

territory rise towards the sky noisily and suddenly swoop down or circle over the intruder in their territory. Both male and female birds take part in this act; mostly it becomes contagious and other nesting pairs also get involved in rais-

ing a racket to scare away any possible predator.

October 27, 1995

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15. PLAY FEEDING BY THE GULL-BILLED TERN *GELOCHELIDON NILOTICA* (GMELIN)

The fishing technique of terns is a simple process involving only capturing and engulfing. Before engulfing, the fish is arranged in head-foremost position (Ali and Ripley, 1981). Interestingly, a gull-billed tern (*G. nilotica*) was observed feeding in a slightly different manner — a manner which can be called 'play-feeding', rather than the simple engulfing technique.

The tern was observed in flight with a captured fish on 31st December, 1995 at 0800 hrs in Dombivli, Thane dist. Maharashtra. As usual, the quarry was held vertically in head-foremost position. Instead of swallowing it, the bird dropped the fish and immediately caught it. Resuming its flight, it again released the fish and allowed it to descend for about one metre. After catching the prey in the air, the bird went a little higher and the play was repeated. But this time

the bird was unable to catch the fish in the first attempt. Somehow it managed to grab the fish after a fall of 2-3 m and finally engulfed the fish without any more play.

Significantly, the only group of birds that have been seen to play in a convincing manner are the crows, especially the ravens. These are with the highest intelligence of all avian species (Desmond Morris, 1990).

It is also likely that the kind of play mentioned above may not be an established trend, but just an opportunistic display by *G. nilotica*.

July 10, 1996

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16. BREEDING RECORD OF GREATEARED NIGHTJAR (*EUROSTOPODUS MACROTIS*) AT SIRUVANI HILLS, TAMIL NADU

The greateared nightjar *Eurostopodus macrotis* was recorded nesting in Tamil Nadu for the first time at the foothills of Siruvani during the first week of May 1995. C.V. was on routine nest search, as a part of project work on the breeding strategies of birds in a tropical moist deciduous forest at Siruvani, Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu. Suddenly a bird was flushed and flew into

a bush nearby. The surrounding places were checked and two eggs were seen on the bare ground but without any lining, surrounded by dry leaves. The eggs were pale yellow with a few black spots on them. After 15 min the bird came back to the nest and started incubating. A closer look helped in identifying the bird as the greateared nightjar. This nest was about 50 m



Sabne, Mahesh, Khanolkar, Nayan V, and Nayak, S R. 1997. "Play feeding by the gullbilled tern *Gelochelidon nilotica* (Gmelin)." *The journal of the Bombay Natural History Society* 94, 407–407.

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