

7. RECORD OF *CICONIA CICONIA ASIATICUS* FROM INDIAN TERRITORY

We had procured a pair of white stork *Ciconia ciconia* from a bird dealer at Calcutta in April 1969. Another pair was procured from Kankaria Zoo, Ahmedabad in June 1976, while the third pair was brought from the same zoo in 1985. However, between 1976 and 1985 one stork died, but its record is not traceable. In December 1985, we realized that out of the total of five storks, one did not mix with the others and kept aloof. On closer observation we realised that the stork in question had red skin surrounding its eyes and lores. This character was in sharp contrast with other storks in the zoo, which had black skin in the same area. The bill colour was also bright red and bare gular skin was red and not black. This strange stork appeared slightly larger than other storks. The white storks with black skin around the eyes were certainly the nominate race *Ciconia ciconia ciconia* (Ali and Ripley 1983). However, we failed to find a description of the strange stork and hence its race/subspecies.

In February 1996, during the Sálím Ali Centenary Seminar, one of us (BMP) showed a picture of the stork to Dr. Malcolm Coulter (USA) and Dr. Elena Mukhina (Uzbekistan), who said that it could be the Central Asian White Stork *Ciconia ciconia asiaticus*. This subspecies is described by Hancock *et al.* (1992), who report that it is larger than *ciconia* and its bill is redder, upcurved, longer and heavier. However, they have not mentioned the colour of the skin around

eyes. *C. c. asiaticus* is found in Turkistan, USSR, Uzbek SSR, Tadzik SSR, Kirgiz SSR, and Southern Kazakh SSR from Amu Dar'ya to ISSYK Kull and Lake Balkhash and extreme Western Sinkiang, China (Kashgar). Hancock *et al.* (1992) also state that this subspecies migrates through Afghanistan and winters mainly in the northern parts of the Indian subcontinent, mixing with birds of the nominate race from the Middle East. Ali and Ripley (1983) have shown breeding distribution of *C. c. asiaticus*, but they doubt the validity of the subspecies.

Hancock *et al.* (1992) reported that this subspecies winters mainly in the northern parts of the Indian subcontinent. We believe that the stork in our zoo must have been supplied by a Calcutta dealer. No Indian zoo has received white storks from any Russian Zoo and hence it is quite likely that *C. c. asiaticus* was trapped from the Gangetic plains of West Bengal or Bihar. After 1986 we have carefully watched all the white storks in the field for red skin around the eyes but have failed to trace even a single specimen, especially in Gujarat.

October 11, 1996

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8. OCCURRENCE OF THE WHITEWINGED BLACK TERN *CHLIDONIAS LEUCOPTERUS* IN RAJASTHAN

On April 9, 1996 we were watching a mixed flock of terns at Phulera lake, Jaipur and

became immediately aware of four jet black terns. As we viewed them for more than fifteen minutes

before they flew away, there was no doubt in our minds that they were indeed whitewinged black terns *Chlidonias leucopterus* in full breeding plumage.

The next day, on April 10, only one individual was present and we were able to shoot a picture of this bird despite the great distance.

So far there have been only three records of the bird from the western side of India, on the basis of which this tern is considered to be rare

in this part of the country (Ali and Ripley, 1981, HANDBOOK OF THE BIRDS OF INDIA AND PAKISTAN Vol. III). This is the first record of the species in Rajasthan.

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9. AERIAL DISPLAY OF RUFOUS TURTLE DOVE *STREPTOPELIA ORIENTALIS* *AGRICOLA* TICKELL NEAR NAMBOL BAZAR, MANIPUR

On 20th May, 1996 at about 0530 hrs, I saw a pair of rufous turtle doves, *Streptopelia orientalis agricola* on a dry twig of a big tree enjoying the morning sun. Suddenly, one of them (probably a male) left the perch for an aerial show covering about one minute in three successive phases (or models). The first-phase flight was short, horizontal with gentle wing flapping and unsplayed tail. This was followed by a swift and forceful steep flight with rapid wing clapping, producing loud sounds, but tail slightly fanned out. In the third or final phase, it flew in gliding and coasting in a semicircle with both wing and

tail fully fanned out. Only during this phase of flight could the white of the terminal fringe of tail be seen. On completing such a round flight, it alighted about two feet away from the other bird at first, but on the same branch, then gradually moved in mincing paces. No display call or aggressive attitude was exhibited by either bird. However, this activity may be a courtship display.

July 10, 1996 Kh. SHAMUNGOU SINGH
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10. AN INDIAN PITTA (*PITTA BRACHYURA*) TRAPPED IN A STANDARD SHERMAN LIVE TRAP

I studied the effect of rainforest fragmentation on small mammals by the removal method which consisted of 50 foldable Sherman live traps along five 5 x 10 m grids in a disturbed forest patch of the Indira Gandhi Wildlife Sanctuary, Tamil Nadu. The traps were baited with peanut butter and were designed for large bodied rats like the house rat (*Rattus rattus*), but are sensitive even for animals weighing as little as 8g. In the morning of 28th March 1995, while I approached a particular trap station, the box was shaking. The trapped creature made a few harsh sounds which confused me. To my surprise, there was

an Indian pitta (*Pitta brachyura*) inside. After identifying the bird it was released at the same spot. I thought this record of particular interest because a) the bird stands higher than the mouth of the trap and b) the bird had either come for the bait of peanut butter or to feed on the insects or ants which had been lured into the trap by the bait. The Indian pitta primarily feeds and forages on insects, grubs and worms on the ground (Ali & Ripley, 1987 COMPACT HANDBOOK OF BIRDS OF INDIA AND PAKISTAN). Hence, it is likely that the bird was attracted to the insects or bugs rather than to the peanut butter, although this needs to be



Sangha, Harkirat Singh and Vardhan, Harsh. 1998. "Occurrence of the whitewinged black tern *Chlidonias leucopterus* in Rajasthan." *The journal of the Bombay Natural History Society* 95, 113–114.

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