

BIRDS OF TALRA WILDLIFE SANCTUARY IN LOWER WESTERN HIMALAYA, H.P., WITH NOTES ON THEIR STATUS AND ALTITUDINAL MOVEMENTS

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Abstract

The paper deals with the birds of Talra Wildlife Sanctuary situated in lower western Himalaya of Himachal Pradesh. Sixty-one species of birds belonging to 19 families were recorded. Out of these 32 species were resident birds confined to Himalayan ecosystem. Some of the birds were noticed as extending their altitudinal distribution range to higher elevations. Mixed hunting parties and pure feeding flocks of birds have been discussed along with their abundance in the Sanctuary area.

Keywords

Status, inventory, Talra Wildlife Sanctuary, birds, abundance, altitudinal movements

Introduction

In the complex folded mountain chain like Himalaya the altitudinal variations, topographical and climatic conditions have greatly influenced the biotic diversity and its distribution, which directly or indirectly affects the life of birds inhabiting the various altitudinal belts or 'life zones' (Ali, 1949). This causes variations in the distribution pattern of birds in various regions of Himalaya.

To investigate this, a study of the avifauna of different districts and wildlife sanctuaries of Himachal Pradesh which forms a part of western Himalayan ecosystem, was undertaken during 1990-1993. The avifauna of Mandi and Chamba Districts, Kangra Valley, Naina Devi Wildlife Sanctuary, Siwalik Himalaya and Solan District has already been worked out by Mahabal and Mukherjee (1991), Mahabal (1992), Mahabal and Sharma (1992; 1993), Mahabal (1996) and, Sharma and Mahabal (1997) respectively. The present account deals with the status and abundance of birds occurring in the Talra Wildlife Sanctuary Shimla District of Himachal Pradesh.

Study area and Methods

Talra Wildlife Sanctuary, falls partly in Chopal and partly in Jubbal Tehsils of Shimla District, Himachal Pradesh, India (Map 1). The area of the sanctuary is 40.49 sq.km. and its latitudinal range is 30°57' to 31°03'N and longitudinal range is 77°43' to 77°48' E. It is about 92 km. from Shimla and the nearest town Jubbal is about 35 kms. Entry in the Sanctuary from Shimla is via Jubbal and Chhachpur. There are no jeepable roads inside the Sanctuary. Altitude varies from 1500 to 3324 m. The mean average temperature ranges between -7°C and 24°C with a mean annual rainfall of 875 mm. The area remains covered with snow during November / December to March.

The general topography is of high and steep mountains with Lower Western Himalayan Temperate Forest and West Himalayan Upper Mixed Coniferous Forest. Vegetation comprises mainly Pine (*Pinus* sp.) and Oak (*Quercus* sp.) at lower elevations between 1500 and 2500 m. Mixed Coniferous Forest is mainly of Deodar (*Cedrus deodara*), Himalayan Silver Fir (*Abies pindrow*), Broad-leaf Maple (*Acer* sp.), Spruce (*Picea smithiana*), mixed with Dwarf Rhododendron (*Rhododendron arboreum*) at higher elevations above 2500 metres.

A preliminary survey of avifauna of the sanctuary and adjacent forests was undertaken during the post-monsoon season only during 20 September to 2 October, 1992. Observations on the birds were carried out with the help of 8 x 50 (zoom) binoculars. The identification of birds and their status, altitudinal range are based on Ali (1949) and Ali & Ripley (1983a;b). The birds sighted were categorised as resident (R), resident birds of Himalayan ecosystem (HE) showing winter-summer vertical movements, summer visitor (SV) for breeding purpose during March-September and birds showing seasonal altitudinal movements (AM). The birds were also categorised (as follows) based on their abundance

(+) - Rare or seen occasionally;
(++) - Common; and
(+++)- Abundant

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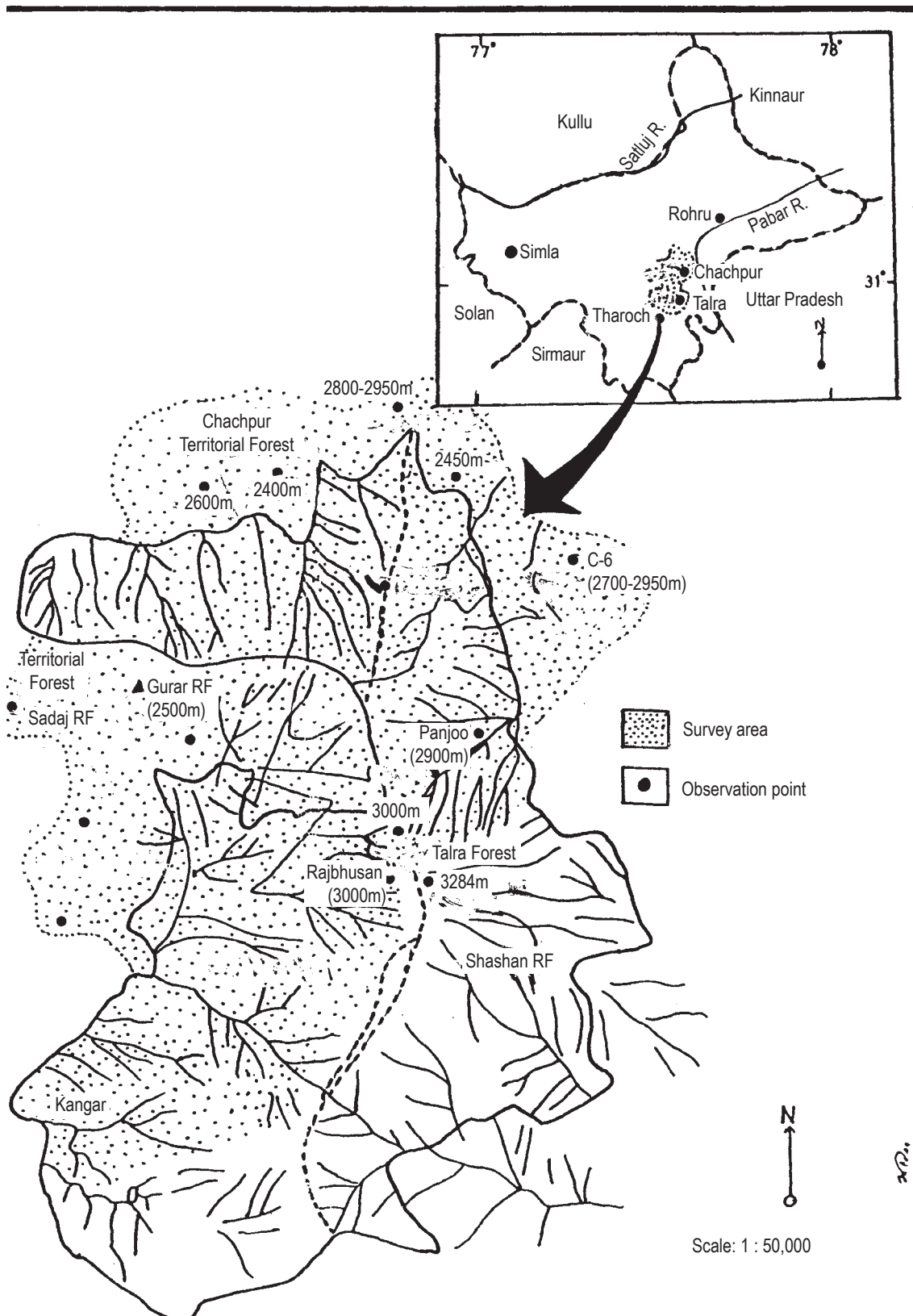


Figure 1. Map of Talra Wildlife Sanctuary (Shimla District), Himachal Pradesh

Result and Discussion

A total of 61 species of birds belonging to 19 families have been recorded during the study period. A systematic list along with their status, abundance and altitudinal range based on Ali and Ripley (1983a; b) is presented in Table 1. Of the total, 32 species (52.5%) were resident birds confined to this Himalayan ecosystem and 13 species (21.3%) were summer visitors. Ten species (16.4%) were recorded as resident birds while remaining six species (9.8%) showed seasonal altitudinal movements. Out of the total birds recorded, 31 species (50.81%) were found commonly in the sanctuary area and 28 species (45.9%) were rarely seen. Only two species of birds (3.3%) viz. Spotted Nutcracker and Grey-winged Blackbird were found to be abundant.

It was noticed that Black Drongo, Grey Tree Pie, Rusty-cheeked Scimitar Babbler and Tickell's Thrush extended their altitudinal distribution range to higher elevations as compared to the records given by Ali and Ripley (1983b).

Further, Ali and Ripley (1983b) have stated that the Grey-winged Blackbirds keep singly or in small flocks outside their breeding season. However, a number of family parties of these blackbirds were seen to have joined together, forming large feeding flocks particularly near Chhachpur Forest Rest House (2400 m). In three of such flocks (comprising 38, 53 and 56 birds), male and female ratio, including young birds was 2:3. Occasionally, Eurasian Blackbirds and Streaked Laughing Thrushes were also observed in these flocks forming mixed feeding parties. Besides this, mixed hunting parties of insectivorous bird species like Yellow-browed Leaf Warbler, Green-backed Tit, Spot-winged Tit, Rufous-vented Tit and Bar-tailed Tree Creeper were noticed in the valley of Rajbhushan area at 3000 m. Pure feeding flocks of Spotted Nutcracker, Long-tailed Minivet, Black Bulbul, White-throated Laughing Thrush and Verditer Flycatcher were also seen very commonly in Chhachpur area of the Sanctuary.

In general, Griffon-Vultures, Himalayan Slaty-headed Parakeet,

tree pies, and various species of bulbuls, laughing thrushes, flycatchers, leaf warblers and tits were noticed in fairly good numbers throughout the Sanctuary. A substantial population of Himalayan Monal and Koklass Pheasants was also recorded in the core area of the Sanctuary at higher elevations.

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Table 2. A systematic list of birds of Talra Wildlife Sanctuary showing their status, abundance and altitudinal range.

HB #	Scientific Name	Common Name	Status	Abun.	Alt. range	HB #	Scientific Name	Common Name	Status	Abun.	Alt. range
<u>Accipitridae</u>						1037	<i>Dendrocitta formosae</i>	Grey Tree Pie	HE	++	600-2100
148	<i>Accipiter nisus</i>	Eurasian Sparrow-Hawk	R/AM	+	1400-3500	1020	<i>Garrulus glandarius</i>	Eurasian Jay	HE	+	1500-2500
180	<i>Gyps fulvus</i>	Eurasian Griffon-Vulture	R	++	-	1022	<i>Garrulus lanceolatus</i>	Black-headed Jay	HE	+	1500-2500
181	<i>Gyps himalayensis</i>	Himalayan Griffon-Vulture	HE	++	800-4500	1043	<i>Nucifraga caryocatactes</i>	Spotted Nutcracker	HE	+++	2000-3300
<u>Falconidae</u>						1085	<i>Pericrocotus ethologus</i>	Long-tailed Minivet	SV	++	1200-3000
222	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	Common Kestrel	R/AM	+	700-3300	1025	<i>Urocissa flavirostris</i>	Yellow-billed Blue Magpie	HE	++	1600-3300
<u>Phasianidae</u>						<u>Pycnonotidae</u>					
307	<i>Catreus wallichii</i>	Cheer Pheasant	HE	+	1400-3500	1148	<i>Hypsipetes leucocephalus</i>	Black Bulbul	HE	++	1000-2400
290	<i>Lophophorus impejanus</i>	Himalayan Monal Pheasant	HE	++	2600-5000	1125	<i>Pycnonotus leucogenys</i>	Himalayan Bulbul	HE	++	500-2400
293	<i>Lophura leucomelanos</i>	Kalij Pheasant	HE	+	600-3600	<u>Muscicapidae</u>					
305	<i>Pucrasia macrolopha</i>	Koklass Pheasant	HE	++	1500-4000	1445	<i>Eumyias thalassina</i>	Verditer Flycatcher	SV	++	1200-2700
<u>Columbidae</u>						1423	<i>Ficedula tricolor</i>	Slaty Blue Flycatcher	AM	+	1800-3300
537	<i>Streptopelia chinensis</i>	Spotted Dove	R/AM	++	400-2400	1273	<i>Garrulax albogularis</i>	White-throated Laughing Thrush	HE	++	1800-2900
531	<i>Streptopelia orientalis</i>	Oriental Turtle Dove	R/AM	+	500-4000	1314	<i>Garrulax lineatus</i>	Streaked Laughing Thrush	HE	++	1200-3000
<u>Psittacidae</u>						1279	<i>Garrulax striatus</i>	Striated Laughing Thrush	HE	++	1200-2700
562	<i>Psittacula himalayana</i>	Himalayan Slaty-headed Parakeet	HE	++	600-2500	1396	<i>Heterophasia capistrata</i>	Western Black-capped Sibia	HE	+	1200-2700
<u>Cuculidae</u>						1407	<i>Muscicapa dauurica</i>	Brown Flycatcher	SV	++	900-1800
570	<i>Clamator jacobinus</i>	Pied Cuckoo	SV	+	~3800	1409	<i>Muscicapa ruficauda</i>	Rufous-tailed Flycatcher	SV	++	2100-3600
<u>Strigidae</u>						1729	<i>Myiophonus caeruleus</i>	Blue Whistling Thrush	HE	++	1200-3600
626a	<i>Bubo bubo</i>	Eurasian Eagle Owl	HE	+	2000-4200	1181,	<i>Pomatorhinus erythrogenys</i>	Rusty-cheeked			
<u>Capitonidae</u>						1182		Scimitar Babbler	HE	++	450-2200
777	<i>Megalaima virens</i>	Great Barbet	HE	+	1000-3000	1679	<i>Rhyacornis fuliginosus</i>	Plumbeous Redstart	HE	+	1200-3700
<u>Picidae</u>						1705	<i>Saxicola ferrea</i>	Grey Bush Chat	AM	++	1500-3300
836	<i>Dendrocopos himalayensis</i>	Himalayan Woodpecker	HE	++	1700-3300	1697	<i>Saxicola torquata</i>	Common Stone Bush Chat	SV	+	1500-3000
809	<i>Picus canus</i>	Grey-faced Woodpecker	HE	+	~2400	1750	<i>Turdus boulboul</i>	Grey-winged Blackbird	R/AM	+++	1800-2300
807	<i>Picus squamatus</i>	Scaly-bellied Woodpecker	HE	+	1000-3300	1752	<i>Turdus merula</i>	Eurasian Blackbird	R/AM	+	~2300
<u>Dicruridae</u>						1748	<i>Turdus unicolor</i>	Tickell's Thrush	SV	+	1200-2100
962	<i>Dicrurus macrocercus</i>	Black Drongo	R/AM/SV	+	~2100	<u>Sylviidae</u>					
<u>Sturnidae</u>						1594	<i>Phylloscopus chloronotus</i>	Lemon-rumped Warbler	AM	++	2200-3300
1006	<i>Acridotheres tristis</i>	Common Myna	R	+	~3000	1590	<i>Phylloscopus inornatus</i>	Yellow-browed Leaf Warbler	SV	++	2100-3600
<u>Corvidae</u>						1602	<i>Phylloscopus trochiloides</i>	Greenish Warbler	SV	+	2700-3700
1054	<i>Corvus macrorhynchos</i>	Jungle Crow	HE	+	1800-4500	1614	<i>Seicercus burkii</i>	Gold-spectacled Warbler	SV	+	1800-3000
						1616	<i>Seicercus xanthoschistos</i>	Grey-hooded Warbler	HE	++	900-2700
						<u>Cisticolidae</u>					
						1527	<i>Prinia criniger</i>	Brown Hill Prinia	HE	++	1200-2800
						<u>Paridae</u>					
						1792	<i>Parus major</i>	Great Tit	HE	++	1000-2400
						1799	<i>Parus monticolus</i>	Green-backed Tit	AM	+	1500-3000

HB #	Scientific Name	Common Name	Status	Abun.	Alt. range
1802	<i>Parus melanolophus</i>	Spot-winged Tit	AM	++	2000-3300
1804	<i>Parus rubidiventris</i>	Rufous-vented Tit	HE	++	2700-3600
1813	<i>Sylviparus modestus</i>	Yellow-browed Tit	HE	+	1200-2400
<u>Aegithalidae</u>					
1818	<i>Aegithalos concinnus</i>	Chestnut-capped Tit	R/AM	++	1400-2400
<u>Certhidae</u>					
1847	<i>Certhia himalayana</i>	Bar-tailed Tree Creeper	HE	++	1500-3600
<u>Passeridae</u>					
1873	<i>Anthus sylvanus</i>	Upland Pipit	AM	+	1200-3000
1887	<i>Motacilla alba</i>	White Wagtail	SV	+	2500-2800
1884	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>	Grey Wagtail	SV	+	1800-3900
<u>Fringillidae</u>					
1990	<i>Carduelis spinoides</i>	Yellow-breasted Greenfinch	SV	++	1800-2700

R Resident
 HE Resident Birds of Himalayan Ecosystem
 SV Summer Visitor (March - September, for breeding)
 AM Seasonal Altitudinal Movements
 (+) Rare or seen occasionally
 (++) Common
 (+++) Abundant

The scientific names and taxonomic classification is after Inskipp *et al.* (1996) and the common names after Manakadan *et al.* (1998).