



MISTNET



Quarterly Newsletter of the Indian Bird Conservation Network (IBCN)

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Jerdon's Courser

by P. Jeganathan

Jerdon's Courser *Rhinoptilus bitorquatus*, endemic to southern India, is principally known from southern Andhra Pradesh. It has an extremely limited geographical range, being known from Godavari river valley near Sironcha and Bhadrachalam, and from the Cuddapah and Anantapur areas in the valley of Pennar. This poorly known species qualifies as Critical as a result of its single, small, declining population, which is thought to be threatened by exploitation of scrub-forest, livestock grazing, disturbance and quarrying (BirdLife International 2001).

Jerdon's courser is a globally threatened species and one among the eight species, which are listed as critical in India by BirdLife International (see MISTNET Vol.2 No.2 April-June 2001 for complete list). It was thought to be extinct until the rediscovery in 1986 near Cuddapah district, Andhra Pradesh. The place where it was rediscovered has been declared as Sri Lankamalleswara Wildlife Sanctuary. Except few sight records in recent times, very little information is

available on this species especially regarding the ecology, population status and geographical range. To fill these gaps, the Bombay Natural History Society and the Royal Society of Protection of Birds, UK collaborated to study this little known species with the help of Darwin Initiative for Survival of the Species, and the Andhra Pradesh Forest Department.

The project was started with a short survey in parts of Sri Lankamalleswara Wildlife Sanctuary, near Reddipally (14°34'N & 79°02'E) Cuddapah district in September 2000. The main objectives of the study is to develop a proper survey technique to estimate the population size and to know the geographical range. Jerdon's courser affects scrub jungle with open patches and is nocturnal or crepuscular in habit.

Night time search

Conventionally, the Jerdon's Courser is detected by night-time search in suitable habitat by scanning the ground using electronic torches. To reduce the disturbance made by the observer's foot, a battery operated buzzer is used. Although the bird is located by following this method, the

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BirdLife International(2001) *Threatened birds of Asia: the BirdLife International Red Data Book*. Cambridge, UK: BirdLife International.

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Welcome to January 2002 issue of MISTNET. With this year, the IBCN enters in its third year of partnership. Over 75% partners have renewed their partnership with the Network.

Around 25 projects have been commissioned in different parts of India which not only include data deficient sites and species but proposed sites also, to confirm their inclusion in the final list of IBAs.

This April, we will be sending our final list of IBAs for the Asia Inventory and then shall be finalising the list for the Indian IBA inventory, the first draft of which is due by the end of this year.

And finally a request for all the partners, please send your contributions for MISTNET regularly. We would like to know about your observations on any particular IBA, species, about work of your organisation or any issue which can affect the bird life of your area. This is a great medium to share your experience and knowledge with any one interested in bird conservation. We shall look forward to it.

rate of sighting the bird per hour is very low and also the efficacy of this method might vary with the density of bushes and ground type and moonlight luminance.

Track strip method

Therefore track strip method was developed to detect the presence of the Jerdon's courser. Fine soil was collected from roadside and sieved. Five meter long and 30 cm wide ground surface is cleared of stones and small grasses with the help of mattock and crowbar and soil is leveled. The sieved soil is spread in the cleared ground and the surface of the soil is flattened into a layer of 1-2 cm thick using builder's trowel. Then a very thin layer of soil from near the site is dusted onto the surface of the strip from a sieve to make the appearance of the strip match its surroundings. Tracking strips are checked for bird tracks once in three or four days. Bird tracks are documented by taking plaster casts and/or photographs for reference.

Before initiating the track strip method, to know the dimensions of the footprint of the Jerdon's courser in the soil strip, the specimen of Jerdon's courser in the BNHS collection was measured. Jerdon's courser lacks hallux, so birds present in the study area that do not have hind toe were also measured for comparison.

Trailmaster infra-red cameras

Initially tracking strips were deployed randomly in the places where the Jerdon's courser has been seen regularly to identify the footprint and to make out the rate at which it tracks the soil strips. It was monitored for about two and a half months. To identify the footprint of the Jerdon's courser, Trailmaster infra-red cameras were used. The transmitter and the receiver were arranged at both ends of the 5 m soil strip. The infra-red beam was about 10 cm above from the ground and the camera were placed above the receiver and it will look along the beam line as well as the soil strip. So, the picture and the footprint in the soil strip will confirm the bird crossing the soil strip and the infra-red beam. The units were programmed only to photograph between dusk and dawn and only to trigger if the infra-red beam was broken for at least 0.1 seconds.



A Jerdon's courser footprint was confirmed by the trailmaster infra-red camera picture which was taken on 13th February 2001. From the tracking strip monitoring result it has been calculated that to record the presence or absence of the Jerdon's courser, the tracking strip has to be monitored in the potentially suitable habitat for not less than two months. Based on these findings, tracking strips were placed in a regular square grid of 50 meter interval in different parts of the Sanctuary. Twelve to sixteen soil strips were placed in one patch. To know the extent of the potential habitat, remote sensing data were used. Satellite imagery of the Thematic Mapper 7 (TM7) was used to map the potential habitat. Out of eight places surveyed, the Jerdon's courser tracks were obtained in three new places. The three new places where Jerdon's courser has been discovered from tracks are 4 km, 6.45 km and c.14 km from the previously known Jerdon's courser area.

Call

Efforts were made to identify and to record the call of the Jerdon's courser right from the beginning of the project. Calls of nocturnal birds were heard and monitored in the places where Jerdon's courser photographs and footprints were obtained. Recently call of the Jerdon's courser was recorded successfully. Since the call would be useful in estimating population and distribution, playback experiment has been carried out at dusk. As a result the tape lure has elicited responses from Jerdon's courser from 9 new places. This evening tape transects were successful and promising, so in future work will be continued to find out the distribution of the Jerdon's courser in the suitable habitat found in and around the Sri Lankamalleswara Wildlife Sanctuary.

(P. Jeganathan is a BNHS researcher working on Jerdon's Courser Project for the past two years. The project is funded by the Darwin Initiative and sponsored by the University of Reading and RSPB. Dr. Rhys Green, University of Cambridge and Dr. Ken Norris, University of Reading are helping in the project.)

'Long-billed' Vultures



The Long-billed Vulture *Gyps indicus* is generally recognized as having two distinct subspecies, *indicus* and *tenuirostris*. Recent study of the skins and photographs has shown that the two forms are distinct and not even close relatives.

Among the morphological distinctions are differences in shape of the head, bill and nares; colour of the bill, cere, eye-ring, and feathering of the head and neck; structure and skin texture of the neck; structure and colour of feathers on the breast, mantle and wing-coverts in adults; structure of remiges, abdomen and thigh feathers; colour of the undertail-coverts; length and scutation of the tarsi; colour and curvature of claws; and eggshell texture.

The Indian Vulture *Gyps indicus* occurs in Penninsular India south of the Gangetic Plain, barely reaching easternmost Pakistan in the west and extending locally east to at least eastern Madhya Pradesh and south at least to the Nilgiris.

The Slender-billed Vulture *Gyps tenuirostris* occurs in the Gangetic Plain from at least western Uttar Pradesh along the base of the Himalayas of India and Nepal and southward to the Calcutta and Bangladesh.

For detailed account on the field identification of Indian and Slender-billed Vultures, please refer to Rasmussen, P.C. and Parry, J. S. (2001) OBC Bulletin 34: 24-29.

BirdLife International (2001) *Threatened birds of Asia: the BirdLife International Red Data Book*. Cambridge, UK: BirdLife International.



Darwin Initiative for the Survival of Species Conservation is providing funding for a 3 year project (from 1 April 2001) investigating causes of the dramatic declines in *Gyps* spp. Griffon vultures in India. Project Partners are the Institute of Zoology (IoZ, London), RSPB and BNHS and PDRC in India.

Indian White-backed *Gyps bengalensis* and Long-billed *Gyps indicus* vultures* have declined by over 90% in India in less than a decade, as shown by BNHS surveys, and this appears to have resulted from an infectious disease.

The aims of the Darwin project are: identify the cause of the declines and potential remedial measures, to establish a captive care facility for sick and potentially healthy vultures, to conduct annual nationwide monitoring of vulture numbers and produce a monitoring strategy and to produce a recovery plan.

The Australian Animal Health Laboratory (CSIRO, Australia) is collaborating in the vulture disease investigations although this aspect of the work is not covered within the Darwin project.

In January 2002, a Darwin Initiative vulture monitoring workshop was held in Haryana. A network of volunteers has been established to monitor vulture colonies across India. It became obvious from information presented at the meeting that the declines are continuing, even at very low population densities.

If you would like to help in the disease identification work by collecting vulture serum samples, or monitoring this problem in your area, please look out for vulture showing symptoms of the disease. You can contact and visit us at www.vulturedeclines.org or at BNHS.

***Note:**

Long-billed vulture comprises two distinct species, Indian vulture *G. indicus* and slender-billed vulture *G. tenuirostris* (Rasmussen *et al.*, OBC Bull. 34 Dec. 2001) but is treated as one species here as the two forms were not differentiated at the time of writing the proposal.

IBA NEWS

IBA SURVEYS:1999-2001

1. Survey of avifauna of Digboi Forest area, Upper Dihing (East Block) Reserve forest and Kakojan Reserve Forest, Tinsukia district, Assam. (Rs. 38,000). Mr. Kulajyoti Lahkar (**COMPLETED**)
2. Wild bird survey of the rainforests of the proposed Joydihing Wildlife Sanctuary, Assam. (Rs.39,000). Nature's Beckon (**COMPLETED**)
3. Surveys for Manipur Bush Quail and Hume's Pheasant in the North-east India. (Rs. 50,000). Dr. Rahul Kaul (**COMPLETED**)
4. Survey of the Western India to identify important breeding areas of the Lesser Florican *Syphotides indica* and the Great Indian Bustard *Ardeotis nigriceps* and to advocate conservation of these species and sites. (Rs. 50,000). Dr. Ravi Sankaran, SACON (**COMPLETED**)
5. Survey of birds in Sangti-Shergaon-Kalaktang areas of West Kameng district, Arunachal Pradesh. (Rs. 44,400). Dr. Anwaruddin Choudhury (**COMPLETED**)
6. Status survey of the Dark-rumped Swift *Apus acuticauda* in Meghalaya. (Rs. 60,000). Mr. Firoz Ahmed, *Aaranyak* (**COMPLETED**)
7. Status survey of identification of IBA sites of the Bristled Grass Warbler and Kashmir Flycatcher. (Rs. 60,000). Dr. Rajiv Kalsi (**COMPLETED**)
8. Survey of avifauna in Ditchu Reserve Forest and adjoining areas of Arunachal Pradesh with special reference to Red-breasted Partridge *Arborophila mandellii*. (Rs. 25,000). WWF-Northeast, Mr. Asif Ahmed Hazarika
9. Survey of avifauna of Northeast India. (Rs. 50,000). Nature Conservation Foundation (**COMPLETED**)
10. Survey of the Dark-rumped Swift *Apus acuticauda* in Mizoram, North-east India (II Phase). (Rs.50,000). *Aaranyak* (**COMPLETED**)
11. Survey of some non-protected sites of Darjeeling Hills. (Rs. 50,000). Dr. Sarala Khaling
12. Conservation education for communities living in and around the IBAs Gangapur dam and Grasslands. (Rs. 39,000). Mr. B. Raha, Nashik Conservation Society.
13. Survey of avifauna of the Nokrek National Park, Meghalaya and its environ with special reference to RDB species. (Rs. 57,000). *Aaranyak*
14. Survey of the avifauna of the Chaglagaum areas and Ditchu Reserve Forest of eastern Arunachal Pradesh. (Rs. 50,000). Mr. Asif Ahmed Hazarika
15. Awareness campaign to conserve nesting colonies of Greater Adjutant Stork. (Rs. 40,000). Dr. Hilloljyoti Singha, *Aaranyak*
16. Survey of IBA sites in Arunachal Pradesh. (Rs. 23000). Mr. Bablu Dey, Green Hearts Nature Club
17. Survey of Norpoh Block II and Shillong Peak National Park. (Rs. 70,000). Mr. Kulajyoti Lahkar
18. Survey of the Kottiyoor Reserve Forest, Kannur District, Kerala. (Rs. 45,000). Mr. C. Sashikumar
19. IBA Database build-up and confirmation of IBAs in West Bengal. (Rs. 48,000). Prakriti Samsad
20. Survey of avifauna of the Nokrek National Park, Meghalaya and its environ with special reference to RDB species. (Rs. 57,000). *Aaranyak*
21. A bird survey of the Saipung Link Wildlife Sanctuary of Meghalaya. (Rs. 78,000). Mr. Kulajyoti Lahkar
22. Bird diversity in Kulathupuzha forests. (Rs 40,000). Mr. P. Manoj
23. Survey of non-protected areas in Bastar RF for confirmation of IBA. (Rs. 70,000). Chhattisgarh Wildlife Society
24. Mangalajodi-Conservation of waterfowl breeding habitat. (Rs. 20,000). Wild Orissa

Beside these surveys, IBAs in Maharashtra, Orissa, Kerala, Haryana, Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, Lakshdweep, Uttar Pradesh and confirmation of proposed sites for Forest Owlet in Orissa and Chhattisgarh states were conducted by the IBA team with the help of IBCN State Coordinators. Some of the reports are underway and can be asked from IBCN secretariat.

Projects under consideration



1. Survey and status of Himalayan Quail (*Ophrysia superciliosa*) in India. Total amount: Rs. 50,000/- submitted by Dr. Rajiv Kalsi.

2. Monitoring Bustard population and habitat in Rollapadu Sanctuary and its surrounding areas to identify suitable habitat and

determining causes for decline. Total amount: Rs. 48,400/- submitted by Birdwatcher's Society of Andhra Pradesh.

3. Survey of Bhimgad forests. Total amount Rs. 50,000/- submitted by Tejal V. and Major Mhaskar.

4. Preliminary bird survey of the boundaries of the Eastern Ghats of Tamil Nadu to identify Important Bird Areas and defining their boundaries. Total amount: Rs. 71,000/- - submitted by Dr. Priya Davidar.

5. Bird survey of Konni reserve forest, Kerala. Total amount Rs. 36,000/- submitted by Mr. S. Chandrasekaran.

Publications on IBAs

Conservation of Indian Galliformes through the Important Bird Areas approach (Ishtiaq *et al.*, proceeding of International Galliformes Symposium 2000). This paper deals with the gaps in information and discusses how useful this approach is for the conservation of Galliformes in India.

The coming issue of ENVIS Bulletin will be on *IBA Programme, India* with a comprehensive list of IBAs in India. This is an updated list of sites after the one published in MISTNET Vol. 2 No. 1 Jan-Mar 2001.

We will be sending the same list for inclusion in the Asian list of IBAs. 36 sites were added after surveys. Final list will surely have more sites once all the IBA surveys are over by June 2002.

The next issue of ENVIS Bulletin will be on *Threatened Birds of India*, is still under preparation.

Do you want a TBA-CD?

We have been sending copied CD of BirdLife International's book on "Threatened Birds of Asia" to the partners who requested it. We worked out the cost of CD, copying and postage comes out to Rs. 100/-. The generated funds will be used for IBCN only.

We therefore request IBCN partners who would like to have a copy of this CD and those who have already received it, please send a DD in favour of BNHS. Your better cooperation will help us in sending it faster to you.

IBA Information and Acknowledgements

The IBA has been one of the most participatory projects of the BNHS. Over 300 people shared their information during the regional workshops held in 1999 and later over 50 people were involved in getting technical information on the sites and species. The reports of all the workshops were circulated to participants and interested people. We are thankful to all contributors who have helped us in this project.

Here we would like to emphasise that all the contributors of this project will be duly acknowledged for their work and help. At no stage the partners should feel that this is a BNHS project only. In fact the success and onus of IBA lies on the partners since it is the first major project of IBCN. For every site account in the national inventory of IBAs, we have added a separate column on "Key Contributors" which will have names and address of all those partners who either conducted surveys or helped in getting information of a particular site. You can ask for a copy of the inventory format from IBA staff at BNHS.

PARTNER FACT FILE

Delhi Bird-The Northern India Bird Network

Date founded: 2000

Contact Persons: Mr. Nikhil Devasar

Phone: 0129 5253294 **Email:** nik@delhibird.org

Contact address: N-50, Panchsheel Park, New Delhi-110017

Email discussion group: delhibird@yahoogroups.com

To join send an email to:

delhibird-subscribe@yahoogroups.com

Website: <http://www.delhibird.org>

Members: 350



delhibird
The Northern India Bird Network

AIM

Delhi Bird is an interactive group which exist to share information about birds in Northern India and the issues that effect them. We seek to help and encourage new comers to the study of birds and enable birdwatching visitors and short-term residents to meet fellow enthusiasts who live in India. We use the group to collect and collate valuable bird records from Northern India and to discuss unusual sightings and other identification issues.

OBJECTIVES

- ✦ To prepare a guidebook to birds of Northern India
- ✦ To prepare and maintain a bibliography of birds of Northern India
- ✦ To prepare the Bird Atlas of Northern India
- ✦ To prepare a map of the important wetlands of North India
- ✦ To identify Important Bird Areas (IBA) of Northern India and work towards their conservation
- ✦ To get more people concerned and interested in avifauna

ADMINISTRATION

Delhi Bird functions as a group where the moderator informs all members of forthcoming walks, slide shows and other conservation related information besides social events. Every member is encouraged to participate in our activities. The moderator also maintains the website. The website has been a great success. Participation by the members in the group's activities is voluntary.

MAJOR ACTIVITIES

- ✦ regular birds walks in and around Delhi every weekend;
- ✦ outstation trips to places such as Harike, Dehra Dun and Corbett have been organised;
- ✦ illustrated talks in the Habitat Centre in New Delhi;
- ✦ bird ringing in partnershp with the BNHS;
- ✦ bird census workshops in partnership with the BNHS;
- ✦ protect the IBAs against poaching and illegal activities;
- ✦ workshops for bird identification tips;
- ✦ slide shows in schools to educate young birders and to instil a sense of conservation;
- ✦ mapping of Birds of Northern India in partnershp with IBCN.

ACHIEVEMENTS

We have grown from a small informal group of birdwatchers to an organisation which is now involved in collection of valuable information about various aspects of birds.

We have today 350 members and on occassion collaborate with other groups that are involved in the study of birds and related subject.

IBCN NEWS

“Development of National Bird Monitoring Strategy”



One day workshop was organised at India Habitat Centre, New Delhi for *Delhi Bird* (IBCN partner) on 28th January 2002. The workshop was jointly organised by the *Delhi Bird* and BNHS in which around 30 people participated. Mr. S.C. Sharma, Inspector General (Wildlife) inaugurated the workshop along with Dr. Anmol Kumar, Deputy Inspector General (Wildlife). Dr. Paul Donald, RSPB, was the main resource person along with Dr. Asad R. Rahmani, Director, BNHS and Dr. Rahul Kaul-IBCN State Coordinator for Delhi.

The workshop started with a brief overview of IBCN and IBA by Dr. Farah Ishtiaq and then Dr. Donald gave presentation on *Bird Monitoring for conservation: from grassroots to the Government*. Later Dr. Rahmani talked about the vulture decline in India and how regular monitoring helped BNHS to highlight it. He also gave a brief presentation on *Need for bird monitoring in India* followed by explanation of some bird census techniques like line-transect and point count by Dr. Kaul.

It was emphasised throughout in the workshop that how a monitoring programme can immensely help in conserving the common as well as threatened species. Dr. Donald gave few examples from UK and other parts of Europe which helped in the recovery of species that declined due to change in land use policy, pesticides or habitat degradation.

A similar kind of monitoring programme has been taken up by the *Delhi Bird* initially for a year in and around adjoining areas of Delhi which involves division of the state into several grids and monitoring of each grid on a weekly basis for common birds. This information is being collected meticulously by the *Delhi Bird* and

transferred immediately to computer so that it can be analysed with the help of some mapping programme. RSPB has agreed to buy a mapping software for the *Delhi Bird*. If this works out well for Delhi, other states too can start the same exercise in future. Good Luck to *Delhi Bird* and to the dynamic birdwatcher, Nikhil Devasar.

IBAs of Central India

The IBA list for the Central India remained unsatisfactory even after our first workshop for the Madhya Pradesh held in September 1999. There were just four contributors to this big state who actively participated in the workshop. Looking at the size of Madhya Pradesh and newly formed Chhattisgarh state, there are handful of people working for bird conservation. The information on the sites is very patchy and scattered. To strengthen the IBCN and to collect more information on the IBAs, we conducted a workshop with the help of *Forum for Forestry Furtherance* in Academy for Administration, Bhopal on 16th February 2002. The workshop was held for one day in which over 30 participants from different parts of Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh gathered to revise the list of IBAs. Mr. P. K. Mishra, PCCF, Madhya Pradesh inaugurated the workshop and stressed on the role of community in the conservation of these sites. If we look at the forest cover of Madhya Pradesh, there are very few areas that have been explored for birdlife. The workshop came up with an action plan for the state in which all participants agreed to identify key persons to conduct surveys of the unexplored sites. Also need for a census training workshop for both the states was felt which will help partners to conduct surveys and studies in a systematic manner. Mr. A.M.K. Bharos, State Coordinator for MP and Chhattisgarh could not attend this workshop due to prior engagements.

A day before the meeting, a talk was given on birds and IBAs by Dr. Farah Ishtiaq in Van Vihar National Park for school children.

Bird Census Training Workshops

Guwahati

The training workshop was held at NEIBM, Guwahati from 29-31st March 2002 and participated by 35 people from different parts of the region including about 15 fresh invitees. *Aaranyak* (IBCN partner) took initiative

as local organizer of the workshop. The programme was inaugurated by Dr Anwaruddin Choudhury, IBCN coordinator NE.

On 30th morning the programme was started with a presentation by Zafar-ul Islam (IBA Information Officer) who gave a detailed account of the IBA programme and the IBCN. Dr. Goutam Narayan took participants to the field in the next session to tell them how to initiate a scientific ornithological survey. He stressed that the participants should give more systematic efforts to collect data during an ornithological survey.

Dr. Asad R. Rahmani with Mr. Steve Parr (International Officer, RSPB) joined the participants just after lunch. Dr. Rahmani described different methods for bird census. In the evening of 30th March, M. Firoz Ahmed presented findings of the Dark-rumped Swift survey in Meghalaya and Mizoram in northeast India.

On 31st morning, the census and bird banding techniques was demonstrated to the participants at Garbhanga RF. In the evening the issue of the proposed dams in northeast was arranged. At the end of the discussion it was decided to conduct surveys on priority basis in the areas in and around IBAs that are going to be destroyed by inundation or other dam related activities. The lively discussion also covered poor quality EIA reports submitted by agencies to the MoEF.

Aaranyak

West Bengal

This workshop was held from 2-4 April 2002 at Gorumara Jungle Camp, Chalsa, Jalpaiguri district with the help of *Prakriti Samsad* (IBCN Partner) and *Help Tourism*. There were 22 participants from Prakriti Samsad, Calcutta Wildlife Society, Nature Environment and Wildlife Society, Jungles, Green Peoples India, Chittaranjan NEST, Siliguri Environment Preservation Society, Society for Wildlife, Avifauna and Nature Study, Naksalbari Vigyan Club and Himalayan Nature Adventure Foundation. Field trips were organised inside the Gorumara National Park and its fringe areas, near Moorti, Khunia Beat and at Lataguri.

The workshop helped in interaction among NGOs to carry forward the IBCN activities and bird conservation related works and the census techniques for birds demonstrated in the field were of great help for the beginners. It is worth organising such workshops in the future provided funds are available as it helps NGOs to exchange ideas and strengthen the Network.

Prakriti Samsad

National Symposium on Galliformes

Dr. M.C. Sathyanarayana (AVC College, Tamil Nadu) hosted a national symposium on Galliformes on 20-22 February 2002. The meeting attracted 17 delegates and featured 29 papers. Issues related to Galliformes were discussed including status and distribution of Pheasants from various parts of India, field techniques for capture and radio-tracking of Galliformes, habitat preferences and utilization and conservation management of Galliformes. A paper titled "*Conservation issues relevant to Important Bird Areas and Galliformes*" was presented by Supriya Jhunjhunwala IBA Officer from BNHS.

Field techniques and equipment were demonstrated by Dr. Rajiv Kalsi, IBCN State Coordinator Haryana and Punjab and K. Ramesh and Dr. Sathyakumar from the Wildlife Institute of India.

BirdLife chairman's visit to BNHS

On 23rd February 2002, Dr. Gerard Bertrand, Chairman of BirdLife International since 1994 and a former President of Massachusetts Audubon Society, visited BNHS for a day along with his wife and Mr. Toby Sinclair. His visit was mainly to see the progress of BNHS in BirdLife partnership, development in the IBA programme and the IBCN.

www.ibcn.org

We have been working on a website for IBCN for sometime and now the website is in the final stage. We expect to launch it in April 2002. This website will be linked to most of the other websites on the environment, research and of course partner NGOs. It will be updated on a quarterly basis, just at the time when we bring out a new issue of MISTNET. There are pages exclusively on the IBAs with a state wise list and map. We hope this will be a better way to let everyone know about IBCN and involve many more for the cause of bird conservation.

With this issue of MISTNET, I would like to inform the IBCN partners that I have resigned from the post of the National/Network Coordinator, IBCN on account of better career opportunity but I shall always be a part of the Network. I thank you all for the help, support and cooperation given to me during my work with BNHS.

Farah Ishtiaq

MISCELLANEOUS NEWS

Bird Festival in Sibsagar, Upper Assam

As proposed by Lok Sabha MP Bijoy Krishna Handique, Sivasagar and Jorhat district administration are jointly preparing to host the first ever bird festival keeping in view the large numbers of wetland areas spread over both these districts where large number of migratory birds congregate every year. The Panidihing bird sanctuary being the centre of attraction. With objectives like increasing environmental awareness, promoting eco-tourism, increasing awareness about the avian world and to involve more and more people in nature conservation, a tentative programme has been drawn up for celebrating the festival towards the end of November this year. The programme include bird watching, ornithological study session, water sports, river beach activities, trekking and package tours to select spots and Gibbon sanctuary. Participating in the first meeting held for the purpose in Sivasagar circuit house, MP Bijoy said that he will move the centre and various other NGOs to support the cause and make arrangements for funds. Dr. B.K. Gohain, Upper Assam Commissioner directed the government agencies, Department of Forests and Social Forestry to make the eco-conservation efforts a part of "Sanva Siksha Abhijan". Dr. Ravi Kota, DC Sivasagar sought the help of the eco-clubs, environmentalists, ornithologists in making the effort successful.

(Source: Assam Tribune, 15th March 2002)

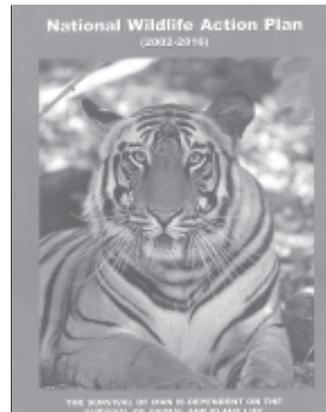
NGO Meet on Biodiversity Conservation

Nature's Bonyapran, an environmental activist group in the North Assam is going to organise a state/national level NGO meet on biodiversity conservation at Bedeti, Sontipur, Assam from 26th-28th April 2002. Interested partners can get in touch with Mr. Ajoy Kumar Sharma, Secretary General, Nature's Bonyapran, H.O. & P.O.-Bedeti-784179, Sontipur, Assam.

Earth Day 2002

Earth Day Network's theme for this year's Earth Day 2002 is Protect Our Home. Ours is a beautiful and fragile planet, and it is under threat. We have only one planet and we must work together to protect it. For details check out www.earthday.net

National Wildlife Action Plan (2002-2016)



The first National Wildlife Action Plan (NWAP) was adopted in 1983, based upon the decision taken in the XV meeting of the Indian Wildlife Board for Wildlife held in 1982. The plan had outlined the strategies and action points for wildlife conservation which are still relevant.

Meanwhile, some problems have become more acute and new concerns have become apparent, requiring a change in priorities.

The new NWAP was released by the Prime Minister on 16th January 2002 in XXI meeting of Indian Board of Wildlife strengthening, enhancing, managing the protected area network through research and monitoring, human resource development, people's participation, conservation education, wildlife tourism and financial allocation.

This NWAP can be a good tool for protection of the sites identified as IBAs. It has been suggested that apart from national parks and sanctuaries, new legal PA categories are required, namely 'Conservation Reserves' and Community Reserves'. Together with these categorisations and by including suitable adjacent habitats and corridors with PAs, we should aim to bring 10 per cent of India's land mass under the PA network, of which at least half should be inviolate habitats. Suitable amendments needs to be made for this purpose in the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.

In case readjustments of legal status and boundaries of existing and proposed PAs is required to be done, the same must be done on the basis of ecological, natural boundaries and features. Denotifications and deletions of areas from PAs to accomodate commercial and non-forest activities must be avoided.

Asia Waterbird Census

Wetlands International-Asia Pacific coordinates the Asian Waterbird Census (AWC). The Census runs parallel to other waterbird censuses in Africa, Europe and the Neotropics under the umbrella of the International Waterbird Census (IWC). Dr. David Li is the International Coordinator of AWC based in Malaysia (for more information check www.wetlands.org).

The AWC plays a significant role at both national and international level. The Ramsar Convention encourages regular monitoring of waterbirds by its Contracting Parties as the basis for the identification of many wetlands of international importance. The Asia-Pacific Migratory Waterbird Conservation Strategy:2001-2005 is also based on AWC data.

In India, BNHS is the coordinator of AWC. We would be pleased to receive wintering count information from the region (December to February) over the past five years (1997-2001). We would like to thank those who have already contributed. Please send your contribution at the earliest to : Dr. Asad R. Rahmani, National Coordinator AWC, at BNHS.

Catalogue of India's Heronries

Dr. S. Subramanya, State Coordinator of Karnataka has prepared a catalogue which presents an overview of the distribution, status and conservation needs of India's heronries. This project has been sponsored by the Oriental Bird Club (OBC) under small grants programme and was done in two phases: (i) questionnaires were sent to over 400 birdwatchers, ornithologists and naturalists in different parts of India and over 200 responses were received. This

was done between 1993-94; (ii) Over 300 additional birdwatchers were contacted and information on nearly 100 more heronries was gathered.

Information on over 698 nesting sites and 26 waterbird species was gathered. It clearly shows that at least 164 sites have been lost to tree felling, disturbance of nests, poaching of eggs, nestlings and even nesting birds as well as to natural factors such as floods, cyclones and droughts.

This study also revealed that how heronries come into existence and the fact that only a small proportion of existing heronries was found to be protected.

Nearly 80% of the heronries are located within close proximity to human habitations. It is important to educate people of the need to protect nesting sites. Efforts should be made to encourage local NGOs to identify and protect heronries, particularly where nesting sites are located on private property.

For more information, please get in touch with Dr. Subramanya at subbus@vsnl.com



DIARY DATES

✎ 22 April 2002 *Earth Day*. For more information see www.earthday.net

✎ 8-10 August 2002 *International Crane Workshop*, will be held in Beijing China. The workshop will be organised by China Ornithological Society and the International Crane Foundation. The workshop will summarise research on the world's cranes and their habitats, promote scientific research and conservation of cranes and strengthen international information exchange. Topics to be covered include crane migration, cranes and people, captive breeding and the future direction of crane research.

✎ 11-17 August 2002 *International Ornithology Congress*, Beijing China. Information can be obtained via email (infocenter@ioc.org.cn), via internet at (<http://www.ioc.org.cn>) or via home page of the 23rd congress at (<http://www.ioc.org.za>).

✎ 18-25 May 2003 *6th World Conference on Birds of Prey and Owls*, to be held at Budapest, Hungary. All enquiries should be addressed to World Working Group on Birds of Prey (WWGGBP), PO Box 52, Towcester NN12 7ZW, England. Tel. & Fax: ++44 -(0)1604-86 23 31 Email: WWGGBP@aol.com; Website: www.Raptors-International.de

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30 organisations are partners of IBCN but all do not have logos



Indian Bird Conservation Network

The Indian Bird Conservation Network is set up by BNHS in collaboration with BirdLife International and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) (BirdLife partner in UK). The mission of the Network is to promote conservation of birds and their habitat through development of a national network of individuals, organisations and Government.

The Network invites two types of partnership- individual and organisational. To join the Network, write to your State Coordinator or the National Coordinator.

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BirdLife International is a global partnership of conservation organisations, represented in over 100 countries, working for the diversity of all life through the conservation of birds and their habitats.

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The BNHS was founded in 1883 for the purpose of exchanging notes and observations on natural history and exhibiting interesting specimens. Today, it is the largest non-governmental organisation (NGO) in the subcontinent engaged in the conservation of nature and natural resources, education and research in natural history with members in over 30 countries. BNHS is a BirdLife Partner Designate in India.

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