

to Pakistan and sporadically all over north India (Ali and Ripley 1983).

Even though the black stork and Indian skimmer were recorded in Delhi area by Abdulali and Panday (1978), they have never been recorded in

Keoladeo National Park.

I thank Dr V.S. Vijayan, Project Scientist, BNHS for his help in the preparation of this note.

July 24, 1990

C. SIVASUBRAMANIAN

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15. UNUSUAL NESTING BEHAVIOUR IN THE DOMESTIC PIGEON *COLUMBA LIVIA* GMELIN

The domestic pigeon *Columba livia* is a monogamous species normally laying two eggs per clutch (Ali and Ripley 1987). Both parents share the duties of incubation and rearing the young. The incubation period varies from 16-18 days and chicks are fledged 21-25 days after hatching. Usually one and occasionally both the chicks from a clutch are fledged. Here we report unusual nesting behaviour of this species involving two females (A and B) which laid in the same nest and shared incubation duties.

Female A laid two eggs in its nest and started incubating them, sharing the duties with its mate. After three days of incubation, male A disappeared. Female B along with its mate built a nest near A's nest and was in the pre-laying stage when male B died. Female A continued incubation alone while female B repeatedly tried to enter A's nest, only to be repelled each time by female A. After two days, female B was able to enter A's nest and lay an egg. One day later B laid another egg, which was about the size of a marble. We removed the abnormal egg, leaving three eggs in A's nest. Subsequently both females shared incubation duties for the next 11 days.

On the twelfth day, male A returned and expelled female B from the nest. Afterwards both male and female A incubated and hatched the three eggs and successfully reared all the chicks.

Among Columbidae, clutches of more than two eggs due to laying by more than two females in a common nest has been reported in the rock pigeon *Columba guinea* (Skead 1971), eared dove *Zenaida auriculata* (Murton *et al.* 1974), mourning dove *Zenaida macroura* (Weeks 1980) and ring dove *Streptopelia decaocto* (Cramp 1985). In Columbidae, laying by two females in a common nest may be induced by nest destruction or presence of a predator near the nest during the laying period (Goodwin 1967). Blockstein (1986) observed three cases in which a female and two male mourning doves attended a nest.

However, this is probably the first report of sharing of incubation duties by female columbids. Skadsen (1987) reported sharing of incubation duties by female tree swallows *Iridoprocne bicolor*.

RAJIV SINGH KALSI
RAJDEEP KALSI

May 2, 1990

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16. AN UNUSUAL NEST-SITE OF SPOTTED DOVE *STREPTOPELIA CHINENSIS* (SCOPOLI)

While surveying the hillock at Thondebhavi, about 83 km north of Bangalore, on 1 September 1990, (see also Ali 1942, *JBNHS* 43: 325–326), we came across an unusual nest-site of spotted dove *Streptopelia chinensis*. The nest was placed on the ground amidst a clump of lemon grass *Cymbopogon schoenanthus* about 10 m from the foothill. The scrape-nest was lined with rootlets.

According to the HANDBOOK OF THE BIRDS OF INDIA AND PAKISTAN, (Ali, S. and Ripley, S.D. 1983) spotted doves are known to nest only in vegetation, well above the ground. The site of the nest is of

interest as it does not conform with earlier observations.

The boulder-strewn hillock, Arasalubande, (13°30' N, 77°30' E, 892 m above msl), where the nest was found was totally denuded, and not even a single tree or a dense bush was seen within about 200 m radius.

S. SUBRAMANYA

S. KARTHIKEYAN

J.N. PRASAD

T.S. SRINIVASA

B. ARUN

February 8, 1991

17. OCCURRENCE OF WRYNECK *JYNX TORQUILLA* LINN.

The HANDBOOK OF THE BIRDS OF INDIA AND PAKISTAN (Ali, S. and Ripley, S.D. 1987) describes the winter distribution range of the wryneck *Jynx torquilla* as Maharashtra and western central province.

However, the species was sighted in our garden at Durg, Madhya Pradesh, first on 28 October 1990, subsequently daily between 9 and 12 November and later on 13 and 15 December 1990 and 7 February 1991. Repeated sightings of the species

during the winter months suggest that it spends its winter in the area, and was not in transit.

A specimen taken from Charmae Sambalpur, Orissa (about 250 km further east) by N. Majumdar of ZSI (*JBNHS* 76: 162) is the other instance of the occurrence of the species outside the earlier known range.

February 13, 1991

A.M.K. BHAROS

18. SOUTHERN GOLDENBACKED WOODPECKER *DINOPIUM BENGHALENSE* FEEDING ON THE NECTAR OF BANANA TREE *MUSA PARADISIACA*

On 2 August 1990 at 0820 hrs, I saw a goldenbacked woodpecker *Dinopium benghalense* perching and feeding on the spathe of a banana tree *Musa paradisiaca* in my garden at Vedharanyam, Thanjavur district, Tamil Nadu. The banana tree had a few bunches of unripe fruits and flowers.

The bird was perched on the tip of the spathe and was probing with its beak into the free perianth (inner perianth) of flowers and drinking the nectar. Changing its perch frequently, the bird made a full round of the spathe and attended to several flowers. After about 7 minutes the bird flew away. The

next day also at about 0615 hrs I noticed a woodpecker feeding on nectar from the same tree.

Ali and Ripley (HANDBOOK OF THE BIRDS OF INDIA AND PAKISTAN, 1983) recorded insects, larvae, ants, centipede, spider, fruits, berries and flower nectar of *Erythrina*, *Salmalia*, *Acrocarpus* and *Grevillea* as the food items of this woodpecker. Now the nectar of banana tree should also be included in the list of food items.

August 20, 1990

P. BALASUBRAMANIAN



Kalsi, Rajiv Singh and Kalsi, Rajdeep. 1992. "Unusual nesting behaviour in the domestic pigeon *Columba livia* Gmelin." *The journal of the Bombay Natural History Society* 89, 253–254.

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