



April-Jun 2016

# Whispering Wings®

NEWSLETTER OF THE CHANDIGARH BIRD CLUB

Issue 04

## FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

This is the hottest quarter of Indian summer when temperatures cross 40°C in our region. This year is no exception, rather it has been warmer and due to monsoon failure, even drier. Yet, our friends, the summer breeders are here in their usual droves. The minstrels of summers - Common Hawk Cuckoos and Eurasian Hawk Cuckoos have broken into their melodious songs in chorus with ubiquitous Koels. Blue tailed bee eaters with their smaller cousins, the green bee eaters flit from perches returning holding a dragon fly in their beaks, trilling with joy. Lapwings in their fury make ariel attacks if you accidentally step in to a clearing where their brood is. Lesser Whistling Ducks fly by whistling their delight. Despite the heat and dust, there is procreation - Nature renews itself!

The birds in urban areas face a heat stress and suffer from lack of water. The beautiful initiative to involve people in keeping water pots in the open areas and garden as well as refilling them, is commendable. It needs to be taken up at a larger scale with the involvement of school students, home makers and retirees.

There is a requirement to enrol schools as institutional members so that our club can hold bird walks for school students under its aegis. The idea of booklet of 100 common birds of tri-city should also be brought to culmination at the earliest to assist us in disseminating information about birds.

Collection of information about avian habitats, habitat destruction and protection of habitat in our region is need of the hour. Club members need to take a proactive stance in favour of habitat protection through increasing public awareness, dialogue, mass media and any other peaceful means.

The time is also ripe to start planning a Bird Festival on lines of UP government bird festival at Chambal. It would be a major step towards a greater recognition of our club beyond tri-city limits adding greater force to our dialogue with UT and State Governments towards avian diversity protection - the core stone of club's objective.

May you always hear the bird song!

Mitinderpal Singh Sekhon  
Editor

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## SUMMARY OF THE ACTIVITIES OF CLUB

**B**esides the monthly meetings of the club the fieldtrips to Chakki ka Mor in April and to Dagshai in May and Chail in June were well attended by the members.

After a dry winter, spring had come to Chakki ka Mor in April with Coral trees in full bloom. All the usual birding points along the road were visited though we took a slight detour towards Bayalla village. To everyone's delight we were able to see fourteen species on a single Coral tree!

There was hectic activity all around with courtships in full swing-males displaying and looking hopeful and the females disdainful!

In May, the fieldtrip was to Dagshai which is 50 kms from Chandigarh at a height of 1,735 mts. Fifty three species were spotted in five hours of morning birding. Though we did not see European Goldfinches, the woodpeckers and nuthatches gave great photo-ops. The Bird of the day, however, was the Himalayan Wood Owl.

Prabhat Bhatti, member from Nangal initiated the idea of putting down bowls of water for birds as the heat and forest fires had depleted the natural sources. terra cotta bowls were put at various places along the road from Chakki ka Mor to Bhojnagar. Local people, including school children, in the vicinity were sensitised into replenishing the water everyday.

Amandeep Singh and Geeta Goswami helped in taking children from some local schools to watch birds at Sukhna Lake.

About half a dozen birders of the Club, namely Mitinderpal Singh Sekhon, Narbir Kahlon, Rima Dhillon, Navjit Singh, Mahesh Garg, Aparajita Lobana, Saiyam Nagar and Amandeep Singh went for birding in the hills, visiting Chail.

Inspite of the unmitigating heat, the members have been out birding almost everyday in various parts of the tricity-Painted Storks and Comb Ducks in Motemajra, Barred Buttonquails in Chhapar Chiri, Red-billed Blue Mappies in Sukhna Wildlife Sanctuary, nesting Hornbills in Smriti Van.

It is inspiring to see such enthusiasm!

*Rima Dhillon*

***Secretary, Chandigarh Bird Club***

## “TO BUY OR NOT TO BUY, THAT IS THE QUESTION”

## A GUIDE TO BUYING A TRIPOD

**T**he most difficult thing other than buying the best camera gear you need is a Tripod. Generally tripod is considered as a simple tool to make your camera steady but lot of variables have to be considered while buying a tripod. Length of the tripod both while opened or folded, weight of the tripod, weight bearing capacity, budget and above all, for what kind of photography you need it.

First of all we should know why we need a tripod.

- To click sharp images
- To handle heavy camera gear
- To click on slower shutter speed

- To click images on Low ISO
- To shoot Macro/Portraits/Star trails/Panoramas/self portraits etc.

But lot of us avoid using tripod because

- They are bulky
- They take time to open
- They put some extra burden on budget
- And at times are inconvenient

I hope by now you understand the need of a tripod in your kit and want to buy the best that suits you, so here is a quick guide

**Max Weight of your gear:** Take in consideration what is maximum weight you need to carry (Camera + lens + flash). Always buy a tripod which can bear weight which is 1.5 times your maximum available kit. Also keep in mind the lenses you are intending to buy and may add flash on it.

**Height of Tripod:** The height of tripod while opened to max should always match your height.

**Weight of Tripod:** If you are a travel photographer then weight is main component while selecting a tripod as we all know the limitations of maximum weight that can be carried while flying. Moreover it is easy to carry one while hiking. For this, consider tripods made of Carbon as they are much lighter and steady.

**Stability:** Tripod you select should also be stable as a strong wind can make your gear fall while on shoot. Check the thickness of last leg opening, the width between three legs should be maximum.

**Sections of tripod leg:** Check in to how many sections the tripod leg is divided. It generally has 3-5 sections but select the equipment with 3 sections as it takes less time to open and fold will give you a good thickness to last section opened

**Tripod Head:** Now comes the most essential part. It gives you full control over camera movement and also holding the equipment. Always make sure that head you buy can support at least the same amount of weight your tripod legs can. Pan-Tilt Head, Ball-Head and Gimbal Head are varieties of heads available.

**Budget:** Last thing to take into account is budget you have for buying a tripod. Remember a tripod for bird photography is going to cost you a little more than normal.

Now that you are familiar with all the aspects to be considered while buying a tripod, I think you will buy the most suitable.

Happy Clicking!

*Mahesh Garg*

## RED-BILLED BLUE MAGPIE

**R**ed-billed blue Magpies (*Urocissa erythroryncha*) have a wide range of habitat which extends from Western Himalayas to Eastern China and through Myanmar to Vietnam within an altitudinal range of 1200m to 2200m msl. Five subspecies are known to exist within this range.

Being quite used to seeing them in the hills-Kasauli, Shimla Morni etc-I was quite surprised to

sight a pair in a jamun tree in my house in sector 24, Chandigarh in 2014. Then again the pair was seen in the same spot in April 2015.

In mid April 2016, Alpana, a member of Chandigarh Bird Club, photographed one bird at the nallah running through the Children's Traffic Park in Sector-23 Chandigarh, which is across the road from my house. For the past two years I have had an idea that they may be breeding in the park, but so far I had had no luck in verifying whether they were nesting here or not.

Though they have been seen at lower altitudes during winter I could find no information on whether they breed as low as 350m which is the elevation of Chandigarh.



**Red-billed Blue Magpie,**

*Picture by Rima Dhillon*

30/4/2016

This morning I decided to pay a long overdue visit to the traffic park so I crossed the road at 6.15 am and entered from the small pedestrian park where I usually start birding as the nallah here is always flowing and birds can be seen either drinking water or hawking insects while perching in the canopy above the water.

After wandering around my usual circuit I decided to take a look in the area bordering the old rose nursery on the western extreme as several peacocks and flycatchers can be seen here most of the time. I was not disappointed. Two magnificent peacocks were displaying each trying to out do the other in its dance moves. Shivering and quivering as they held up their display feathers to be critically examined by the peahens.

Mesmerised as I was and trying to get a video clip of the performance, a flash of blue from the corner of my eye drew my attention away from the drama being played out.

To my delight a Red-billed Blue Magpie, which shall herewith be referred to as The Magpie, had alighted on the branch just ahead of me. Unmindful of being watched and photographed it sat there preening before taking off for the banyan trees to my left and the exit gate of the park. It had disappeared

from my view!

I waited around for what seemed like ages but was in fact about 15 minutes, filling my time with watching the antics of the peacocks, jungle babblers and a single female Purple Sunbird collecting material to line its nest. Just as I was tired of cooling my heels and thinking that The Magpie may have taken a different route back to the area it had initially appeared from, it flew right by my nose to disappear into the little forest area beyond. This time I wasn't about to let it go untraced so I dived in right after it. I was a little wary as this part of the Park is usually very slushy and the undergrowth is thick. However, due to lack of rain over the winter it was all dry. I began to tiptoe along-an exercise in futility as the forest floor was thick with fallen dry leaves. Every time I breathed, the leaves seem to give a deafening CRUNCH!

Thinking better of a stealthy approach and discovering some large boulders randomly strewn in a clearing, I sat down to wait it out for The Magpie.

I could hear the continuous sifting of leaves and knew it was the ever present gregarious family of Jungle Babblers, but among them I was happy to discover another species that had visited my kitchen garden, just once, last summer—Orange-headed Thrush. A pair of them was hopping around with the Jungle Babblers, taking advantage of their labour in overturning the leaves and exposing the delicacies hiding beneath!

As I sat there swatting mosquitoes, must come prepared with odomos next time, The Magpie was back bringing along its mate. What a sight and well worth the quart or so of blood I may have donated to the moszies!

Over the next half hour I photographed and video taped the pair from every angle, in every pose. The female fawned around the male, dropping its wings and flapping them coyly as she made soft twittering sounds.

It wasn't long before she flew up into an acacia tree and I realised it had headed for a loose collection of twigs in the fork about 20 feet up. The nest! At last I had proof of its breeding in my neighbourhood.

I could see two small bald heads with large beaks craning upwards sensing the presence of their parent and hopefully some food. It sat at the nest fussing over the chicks, fidgeting and fixing the twigs of the nest then flying back to join its mate-wasn't feeding time after all.

I sat motionless watching the antics of the magpies as they preened and chirped all the time keeping a watchful eye on the nest. When I was certain their attention was engaged and they would not see me I silently moved away. Not wanting to frequent the place and alert predators to the presence of the nest I kept away for the next fortnight.

17/5/16

I decided to go have a look at the Magpie nest and to ascertain the chicks were growing well. It was already late in the morning, Close to 9.30 am. I couldn't see the magpies nor was there any movement in the nest as far as I could tell. I hung around for about half an hour but except for the constant activity of the jungle babblers and the solitary Black Drongo hawking insects, there was no other movement-even the peacocks were silent.

Deep down in my gut I have the horrible feeling the nesting was not a success. Maybe predators got at the magpie fledglings. I read somewhere that magpies can even turn on their own eggs and fledglings sometimes.

I hope, though, there will be another clutch soon and this time I get to see some little ones and have our very own flock of Magpies in Chandigarh.

*Rima Dhillon*

## THE BEST WEAVERS IN THE AVIAN WORLD-BAYA WEAVERS

**B**aya, *Son-Chiri* as it is called in Hindi lives up to it's name, *HOW ... Let's see..*

These are sparrow sized (15 cm) birds and in their non-breeding plumage, both males and females resemble female house sparrows. They have a stout conical bill and a short square tail. Non-breeding males and females look alike, dark brown streaked fulvous buff above, plain (unstreaked) whitish fulvous below, eyebrows long buffy, bill is horn colored and no mask.



These dull looking birds have a most interesting breeding season. At this time, the males put on a brighter costume, *(to be a would be groom on needs to dress up u see)* Breeding males have a bright yellow crown, dark brown mask, blackish brown bill, upper parts are dark brown streaked with yellow, with a yellow breast and cream buff below. Hence the name *son chiri*. But what is with the female!!! Well she chooses to be her natural self.



Baya Weavers prefer to be in a big crowd and be very social hence flock together, to eat and live in colonies, fly in close formations, often performing complicated maneuvers. They depend on wild grasses, crops like paddy for both their food and nesting material. They breed during monsoons. Nesting in colonies of fifteen to may be fifty sometimes (as has been counted by me in the presence of Dr Bhupesh and Col Cheema) close to the source of food, nesting material and water.

Nests of the Baya are an architectural feat and very aesthetically woven. Males are the busiest during this time, *(NOTE: only during this time till they can attract a female)* they are seen tearing strands from palm leaves or reeds or collecting thin strands of grass. The nest hangs from a palm frond or branch and looks like an upside down flask. The general features are a central nesting area with a long tube that leads to a side entrance. The nests are made entirely out of strips of grass which the birds collect by cutting a notch in a tall grass, then stripping off a 30-60cm length. The birds then use their strong beaks to weave and knot the strips of grass. A newly-made nest is green with fresh grass and turns brown as the grass dries. A bird may make up to 500 trips to complete a nest. The nests last well through the 3-month breeding season. We have often seen dry nests hanging long after they have been abandoned. Proving the fact that they can last through hail and storm.

Bayas have another extraordinary aspect to their breeding behavior; in the season the males begin building nests. The nests are partially built when the males display to passing females by flapping their



wings and calling in sharp and shrill tones while hanging to their nests (to this a local village friend had a beautiful thing to say in punjabi chidiyan ne raunk laga rakhi hai). The females inspect and choose a nest before signaling their approval to a male. Once a male and a female are paired, the male goes on to complete the nest including the entrance tunnel, males are solely in charge of building the nests, though their female partners may join in by giving the finishing touches or in some cases finish a nest too. Males are polygynous, mating with 2 to 3 females, one after another. For this habit of polygyny, the males build many partial nests and start attracting females. A male finishes the nest to its completion only after finding a mate. After mating the female lays about 2 to 4 white eggs and incubates them. The females are solely responsible for incubating and bringing up the brood. After mating with a female the male goes on to woo more females with its other nests.

***May you always hear the inner silence!***

*Geeta Goswami*

## THE INDIAN PITTA STORY: CIRCA 2016

As the temperatures in Chandigarh started climbing and as the orioles and baya weavers started making their comeback to Chandigarh for the summers, the longing for Pitta once again began to come to surface. "The summers are early this time, the Pitta should be coming in anytime now!" said Narbir around early May. Considering the chosen destination for Pitta over the years has been the Chandimandir military station, I took it upon myself to 'go and see'. In the evening of 8 May, I made the first trip to Chandimandir and went around everywhere possible to hear it's characteristic call which I remembered very vividly from last year. After about an hour, I came back empty handed. Another hopeful attempt with Munish on 12 May, this time in the morning. We saw and heard a lot of other birds but no trace of Pitta. This fella sure knew his dates well and would keep his calendar, we surmised.

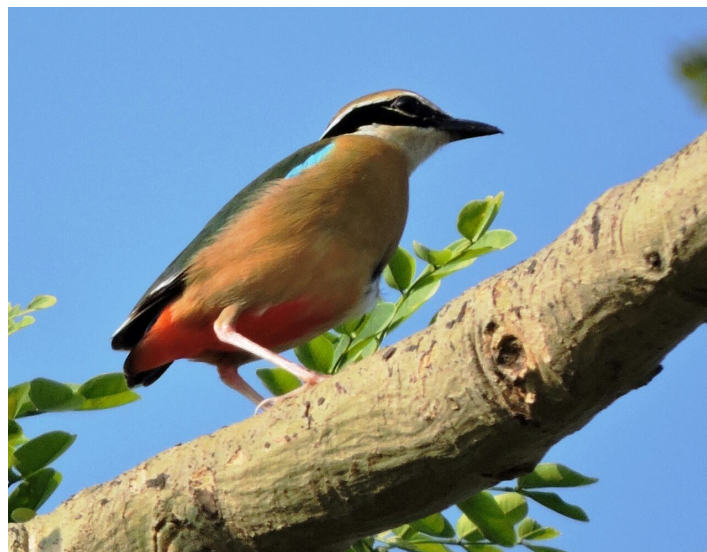


Four days later, on 16 May 16, the Pitta took everyone by surprise when it reached Chandigarh and chose to land at the Chandigarh Bird Club 'headquarters'. As if it knew that Rima's house was where he must give his arrival report first! Rima's "BREAKING NEWS" message that Pitta has come to her

house, sent the entire Chandigarh Bird Club aflutter with joy and expectancy. Rima hoped that the little birdie would stay there so that the hassle of entering the heavily guarded Chandimandir for its sighting would be avoided. Before anyone could actually visit Rima's house, the little fella had moved on, after refuelling for what would be final leg of its long journey to its chosen breeding ground.

Soon after, on 19 May, Geeta Goswami and I again went after it in Chandimandir. We checked Pine Marg area, where she had seen it nesting a couple of years ago, the Officers Mess area, where I had been seeing it last year, the Infantry Messes area, which I thought Miti Sahab had been suggesting and the golf course area but to no avail. Finally we went behind the Golf course on the dirt track. Ravi Arora and I had seen a pair last year near the back gate of the golf course. As we moved further ahead from golf course, and parked and listened - there it was! A very clear and unmistakable song of the Pitta filled the air and we were drawn towards the call, negotiating thick thorny bushes and undulating ground. We came really close to the source of the sound but could not move any further as the forest won't allow us. We decided to content ourselves with the melody of the call and wait another few days when more birds would have come and their visibility would increase.

My work kept me really occupied after that and it was only on 31 May, when I took Vineet, a



bird from Mumbai, who was staying with me at Command Hospital on his way to Shimla, for a possible Pitta sighting to Chandimandir. We drove straight behind the golf course, where we had heard the call but with no result. As we made a slow descent on the road between the helipad and the water tank, we heard the call from real close. We stopped the car and dashed towards the call (leaving the doors wide open, as we realized later). There it was! Perched sideways at nearly eye level on a Kikar tree with the rays of the early morning sun bringing out its best colours. Either we were too mesmerized by its sighting and delayed clicking it on that spot or it got startled by our arrival (I am not sure), it took off and landed on a tree high up about 30 metre away. And stayed there, till we could take all the pictures that we wanted and see it to our heart's content. With our hearts brimming with joy, we started back. I was getting late for OT. It was my surgery day. However, I found my foot on reflex press the brake pedal when the call of another Pitta reached my ears near Pine Marg area. And there was another Pitta flitting from one tree to another in short flights. Pitta took precedence over surgery.

The same evening, I posted all the possible images on the WhatsApp group. Immediately, Rajive Das called and fixed up for Pitta hunt the following morning. Once again, we got to hear and see Pitta on many locations in Chandimandir but the sighting near Pine Marg was absolutely fantastic. It was perched on a small bare branch of a big tree, showing all its colours to the fullest. Rajive's appetite for Pitta was now fully whetted and the glee on his face said it all. He was quick to post his best pics on the group and Preet Cheema (group admin) wasted no time in changing the group DP to Rajive's Pitta.

Inevitably, the seekers of Pitta for the next morning had swelled in number. A group of five,

Jasbir, Munish, Saiyam, Geeta ma'am and me, followed the route that had proved very successful on the previous two days, but, save for a couple of distant calls, the bird proved elusive, much to the disappointment of the birders. Mitipal Sekhon Sahab and I chose to look for it in the evening the next day. After finding no luck around the golf course area, we drove towards and into Pine Marg area and soon heard it's call from the prickly forest behind the Pine Marg houses. We made a dash towards the forest, following the call and sighted it sitting majestically on a low tree. Before the cameras could be spun into action, a cow walked through the bushes making a big racket and scared the Pitta to a tree deeper into the forest. We bashed on, unmindful of the numerous pricks from the thorny bushes, and gave ourselves ample opportunity to sight it and capture it in the fading light of the sun.

After Miti Sahab posted his pics on the group, Chandimandir visit was on the itinerary of almost each and every one of the Chandigarh birders. Even Palash Majumdar came out of hibernation to fix a Pitta chase in Chandimandir.

A couple of days later, the magic of Chandimandir being the sole preserve of Pitta was beaten, probably for the first time, when Narbir Kahlon reported sighting and nesting of this sought after bird in some other location in Shivalik Hills through pictures and a video clip.

Considering the Shivalik hills location remains undisclosed and out of reach for most other Pitta seekers, I remain committed to my solemn task of taking everyone of these seekers to the gated and guarded Chandimandir for their Pitta Darshan, anytime of their asking!

*Bhupesh Kumar Goyal*

## **BAYA WEAVER: THE STORY OF THE HOME MAKER**

**I** will start this with a disclaimer - home builder and home maker are not the same, where in the home builder constructs the home - brick by brick or in case of our story - thread by thread - the home maker makes this place surrounded by these bricks or streaks of vegetation a home. Today I will talk about one such home maker...

Me and my fascination of Baya Weavers is not new. I remember being a kid looking up at these beautiful nest in trees - sometimes carrying one home to make it a piece of my decoration - the one that was fallen down was story of many boys and girls who have lived our times in 80s. Then there were period of times that I used to wonder why the nests were abandoned most of the times I saw them. Passing through that thought were times when I blamed myself that I bought that nest home, or touched it or God only knows what all crossed my mind where I blamed the empty nests because of my mis-conduct. Alas - it was only over the observation of these beautiful birds over so many years that I understood the entire process of a few drooping branches that become inhabited by these beautiful birds and then they construct their homes and raise the next generation and move on with life - moving to the next generation.



When I say beautiful - I mean every letter of the word flows from the bottom of my heart. Without rubbing in to my lady readers - the word beauty is more apt to males in the bird world than to a lady bird,

hence to start where I left - the BEAUTIFUL males carry Yellow crowns and yellow breasts, with dark black masks over their faces.



The breeding starts with the arrival of monsoons. The males who attain the breeding conditions by showing off the beautiful yellow at approximate one and half year of age starts looking for places to build the nest. Though the nests have sometimes been found at isolated places - the birds as a rule build nests as a colony with 15 to 20 in a group. There are some very strict rules governing the colony - the nests are generally on the eastern side of tree - perhaps saving them from the punishing winds of South-



West monsoons. If the colony is established on a tree or trees of lower height - then they generally are built where droop over water and not so easy to approach and of course the low colonies are preferred on thorny trees. The colony also has to be near a source of building material and wet mud. If the colony is established over tall trees then the thorny tree clause is struck off with the tall palm trees preferred.

After the colony location is shortlisted and approved by the house of majority - the males are a flurry of activity. They choose the branch over where the new house is to be built and off they go to get that first thin strip of a reed to make the knot. The first knot takes time and I saw many a males struggling, taking multiple attempts. After this the male makes multiple trips to get one string at a time and weave it to start making the nest. With the nest just about 1/4th done - the male starts advertising the property -



after all if he sells the house right - he gets the home maker. The females behave - not unlike our species - minus the make up of course. They will stay at a distance and in a group observing and will come near

the colony from time to time in a group. Whenever a female or a group of them approach the colony, it is a flurry of activity - the males shouting at the top of the voice to attract a mate - making full show of the plumage hanging from their (own) nests. Many a times the nest are not approved - and the female will come and tear it from the base - letting it to fall to ground. And this is not necessary for the nest that are under construction - this may be the treatment given to nest that almost complete or even fully complete. There is no choice and the male starts all over again. This game continues till the nest is complete and a lady bird approves of it.



The male does the nest that are pendulous - with a retort shape and long vertical tube that leads to the nesting chamber. The nests have are either weighed down or lined with dung or mud. It is believed to give it more stability by adding weight at the right places. Once the nest is chosen by the female the inners are done almost exclusively by the female - lining it perhaps with mud, and soft material and converting this nest to a home.

Recently - BHNS acknowledging that the weavers range has dwindled over the years in India and initiated a count across the country to count and report the weaver birds so that a study could be done to mitigate the factors pushing these beautiful birds to the edge. I am writing this article to acknowledge these tiny birds who because of human greed and intervention are being pushed to a stage where they are becoming more and more rare to see and admire. It would be unfortunate for the next generation not to know the magic of building homes in nature. Each thread - stripped and converted to this nest is 20 to 60 cm long. The male takes almost 18 days to build the nest making upto 500 trips to complete one...



If you cannot appreciate it - you have no heart whatsoever...

*S S Cheema*

## HOW I STARTED BIRDING

**M**y eye sight is weak. I need to wear spectacles for driving. Yet when I spot a Shikra or Black Winged Kite from a car moving at 80 m/hr on a busy highway, people are amazed at my keen sense of sight.

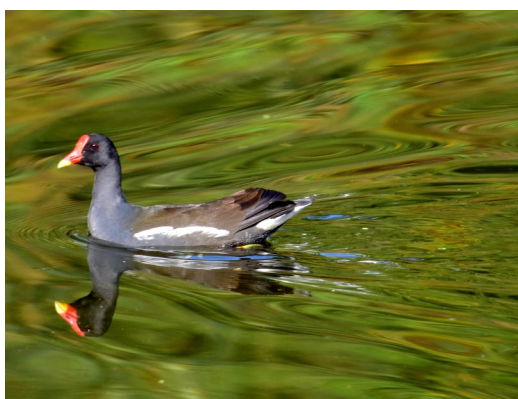
Truth is, it's not about what you see, and it's about what you're looking for.

I got into bird watching (the winged ones for the sake of clarity) around 5 years ago when I bought a Long Zoom Fixed Lens Camera. I belong to the category of Photographers who were made by the growing economy & developing digital camera industry. We had decent paying jobs at a relatively young age and Digital Cameras are a onetime investment. You don't have to worry about the film & developing /printing costs.



I was told by my mentors that I needed to pick a line of interest for photography. Options were: Street Photography, Architecture, Portraits, Abstract Art, and Nature etc. I chose nature without blinking an eye. Now within nature, Flowers were too passive, Wildlife was too expensive & rare so it was Birds for me. Somewhere on the back of my mind, my love for freedom & blue sky was also leaning towards birds.

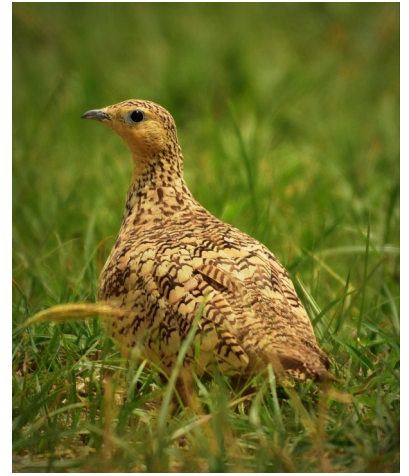
The good thing about birding (or bad... it depends) is that it can be done mainly during sunrise or sunset. The sun sets very quickly in cities so sunrise was only option. So whether I liked or not, I had to get up early in the morning to go birding.



There is a thing about Observation, if you are interested, there is so much special about, even the most ordinary of the things. I used to think that the only birds in my congested not so green neighborhood of Mohali are Crows, Pigeons & Mynahs (Gataars).

Within 8-10 months I was able to spot Brown-headed barbets, Purple Sunbirds, Lapwings and Parrots from my balcony.

I started visiting neighborhood parks & gardens. Then moved on to Sukhna Lake, Perch Dam, Siswan & Jainti Devi Dams etc. Jungles & Waterbodies proved to be good places for finding new birds.



Learning was happening albeit very slow. Sometimes I used to feel very frustrated at being unable to find more birds or click better photos.

Then one fine winter morning I met Sarbjeet Kaur Ma'am at Sukhna Lake Bird Observation Post. She is a walking knowledge bank of birds & their habits. She told me about the Facebook page of CBC.

I joined the fb page of CBC & started posting photos there.

Slowly I started attending the monthly meetings & made some very good friends there.

Joining the Chandigarh Bird Club was a landmark decision that has taken me through 2 Annual Bird Races, multiple Field Trips & One Outstation Trip exclusively for Birding.

It's been over 2.5 years being a part of Chandigarh Bird Club & I'm enjoying the learning from senior birders as well as discovering new species with my peers.

Recent discoveries & clicks being Barred Button Quail, Red Avadavat, Indian Eagle Owl, Indian Roller, Chestnut Bellied Sand-grouse, Asian Open-bill Stork, Indian Thick knee & Tricolored Munia.

Fun part is Birding is a lot by chance as well. I was able to spot & photograph a few rare birds that the stalwarts have been looking forward to for a long time now. Knowing that I've been one of the privileged few boosts one's confidence as well.

I have changed 3 cameras in 6 years, starting with Nikon Coolpix P90 then upgrading to Fujifilm HS50 EXR. Finally settling down with a Nikon D7200 & 200-500mm lens.

Now it's like a vital ritual for me. I start feeling empty & itchy if I don't go birding for a week or 10 days.

Being in nature has taught me that there is no good or bad, ugly or beautiful.

It's all about being....existing.

*Abhey Bhardwaj*

## CHAKKI KA MOR FIELD TRIP

The field trip to Chakki ka Mor was held on 10th April 2016. Following members were present:

1. Rima Dhillon
2. Vikas Sharma
3. Sarabjit Randhawa
4. B.K. Goyal
5. Saroj Gulati
6. Alpana NP Singh
7. Gitanjali Kanwar
8. Vivek
9. Sukhpreet

## BIRD LIST

1. House Sparrow
2. Russet Sparrow
3. Great Tit
4. Chesnut Shouldered Petronia
5. Jungle Myna
6. Common Myna
7. Chestnut Tailed Starling
8. Spot Winged Starling
9. Blue Whistling Thrush
10. Tailorbird
11. Purple Sunbird
12. Plain Prinia
13. Grey-breasted Prinia
14. Ashy Prinia
15. Red Vented Bulbul
16. Himalayan Bulbul
17. Black Bulbul
18. Rusty Cheeked Babbler
19. Grey Hooded Babbler
20. Straited Laughing Trush
21. Kalij Pheasant M/F
22. Pied Bushchat M/F
23. Indian Golden Oriole
24. Veridators Flycatcher
25. Asian Paradise Flycatcher
26. Asian Brown Fly Catcher
27. White Breasted Kingfisher
28. Crested Kingfisher
29. Common Kingfisher
30. Ashy Drongo
31. Spangled Drongo
32. White Browed Fantail
33. Magpie Robin
34. Plum Headed Parakeet
35. Crested Bunting
36. Common Rosefinch
37. Great Barbet
38. Blue Throated Barbet
39. Oriental Whiteeye
40. Rofous Treepie
41. Grey Treepie
42. Red Billed Blue Magpie
43. Crimpson Sunbird
44. Red Junglefowl
45. Common Kestrel
46. Shikra
47. Spotted Dove
48. Grey Headed Woodpecker M/F
49. Yellow Crowned Woodpecker / Brown Fronted Woodpecker M/F

## DAGSHAI FIELD TRIP

The field trip to Dagshai was held on 8th May 2016. Following members were present:

1. Rima Dhillon
2. Sarabjit Randhawa
3. Aparajita Lobana
4. Jasbir Randhawa
5. Mahesh Garg
6. Gitanjali Kanwar
7. Ravi Arora
8. Saiyam Nagar

## BIRD LIST

1. Black-chinned Babbler
2. Sulphur-bellied Warbler
3. Rose-ringed Parakeet
4. Black-throated Tit
5. Grey-hooded Warbler
6. Streaked Laughingthrush
7. Black Drongo
8. Himalayan Bulbul
9. Red-vented Bulbul
10. Nuthatch ?
11. Barn Swallow
12. Byth's Leaf Warbler
13. Grey Treepie
14. Brown-fronted Woodpecker
15. Indian Paradise-flycatcher
16. Russet Sparrow
17. Straited Prinia
18. Grey-headed Woodpecker
19. Cinnareous Tit
20. Long-tailed Minivet
21. Khalij Pheasant
22. Verditer Flycatcher
23. Black-headed Jay ?
24. Fulvous-breasted Woodpecker
25. Black Bulbul
26. Grey Buschat
27. House Sparrow
28. Red-rumped swallow
29. Large-billed Crow
30. Commom Myna
31. Great Barbet
32. Blue-whistling Thrush
33. Shikra
34. Black-lored Tit
35. Speckled Piculet
36. Plum-headed Parakeet
37. Grey-headed Canary Flycatcher
38. Bar-tailed Treecreeper?
39. Bonelli's Eagle ?
40. Alexandrine Parakeet
41. Blue-capped Rock Thrush
42. Oriental White-eye
43. Common Hoopoe
44. Himalayan Wood Owl
45. Asian Barred Owlet
46. Asian Brown Flycatcher
47. Pied Bushchat
48. Scaly-bellied Woodpecker
49. Spotted Owlet
50. Crested-serpent Eagle?
51. Himalayan Griffon Vulture?
52. Ashy Drongo
53. Red Junglefowl
54. Chestnut tailed nuthatch
55. Black headed Jay
56. Bar tailed treecreeper
57. Himalayan Buzzard
58. Honey Buzzard
59. Himalayan vulture

## CHAIL FIELD TRIP

The field trip to Chail was held from 10th to 12th June 2016. Following members were present:

1. Rima Dhillon
2. Mitinderpal Singh Sekhon
3. Aparajita Lobana
4. Amandeep Singh
5. Mahesh Garg
6. Narbir Kahlon
7. Navjit Singh
8. Saiyam Nagar



**The Birders**

Weather — Partly overcast throughout

Height — 7400 ft above sea level

Habitat — mixed pine and oak forests with thick thorny undergrowth.

The birding trip to Chail was divided into two sections over two days.

On Day 1 — birds were recorded as we drove from Kandaghat to Chail via Sadhupul and around the house

On Day 2 — birds were recorded in a circuitous route from Chail down to Junga (5200ft above sea level) and then back up via Sadhupul.



**The Cottage**



**The Cattle Pond**

Area around the Cottage in Chail is thickly forested with a village and some fields about a kilometre away. Terraced fields here are cultivated with vegetables like Potato and Tomato along with buckwheat and Amaranth (Cholai). There is a cattle pond 100 metres from the house—a favourite watering hole for Leopard, Barking Deer, Kaleej and various other birds besides the local cows.

Ashy Drongos and Black-headed Jays were a common sight around the house during the day while a flock of Kaleej and Grey headed woodpeckers kept us company during morning tea.

At nightfall, Mountain Scops Owl called loudly from the forest close to the house. Though

Navjit, Amandeep and I braved the dark and sinister look of the tall pines to go have a look and try to locate it, we came away disappointed as the light of the torch was too weak.

Around 4.30 am we decided to try our luck with the Nightjars which normally can be seen flying around the compound of the house all the while calling loudly. Sure enough Grey Nightjar started calling loudly and we only saw it as it flew past us into the trees-gone in a flash! However call of Collared Owlet was also heard in the distance.

Over the next two mornings we made repeated trips to the cattle pond but there were no Leopards or Barking Deer sipping at the water!



A walk down to the village resulted in the sighting of Black Francolin, Yellow-breasted Greenfinches, House and Russet Sparrows, Large-billed Crows, Red-billed Blue Magpies, Grey Treepies, Black, Red-vented and Himalayan Bulbuls.

### **Chail-Junga-Sadhupul-Chail**

The original plan was to visit the Pheasant breeding centre in Chail, but due to a misunderstanding of directions we found ourselves heading out of Chail and towards Junga. It was too late to turn back and waste birding time so it was decided that we would just carry on and make a round trip back to Chail.

The most heard call was that of Black Francolins. They seemed to be calling from every direction around us! A few were even sighted. Red-billed blue Magpies, Grey Treepies, Kaleej, Oriental Turtle-doves, Jungle Myna were all seen along the way.

I would say the hotspot of the area was Saingan Nullah. A bridge over the Nullah, a temple, a couple of tea shops and a handful of mountain homes among terraced fields – sums up Saingan Nullah. It is a scenic spot between Junga and Sadhupul. There are two small streams flowing in the area. From the bridge we saw a Spotted Forktail busy foraging among the rocks in the water. A pair of Rusty-cheeked Scimitar Babblers provided great photo-ops. A swift flyby of a medium sized raptor left us wondering if it might be an Oriental Hobby but there was no conformation as we did not spot it again. Grey Treepies. RB Blue Magpies, Oriental Turtle Doves. Spotted Doves, Asian Koel, Plumbeous Water Redstart, Oriental White-eye all made their presence count.

Being overcast was a bit of a bummer as bird activity wasn't what one would expect of such a setting but overall the elusive Spotted Forktail gave uninhibited photo shots. We arrived back in Chail in time for a late breakfast.

Two days in the sylvan surroundings of Chail.

Great!

*Rima Dhillon*

## BIRD LIST

1. Kaleej Pheasant
2. Black Francolin
3. Indian Peafowl
4. Black-winged Kite
5. Himalayan Vulture
6. Shikra
7. Booted eagle
8. Oriental Honey Buzzard
9. Common Pigeon
10. Wedge-tailed Pigeon
11. Spotted Dove
12. Oriental Turtle Dove
13. Eurasian Collared Dove
14. Rose-ringed Parakeet
15. Slaty-headed Parakeet
16. Plum-headed Parakeet
17. Asian Koel
18. Common Hoopoe
19. Great Barbet
20. Grey-capped pygmy Woodpecker
- 21. Brown-fronted Woodpecker**
22. Himalayan Woodpecker
23. Gray-headed Woodpecker
24. Long-tailed Minivet
25. Black Drongo
26. Ashy Drongo
27. Indian Golden Oriole
28. Indian Paradise flycatcher
29. Eurasian Jay
- 30. Black-headed Jay**
31. Red-billed Blue Magpie
32. Grey Treepie
33. Large-billed Crow
- 34. Spotted Nutcracker**
35. Cinerous Tit
36. Green-backed Tit
37. Black-throated Tit
- 38. Striated Prinia**
39. Grey-breasted Prinia
- 40. Common Tailorbird**
- 41. Barn Swallows**
42. Red-rumped Swallows
43. Grey-hooded Warbler
44. Rusty-cheeked Scimitar-babbler
45. Streaked Laughingthrush
46. White-throated Laughingthrush
47. Oriental White-eye
48. Chestnut-bellied Nuthatch
49. Bar-tailed treecreeper
50. Blue Whistlingthrush
- 51. Grey-winged Blackbird**
52. Oriental Magpie Robin
53. Spotted Forktail
54. Common Stonechat
55. Blue-capped Rock Thrush
56. Asian brown Flycatcher
57. Ultramarine Flycatcher
58. Verditer's Flycatcher
59. Grey-headed Canary Flycatcher
60. Crimson Sunbird
61. Purple Sunbird
62. House Sparrow
63. Russet Sparrow
64. Yellow-breasted Greenfinch
65. Common Myna
- 66. Jungle Myna**
67. Brahminy Myna
68. House Sparrow
69. Russet Sparrow
70. Yellow-breasted Greenfinch



**Jungle Myna**



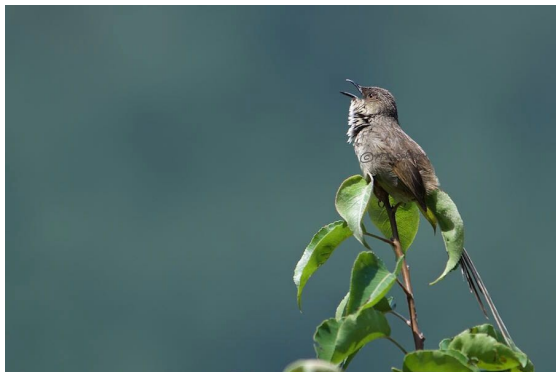
**Grey-winged Blackbird**



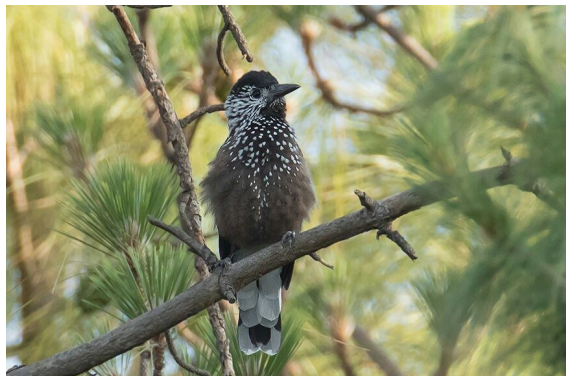
**Black-headed Jay**



**Brown-fronted Woodpecker**



**Striated Prinia**



**Spotted Nuthacker**



**Rusty-cheeked Scimitar Barbler**



**Barn Swallow**

*Whispering Wings®*

CHANDIGARH BIRD CLUB



Newsletter of the  
Chandigarh Bird Club

Incepted in 2008, the Chandigarh Bird Club has been dedicated to its goal of protecting the environment. The Club owes its existence to those few dedicated and expert members, who started this club in the Chandigarh Boat Club, namely, Navjit Singh, Narbir Kahlon, Vikramjeet Singh, Mrs. Rima Dhillon, Mrs. Sarbjeet and Mrs. Geeta Goswami. The Basic objective of the Chandigarh Bird Club continues to be to:

- Bring people specially the younger generation closer to nature through birding and help them to enjoy the outdoors while making it a fun activity
- To make people and government more sensitive towards the environment to create a dynamic database for analysis in order to focus conservation efforts.
- To create a forum for birders to share information and discuss issues related to this activity

- President, CBC — M. S. Sekhon
- Vice-President, CBC — Narbir Kahlon
- Secretary, CBC — Rima Dhillon
- Joint Secretary, CBC — Sarbjeet Kaur

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