

roost habitat. Grass-cutting by villagers, both legally and illegally, from the roost and its surroundings was considered to be the primary reason for the sharp drop in numbers after November in 1997 and 1998 (Table 1). Eurasian Marsh Harriers were observed roosting on floating vegetation (water hyacinth *Eichhornia crassipes*) in wetlands in the park when there was disturbance at their grassland roosts. After January numbers diminished gradually as return migration started.

Variation between years probably depended on rainfall, which determines the abundance of prey species, particularly waterfowl (which form about 25% of the prey items taken). Eurasian Marsh Harrier numbers were significantly positively correlated with waterfowl numbers (Pearson's correlation coefficient  $r = 0.8$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). There was a positive correlation with rainfall ( $r = 0.7$ ,  $p = 0.26$ ), but this was not significant, perhaps due to the small sample size ( $n = 4$  years).

The roost in the park was situated away from foraging grounds in the grassland of block G (locally called Koldehar, located south-east of the park) close to the Chiksana canal. The roost habitat was formed largely of *Vetiveria zizanioides*, a tall grass about 2 m high, with long, erect and rigid leaves, and *Desmostachya bipinnata*, a soft and easily bent grass about 1 m tall. The latter species may have acted as a barrier for mammalian predators, as the rustling sound produced by any ground predators entering these grasses could alert the harriers of danger.

During the study, Keoladeo National Park was identified as the biggest roost of Eurasian Marsh Harriers so far known in India. More than 150 Eurasian Marsh Harriers probably roost in the park when conditions are favourable. Conservation of the roost site in the grasslands of Block G is therefore very important.

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## New and significant records from Dehra Dun valley, lower Garhwal Himalayas, India

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This paper supplements information published earlier on the birds of Dehra Dun valley and the neighbouring hills (Singh 2000). The observations presented here were based on a survey of 89 days undertaken from March 2000 to May 2002 in tropical moist deciduous sal *Shorea robusta* forests (Champion and Seth 1968) below 1000 m in the Dehra Dun valley. Information on seven species newly recorded in the valley is provided, along with recent observations of two threatened and three Near Threatened species.

### NEW RECORDS FOR DEHRA DUN VALLEY

PALE-CHINNED FLYCATCHER *Cyornis poliogenys*  
A pair was observed in an opening in a mixed patch of dense sal forest at Thano (30°13'N 78°15'E) on 27 August 2001. Both sexes were observed perching together on a thick branch and descending lower to feed. The male had a pale throat, light orange breast and an ashy-blue wash on the back and head (similar to form *vernayi* found in peninsular India). In contrast the female had an ashy-brown back and head. This species has been

recorded previously in Corbett Tiger Reserve (Grewal and Sahgal 1995). Tickell's Blue Flycatcher *Cyornis tickelliae*, which is commonly observed on the southern slopes of Shiwalik hills, was not recorded from the valley during the present survey. It is rare for these two congeneric (and perhaps competing) species of flycatcher to occur together. For example, in sal forests in the Nepal terai Tickell's is absent but Pale-chinned is present. It is possible that these two species mutually replace each other, but further research is needed.

#### CRESTED GOSHAWK *Accipiter trivirgatus*

A pair was observed perching on a high branch of a medium-sized tree, beside a large water-hole, in sal forest at Jhajra (30°18'N 77°57'E) on 15 November 2000. The short nuchal crest, dark mesial streak, breast streaking and relatively large size distinguished them from other *Accipiter* species. This species's range extends to lower Garhwal in the Himalayas (Ali and Ripley 1987), but it was not previously known from the valley.

#### WHITE-RUMPED MUNIA *Lonchura striata*

A small party of five individuals of the race *acuticauda* was observed feeding on the ground in dense undergrowth in sal forest at Thano on 28 December 2001, in the company of Puff-throated Babblers *Pellorneum ruficeps*. The north-western distribution limit was previously known to be lower eastern Garhwal and Kumaon (where there are no recent records) and central Nepal (Kazmierczak 2000).

#### EURASIAN BLACKBIRD *Turdus merula*

A pair was observed in the garden of Malhan Forest Rest House at Sabhawala (30°22'N 77°47'E, 550 m), situated at the edge of dense sal forests on 21 November 2000. The male was entirely black without a grey wing-patch and the female had a brown bill instead of yellow as found in Grey-winged Blackbird *T. boulboul* which winters in Dehra Dun valley. There are no previous records of this species from the valley or adjoining hills. It is known from higher elevations (>3,000 m) in the Garhwal Himalayas, with downhill movements during winter to as low as 75 m (Ali and Ripley 1987, Grimmett *et al.* 1998).

#### BROWN FISH OWL *Ketupa zeylonensis*

An individual was observed on a big stone in a small perennial jungle stream near Karvapani (30°17'N 77°57'E) during the afternoon on 21 November 2000. On being disturbed it flew away to settle in a huge sal tree nearby. Previously, Pandey *et al.* (1994) observed this species in Rajaji National Park outside the valley. It is known from submontane Himalayas locally up to 1500 m (Ali and Ripley 1987).

#### LESSER RACKET-TAILED DRONGO *Dicrurus remifer*

Two were seen flying over tree-tops at the edge of sal forest at Thano (30°12'N 78°08'E) close to the river Song on 23 February 2001. The blunt tail with rackets was distinctive. Osmaston (1935) observed this species between Thadiar and Deota (Tons river valley) at 1,600 m in July, but did not observe it in the valley. These sites represent the western limit of the distribution of this species in the Indian subcontinent (Ali and Ripley 1987).

#### GREEN-TAILED SUNBIRD *Aethopyga nipalensis*

A pair was noted feeding on nectar of *Atharoda vasaca* flowers in an open bush-covered hillside in sal forest, close to Thano Forest Rest House (30°15'N 78°12'E) on 22 February 2001. This is the first record of this sunbird from the valley, but it was recorded by Fleming (1967) at Mussoorie, and it is known as far west as 78°E in Garhwal (Grimmett *et al.* 1998, Kazmierczak 2000).

### OTHER SIGNIFICANT RECORDS

#### FERRUGINOUS POCHARD *Aythya nyroca*

(Near Threatened: BirdLife International 2000)

A pair was noted in shallow water in the marshes near the southern islands of Asan Barrage, feeding with Gadwall *Anas strepera*, Common Pochard *Aythya ferina* and Tufted Duck *A. fuligula* on 13 and 23 November 2001. Osmaston (1935) recorded this species occasionally along the river Yamuna, and Singh (2000) found it to be uncommon in winter 1998-1999.

#### BLACK-BELLIED TERN *Sterna acuticauda*

(Near Threatened: BirdLife International 2000)

A single bird was recorded circling over the Asan Barrage and the river Yamuna on 19 January 2002. This species was previously recorded in Dehra Dun valley by Osmaston (1935), Gandhi and Singh (1995) and Singh (2000).

#### PALLAS'S FISH EAGLE *Haliaeetus leucogaster*

(Vulnerable: BirdLife International 2000)

A pair was regularly observed from August 2000 to April 2001 and from August 2001 to January 2002 at the edge of sal forests at the confluence of Yamuna and Asan rivers at Asan Barrage (30°26'N 77°40'E). They were observed feeding and preying on small and medium-sized fish, Spot-billed Duck *Anas poecilorhyncha* and Ruddy Shelduck *Tadorna ferruginea*. Courtship and mating accompanied by loud braying noises given by both sexes was observed on a *Bombax ceiba* tree in the evening of 13 November 2001. This nest site has been used by the eagles since at least 1984. This species was recorded as a breeding resident by Osmaston (1935) on the rivers Ganga and Yamuna and at Kanarao; by Gandhi and Singh (1995) and Singh (2000) at Asan Barrage, and by Pandey *et al.* (1994) and Singh (2000) in adjoining Rajaji National Park.

#### WHITE-RUMPED VULTURE *Gyps benghalensis*

(Critically Endangered: BirdLife International 2000)

This species was observed in a large flock only once during the present survey. A total of 27 individuals, counted twice in half an hour, were noted circling over a carcass at Jhajra forest range (30°18'N 77°57'E, 650 m) on 19 March 2001 along with a single Egyptian Vulture *Neophron percnopterus*. Congregations of up to 200 were observed by George (1957) and more than 90 were observed by Singh (2000) in the early 1990s. The population of this formerly common vulture has declined in the valley recently.

#### PAINTED STORK *Mycteria leucocephala*

(Near-threatened: BirdLife International 2000)

Small to large parties of these storks were observed on

several dates in 2001 at Asan Barrage (two on 7 March, 34 on 18 April, and 36 on 18 June). Previously, a maximum count of 30 was recorded at this site (Tak *et al.* 1997).

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# Rediscovery of Black-faced Spoonbill *Platalea minor* in the Philippines

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The Black-faced Spoonbill *Platalea minor* winters in Tsengwen estuary in Taiwan, Inner Deep Bay in Hong Kong, Red River delta in Vietnam, Kyushu and Okinawa in Japan, Cheju Island in South Korea, Yancheng and Hainan in mainland China, and there are also recent records from Macao, Thailand, and possibly Brunei. Its known breeding sites are on the western coast of the Korean Peninsula in North and South Korea, Liaoning province in mainland China, and possibly the Tumen estuary, Russia (BirdLife International 2001).

It nests with other waterbirds on cliffs on small rocky islands. Outside the breeding season it is found on tidal flats, mudflats, mangroves, fishponds, marshes, flooded ricefields, estuaries, swamps, lakes, and other brackish wetlands (Severinghaus *et al.* 1995, Collar *et al.* 1999, Kennedy *et al.* 2000, BirdLife International 2001). The species is globally threatened, being listed as Endangered, with an estimated total world population of 700-1,000 individuals (Severinghaus *et al.* 1995, Rose and Scott 1997, BirdLife International 2001, S. Chan pers. comm. 2001).

## HISTORICAL RECORDS IN THE PHILIPPINES

In the Philippines this species was considered a rare winter visitor to Luzon, with flocks not exceeding six individuals, and there being some doubt as to whether these really referred to Black-faced Spoonbill or Eurasian Spoonbill *P. leucorodia* (Dickinson *et al.* 1991). The last reported sighting was in October 1914 on the

tidal area of Dagupan in Pangasinan province, Luzon, where an immature female was collected (McGregor 1916; Dickinson *et al.* 1991). Previous reports include: six individuals, possibly this species, reportedly shot in January 1905 near Manila (McGregor 1906); a head collected in November 1907 in Dagupan, Pangasinan province (McGregor 1909-1910); and two individuals seen in November 1910 in Baluarte, Obando, Bulacan province, where according to local fishermen the species was well known but uncommon (McGregor 1916).

## RECENT SIGHTINGS

We obtained posters produced by the Wild Bird Federation Taiwan and distributed by the Wild Bird Society of Japan as part of the public awareness programme initiated by the Asian partners of BirdLife International on the conservation of this species. These were distributed to the different areas of Batanes Protected Landscape and Seascape in the second week of November 2001. Two weeks later, alerted by the information on the posters, local residents realised that three birds present since late October 2001 matched the description of the spoonbills, and informed the Protected Area Superintendent of the sighting of spoonbills (see photo in *OBC Bull* 35: 53).

The three individuals were observed on a small (<1 ha) freshwater pond, 50 m from the shore near the town of Savidug (20°18'N 121° 53'E) on Sabtang Island, from the last week of October until the second week of December 2001. They were observed feeding together