
Whispering Wings®

Newsletter of the Chandigarh Bird Club®



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July - September 2021

From the Editor's Desk

Autumn is here and the Black Redstart arrived in my garden on 16th of October. The Wire-tails also fly around twittering, like Keats said:

“Hedge-crickets sing; and now with treble soft
The red-breast whistles from a garden croft;
And gathering swallows twitter in the skies.”

Yes, a different set of birds has started arriving in ISCR; the winter migrants! The Salim Ali Waterfowl Census, the Migrant Watch and intense birding activity will be the order of days to come.

With the pandemic slowing down and restrictions easing, much birding activity is envisaged. Good rains and normal monsoon has not only left the waterbodies brimming but also the land much greener. Early snows due to La Nina have accelerated the migration. I wish all birders an excellent bird watching season. May our vigour add much to birding and the bird habitat data...

May you always hear the bird song!

Mitinderpal Singh Sekhon



Yellow-footed Green Pigeon, at Mullanpur

By Rima Dhillon

Secretary's Report

We are now in the second year of Covid protocols with restrictions of travel to many parts of the country still in place.

Much of the birding activities in July, August and September were still centred around local areas. Field-trips were conducted in the vicinity of Chandigarh, at Chhatbir, Jawaharpur/Derabassi, Chhaparchiri and Mirzapur Dam.

The first physical meeting of the club, since covid restrictions of April 2020, was held in August 2021 followed by the second one in September. Both meetings were well attended by members.

The club plans to participate in the World Wildlife Week in October and to conduct our annual Salim Ali Waterfowl Census at Sukhna Lake and wetlands around Chandigarh, in the month of November.

Here's hoping for an improvement in the situation, enabling the club members to follow where the birds lead.

May there always be birdsong around us.

Happy Birding!

Rima Dhillon



Indian Spot-billed Duck, at Mullanpur

By Rima Dhillon

A Son's take on a Birder Father

My father (Brig. B K Goyal) is a doctor in the Indian Army. He's a gynaecological oncologist, which is Greek & Latin for a specific kind of cancer surgeon. He also happens to be an avid birder. For those of you that might not be aware, this is a new sub-species of homo sapiens typically found occurring in the oddest of poses under shady trees deep in a forest (usually infested with elephants, snakes, and your friendly neighbourhood jungle cats), hidden behind a massive lens that can cost as much as a small car, trying to photograph an elusive little bird nestled quietly (and minding its own business, mind you) in the branches of said tree. When the sun goes down, birders don't retire to their beds like the rest of us, they go 'owling' deeper into the forest with their night-vision goggles to catch a pretty pic of the old barn owl out on a jaunt to hunt a pesky rodent for the family meal. Interestingly, birders often find themselves at odds with an adjacent but equally fascinating sub-species of homo sapiens known as 'bird-watchers', who seek not beautiful shots of these magnificent feathered creatures, but just want to watch them up close in their natural habitats (and so naturally take offence to a rather noisy set of birders with their constant clicking & shifting, disturbing the jungle's peace). Anyhow, there is no doubt that this rather peculiar activity delivers incredible and rare visuals of wildlife for the rest of us to enjoy (see below for yourself), and so I can scarcely complain about it.

What I can complain about is the device my dad was using to process these images. It was right out of Jurassic Park, and the reason it was thrown out of the Park was that even the dinosaurs refused to use it. The asteroid that ended their race didn't seem to want to touch it either and it my father might have found it buried somewhere deep in the earth forsaken by everyone else.

The kind man that he is, not to mention a true-blue '60s born Indian, he decided to make do with it rather than buy a new one. It was made by this company called 'Lenovo' that I had to google to check if it even existed anymore (thankfully, it did). When I first saw it, I thought it was just for show (the Army after all doesn't believe in the internet, and they do love memorabilia), but then I saw him *use* it for his birding pics. That nearly burst a rather critical blood vessel in my head, and I stormed out of the room to order a MacBook Air on Amazon. His protests, when he

found out, fell on deaf ears, and the device arrived in due course. What was interesting (and I've finally arrived at the point I want to make) was the look on his face when he opened the box to reveal a slick shiny silver weightless thing of beauty that also happened to be a laptop computer. As he opened it for the very first time and heard the delightful sound that characterises the Mac, I knew that the battle was won. He had forged an emotional connection with his new device. Over time the connection deepened (e.g., the proud expression in his eyes when his colleagues first saw it on his office table) and there was no turning back. He would be a lifetime user.

Sidhant Goyal



**Clockwise from top-left: Collared falconet, Himalayan Monal,
Common Green Magpie, Black-hooded Oriole.**

By Bhupesh K Goyal

Exciting sighting of Crested Treeswift (Hemiprocne coronata) from Panchkula Haryana



On 10th September evening Geeta Goswami, Gagan Mittal and I were looking for Rufous-tailed Scrub Robin reported from the same area i.e. Birhaggar in Panchkula but unfortunately we could not sight it and moved up a bit on the road. I was sitting in the backseat of our car when I spotted a few Red-rumped Swallows along with this Crested Treeswift sitting on an electric wire. I jumped out excitedly and identified it as female Crested Treeswift. It was sitting calmly, preening itself. We watched and photographed it to our heart's content before moving ahead. There is an earlier record of Crested Treeswift from Kalesar National Park, Kalesar, District Yamunanagar, Haryana, but has never been reported from the Tricity area. It was indeed an exciting find!

Chetna Sharma

Yellow-rumped Honey guide - the story of a bird

Well, Honeyguides are interesting birds and there are a number of them. Ten to be precise in the Genus *Indicator*. Eight of them are found in Africa and two in Asia. Out of these two - one is found in India. I was chasing the one in India, the Yellow-rumped Honeyguide. I will get on to it after telling this story to start with. The story goes that I wanted to see this bird (like all other birds of the world I must add) and set my mind to it. Now every time I visited the Himalayas, I was on a constant lookout - I was waiting for an encounter in Sikkim, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland and of course on my last visit to Uttarakhand. Well, to be fair I was also looking out for it in our visit to Borneo, the other Honeyguide of Asia - Malaysian Honeyguide. Well, being on a lookout and to actually see the bird is like the sip and the lip - both close but it will be when it will be.



The hunting party — our bird-guide on the left

My visits to Sikkim, Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh and even Borneo were a washout and this happened over a period of more than 5 years. Then came the last birding trip to Uttarakhand, a trip to Chopta, tucked between the two COVID lockdowns, that still had the name of this bird as a target species along with a dozen others I must say. Our Bird-guide was absolutely certain that we will see the bird and in hearts of hearts, I was not so sure. The past failures were weighing heavy on my

mind to say the least. Well, the day arrived and we walked upstream from the road the first day at Chopta and that was where we were to see the bird for sure, or so our Bird-guide has said - like a 100% sure. Well, we waited, scanned the area for any signs at all for the birds - but for the huge Beehives humming with bees in the far distance on a ledge - there was nothing. Well, there were other birds and pretty ones - but this was not to be. We waited and scanned the nearby areas for over an hour. Since we were to reach our destination that was still a few hours away we had no choice but to cut the chase and after a small Maggie Lunch, we moved on. The disappointment was writ large on my face. A few hours down the lane we stopped again with a Cliff in far distance and the Bird-guide telling us that we ***might*** be lucky here as the bird is seen at this place also sometimes. Missing the bird where it was surely to be seen and now at a place where it is sighted sometimes is really not very hopeful. Well, we stopped at the stream and all our group started looking out for



**Oh what a sight it was — especially when it has eluded you for 5 years
plus some change ;-)**

some beautiful birds around the stream. I asked our guide if we can walk along the road to the place near the Beehives that was about half a km away and since rest did not respond enthusiastically - we both, the Bird-guide and me, moved on. As luck would have it, just about 200 m ahead - there was a flutter in a tree nearby and both the Bird-guide and me shouted simultaneously - HoneyGuide. I was shaking with excitement and moving my feet barely a few inches at a time to ensure the bird does not fly away. The bird was still not clearly visible even though we were hearing it and catching the glimpses of it in that tree. I got one clear shot and the bird decided to be more confident than me. It perched on to a branch an arms length away and was not at all afraid. My heart was jumping with joy - I called out to the rest of the team. The bird did not mind my shout at all - they all came - and the bird was there still singing in front of all of us and what a day we had.



The bird that refused to be afraid — leading me to the Beehive?

The Scientific Name of the bird is *Indicator xanthonotus*. The first part of the name, *Indicator*, and it is exactly what it sounds - to Indicate as in English. And the second part *xanthonotus* can be broken into two parts - *xanthous* - that means yellow, and *-nōtos* that means backed. This basically gets down to Indicator bird that has a yellow back. And now you can correlate with the common name - the Yellow-rumped Honeyguide. The story of the bird is an interesting one and it goes something like this... this bird is known for leading mammals and humans to the bee hives, enabling the stronger mammal to break open the hive/nest and benefit from honey, whilst the honeyguide eats the grubs, bees and the wax. The local (African) superstition demands that some of the honey is left for the honeyguide, otherwise next time it will lead the searcher towards a hidden snake or leopard. Well - search the net and you will find such videos doing rounds but most of them are not proven or verified - all the same the folklore lives on...



The Yellow rump being clearly displayed.

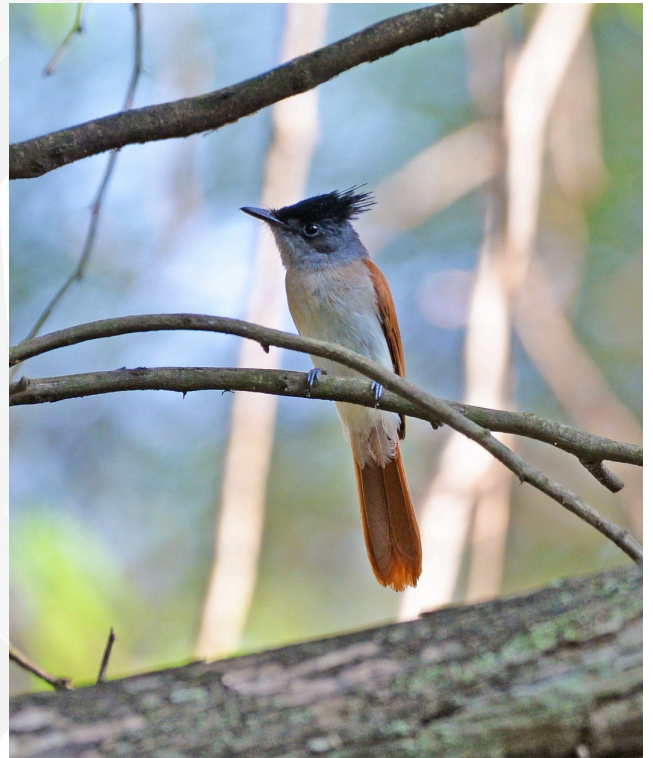
This is the reason why birding is my passion - every bird has a story and every story has a bird 😎

Simerpreet Singh Cheema



Blue-throated Barber

By Rick Toor



Indian Paradise Flycatcher

By Munish Jauhar



Lammergeier
By Rick Toor



White Stork
By Sarbjit Randhawa



Eurasian Hoopoe
By Lalit Mohan Bansal



Tufted Duck
By Lalit Mohan Bansal

Accepted in 2008, the Chandigarh Bird Club dedicated itself to its goal of protecting the environment.

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Newsletter of the Chandigarh
Bird Club



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, Vikramjit Singh, Mrs Rima Dhillon, Mrs Sarbjeet Kaur, and Mrs Geeta Goswami.

The fundamental objectives of Chandigarh Bird Club continue to be to:

1. Bring people, especially the younger generation closer to nature, through birding and help them to enjoy the outdoors while making out a fun activity.
2. To make individuals and government more sensitive towards the environment to create a dynamic database for analysis to focus on conservation efforts.
3. To create a forum for birders to share information and discuss issues related to this activity.

Editors:-

Mitinderpal Singh Sekhon

Amandeep Singh Channa

- **President - Mitinderpal Singh Sekhon**
- **Vice President - Narbir Singh Kahlon**
- **Secretary - Rima Dhillon**
- **Joint Secretary - Sarbjeet Kaur**
- **Treasurer - Mahesh Garg**