study on heronry of Kanki. Information regarding nesting trees of Asian Open-bill Stork has not been documented in the central India. The object of this study is to give an account of nesting trees and habitat of Asian Open-bill Stork in Kanki village in Korba district in Chhattisgarh.

#### Methodology

Kanki was visited and the nesting as well as other relevant details were studied and information collected from local

residents. Majority of birds had left after nesting but some nests active and a few sub-adult chicks and adults were seen in the vicinity.

The number of nests on each tree was counted, approximate height of the trees were assessed. Visual observations of Open-bill Stork and its habitat were taken in November 2009. Nests were observed from the terrace of a nearby building using binoculars.

#### Study Site

##### *The Kanki Village*

The Kanki village is 25 km from Korba, an industrial town in the Karthala tahsil in Korba district. The District Korba is blessed with rich mineral deposits and has attracted largescale investments in Aluminum, Coal and Power Sectors. These investments have enabled Korba to emerge as a major industrial hub in central India (Anon: n. d.). In Korba and surroundings major industries including opencast coal mines, bauxite mines, coal base thermal power plants, aluminum plant, cement plants are located.

The village is situated on the banks of Hasdeo river. The river bank is at the threshold of soil erosion. The village lies at 22° 13' 47½ of north latitude and 82° 39' 40½ east longitude. The altitude is 277 meters above mean sea level. There are 487 households with total population of 2271. About 33.8 % population belongs to tribal community. The geographical area of village is 881 hectares and 209 hectare is under irrigation from Hasdeo Reservoir and Hasdeo - Bango