

This is the first record of the Rosy Pelican breeding within Indian limits where it has hitherto been considered a winter visitor only. As far as I am aware its nearest known breeding place is, or was, Bubyán Island at the head of the Persian Gulf where La Personne, collecting for Sir Percy Cox, found a colony in 1922 (*J. Bombay nat. Hist. Soc.* 31: 109). But it is curious that although this colony contained downy chicks at the time no mention of their colour is made. Likewise there is no description of the downy young in any of the better known literature I have consulted in spite of the fact that it is so startlingly different from its parents and from similar chicks of the Spottedbilled species.

The discovery of the Rosy Pelican breeding in the Great Rann of Kutch again points up to the many surprises that await a proper biological exploration of this unique and truly fantastic salt desert. It will be remembered that my visit to Flamingo City in 1945 produced the first record of an avocet breeding colony on Indian soil. Although agitated avocets were present in small numbers in March this year also, and probably breeding, no definite evidence of this was procured.

33, PALI HILL,
BANDRA,
BOMBAY 50,
April 15, 1960.

SÁLIM ALI

10. IN SEARCH OF THE PINKHEADED DUCK [*RHODONESSA CARYOPHYLLACEA* (LATHAM)]

I have just returned from a tour of north Bihar where I had gone in search of the Pinkheaded Duck. Having failed to locate the "Patraha Katla" anywhere in the Bhagalpur district in spite of extensive enquiries, and finding a place called Pathraha shown on the 1" topographical map of Purnea district, I made my way to Forbesganj in the extreme north of the district. Pathraha, which lies some seven miles west of Forbesganj and is approachable only by bullock cart, proved disappointing. All the chauris and jheels have been reclaimed for cultivation, and I could not find a single habitat which even remotely resembled that of the Pinkheaded Duck.

Mr. Frank B. Simson mentions in *Ibis*, 1884, p. 271 the area in the south of the Purnea district lying between the Kosi and Ganga rivers

¹ Where an anonymous writer in the defunct *Asian Sporting Newspaper* had found it breeding in July 1880.

as a favoured locality for this bird. He particularly mentions the Purnea Trunk Road, and a travellers' bungalow on it. The map showed the area lying between Karhagola Road railway station and the Ganga River as full of jheels and chaurs. Karhagola Road lies on the Purnea Trunk Road, and there is a travellers' bungalow there. Unfortunately the bulk of this area too has been reclaimed for cultivation, and Mr. Simson's description of 'pools of deep water abounding in wild fowl and crocodiles' reads like an after-dinner story. I found only two chaurs, the Chapri and the Drona, each nearly 10-12 acres in extent, lying past Uchla village, some $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles south of Karhagola Road railway station. The Drona chaur was practically devoid of vegetation, but the Chapri chaur had water hyacinth, lotuses, and dry grass. Both are located in the midst of cultivated fields, and neither looked in the least suitable as a place for the Pinkheaded Duck. Though I could not find the duck, I found some interesting water birds. Of particular interest was a colony of River Terns breeding, and there were 9 young ones playing or flying on the banks of the Drona chaur. They appeared to be in almost exclusive occupation of the chaur. I have not seen such a big colony even on the river Ganga. The other interesting bird was the Spurwinged Plover, which probably breeds there.

I showed the pictures given in the *Illustrated Weekly of India* (28th July 1957) with Mr. Sálím Ali's article to a number of villagers, and they all unhesitatingly pointed out the Redcrested Pochard or *lal sir* as visiting the chaurs in large numbers with other ducks during the cold weather. They also told me that both these chaurs were extensively shot over during the winter, and only some 15 days before my visit a party had bagged about 20. They proved more accurate observers than a 'sportsman', who told me that 'these migratory birds go back to their nesting places by the end of March' on being questioned about the Pinkheaded Duck, and was obviously referring to the Redcrested Pochard. Nawab Chaudhri Nazirul Hassan, a great shikari of north Bihar, however, mentioned that he had shot a pair of Pinkheaded ducks with Mr. Atkins many, many years ago, but had not seen any since then. One more locality in Darbhanga will be investigated by me next cold weather, since the last record of this duck is from this area in June, 1935.

4, EUROPEAN BACHELORS' QUARTERS,
DORANDA, P.O. HINOO,
RANCHI,
April 29, 1960.

JAMAL ARA

[We are informed by Mr. D. E. Reuben, I.C.S. (Retd.) that a pair shot by Nawab Chaudhri Nazirul Hassan and T. Atkins at Bakhtiarpur (Monghyr Dist.) on 11 March 1924 are exhibited in the Patna Museum.—EDS.]

11. A PINKHEADED DUCK [*RHODONESSA CARYOPHYLLACEA* (LATHAM)] AT LAST?

This is to inform you that, on 28 and 29 February 1960, I along with a friend Shri Grehawal, an Engineer in the Western Command, Simla, saw a solitary Pinkheaded Duck in a local tank in 'Kunihar State' situated about 40 miles south of Simla.

We tried to take a coloured photograph but, owing to the abundance of reeds and lack of a proper hide, we were unsuccessful in taking the picture. My Wildlife Guard told us that this drake was in the tank for the last two months or so along with Mallard and Common Teal.

SIMLA 4,
March 23, 1960.

K. L. MEHTA,
Deputy Game Warden, Himachal Pradesh

[It will be recalled that the last *definite* record of this species in a wild state goes back to 1935 when a trapped bird was brought to the late Mr. C. M. Inglis, in the Darbhanga Dist., Bihar.—EDS.]

12. BIRD NETTING AND THE WEATHER: SOME EXPERIENCES IN KUTCH, MARCH 1960

Clouds loomed ominously in the Kuar Bet sky as the first net was being installed. This was only a foretaste of the unpredictable spell of weather that confronted the Migration Study Team during the three weeks of the project. There were three dust-storms, one rainfall, and on three successive nights the thermometer recorded 40°, 42°, and 52° F. respectively.

How and to what extent did this abnormal weather affect the flow of migration? The answer is difficult, but a look at the collection statistics vis-à-vis the weather-chart is suggestive.

Below, the daily collection of three migratory species, namely Lesser Whitethroat (*Sylvia curruca blythi*), Orphean Warbler (*Sylvia hortensis*), and Rosy Pastor (*Pastor roseus*) are plotted on a graph with dates on the other axis. Readings of temperature (maximum and minimum) and relative humidity are also plotted likewise.



Ara, Jamal. 1960. "In Search of the Pinkheaded Duck." *The journal of the Bombay Natural History Society* 57, 415–417.

View This Item Online: <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/item/183056>

Permalink: <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/partpdf/151314>

Holding Institution

Smithsonian Libraries and Archives

Sponsored by

Biodiversity Heritage Library

Copyright & Reuse

Copyright Status: In Copyright. Digitized with the permission of the rights holder

Rights: <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/permissions/>

This document was created from content at the **Biodiversity Heritage Library**, the world's largest open access digital library for biodiversity literature and archives. Visit BHL at <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org>.