

It is possible that the Mahratta woodpecker lost its eggs due to the usurpation of its nest cavity by the pair of lesser goldenbacked woodpeckers. I had seen the latter species close to the nest even when the Mahratta woodpecker nest was active. The goldenbacked were tempted to usurp the nest because the nest site was on the trunk of a tree with adequate girth to meet their requirements. Smaller woodpeckers normally nest in smaller substrates (trunk/branch), thereby reducing the possibility of a take-over by their larger counterparts. The mean DNH (diameter

at nest height) size of the Mahratta woodpecker nests is  $17.5 (\pm 3.91)$  cm while it is  $28.3 (\pm 9.66)$  cm for the larger species (Santharam 1995). But in this case, as the nest was on a larger substrate, it was successfully taken over by the lesser golden-backed woodpeckers.

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### 15. SPECKLED PICULET *PICUMNUS INNOMINATUS* AND GOLDEN SPECTACLED FLYCATCHER-WARBLER *SEICERCUS BURKII* FROM MARGALLA HILLS, PAKISTAN

Between January and March 1995, we made a series of visits to the Margalla Hills on the outskirts of Islamabad, Pakistan. On the morning of 27th February two species noted by Roberts (1991, 1992) as being "extremely rare and local" in Pakistan were observed.

#### Speckled Piculet *Picumnus innominatus*

This species is found mainly in the foothills from Afghanistan, through India, Bangladesh, Malaysia, and southwestern China (Roberts 1991). The species is extremely rare in the northwestern-most part of its range (Winkler *et al.* 1995). Roberts (1991) states that the species is very local in Pakistan, citing just a few records.

Roberts (1991) reports that despite intensive fieldwork in the Margalla Hills for the past 20 years the species has only been recorded twice, with records in July 1977 and April 1982. Since then, there has been one additional record of a single male on 11th May 1994 (Benstead *et*

*al.* in press).

We located a single female speckled piculet at c. 600 m on the edge of a clearing in deciduous secondary woodland. The bird, first located by its agitated chattering call, was observed for ten minutes at a range of 10-20 metres. The bird was watched foraging on slim branches and the trunks of saplings, allowing close approach. Although Roberts (1991) and Winkler *et al.* (1995) note that outside the breeding season speckled piculets often join mixed flocks, this bird was entirely alone.

This sighting, together with previously documented records, suggests that the Margalla Hills may support a small population of speckled piculets at low density. Winkler *et al.* (1995) suggest that the species is often overlooked due to its unobtrusive behaviour.

#### Golden Spectacled Flycatcher Warbler *Seicircus burkii*

This species occurs widely in south-



east Asia (Roberts 1991), being found from south China, through Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand and across the Himalayas, but is on the western extremity of its range in Pakistan.

Roberts (1992) states that the species is extremely rare in Pakistan, citing just five records, two of which come from the Margalla Hills in winter and spring. We located an individual in dense woodland at c. 650 m, foraging in dense undergrowth close to the ground.

# 16. BREEDING OF SOUTHERN JUNGLE MYNA *ACRIDOTHERES FUSCUS MAHRATTENSIS* (SYKES) AT KARANJA

On 20th April 1996, a group of southern jungle mynas *Acridotheres fuscus mahrattensis* was seen at Karanja near Uran, Raigad dist., Maharashtra, on and around a huge 800 year old baobab tree *Adansonia digitata*. By the first week of May, many of them began nesting in holes at different heights, ranging from 5-10 m in the same tree. In June, when we visited the site, males (probably) were bringing food to the females and to the chicks sitting inside the nests. We did not want to disturb the birds by probing their nests, but noticed a long ribbon of audio cassette tape hanging from one of the holes, presumably used inside the nest. Sálím Ali and Humayun Abdulali (1941) reported them using onion peel, snake-slough or tissue paper, may be tapes were not available those days! In the 3rd week of September all the holes except one were appropriated by nesting roseringed parakeets. In one hole, a Myna was still feeding the inmates. On 5th October, when we visited the place, jungle mynas were quite absent and there was an overabundance of common mynas. On 29th March 1997, jungle mynas (10-12) were examining the

holes in the same baobab tree and were singing.

Sálím Ali and Humayun Abdulali (1941) in their book "The Birds of Bombay and Salsette" term the status and distribution of this myna as curious and inexplicable. The jungle myna has a patchy distribution, even though it is as common as the common myna at Kihim and Thane. Except for one or two stray records they are not sighted in Mumbai. Sálím Ali (1935) reported a similar peculiarity in the local and patchy distribution of the jungle myna in Kerala. Nayan Khanolkar and Adesh Shivkar (pers. comm.) reported that jungle mynas were common at Dombivli, Thane dist. from Aug-Jan and only occasionally seen during the breeding period. They seem to be local migrants and at Karanja they come only to breed, and leave thereafter.

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