

MISSION



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Bombay Natural History Society

Mission Statement

'Conservation of nature, primarily biological
diversity through action based on research,
education and public awareness.'



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. BNHS is partner
designate.

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(ICF)

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From the Editor...



Since extinction is a part of the earth's natural order, and there is still an abundance of species, some people ask: "Why save endangered species? What makes a relatively few animals and plants so special that a great deal of effort and money should be expended to preserve them?"

The Indian Parliament addressed these questions a number of times. The preamble of the Ministry of Environment and Forests states that, endangered and threatened species of birds, mammals and other biodiversity are of esthetic, ecological, educational, historical, recreational, and scientific value to the nation and its people. This statement summarizes a number of convincing arguments advanced by scientists, conservationists, and others who are greatly concerned by the disappearance of wildlife.

People wondered whether the Important Bird Areas (IBAs) programme would be helpful to conserve the biodiversity and their habitats. In support of this, Dr. Lincoln Fishpool gives a global perspective on IBAs and how the prioritization, regular monitoring, liaisoning, conservation strategies and site support of groups are important to promote the conservation of IBAs in other countries.

Our younger IBCN members have been writing to us to give some information which could be useful to them. Two interesting notes on 'how to attract birds to your backyard' and 'what to do with baby birds' would be of interest to every bird lover.

The state of India's birds demonstrates the state of her environments, and the birds clearly indicate that the current policy and practice is unsustainable for them, for the biodiversity, and ultimately for the people.

Whilst this publication paints an alarming picture, it also presents solutions and calls for action. If we as individuals, Governments, non-governmental organizations and members of the IBCN act now to preserve these birds and their habitat, what we call the IBAs, it might be a step towards the long term conservation of the globally threatened species, and other common birds.

Zafar-ul Islam (Project Manager IBA-IBCN)

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INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE...

Birdlife International's Important Bird Areas Programme

To identify and protect a network of sites, at a biogeographic scale, critical for the long term viability of naturally occurring bird populations, across the range of those species for which a sites-based approach is appropriate.

Such is the formal aim of BirdLife's Important Bird Area (IBA) programme. Put more simply, IBAs are sites vital for the conservation of the world's birds and, as a first step towards their protection, they have to be identified and documented. Moreover, their protection would, because of the way many endemic plant and animal species are concentrated together in relatively small areas, also conserve much of the world's terrestrial biodiversity.

On the strength of successes in Europe the decision was taken in the early 1990s to 'go global'. One of the first steps in the process was to adopt and standardise the mechanisms of site selection to ensure their applicability to tropical environments and more diverse avifaunas. After lengthy consultation, four categories of selection were agreed that could be used globally. These are defined by the presence at sites of species of global conservation concern, species of restricted range (as defined by the BirdLife's Endemic Bird Area analysis), concentrations of numbers of individuals (including waterbirds, seabirds and terrestrial species such as raptor breeding colonies) and groups of species restricted to a particular ecological community or biome. With these tools in place the process of selecting sites could begin and IBA programmes are now underway in most parts of the world.

The Africa programme was begun in 1993 and the resulting directory (*Important Bird Areas in Africa and associated islands: priority sites for conservation*, by Fishpool and Evans 2001), covering 58 countries and territories, gives details of 1230 IBAs across the region. The process of site identification and documentation in Asia is now well advanced and it is planned that a summary directory of sites will be published in late 2003 / early 2004. This is to cover 26 countries and territories and will include some 2000 sites.

In all these places, wherever human and financial resources permit, national IBA inventories are being compiled, as far as possible, by teams of nationals., often from BirdLife Partner and Affiliate organisations, assisted by external support as appropriate. This support may be merely technical but can include provision of financial support, equipment, training and the secondment of advisory expertise. The international cooperation, institution building and training that the programme entails

are not only essential to the generation of the national IBA inventories but are seen as spin-offs, the importance of which is comparable to that of the inventory itself.

Although there is considerable variation in detail between countries in the approach taken, there are a number of elements common to most. An early task is to inform government of the project: official approval is sought (and may be essential for the project to go ahead) but, in addition, participation of staff from relevant government departments is actively encouraged wherever possible. The commitment of national authorities to the IBA programme is essential if the results are to be of most benefit to conservation. An assessment of the current state of knowledge of the avifauna of the country has to be made through literature review and, often, by means of a workshop with the participation of experts on the nation's birds as well as other fauna and flora. The workshop is a preliminary attempt to apply the selection criteria to the national avifauna and to sites of previously recognised importance. Outputs from the workshop include two lists, one of which comprises those sites which, on the basis of existing knowledge, are known to qualify as IBAs; the other lists sites that may do once they are better known. The second list is then used to guide and prioritise the field survey work to be undertaken.

While it is clearly preferable that national organisations carry out this work wherever possible, not least because the chances of the conservation of the sites identified are considerably enhanced if there is an articulate, well-informed constituency lobbying for their protection in country, this is currently not possible everywhere. Partly this is a resource problem but also reflects a lack of (known) national expertise in some countries.

The Africa IBA programme, for example, has, with funding from the RSPB and UNDP-GEF, developed methodologies for taking the IBA process beyond the site identification phase. These new methods include prioritization of the need for conservation action at sites, monitoring and building sustainability through National Liaison Committees (NLCs), National IBA Conservation Strategies (NIBACS) and Site Support Groups (SSGs), described briefly below:

1. Prioritizing IBAs for conservation action

All IBAs are important, but not all require the same level of conservation action. Some are already well-protected and managed, whilst others are under imminent threat of destruction or modification. Therefore, an objective

quantitative system for prioritizing the need for conservation action at IBAs has been developed, based upon, among other things, biodiversity importance and level of threat.

2. National and regional IBA monitoring

Mechanisms are needed to assess the effectiveness of the IBA network at conserving the species and populations for which the sites were identified. As such, monitoring guidelines have been devised at both national and regional levels. These protocols address the need for sustainability (including the participation of Site Support Groups and National Liaison Committees—see below) and for regional compatibility.

3. National Liaison Committees

National Liaison Committees (NLCs) are composed of representatives from national governments, NGOs, UNDP and community groups. They form an important channel of communication between the highest levels of national policy-making and site conservation action. These committees oversee the implementation of the IBA programme through meetings and field visits. The most notable impacts of the NLCs to date include:

- the inclusion of project personnel and IBA considerations in government policy discussions and actions;
- the inclusion of project personnel in government delegations to the Conferences of the Parties of the Ramsar Convention, the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Convention to Combat Desertification;
- invitations to serve on the planning and steering committees that are developing National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plans;
- inclusion of project personnel in national policy and legislation reviews.

4. National IBA Conservation Strategies (NIBACS)

Conservation of IBAs in Africa poses serious challenges, because of the large size of many IBAs, their number and diversity and the complexity of threats they face. NIBACS are being developed in attempts to bring together all key stakeholders to act collaboratively for the protection of IBAs. NIBACS are flexible framework documents containing goals, objectives, priorities and mechanisms for IBA conservation that define the roles of all main players and help guide them to undertake the actions required.

5. Site Support Groups

Site Support Groups (SSGs) are members of site-adjacent communities who actively promote the conservation of IBAs. To date, some 60 SSGs have been formed in across 10 countries.

The main activities of SSGs are:

- Advising local communities on the wise use of natural resources and the importance of IBAs for conserving biodiversity. SSGs also help to establish and/or strengthen environmental education programmes in schools around sites. Examples include the Arabuko-Sokoke Forest Guides Association in Kenya (IBA KE007, Arabuko-Sokoke forest) and the Menagesha-Suba Forest Site Support Group in Ethiopia (IBA ET031, Menagesha State Forest).
- Monitoring the status of key species and habitats in their sites and the human activities going on at sites, and reporting illegal or destructive activities to the relevant authorities. Examples include the Bird Guides and Drivers Association in Uganda (IBA UG017, Mabamba Bay).
- Starting environmentally-friendly conservation-linked projects that help communities generate income (for example, bee-keeping, tree nurseries, ecotourism) and providing services, such as assisting researchers and tour-guiding at IBAs. Examples include the Friends of Kinangop Plateau, Kenya (IBA KE004, Kinangop grasslands) and the Dar-Es-Salaam Wetland Site Support Group.
- Working with NGOs and government agencies to rehabilitate degraded habitats, for example by tree planting. Examples include the groups active at Kaboré Tambi National Park, Burkina Faso (IBA BF006, Kaboré Tambi—Nazinga—Sissili complex).
- Providing a means for local communities to participate in negotiations and decisions that affect the sites that are their concern.

The SSGs have received training in the significance of group dynamics, IBA monitoring, ornithology, tour-guiding and other income-generating activities, project management and fund-raising. The groups have also been empowered to advocate the conservation of 'their' sites in local and national fora. At the national level, the capacity of the Partners to coordinate complex multi-stakeholder projects has been enhanced. Training workshops have been organized to address Partner and project skills needs.



Dr Lincoln Fishpool started his professional career as an entomologist working on agricultural pest problems in various parts of Africa. In the course of doing so he became increasingly interested in ornithology and conservation. He joined BirdLife ten years ago as coordinator of the Africa Important Bird Areas programme. With the publication of the African IBA directory in late 2001, he assumed responsibility for the technical aspects of IBA coordination globally.

RESEARCH AND CONSERVATION...

Siberian cranes at China's largest lake surpass world estimate



PICTURE: ICF

In January 2003, a total of 4,004 Siberian Cranes, one of the world's rarest bird species, have been counted in a recent survey of migratory birds over wintering at Lake Poyang in east China's Jiangxi province.

The news will spark a review of the International Crane Foundation (ICF's) record that says only 3000 Siberian Cranes currently exist in the world.

This is the second time that Lake Poyang has countered the ICF's authoritative conclusions. In 1983, the ICF after a survey declared there were only 300 white cranes left worldwide. However, in 1985, about 1,300 Siberian Crane appeared in the vicinity of Lake Poyang, prompting

comparisons to a "second Great Wall". In 1989, the ICF corrected its records and raised the number of Siberian Cranes to 3,000.

According to workers conducting the survey, the increase in migratory birds is closely related to the improvements in the local environment.

The end of 2002 saw a four-year relocation project completed, which enlarged the area of the lake to 5,100 square kilometers, providing more space for the birds to find food.

Ban on fishing in Lake Poyang for more than ten years has also meant more food is available for migratory birds.

Asia-Pacific Migratory Waterbird Conservation Strategy 2001-2005

Across the Asia-Pacific region, a large number of interesting activities, projects, publications and other news about migratory waterbirds and wetlands are being generated and being reported in a number of different media. A News page for the Asia-Pacific Migratory Waterbird Conservation Strategy website has been launched <http://www.wetlands.org/IWC/awc/waterbirdstrategy/News.htm> This web page offers a forum for news and announcements on waterbird activities in the Asia-Pacific region. This page will also contain interesting updates from the international site networks in the East Asian- Australasian Flyway. Kindly visit the website to view this page.

David Li, Wetlands International Asia Pacific

Interesting website to find Coordinates of any place

The following websites are useful to find the coordinates (longitude and latitude) of any place of the world, and also elevation of any town/villages in any part of the world. Please check out the countrywise database in the following

address: <http://www.calle.com> and <http://www.heavens-above.com/countries.asp>

RESEARCH AND CONSERVATION...

Megapode: A fascinating bird of Nicobar Islands

Megapodes are a group of birds which utilise external sources of heat to incubate their eggs. The Megapodiidae, literally meaning big feet after the birds disproportionately large feet, were first described to science during Magellan's 1519-1522 expedition to the Far East. Megapodes are heavy-bodied birds of the forest floor and resemble other Galliformes in body shape and plumage. Most of the megapodes are brown, blackish, or grey in colour. Many have virtually bare areas on their face or neck and this exposed skin may be coloured yellow, blue, or dull red. Megapodes are opportunistic ground foragers, eating a wide variety of food such as insects, seeds, and fallen fruits. Although all are able to fly, and some make considerable flights on a daily basis, most species move primarily by walking.

The Nicobar Megapode *Megapodius nicobariensis*, a mound nesting megapode, is endemic to the Nicobar group of Islands, over 1500-km from its nearest congeneric.

The Nicobar megapode prefers to construct mounds in sandy and sandy-loam substrates. This preference is largely because digging by the bird is easier in soil with high sand content. This preference for constructing mounds on sandy substrates could indicate why mounds are found in high densities in coastal forest when compared to interior forests, and within coastal forests in a narrow belt adjacent to the beach. These coastal forests normally dominated by the *Pandanus*, *Casuarina*, *Barringtonia* and *Macaranga peltata*,

The Nicobar Megapode builds incubation mounds of sand, loam, coral bits and rotting vegetation within which eggs are laid. Both partners of a pair equally participate in mound construction and maintenance, which starts from egg-pit-digging and concludes with raking the surrounding vegetative material and covering the incubation mound so that all pits present are filled up and the surface of the mound is smooth.

Although the Nicobar megapode is largely monogamous, temporary bonds, change of partners, and extra pair copulation happens. There is no pre- and post-copulation display. However, they exhibit synchronous behaviour such as dueting. A mound is used by more than one pair. During egg-laying, a pair establishes territory at a mound and strongly defends it from others who use the same mound at the same time. The average size of the home range is less than a hectare.

The Nicobar Megapode is omnivorous. Cockroaches, snails, and seeds of *Macaranga peltata* are the most preferred foods of this bird. Rainfall and egg production are linked via food availability. Frequent rains in dry season increase food availability, and so the egg production.



The climb of the hatchling from the egg chamber to the surface is a long process that can take up to 84 hours, and the mean rate of movement is about 1.25 cm per hour. As soon as the chick emerges out from the mound it performs both body and leg preening. Some of the chicks are born with eye defects.

The Nicobar Megapode nesting grounds attract a wide range of predators such as Monitor lizard *Varanus salvator*, raptors, man, python, cat, dog and some invertebrates. Monitor lizard not only feeds on the eggs of the megapode but also lays its eggs in the mound.

Thirteen of the 22 species are currently threatened by habitat destruction, introduction of predators and over-exploitation of eggs. The Nicobar Megapode is also not exceptional to this. Soon, the Wildlife Institute of India will be initiating a study on this species for its conservation.

Text and photographs: Dr. K. Sivakumar (IBCN member) teaches at Wildlife Institute of India and worked on this bird for his Doctoral theses.

RESEARCH AND CONSERVATION...

Wintering of Kashmir Flycatcher (*Ficedula subrubra*), in the Nilgiris Upper Plateau

The Kashmir flycatcher *Ficedula subrubra* is one of the 35 species of Muscicapinae reported from the Indian sub-continent. It is categorized as vulnerable and is included in Red Data Book by BirdLife International. It has been recorded sparingly in Nepal, Bhutan and Pakistan. It is known to winter in Sri Lanka and the Western Ghats of India. It is believed that virtually the entire population winters in Sri Lanka from October to March above 750m in gardens, tea estates and in the forest edges. There have been very few records of its wintering from within India. It has been recorded sparingly on passage in peninsular India and its status and distribution in Indian limits including the Western Ghats is almost unknown.

There was a great deal of uncertainty regarding the taxonomic position of the Kashmir flycatcher. It was generally confused with the Red-throated flycatcher *Ficedula parva*, until it was finally judged "evidently as a separate species on the basis of plumage characteristic, molt sequence and wing formula".

Of the total 28 site records from Indian limits of this species since the 19th century, only two published records go to prove its wintering in peninsular India (in the Nilgiri Hills). Harrap and Redman in 1989 reported its wintering in Nilgiris based on sightings of four males from the Nilgiris (two in Ooty and two near Avalanche road in February 1985) and Karthikeyan and Athreya (1992) again reported a sighting record of a single male from Muthorai in December 1990. The rest are either spring or passage records during migration, from across much of India including Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Himachal



Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, and Punjab, and Chandigarh.

The Kashmir Flycatcher breeds in the northwest Himalayas and Pir Panjal Range and has been reported as very common in Overa Wildlife Sanctuary in Jammu and Kashmir. We conducted a preliminary survey on the status and ecology of this precarious species in the Nilgiris during the last three wintering seasons (2001 to 2003), in the Nilgiri Upper Plateau of Tamil Nadu. Habitat

assessment was done and behavior observations were made on four pairs. A total 16 birds (9 males and 7 females) was recorded from different sites all above 2000 m elevation during our surveys in the first two wintering seasons.

The Kashmir flycatcher remains in pairs in winter and holds a winter territory. In Nilgiris it inhabits wattle (*Acacia mearnsii*) openings with good ground cover and avoids forests with high tree density and canopy cover. Behavioral and ecological aspects have been discussed based on our observations on eight birds during the two wintering seasons in Zarri *et al.*, 2003 (*in press*). In view of its rarity and occupation of the same territory (perhaps by the same pair) during the three wintering seasons, presumably the bird has site fidelity. Thanks to the permission from the Tamil Nadu Forest Department, we could colour ring a few individuals this year. Our future monitoring may help reveal if they have site fidelity. If so, such sites would need to be protected from any kind of disturbance.

Text and photograph: Mr. Ashfaq Ahmed Zarri works with the BNHS for his Ph.D. on Nilgiris Laughing Thrush in the Nilgiris, TN.

Marsh Award for Vulture conservation in India



PIC: BNHS

Dr. Vibhu Prakash, Principal Scientist of the BNHS, is the recipient of the Marsh Award 2003. The function was held on February 26, at Nehru Centre, attached to the Indian High commission in London. Mr. Brian Marsh, Chairman of Marsh Christian Trust, gave away the award which included citation and a cheque of £1000. The Marsh Christian Trust established in 1981, aims to acknowledge individuals and sometimes groups for their dedicated commitment in their chosen field. Mr. Graham Wyne, Chief Executive, RSPB, lauded the BNHS's role in bird conservation for over a century, and spoke of its close cooperation with the RSPB, especially for IBA and IBCN programmes in India for the last many years. Mr. Elliot Morley, Minister for Nature Protection, U.K., said that he was impressed by the implementation of the Vulture Care Centre at Pinjore, which he had inaugurated on February 7, as professionally developed and maintained. (Dr. Vibhu Prakash is a IBCN member)

RESEARCH, CONSERVATION AND ADVOCACY...

Black-necked Stork's present status in India

Black-necked Stork *Ephippiorhynchus asiaticus* was once wide spread throughout south-east Asia and Australia, and has declined recently, or been extirpated from most of its world range. Its population has already declined steadily in the Indian subcontinent. It currently ranges from India, Sri Lanka to Australia. However, in many places, populations have reached critically low levels. It is a solitary breeder and remains mated with the same partner during the successive seasons, and the successful pairs are frequently seen together even after the breeding season is over. It is also said to be a very late breeder in India. In some parts, it starts breeding in September and in others in late November and this extends to even the first week of December. In northern parts of India, its breeding starts in September - this coincides with the end of the monsoon in this region. Except Kahl's brief study on the breeding biology of this species near Bharatpur in Rajasthan in 1966-67, no other major study was undertaken before the Stork Ecology Project, funded by US Fish & Wildlife Service, executed by Dept. of Wildlife Sciences, Aligarh Muslim University, from 1994 to 1997. Recently, BNHS has circulated a questionnaire asking all BNHS members and those who are interested in bird watching to send us information about the presence of Black-necked Storks from their areas. Opinion of most of the people is that the population of this resplendent species is getting reduced when compared to earlier records from the same areas.

According to Mr. Gopi Sundar of the Wildlife Institute in India the main strongholds of Black-necked Storks are the districts of eastern Uttar Pradesh. His findings are mostly based on the sightings of storks while collecting data on the Sarus cranes, mainly in the unprotected areas i.e., outside the protected area network in Uttar Pradesh. While I was working on the Black-necked Storks in Dudwa National Park (IBA), Uttar Pradesh, I could see only four to five pairs. Whereas Radhey Shyam- my field assistant recently informed me that he had seen more than 20 individuals within the Dudwa National Park - a visible and sizeable increase in the population of Black-necked Storks in Dudwa. Whereas, the overall picture from the rest of the country has shown a bleak future for this species; habitat destruction and alteration (conversion of wetlands into agricultural fields and siltation) being the prime suspects behind the declining population of Black-necked Stork in India.

A clearer picture would emerge after analyzing the data that we have gathered from different parts of western, northern and north-eastern India. We have also circulated the questionnaire to individuals who have participated in this years' Annual Waterfowl Census in India, requesting them to send us information about Black-necked Stork' sighting(s). We hope that we would get back the remaining



filled-in questionnaire forms (from BNHS and IBCN members). Lack of information from southern states of India clearly shows that Black-necked Stork is no longer present there in appreciable numbers.

In the meantime, I would urge that the status of the Black-necked Stork should be reconsidered in the forthcoming revision of the IUCN's Red Data Book. At global level (mainly in Australia) the population of Black-necked Stork is deteriorating.

Text and photograph: Dr. Gopinathan Maheswaran, worked on this species for his Doctoral thesis. He is presently working as Scientist with BNHS.

Photographs Required for IBA Inventory (Book)

We are finalizing the IBA Inventory, if anyone has good pictures of IBAs or birds of any IBA, kindly send it to us, we will give full credit and one copy of the book free. Thank you.

ADVOCACY...

Silent Valley NP (IBA site) is no more Silent

I was in Silent Valley National Park (SVNP) recently (23 Feb 03). The condition of the National park, which incidentally forms the core zone of Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve is really pathetic. The entire area, in and around River Kunthi, which originate from SVNP was flooded with tourists, who were involved in all kinds of activities, including smoking, drinking, playing tape recorder, singing, dancing, swimming and eating. They were also found throwing the remnants of the food into the river.

Silent Valley is considered as the symbol of nature conservation in India, for which, thousands of people fought and then won the war against its destruction. The State Forest department which feels so proud of having the SVNP under its jurisdiction, and which has brought out an excellent publication on Silent Valley, is right now totally neglecting the Park. This is exemplified by the fact that the Park does not have a full time Wildlife Warden for quite some time! So there is no one to "manage" the Park. Perhaps the kind of management that an area like Silent Valley requires is the management of tourists. Though there are boards kept at the entry point which read "no private vehicles will be permitted inside the park", on 23rd February 2003, there were at least five private mini buses inside the SVNP (at Sairandri) apart from several cars and jeeps.

I feel that one of the primary reasons for this, is the lack of a full time and committed Warden at SVNP. It is requested to all the IBCN members to write to the State



PICTURE: ZAFAR-UL ISLAM

forest minister, to request him to post a full time and committed Warden at SVNP. Which it is hoped would solve the problem to a great extent. The email id of the State Forest Minister, Mr. Sudhakaran, K is minister_forest@kerala.gov.in.

P.O. NAMEER (State Coordinator of Kerala)

Panidihing (IBA site) bird festival

The year-long Panidihing Birds' Festival 2003, the first of its kind in India, got-off to a colourful start on 21 January 2003 with the Chief Minister Tarun Gogoi lighting the ceremonial lamp in the inaugural function at Rajmai, 10 km from Panidihing Birds Sanctuary proper, under the broad wings of a huge bamboo-made image of a Ruddy sheldrake (*Tadorna ferruginea*) - the logo of the festival. In his inaugural address Sri Gogoi lauded the effort of the organizers and the local people in and around Panidihing for arousing mass awareness about conservation of nature, especially birds.



IBA

The Chief Minister said that the present government is working to link up the state's indigenous resources - the mighty and mesmerizing Brahmaputra, the rainforests, forests, Majuli (IBA site) and cultures with the tourism industry. Sri Debananda Konwar, Minister for Power, in his welcome address said that our society is inseparably linked with birds. He recited the famous slokas of Valmiki 'Ma nishada tama gama saswati ...' and said that our poetic world had its inclination towards birds.

Sri Pradyut Bardoloi, Minister for Forest, released the souvenir brought out on the occasion, which is edited by H N Gogoi, additional deputy commissioner, Sivasagar. Prior to that about a hundred schoolgirls presented a long charter with signatures of one lakh citizens for regenerating people's awareness towards bird conservation and plan of action to be taken up in Panidihing Birds Sanctuary, a 33.93 sqkm wetland

area (IBA). Dr Asad Rahmani, Director, Bombay Natural History Society, also attended the festival as a guest of honour, said in his speech that biologically Assam is a very important place and Panidihing is very important ornithologically. Sivasagar Deputy Commissioner Smt Gayatri Borua presided over the inaugural function.

ADVOCACY...

Greater Adjutant Stork Rescue and conservation efforts in Nagaon and Morigaon in Assam (IBA sites)

The Greater Adjutant Stork (*Leptoptilos dubius*), is the largest and one of the most threatened of the 18 species of storks found in the world. Distinguished by a pale-pink pouch suspended from the neck of adult birds, the Greater Adjutant has been rapidly decreasing in numbers due to various reasons. With a global population of less than 1000, the Greater Adjutant, once commonly found in south and southeast Asia, is now on the threshold of extinction. It is now restricted to Assam and parts of Cambodia and Laos.

The Green Guard Nature Organisation (IBCN partner), Nagaon, has been leading the efforts to protect the Greater Adjutant Storks, locally known in Assam as 'Hargila'. The largest known breeding colonies of the Greater Adjutant are at Nagaon and Morigaon districts of Assam and the Green Guard Nature Organisation has been monitoring them since 1992. Their efforts at checking the high mortality rate of the Greater Adjutant chicks and protecting the remaining breeding colonies have been recognised by various conservation agencies including the National Geographic (see National Geographic News of July 2002).

The Greater Adjutants build their nests on the same nesting trees year after year. Decrease in the number of these large, traditional nesting trees have contributed to their declining numbers. It is quite amazing that the Greater Adjutants have managed to adapt themselves to live in small woodlands near human habitation and also to the pollution and commotion of urban areas. When the Green Guard team started monitoring these birds in 1992 - 93, there were three nesting colonies at Nagaon and two at Morigaon. However felling of trees contributed to the disappearance of both the colonies at Morigaon and of one at Nagaon.

Another factor for the Greater Adjutant's decline could



PIG: ZAFAR-UL-ISLAM



be high chick mortality. The Green Guard Nature Organisation observed that chicks would often fall to their deaths from the nests due to jostling for space, food or during storms and high winds that often hit the area. Mr. Simanta Goswami, Director, Green Guard along with his team, devised a method of putting up nets under the nesting trees. They would then pick up the fallen chicks, often injured, and give them proper treatment. The Green Guard team's efforts paid off and in the very first year, they were able to save a number of chicks from death. With the help of the Nagaon Wildlife Division, the Green Guard team started putting up nets below trees with nests, on an experimental basis. They also made arrangements to keep the chicks under the care of a vet until they could rejoin the flocks.

The Greater Adjutant Stork conservation efforts received a boost in 2002, with the sanction of a project by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service in collaboration with Aaranyak (IBCN partner), for conservation at the two existing colonies at Nagaon, and to locate new areas. The Green Guard Nature Organisation has now put up nets under all the major nesting trees at the two colonies of Nagaon. The team also constructed a rearing centre at Khutikatia, Nagaon where the fallen chicks are allowed to recuperate in a near natural environment. The rearing centre, with an artificial flying platform and a fish pond can accommodate a number of Greater Adjutant chicks. The Green Guard looks after the chicks. The Green Guard team, with the help of forest officials, monitors the growth and development of the chicks and once they learn to fly, the juvenile Greater Adjutants are free to join the flocks at the nesting colonies, which are at a short distance. These efforts have stabilized the population of Greater Adjutants in the area but much remains to be done to save this bird from extinction.



PIG: ZAFAR-UL-ISLAM

ADVOCACY...

Formation of Network of Roads By The Forest Department in Kudremukh National Park



While wildlife conservationists and nature lovers celebrate the closure of the mining company at Kudremukh by the end of year 2005, this unique rainforest ecosystem is facing a new crisis through the formation of a network of roads by the forest department in some of the most pristine wilderness landscapes of Kudremukh National Park. It is feared that the means of protection adopted by the forest department is far more damaging than what it intends to protect it from. The formation of roads in the hilly grasslands and the shola forests of Kudremukh have damaged hundreds of trees and removal of grass cover from steep slopes. The roads formed in the steep terrain of Kudremukh

when exposed to heavy rain in the monsoons are susceptible to heavy soil erosion. It is scientifically proven that roads fragment wildlife habitat; roads also open up new forest areas for illegal activities like timber smuggling, wildlife poaching and so on.

The formation of new roads or reviving old logging roads, which are now covered with thick undergrowth, will cause immense damage to Kudremukh. Scientific study on the effect of roads on terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems underscores the importance of avoiding construction of new roads in roadless or sparsely roaded areas and of removal or restoration of existing roads to benefit both terrestrial and aquatic biota. Further, roads and streams apparently serve multiple functions that enhance exotic species invasion in forest landscape.

Long-term solution for providing effective protection to these forests from fire and other illegal activities would be through establishing regular anti-poaching camps with sufficient field staff in remote forest areas. There are several examples of wildlife reserves in our country Brahmagiri Wildlife Sanctuary, Eravikulam National Park and Silent Valley National Park, with similar terrain and habitat as in Kudremukh where effective protection has been provided by the forest department without forming any network of roads. (Source: *Wildlife First*)

Status Overview and Recommendations for Conservation of the White-headed Duck *Oxyura leucocephala* in Central Asia

The White-headed Duck *Oxyura leucocephala* is the only Stiff-tail Duck species that is indigenous to the Palearctic; it is restricted to a small area of Central Eurasia and North Africa. Over the last decade or so, populations have declined rapidly. The global population, which was probably over 100,000 in the early twentieth century, has decreased to 8,000-13,000 individuals in 2002.

The White-headed Duck is identified as an endangered species listed both in the IUCN Red List and on Appendix I of the CMS. On the basis of this alarming decline, the 6th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to CMS (Cape Town, November 1999) identified the White-headed Duck as a priority species for action by designating it for Concerted Actions under the Convention. These include the preparation of a detailed report on the status of the species.

The White-headed Duck is a straggler in India, with two records from North India (Rajasthan, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh and Jammu & Kashmir) (Zuo & Mundkur, Feb. 2003). This report focuses on the Central Asian region, and covers Afghanistan, China, India, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Mongolia, Pakistan, Russia (Asian part only),

Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. The report is a result of a collaborative effort involving many experts from across the region.

The Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS) and Wetlands International have produced a publication, entitled "Status Overview and Recommendations for Conservation of the White-headed Duck *Oxyura leucocephala* in Central Asia", which can be downloaded from www.wetlands.org.



Simon Nash (Chief Executive Officer, Wetlands International, Netherland) and Arnulf Muller-Helbrecht (Executive Secretary of CMS, Bonn, Germany)

TRAINING AND CONSERVATION...

Bird Census Training Workshop

by IBCN (12-13th March in Jorhat)

The Indian Bird Conservation Network (IBCN) has been organizing the Bird Census Training Workshops in Northeastern states with the financial help of UNDP. This workshop was organized in collaboration of Mrs. Shanta Sharma of Prakriti (IBCN Org. member in Jorhat). Workshop was inaugurated by Dr. Dinesh Chandra Goswami, Deputy Director of Regional Research Laboratory. Mr. Jagat Borthakur, Additional Deputy Commissioner also spoke on government support for long term conservation. Mr. Mahendra Duara, Divisional FO of Eastern Assam Circle (Jorhat Wildlife division) also came for the inaugural function and informally spoke of the help and cooperation from the Forest Department.

After the inaugural sessions, Dr. Asad Rahmani, spoke about the Bombay Natural History Society. He mentioned about the research activities of the Society, networking, membership, conservation work, collection and publication of the Society. Mr. Zafar-ul Islam (Project Manager for IBA-IBCN), gave a presentation on IBA and



PIC: ZAFAR-UL-ISLAM

IBCN. He emphasized to the participants how networking is important for bird conservation with a single platform to exchange and disseminate information on birds and their habitat. Dr. Rahmani gave presentations on bird censuses methods, with local examples to make the participants understand different methods to do systematic scientific studies on birds and their habitats. Next day, participants were taken to Gibbon Wildlife Sanctuary (IBA site) for field exercises.

Bond, James Bond (Ornithologist!)

Ever wonder how James Bond got his name? James Bond, known to his friends as Jim, was a Philadelphia ornithologist and the author of a book called 'Birds of the West India'. While the bird-watching book may not have been a bestseller, it did catch the attention of an Englishman named Ian Fleming. At the time, Fleming was living in Jamaica and writing a book of his own. It was the story of an as yet unnamed British secret agent who had the code name 007.



One day, as Fleming was sitting at breakfast looking through his favorite non-fiction tide, he found the perfect name for his hero: Bond, James Bond. Interestingly, the name Bond was not chosen because it was strong, exotic, or even memorable. As Fleming later wrote, "It struck me that this name, brief, unromantic and yet very masculine, was just what I needed."

Detrimental effect on biodiversity of Sunderban by Sahara Group

The Sahara Group is planning a Rs. 2000 crores eco tourism project in the Sunderbans (an IBA). The project is spread over a huge area of the Sunderbans and 6 islands have been chosen for construction of tourist facilities. The total area of land that will be utilised on all these islands is approx. 1040 acres. The facilities of the project are a Catamaran, mechanised house boats, water sports, a floating tourist complex, helipad and airstrip. This is envisaged to be a "high income - low volume" tourist attraction.

Keeping the ecological sensitivity and the importance of Sunderbans as a natural world heritage site (IUCN), this is bound to have a detrimental effect on the flora and fauna.

*Environmental Justice Initiative, New Delhi 110 014
e-mail: eji@vsnl.net*



BNHS

Bird Man become Secretary General and CEO of WWF-India

Mr. Ravi Singh, who is an Executive Committee member of BNHS and a very active supporter of IBCN, recently joined the WWF-India as Secretary General and CEO. Mr. Ravi Singh, please accept our heartiest congratulations from IBCN members. We hope you will keep on supporting IBCN from Delhi. The email contact of Mr. Ravi Singh is <ravisingh@wwfindia.net>

PARTNER FACT FILE...

NEED

IBCN Partners Name : Natural Environment - Education & Development (NEED)
 [Reg.No.: 53 / Udaipur / 2002-03]
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The foundation of the organization was laid in October 1997 but it took drive in 1999 when it was registered. Presently it is a registered Non-Governmental Organization working for conservation and protection of Nature and Environment.

The name “Need” (Hindi; the nest) logo of the group represents the theme of the group and so the motto:

**PEOPLE WITH NATURE FOR
DEVELOPMENT AND CHANGE**

Aims and Objectives

In brief main aims and objectives of the group are protection and development of Indigenous knowledge; research & development works on applied aspects for the sake of betterment of environment; establishment of nature museum/laboratories/libraries in remote areas; production and formation of films and documentaries; conducting courses/training programs; organizing workshops, seminars, conferences and documentation and publication work.

The main focus of all the aims and objectives is on the conservation of nature as well as protection and development of the rich traditional knowledge.

1. Achievements

- The Organization has been recognized by ‘Compassionate Citizen’ programme supported by PETA (People for Ethical Treatment of Animals).
- The Organization had been awarded Certificate of Appreciation in 49th Wildlife Week by Department of Forest (Wildlife Division), Government of Rajasthan, Udaipur for its contribution in Wildlife Programmes.

Activities of Need

1. **Discussion Forum:** The most important activity of the group is an open discussion forum where anyone can present their views on the aspects of nature & environment and interact with nature lovers and experts. For this purpose periodical gathering on every second Saturday of the month and an hour’s daily interaction for members as well as nature lovers are arranged.
2. **Excursions and Camps:** Most liked activity is the monthly excursion on first Sunday of every month in

different areas of Udaipur region (Southern Rajasthan). Some of the important excursions were in Kumbalgarh Wildlife Sanctuary and adjoining forest areas (2-3 days camp), Gogunda & adjoining forest, Sajjangarh Wildlife Sanctuary, Jaisamand Wildlife Sanctuary, Baghdarah, Banki Medicinal Plant Garden and around Lakes of Udaipur.

3. **Waterfowl Census:** The group conducts ‘Waterfowl Census’ in winters and summers in the lakes of Udaipur. During the census, the awareness camps are also organized for local residents to protect wetlands and protect the birds of these wetlands.
4. **Wildlife Census:** Since last three years, the group members are actively participate in the ‘Wildlife Census’ conducted by Department of Forest (Wildlife Division) in the first week of June, in the protected areas and other forest areas.
5. **Wildlife Week (1st - 7th October):** In association with the Department of Forest (Wildlife Division), the group members actively organize “Wildlife Week”.
6. **Important Days’ Celebration:** Some of the important days, which are recognized as event days are actively celebrated by the group such as National Science Day (28th February), Water Day (22nd March), Earth Day (22nd April), Environment day (5th June) and National Birdwatching Day (12th November).

Some of the major activities done so far

- The group protested against “Coal Dusting of Glaciers in Pakistan” on June 5, 2000.
- The group members conducted survey to ascertain “The Most Beautiful Tree of India” on November 12, 2001.
- The most important event on the current issue took by the NEED members was “Gobar Survey” which was conducted on February 28, 2002 to quantify the stray cattle’s dung in Udaipur city and potential of energy generation from it.
- Summer Birdwatching Camp had been arranged for school children in May 2002.
- Conducted Inter-School Quiz Competition on ‘50 Years of DNA and 25 Years of IVF’ in Udaipur on February 28, 2003 sponsored by Department of Science and Technology.

YOUNG CONSERVATIONISTS...

If you find a 'baby' bird, what to do and what NOT to do



PIC: S. BALACHANDRAN

Many people ask whether a baby bird will be rejected if a person handles the baby and the parents smell human odour. This is just an "old wives" tale. Baby birds are NOT rejected by their parents if a person handles them. In fact, most birds have a very poor sense of smell.

Many fledglings are scruffy looking and look like they are unable to be on their own. They may leave the nest, scurry on the ground, etc., looking like a lost baby bird. The parents care these fledglings and keep track where they are until the fledglings can live on their own. So the baby bird you find in a bush or on grassland be a fledgling that is being taken care of by its parents.

If the baby is NOT fully feathered and has fallen from its nest, the very best thing is to put the baby back into the nest. Remember, depending on the age and species, a baby bird may need to eat every 20 minutes during daylight hours. The parents can take care of it so much better than you can, no matter how hard you try.

If the nest has blown out of a tree, you can nail or wire it back into the tree. If you can not find the nest but know the general area the nest was located, you can

take an empty margarine tub or something similar, put some dry grass or a bit of material in it, nail the new "nest" to the tree, and put the baby or eggs back into it. Then leave nest alone so the parents will come back and take care of it.

DO NOT put the baby or eggs into a new birdhouse and hang it up. If the parents built the original nest in a tree or shrubs, they are not cavity-dwellers and will never find the baby in a birdhouse.

How to Have a Backyard That Attracts Birds



PIC: ZAFAR-UJ-ISLAM

No matter where you live, you can attract birds to your backyard and even to an apartment balcony.

Difficulty Level: easy **Time Required:** Several days

Here's How:

1. Provide many different food sources for birds. Various birds eat insects, nectar, fruit, berries, nuts, and seed.
2. Provide both natural food sources as well as food in feeders.
3. Provide water. Bird baths, ponds, streams, misters, drippers as well as just pans of water work well.
4. Provide cover. Birds feel safe when they are not out in

the open. Shrubs, trees, and flowers all provide some protection and security.

5. Provide a place to raise a family. Some birds use birdhouses, others use nesting shelves, others like trees and shrubs.
6. Keep cats away. Outdoor cats kill millions of songbirds every year.

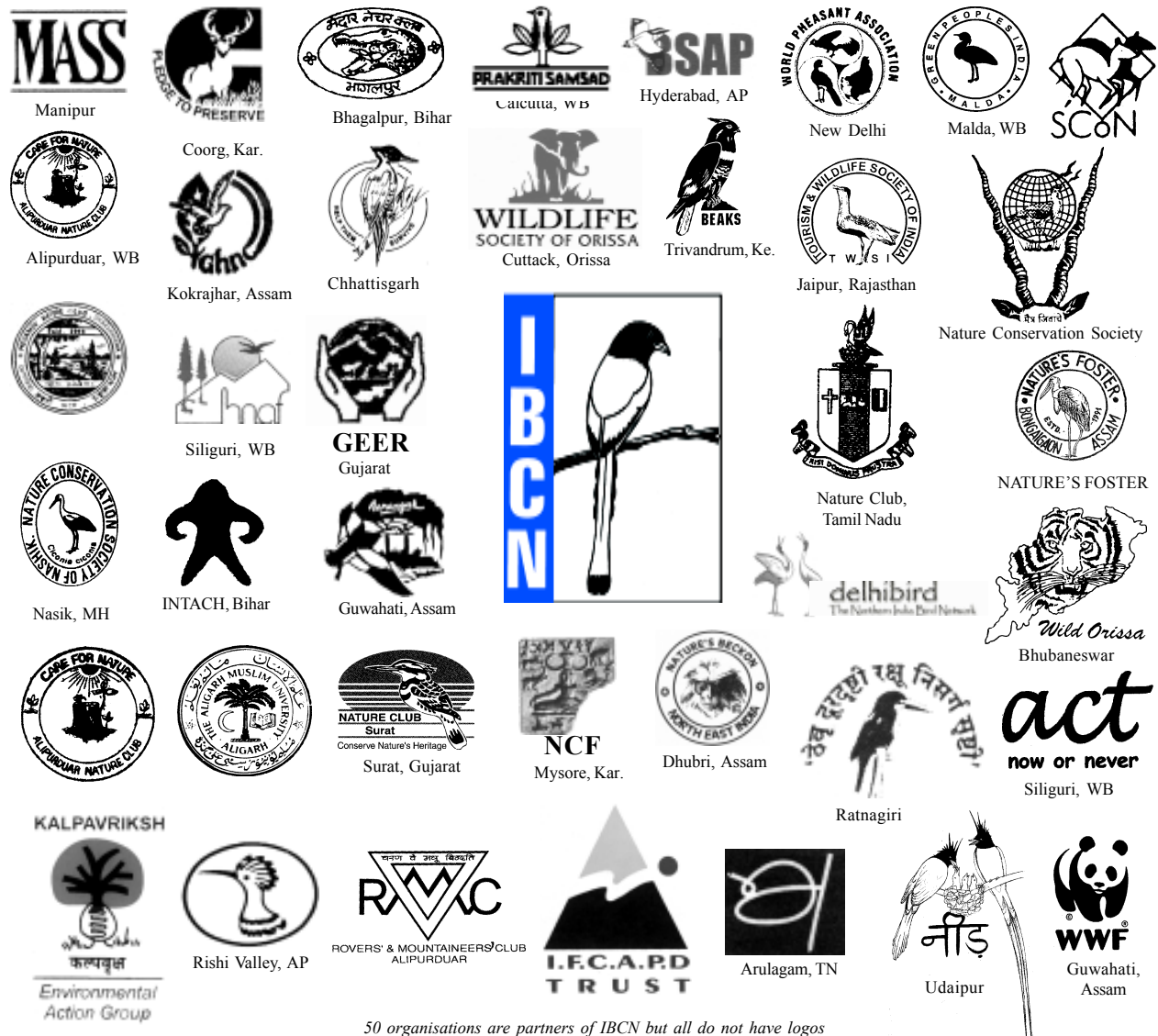
Tips:

1. Plant a variety of plants, shrubs and trees.
2. Remember weeds are useful for something or someone. Ask yourself if a bird could eat its seed or berries before yanking it up.

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IBCN ORGANISATIONAL PARTNERSHIP...



The IBA programme will produce inventories of internationally recognised sites vital for the conservation of birds. These sites will be identified using a set of four standard global criteria: (a) presence of globally threatened species (b) restricted range or endemic birds, (c) biome restricted assemblages and (d) sites having large congregations of birds. These criteria are designed by BirdLife International to select representative areas of the most important bird habitats, particularly those which are under the most severe pressure. Given that birds are good indicators of overall biological diversity, most IBAs will be important for other species as well.

What is the IBCN: It is a Network of Indian organisations and individuals who have agreed to collaborate to promote the conservation of birds in India and through them, the conservation of biological diversity as a whole. IBCN is one of the leading membership networks of India, with more than 500 individuals and 50 organizations as members. It publishes a quarterly newsletter '*Mistnet*' for its members.

IBCN Membership: Join and become important links in the IBCN. Annual membership fee is Rs. 100/- payable through Demand Draft in favour of 'Bombay Natural History Society', in case of outstation cheques add Rs. 25/-.

Kindly contact for membership form

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