

It was observed that though there were only 3 nests at Panchbol valley (near Chikhaldara), more vultures were present there. The ledges seemed to have gathered lot of mud and grass thus filling the cave (AP). On 23rd September 2001, two ledges were cleared of debris, by a team of adventurers, viz., Dhanajay Bhagat, Parveshkumar, Mr. Dhanajay Thete, Ajay Pillarisett, Raju Kasambe, Jayant Wadatkar, and Kedar Pawgi using rappelling and zoomaring techniques. Surprisingly, a completely decomposed vulture skeleton was found in one ledge. It was brought to Amravati, cleaned and the skeleton is now kept at the Department of Zoology, Amravati University, Amravati.

One bird was seen in flight near Gawilgarh fort (near Chikhaldara) on 1st July 2001 (JW, RK). One bird was again sighted in flight near Dharkhora waterfall on 31st November 2001 (JW, RK).

CORRESPONDENCE

ABOUT A CRAKE. WESLEY, DANIEL, H. 2/126, Ramalinga Nagar South, Tiruchirappalli – 620 017.

Adjacent to my house compound is a plot of land earmarked for a park. Low lying area, it receives rain water during the wet season and is overgrown on one half with Typha and on the other with floating Eichhornia.

On 9th January, 2004 there appeared among the Typha and seen with the chicks of white breasted water hen, a smallish bird. Its general feeding behaviour was like that of waterhen, it pulled things up and pecked and rammed on them rapidly. It was not of the Ruddy-breasted crane I had seen on 23 January 1992 at a paddy field 60 km away from Tiruchirappalli. It resembled in its gait a spotted crane (*Porzana porzana*) I had observed in a typha-infested waterbody at Kovandakurichi on 17 February 1993 on my way to Mid-winter waterfowl censusing. It was not a spotted crane, however, the spots were absent on the smooth and sleek grayish chin, cheek, neck and the sides. Tellingly, there were no bars on the sides before the leg insertions. The bird was either the little crane (*Porzana parva*), or Baillon's crane (*Porzana pusilla*). Both have been reported from Western India (Daniel, R.J.R. 1997). The Pocket Guide of Grimmett *et al* (1999) does not allot them to Tamil Nadu.

With high-power binoculars – 20 x -100 x 70; zoom, the bird came closer and clearer than it did with 7 x 35 binoculars. The features approximated those of the Little Crane (*Porzana parva*). The bill and legs were green; the crown was dark brown; the eye-streak was a lores that did not extend behind; the supercilium was concolorous with the neck, cheek and chin. The upper side was brownish with black and white markings. The presence of bands only behind the legs on the flanks was an unmistakable evidence. The eye-ring and iris were reddish. There was however no red at the bill base. On the dorsal side were buffy white stripes on each side with a median stripe. The distribution

Egyptian Vultures *Neophron percnopterus* in Amravati District

A single vulture was sighted at Kekatpur reservoir on 30th January 2000 (RK, JW and Gopal Thosar). Kekatpur is located 30kms north of Amravati city. After a gap of almost two years, one more vulture was sighted near a carcass, on the banks of Chhatri reservoir (RK with Kishor Dudhe), which is adjacent to Amravati city, on 25th and 26th December 2001. But the stray dogs kept the vulture away from its food and ultimately forced the vulture to fly away without feeding.

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of the Little Crane is. "Little known. Uncommon winter visitor. Recorded from Maharashtra (Bombay) and Karnataka" (Ali, S. 1996).

The bird was ever alert, scurrying into the typhas at the bursting calls of the kingfishers, or the popping heads of humans in the neighbouring compounds. The water hens occasionally chased it away; it was disturbed by a landing pond heron and a passing crow.

For the disturbance from people fishing in the area since 21 March 2004 the bird was not seen till 27 March 2004. Does its return suggest site fidelity and tenacity? It was not seen during the wet months of 2004 and early 2005. The hope of seeing it again around here has faded because of the rapid ecological change that has happened.

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SIGHTING RECORDS OF BLACK STORKS (*CICONIA NIGRA*) IN AMRAVATI DISTRICT OF MAHARASHTRA, INDIA. RAJU KASAMBE, JAYANT WADATKAR*, Dr. MANOHARRAO KHODE**, RAHUL KHODE** G-1, Laxmi Apartments, 64, Vidya Vihar Colony, Pratap nagar, NAGPUR, Maharashtra. PIN-440022. India. Email: rajukasambe@rediffmail.com

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Black Storks *Ciconia nigra* are winter visitors to Amravati District of Maharashtra. During our regular birdwatching trips a record of the sightings of these rare birds was maintained from the year 1993. Some of the records were sent to Bombay Natural History Society as a part of the annual Winter Waterfowl Census.

Black Storks are identified because of their glossy black coloured wings with white lower breast and belly and red bill and legs. Even in flight it can be identified with white underparts and axillaries contrasting strongly with black neck and underwing.

According to Ali and Ripley (1987), Black Storks are winter visitors to Pakistan, North India from Baluchistan, Sindh, North West Frontier Province and Punjab through Nepal (up to 900m altitude) and the Gangetic plain to eastern Assam, South to Rajasthan to about Kutch and northern Gujarat. It is considered to be rare in Deccan, South of 18° (Solapur district). However there are sporadic records of these birds from peninsular India (Andheria 2001).

The following table gives 32 unpublished sighting records of Black Storks from Amravati district at various reservoirs from 1993 to 2005 by the authors.

Other migratory waterfowls were also present at all the reservoirs. However, the sighting record of a lonely Black Stork in Melghat Tiger Reserve (M.T.R.) was not associated with any species. The sighting of 34 Black Storks at Jalka-Shahapur reservoir on 18th Nov. 2001, 31 Black Storks at Shewati reservoir on 25th Nov. 2001 and 29 Black Storks on 30th Mar 1996 at a small Fatepur reservoir (near Rajura Bazaar village) might be three of the biggest congregations of Black Storks reported from peninsular India in recent times.

Table: Sighting records of Black Storks in Amravati district of Maharashtra:

Location	No of stork/s	Dt.of sighting
Pandhari (M.R.F.)	01	13 th Feb 1993
Pandhari(M.R.F.)	04	15 th Feb 1995
Pandhari (M.R.F.)	01	7 th Feb 1996
Fatepur	02	23 rd Mar 1996
Fatepur	29	30 th Mar 1996
Pandhari(M.R.F.)	04	26 th Jan 1997
Satnur(M.R.F.)	01	27 th Jan 1997
Pandhari(M.R.F.)	03	12 th Dec 1997
Satnur(M.R.F.)	01	9 th Jan 1999
Pandhari (M.R.F.)	03	13 th Dec 2000
Sawardi	01	24 th Dec. 2000
Pandhari(M.R.F.)	01	7 th Jan 2001
Indla	03	25 th Feb. 2001
Sawardi	13	11 th Nov.2001
Jalka-Shahapur#	34	18 th Nov. 2001
Shewati	31	25 th Nov. 2001
Shewati	05	25 th Dec. 2001
Suryaganga	01	24 th Nov. 2002
Shewati	07	24 th Nov. 2002
Shewati	04	18 th Dec 2002
Satnur(M.R.F.)	04	23 rd Feb 2003
Kekatpur	14	23 rd Nov.2003
Suryaganga	01	7 th Dec.2003
Shewati#	28	4 th Jan 2004
Shewati	03	11 th Jan.2004
Pusli (M.R.F.)	09	18 th Jan.2004
Satnur(M.R.F.)	03	18 th Jan.2004
M.T.R.(Tourist Zone)	01	8 th Feb. 2004

M.T.R (Belkund)	08	17 th Feb 2005
M.T.R (Belkund)	03	18 th Feb 2005
Shewati	01	22 nd Feb.2004
Shewati	01	25 th Nov.2005

Abbreviations used:

M.R.F. = Mahendri Reserve Forest (Satnur, Pandhari, Pusli Reservoirs)

M.T.R. = Melghat Tiger Reserve

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DISTRIBUTION, DENSITY AND THREATS TO BARHEADED GOOSE (ANSER INDICUS) IN MYSORE, MANDYA AND CHAMARAJANAGAR DISTRICTS, SOUTHERN KARNATAKA SHIVAPRAKASH.A., 478, 3rd Cross, 8th Main, 'H' Block, Ramakrishna Nagar, Mysore 570 023.

Barheaded Goose *Anser indicus* having global population estimation of 52,000-60,000 (Wetland International 2002) breeds in Afghanistan, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Tjikistan and in Indian limit at Ladakh region of Jammu & Kashmir and are spread over one million sq. km. in winter. Wintering of these Geese is limited to 3-4 months only in Southern Karnataka where observations were carried out. Arrives in batches of a few hundreds by the end of September and departs by middle of February, making them the least winterer. Lists of the waterbodies that accommodates these gentle birds are annexure in table-1. It is interesting to note that, only 12.5% of 200 waterbodies monitored by us attract the wintering goose. Total birds counted during 1990-2000 are annexured in table-2.

Being crepuscular and nocturnal, feeds in fields causing considerable loss to farmers by devouring tender shoots of wintering crops such as paddy, ragi, gram and vegetables accessing during off-duty hours. During daytime rests in middle of water bodies. Farmers spread nets in their fields not only to distract the geese but also to hamper their movement. Many of the tanks situated are on well-connected roads, making it easy for the poachers from nearby towns to arrive with their firearms. They hire the fishermen or village-folk to retrieve the hunted geese. And it is true that traditional hunters who were earlier assisting the Maharaja's and the Britishers, continue to do so for their livelihood in the water bodies away from human settlements without firing a single shot. Excessive fishing resulting in constant disturbances in the water bodies drive the geese from one water body to another. And, finally encroachment and shrinkage of water bodies is leaving less space for the roosting birds as observed in four lakes where geese abundance is relatively high (names of lakes withheld on purpose).

There is good scope for conserving these water bodies by educating the residents of the surrounding villages. We told the villagers that these birds which come from the mountains which are the abode of gods - Kailash - and that they are

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agents - parvathakkis - of Lord Shiva. We also distributed postcards to be signed by them and sent officials of Wildlife Divisions and Forest departments who have jurisdiction over the areas, alerting them about the menace of the poachers. These appear to have good effect since the traditional hunters are seen less in lake areas. We continue with this kind of educational effort.

Table - 1. List of water bodies frequented by Barheaded Goose

Sl No	Name of Waterbody	Location
1	Abalawadi kere	12 ° 00' 43" N; 76 ° 56' 00"E
2	Arakere	12 ° 19' 30" N; 76 ° 49' 30"E
3	Bannur heggere	12 ° 20' 50" N; 76 ° 51' 45"E
4	Chikkaballi kere	12 ° 40' 15" N; 76 ° 54' 15"E
5	Dadadahalli kere	12 ° 12' 06" N; 76 ° 38' 00"E
6	Gowdagere (north)	12 ° 37' 40" N; 76 ° 54' 54"E
7	Hadinaru kere	12 ° 10' 15" N; 76 ° 45' 18"E
8	Halawarada kere	12 ° 11' 55" N; 76 ° 54' 24"E
9	Hirikere	11 ° 57' 00" N; 77 ° 04' 35"E
10	Irsyadi kere	12 ° 01' 00" N; 77 ° 02' 30"E
11	Kaggalipurada kere	12 ° 16' 30" N; 76 ° 53' 30"E
12	Kalale kere	12 ° 09' 00" N; 76 ° 39' 30"E
13	Kalkuni katte	12 ° 20' 30" N; 76 ° 56' 40"E
14	Kalluru kere	12 ° 09' 00" N; 77 ° 03' 40"E
15	Kenchana kere	12 ° 17' 00" N; 76 ° 14' 35"E
16	KRS dam	12 ° 24' 00" N; 76 ° 24' 45"E
17	Kunthur kere	12 ° 07' 00" N; 76 ° 02' 00"E
18	Lingambudhi kere	12 ° 16' 20" N; 76 ° 37' 00"E
19	Malavalli kere	12 ° 23' 40" N; 77 ° 30' 00"E
20	Maralli kere	12 ° 21' 40" N; 77 ° 30' 00"E
21	Markalu kere	12 ° 23' 15" N; 76 ° 58' 30"E
22	Narasambudhi	12 ° 05' 00" N; 76 ° 43' 00"E
23	Tailuru kere	12 ° 13' 50" N; 76 ° 05' 17"E
24	Yelandur kere	12 ° 03' 00" N; 77 ° 01' 00"E
25	Yeriyur kere	12 ° 04' 00" N; 77 ° 02' 00"E

Table - 2 Total birds counted during 1990-2000

Sl No	Year	Total count
1	1990	1202
2	1991	1892
3	1992	3954
4	1993	953
5	1994	38
6	1995	Figures missing
7	1996	833
8	1997	1149
9	1998	1036
10	1999	301
11	2000	537



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Cover: A flock of **Shovellers** (*Anas clypeata*). The heavy spatulate bill of the shoveller, conspicuous in flight as much as at rest, separates this winter visitor from other ducks. It shovels its beak from side to side and sieves water to trap small aquatic larvae, crustaceans and mollusks. Shovellers usually arrive by October and stay till April, before returning to their Holarctic breeding range. The male has a dark green head, white breast, scapulars; chestnut belly and flanks. It utters a *tsook - took* double note and has a loud nasal *paay*; whilst the female is speckled dark down with a faint green speculum and utters loud *quack...quack*, often in decrescendo. **Photo:** S. Sridhar, ARPS.