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18. UNUSUAL FEEDING PATTERN AND DIET OF CRIMSONBREASTED BARBET (*MEGALAIMA HAEMACEPHALA*)

When the green barked Mexican cotton trees (*Chorisia speciosa*) are in bloom, they attract a variety of nectar feeding birds. On 17th February, 1995 (0840 hrs), a crimsonbreasted barbet joined a party of such birds. For a few seconds, it kept watching, then moved towards a bunch of creamish white flowers on an overhanging branch near its perch. Soon it pecked at a flower and managed to pluck one of the thick inch long petal. Finding it difficult to eat, the bird adopted an unusual feeding pattern. The plucked petal was placed on the branch and held underfoot, the fragments were torn with the bill and eaten. Since the bird was not well adapted to this pattern of feeding, most of the fragments fell to the

ground. In this manner it fed on three petals on that day and repeated this behaviour for the next two days.

The food and feeding pattern of the species has been described in HANDBOOK (Ali and Ripley, 1987, Vol. 4, pp 300) as "banyan, pipal and other wild figs, various drupes and berries, occasionally moths and termites captured in clumsy aerial sorties." The nectar, petals or other parts of the flowers have not been mentioned in the diet of the species.

November 9, 1995

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19. DE-TICKING BY A HOUSE CROW (*CORVUS SPLENDENS*)

While returning from the Asian Waterfowl Census on 14th January, 1996 at about 1145 hrs near Goregaon creek a Mumbai suburb, I saw a resting buffalo and a house crow hopping near the mouth of the buffalo and picking something from its jaws. The buffalo made no attempt to drive away the crow. On close observation I found that the crow was de-ticking the buffalo.

I have seen cattle egrets (*Bubulcus ibis*) de-ticking a walking or sitting buffalo many times, but I do not recall this behaviour in a house crow.

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