

On referring to literature, I realized that the bird was a Ceylon frogmouth (*Batrachostomus moniliger*).

I continued my observations and noticed a small round nest, placed in the fork of a small terminal branch. The cryptic colour of the nest was similar to that of the branch and a half grown nestling was present in the nest. When closely approached, the nestling started opening its mouth.

The Ceylon frogmouth (*Batrachostomus moniliger*) is one of the least known species of the evergreen forest biotope of the Western Ghats. The species was recorded earlier by Dr. Sálim Ali in Kerala (1935) who described it as a little known, nocturnal species, seldom seen during daytime. It was recorded again by Vijayan (1979) and Sugathan (1981) in Parambikulam Wildlife Sanctuary, Kannan (1994) recorded it for the first time from Tamil Nadu and Renee Borges (1986) recorded it from Kanara, North Karnataka. The present record extends its range further north.

The distributional range of the Ceylon frogmouth extends from the southern heavy rainfall tracts of the Western Ghats, from c. 15° N in North Kanara district, south to Trivandrum

district, Kerala, (Ali 1970). According to Sugathan (1981), the distributional range of the Ceylon frogmouth is believed to be from the wet evergreen forests of Karnataka state in the Western Ghats to the southern tip of the country in Tamil Nadu, and Sri Lanka. The altitudinal limit of this bird is believed to be 1,200 m above msl.

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### 13. JUNGLE CROW *CORVUS MACRORHYNCHOS* AND ITS INGENUITY WITH DRY ROTI

On May 26, 1999 I was sitting near an artificial water hole in Kumbalgarh Wildlife Sanctuary, Rajasthan. During the afternoon, the

movements of animals and birds had slackened. At 1210 hrs, a jungle crow (*Corvus macrorhynchos*) came and perched on the branch



of a babul tree (*Acacia nilotica*) near the water hole. The crow had a big piece of dry roti (bread) in its beak. After scanning the area, it flew near the water hole, submerged the roti in the water and started drinking water. After about four minutes, it removed the soft roti from the water and started eating it. When it had finished half of it, a blue bull (*Boselaphus tragocamelus*) approached it. The crow flew away, leaving part of its food near the water hole.

The next day, I was sitting near the same water hole when at 1220 hours, a jungle crow came with a piece of dry roti in its beak and

perched on the same tree. After scanning the area, it landed near the water hole, submerged the dry roti in the water, drank water and removed the roti from the water after four minutes. However, this time the crow flew away from the water hole with the softened piece of roti in its beak.

I was surprised to see this ingenious behaviour of the crow.

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#### 14. MORE EVIDENCE OF RED-VENTED BULBUL *PYCNONOTUS CAFER* FEEDING ON HOUSE GECKO *HEMIDACTYLUS FLAVIVIRIDIS*

The animal food of red-vented bulbul *Pycnonotus cafer* is recorded to be various large insects, including caterpillars, moths, ants and termites among others. In a rare case, a young common garden lizard *Calotes versicolor* was brought by the parent bird to feed its young, which resulted in the death of the young (Ali and Ripley 1987). Bharos (1999) recorded the attempted feeding by redvented bulbul on house gecko *Hemidactylus flaviviridis*, in which the bird killed the prey, but did not consume it.

On August 20, 1999 at about 1530 hrs, a red-vented bulbul landed on the large verandah of my house at Malda district, West Bengal, about 3 m away from me. It dropped a food item in the verandah, and started pecking at it. On taking a closer look, I found that it was a house gecko, about 12 cm in length. The lizard was almost intact except for the head, which was severed from the neck. Even after several pecks, the bird could not get a morsel. Then it started pulling out the viscera of the lizard through the severed neck by pushing its head deep into the abdomen.

It fed on the viscera for the next 10 minutes. Unfortunately it was disturbed by my curiosity and flew off with the prey. I rushed to the verandah, but could not locate the prey or the bulbul again.

The northern house gecko is one of the commonest reptiles in West Bengal, and is found in almost every house. Its avian predators, as I have observed, include Oriental magpie-robin (*Copsychus saularis*) and the common myna (*Acridotheres tristis*). The latter was seen to capture a house gecko on April 4, 1998 near my house. But in this case, the gecko was lucky, it shed its tail by autotomy, to avoid the attention of the predator. The myna left the battleground carrying the tail of the prey, and settled on its nest in the ventilator of a nearby building.

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