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15. ON THE INSECTIVOROUS DIET OF *COLUMBA LIVIA* GMELIN

Some years ago I was watching House Crows, Koels etc. along with Spotted Owlets (in the bright morning light) eating winged termites, emerging from the ground after a heavy shower of rain. Some Blue Rock Pigeon *Columba livia* also joined the other birds on the ground and started picking up something in their bills. I assumed that they were eating grass seeds or picking up grit. However, recently on June 30, 2002, after it had rained the previous day, I saw, from the verandah of my house, four pigeons avidly eating the winged termites that had emerged from the ground! Dead insects were

picked up and swallowed directly, while those still alive were shaken with a sideways movement of the bill before being gulped down.

I have kept domestic pigeons, and have had opportunities of observing free living *Columba livia*, but never have I seen them eating insects.

August 10, 2002

M.K. HIMMATSINHI

Jubilee Ground,
Bhuj, Kutch, Gujarat, India.

16. EASTERN CALANDRA-LARK *MELANOCORYPHA BIMACULATA* IN MYSORE, KARNATAKA: A NEW RECORD FOR SOUTHERN INDIA

Fourteen Eastern Calandra-Larks *Melanocorypha bimaculata* (Ménétrières 1832) were observed at Lingambudhi lake (12° 16' N, 76° 37' E), in the outskirts of Mysore city (12° 18' N, 76° 39' E), on January 7, 2001. Five birds were observed again at the same site on February 25, 2001. The birds were observed on the north-western end of the lake in c. two acres of mixed grassland close to the lake. They were identified by their larger size (*vis-à-vis* the common and widespread Greater Short-toed Lark *Calandrella brachydactyla*), robust beak, distinct white supercilium, a conspicuous black patch on the side of the chest vs. a small patch, sometimes absent in *Calandrella*, absence of a white trailing edge to the wing in flight vs. its presence in the extralimital European Calandra-Lark, *Melanocorypha calandra*, and a narrow, white terminal band to the tail. In flight, the call heard was similar to that of *Calandrella*, "chirrup". The birds were in company of a large flock of c. 450 Greater Short-toed Larks and they clearly stood out in the group; the Calandra-Larks kept a little away from the other larks in the flock, but moved along with them when they flew, or when feeding in the grasses.

The Eastern Calandra-Lark is a fairly common visitor to Baluchistan, Sind, Kashmir, Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan

and Uttar Pradesh east to about the Jumna river (Ali and Ripley 1987); also termed as "erratic" in recent times (Grimmett *et al.* 1998). Specimens collected from Kutch (Himmatsinhji 1960, Ali and Ripley 1987) appear to be the southernmost records hitherto of the species. This sighting is possibly the first from peninsular India, south of the Vindhyas.

The Greater Short-toed Lark on the other hand is a fairly common species in winter around Mysore, usually in small flocks, but occasionally in large aggregations of up to a couple of thousand birds.

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S. THEJASWI

639, 'Sibia House', 16th Cross,
'B' Block, Vijayanagar 3rd Stage,
Mysore 570 017, Karnataka, India.
Email: dumaketu@rediffmail.com

A. SHIVAPRAKASH
478, 3rd Cross Road, 8th Main Road,
'H' Block, Ramakrishna Nagar,
Mysore 570 022, Karnataka, India.
Email: adavanne2004@yahoo.com

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