

Incidence of a Black Drongo (*Dicrurus macrocercus*) attempting to feed on a warbler

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It was on 30th April 2009 morning, I had gone to Ambazari tank (near Nagpur, Maharashtra state) for a walk and birding with my son Master Vedant Kasambe. We were looking for some surprise passage migrants, which are generally sighting in the months of April and May at various tanks in Central India.

At around 9am, I witnessed something I will never forget. I saw a Black Drongo (*Dicrurus macrocercus*) chasing a small brown warbler which was fleeing at its best speed. But the Drongo captured the Warbler mid-air and landed on the ground. It started viciously pecking at the warbler which was struggling. Somehow, the warbler escaped from the clutches of the Drongo and scurried to the nearest *Ipomoea* bush. The Drongo again chased the Warbler, but this time failed to recapture it. As I got few seconds to observe the event, I was not very sure about the identification of the warbler.

After some time I referred to the Pocket Guide by Grimmett et. al. (2000) and came to a probable identification of the warbler as a Paddyfield Warbler (*Acrocephalus agricola*).

I shared this observation with a senior bird watcher Mr. Ramesh Ladkhedkar in Nagpur. He told me about the observations of one Mr. Ravi Deshpande (now staying at Nagpur). It happened around 15 years back at Nagzira wildlife sanctuary. When the latter was observing birds at the Nagzira tank in hot summer, he saw a Purple Sunbird (*Nectarinia asiatica*) flying towards him. From nowhere a Black Drongo emerged and dived towards the arriving Sunbird. The Drongo captured the Sunbird mid-air. Then the Drongo devoured the Purple Sunbird. Unfortunately, this observation remained unpublished.

According to Ali and Ripley the food of Black Drongo is “predominantly insects; on occasion lizards, small birds (*Prinia*, *Zosterops*, *Aegithina* recorded) and small bats (Microchiroptera)...” Senthilmurugan (2005) had reported fish in the diet of the Black Drongo.

Ali (1951) has reported a White-bellied Drongo (*Dicrurus caerulescens*) capturing *Prinia hodgsonii*.

D’Silva, et. al., (1990) has reported the Indian Black Drongo eating a bird, which they believed to be a species of *Riparia*. Osmaston (1922) had reported Black Drongo feeding on *Zosterops palpebrosa*.

Sridharan & Sivasubramanian (1987) had described incidents of Black Drongo capturing and devouring *Prinia subflava* and *Hirundo fluvicola*. Jayson & Ramachandran (1994) has reported a Black Drongo feeding on a small bird.

Thus, the incidence of Black Drongo devouring small birds is not new to Indian Ornithology. But it is an uncommon incidence, reported only few times and hence worth reporting.

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