

Nair and Gadgil (1978) had reported a herd of elephants from the Gersoppa region that used to range north of River Sharavati, especially in the forests at Badal, Jankadkal, Medini, Herebail, Mahime and Gersoppa. A few herds of elephants were also reported south of Sharavati river at Meginavalley, Kollur Ghat and Nagavalli. Towards the north, a few herds were reported from Dandeli forest area. Nair and Gadgil (1978) also reported two elephants that were shot dead on the banks of Sharavati.

The disappearance of the elephant herd from Gersoppa region has created a more than one hundred kilometre gap between the existing populations at Meginavalley (in the south) to Dandeli (in the north). This is one more example of the local disappearance of a species. It is such processes that

result in population fragmentation, and isolation between populations. Another notable result of such local extinctions is also the reduced overall area of occupancy of a species.

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#### 4. MANDARIN DUCKS *AIX GALERICULATA* (LINNAEUS) ON THE SAT TAL LAKES NEAR NAINITAL, UTTARANCHAL

The Mandarin Duck *Aix galericulata* is an East Asian species whose native breeding range is restricted to the eastern part of Russia, northern China and Japan. Its main wintering areas are in the lowlands of eastern China and southern Japan. There is also an introduced feral population in the United Kingdom (Madge and Burn 1988).

In the Indian subcontinent, the Mandarin Duck is a very rare winter vagrant (Grimmett *et al.* 1998). It has only been recorded once in Nepal and once in Bangladesh (Gardiner 1991; Grimmett *et al.* 1998). There are only two records of Mandarin Duck from India, both from the northeast and more than 50 years old. One Mandarin Duck was observed in Assam (Baker 1902), and one in Manipur (Grimson 1934). All observations of Mandarin Ducks from the Indian subcontinent, except the one from Nepal, were at low altitudes.

On February 13, 1999 we were bird watching around Nainital (1940 m above msl), Uttaranchal, northern India. We were counting birds on the lakes of Sat Tal, situated in a hilly wooded area at an elevation of 1300-1450 m above msl (Kazmierczak and Singh 1998). On the lake near the Christian Ashram, we observed three Mandarin Ducks (1 male, 2 females). The birds were very shy and flew away each time we approached within 100 metres, so we used a telescope to observe them. The male was in colourful breeding plumage, which is unmistakable and cannot be confused with any other duck species (see Madge and Burn 1988; Svensson *et al.* 1999). The three observed Mandarin Ducks were the only duck or waterbird species recorded in the area on that day.

This is the third known record for India, and the first in the last 50 years. Except for the observation from Nepal it is

also the highest record (1400 m above msl) from the region. According to the available data on the species distribution (Madge and Burn 1988), the observation from the Sat Tal lakes is the westernmost record for Mandarin Ducks from its native Asiatic population.

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## 5. RECORD OF THE AMUR FALCON *FALCO AMURENSIS* RADDE ON SRIHARIKOTA ISLAND, NELLORE DISTRICT, ANDHRA PRADESH

We sighted the Amur Falcon *Falco amurensis* on two occasions on Sriharikota island, Nellore district, Andhra Pradesh. The first sighting was of an adult male in an open scrub habitat at 1630 hrs on November 23, 2002. We saw probably the same bird in the same place, the next morning. It was perched on an electric wire and allowed close approach (c. 25 m). The second sighting was of a flock of 5 falcons in the morning, on May 23, 2003. The birds were actively hunting dragonflies along casuarina plantations on the seashore adjoining the Bay of Bengal.

Ali and Ripley (1987) mention that the Amur Falcon is a rare migratory falcon, which breeds casually in north Cachar (Assam); its main breeding grounds are in China (Ferguson-Lees and Christie 2001). In Peninsular India, they are autumn and spring passage migrants (observed or collected between

September and April), migrating along a NE to SW route to East Africa (Ali and Ripley 1987; Ferguson-Lees and Christie 2001). Records of the Amur Falcon in Andhra Pradesh are very rare, being known from only two old records, one from Nellore and the other from Rajamundry (Ali and Ripley 1987; Grimmett *et al.* 1998; Kazmierczak 2000). Thus, our sighting of the species, twice in Sriharikota, which is outside the normal migratory route of the species in India and with a gap of 5 months between sightings, is interesting.

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## 6. SIGHTING OF ORANGE-GORGETED FLYCATCHER *FICEDULA STROPHIATA* (HODGSON) AT BANDHAVGARH (M.P.): A FIRST RECORD FOR PENINSULAR INDIA

In the first week of January 2002, while on a trip to Bandhavgarh National Park (Madhya Pradesh), a rather strange looking flycatcher drew my attention as it flitted about in the garden of Tiger Trails Resort. The Resort is located in Bijaria village, which is a few kilometres from the National Park boundary. At first, I mistook this flycatcher for the Red-throated Flycatcher (*Ficedula parva*).

A closer look revealed that this flycatcher did have much more than the plain red throat, though it did exhibit the white outer tail feathers similar to the outer tail feathers of the Red-throated Flycatcher (*Ficedula parva*).

The most interesting and striking feature this bird exhibited was the white band across the forehead, which

extended up to the eyes, a black chin and an orange 'gorget', which could be clearly seen through the binoculars. The bird was not shy and one could watch it from a distance of less than four metres. I had never seen a flycatcher of this description earlier, which forced me to refer to the available literature to ascertain its identification. Referring to the BIRDS OF INDIAN SUBCONTINENT (Grimmett *et al.* 1998), led me to the conclusion that this new flycatcher in the area was a male Orange-gorgeted Flycatcher (*Ficedula strophciata*).

Mahinder Singh, a colleague, who was stationed at the Resort as a naturalist, later informed me that he had first noticed this bird around mid December 2001; and after that, the bird was seen everyday. The bird was seen around the



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