

covery was that it was while watching a pair of Lesser Whistling Teal (*Dendrocygna javanica*) nesting directly above that of the spotbill in the same tree. Both nest entrances in the creeper faced a road which passed some 70 feet from the tree and were almost at eye level when seated in my car. The lower nest had a larger entrance. On 21st August, 1976, when watching the Whistler's nest, I saw the head and neck of the spotbill appear just below. On further investigation I found both nests contained eggs. As the slim branches of the Babul gave little support to the nests, it appeared that both may have been built earlier by herons with a tangle of climber stems supporting the nests. The one of the Whistler appeared to be sagging and in some danger of crashing on to that of the spotbill which had a slightly stronger base. From the behaviour of the Whistler duck, its nesting seemed more recent. However, to have seen two different ducks nesting so close together (within a foot

of each other, above and below) is unique, specially when the excellent rains have created ideal nesting cover and habitat for most waterfowl here. Even a Nukta duck was seen with a brood. On the further side of the nesting tree, a pair of Whitethroated Munia were building their ball-nest and a pair of Common Mynas had commenced to build also. Thus this one site was a choice of four different bird species.

The only record of a Spotbill Duck's nest on a tree branch I could find was that by Hume which I quote:

"placed on a drooping branch of a tree which hung down from the canal bank into a thick clump of rushes growing in a jheel that near the bridge fringes the canal. The nest was about 9 inches above the surface of the water and was firmly based on a horizontal bifurcation of the bough." Baker, 1935 NIDIFICATION OF BIRDS OF THE INDIAN EMPIRE Vol. IV, p. 509.

DIL BAHAR,
BHAVNAGAR 2,
August 26, 1976.

R. S. DHARMAKUMARSINHJI

10. MIGRATING HARRIERS

On 29th October Mrs. D. Panday, Jamshed Panday and I had motored to the Gangawada Reservoir on the Godavari above Nasik intending to have a picnic tea on the dam. A forbidding board kept us off and we went on along the Waghai road towards Girnara village hoping the road would further up skirt the edge of the lake where we could picnic. It was not to be so and so we sat on a hillock in the scraggy shade of the only tree we could find to eat the sandwiches and drink some excellent vanilla-scented coffee. With still a couple of hours of daylight left we decided

to walk down to the water's edge.

It was a glorious evening with the sun's orb reflected in the water and the blue hills beyond. At about 5.30 p.m. we retraced our steps to be on the road before it became too dark.

While having tea we had seen a fine male Pale Harrier flying low over the land from the direction of the gap in the Ghats and go on down the Godavari valley, and very shortly a female followed in the same direction. It was while we were beside the water at 5.15 p.m. that the birds began to appear all flying in the same direction first a solo female, then

three females at a considerable height, followed by a magnificent male Montagu's Harrier gliding low past, turning and alighting on a raised earthen bank and then again flying off down the valley. Seeing more birds coming up, I started counting and within the 45 minutes till 6 p.m. and a little after sundown I counted fifty birds mostly Pale Harriers—the females and juveniles could have been either Pale or Montagu's—and one female Marsh Harrier.

There was a wind blowing from the west down which the birds came. Fifteen days later Jamshed took his mother and sister to the same place and again close to sundown they counted over forty Harriers, this time several Marsh Harriers among predominantly identifiable Pale Harriers flying over from the west onto the plateau and on along the Godavari.

Looking at the map suggests to me that we may have here a major migration route along

the Godavari. The birds from over Saurashtra and Gujarat seem to cross onto the plateau north of the Trimbakeshwar Hills and then along the Godavari on towards the peninsula. Interestingly too, on both occasions there was a tail wind from the west. This is explained by the fact that in October and November the land and sea breezes again start blowing in the interim period before the N.E. monsoon becomes prevalent. The birds make use of the evening sea wind which brings them over the escarpment onto the plateau.

An interesting comment by Jamshed suggests this to be a narrow passage. The Harriers are not seen over his farm a little to the southwest of Nasik. The birds therefore apparently pass along the drier, more open undulating country north of the Godavari. It would be interesting to monitor the passage next October.

W. W. FUND-INDIA,
C/o. B.N.H.S.,
HORNBILL HOUSE,
S. BHAGATSINGH ROAD,
BOMBAY 400 023,
November 29, 1976.

LAVKUMAR KHACHER

11. A NOTE ON HUME'S GROUND CHOUGH *PODOCES HUMILIS* HUME

The Hume's Ground Chough is a rather jolly little bird found on the high bleak plateaux of Tibet. It is an extremely confiding bird walking briskly around, searching for food. During our visit to Mansarovar and Kailas in Western Tibet, Mr. Gurdial Singh and myself were continually charmed by the little bird's perky demeanour. In July, the month we were there, the choughs were busy raising noisy

families tucked away in crevices of small rock outcrops and even down burrows of high altitude rodents.

The HANDBOOK only gives the upper parts of the Tista in Sikkim as where this bird occurs in our limits. I found a bird with young at Bara Hoti Plain across the Chor Hoti Pass in Garhwal and one would expect to find it in the west in Spiti and Ladakh. I was therefore



Lavkumar, K S. 1977. "Migrating Harriers." *The journal of the Bombay Natural History Society* 74, 355–356.

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