

all some time. His guru is Miriam Rothschild. He sent me one of her books "Fleas, Flukes and Cuckoos" which is very good reading, even for a layman. She writes well and most amusingly.

I spent a couple of weeks in February/March with my son, near Johannesburg.

I had written previously to my friend Terry Oatley in Capetown University (he administers all the ringing activities in southern Africa — Namibia, Zimbabwe, Botswana, Mozambique, South Africa, etc.) and asked him for the addresses of ringers in the Johannesburg area. He gave me one or two, and I spent 4 days with one of them, and one day with another. This latter is keen on Raptors and uses a Balchatri Trap — invented, I assume, by an Indian? Perhaps you know all about them? Anyway, I spent a most enjoyable day with him, driving around the Bushveld, and we caught 7 Steppe Buzzards, a Dark Goshawk and a Black Shouldered Kite. The trap is made of strong mesh with about 40 nylon nooses all over it, with a heavy metal ring on the base. And two little mice running around inside. When you spot a bird on a telegraph pole you drop the trap on the side of the road opposite the bird, drive on for a bit, then turn round and watch. Down comes the bird, lands on the trap and gets its feet caught. The trap is too heavy for it to be dragged on to the road. This bloke has ringed about 1,500 raptors in his 6 years in RSA (he's an English electrician who emigrated out there) and has had several Steppe Buzzard recoveries from Russia!

COMMENTS ON SIGHTING OF SIBERIAN CRANE IN LITTLE RANN OF KUTCH AND ON RAINFALL IN CHINNAR. ASAD R. RAHMANI, Centre For Wildlife & Ornithology, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh 202 002

I read with interest the sighting of Siberian Crane in Little Rann of Kutch by Dhanraj Malik but he has not given the date of sighting which I think is very important.

In the article "Avifauna of Chinnar Wildlife Sanctuary", the authors have mentioned that the annual rainfall is only around 150 mm, which I think is very very low. This is the rainfall of Jaisalmer and Barmer districts which are considered as super arid. Is Chinnar area also super arid? I seriously doubt. I consulted a general map of rainfall in India and nowhere it is shown that any part of Kerala has so low rainfall. Will you ask the authors to check their data.

SOCIABLE LAPWING IN MADHAV NATIONAL PARK. RAJIV SAXENA & PRADEEP SHRIVASTAVA, Hanuman Nagar, Phalka Bazar, Gwalior 471 009 (MP)

Rajasthan and Gujarat during winter. There does not seem to be any record of its sighting in Madhya Pradesh. In North Madhya Pradesh, the lists of birds prepared by BNHS Biologists for Karera Bustard Sanctuary (Dihaila Jheel — Conservation Strategy: A R Rahmani) and Madhav National park (Management Plan: S K Sharma) do not include it. Similarly, no participant of Asian Waterfowl Census (Census Report — 1990: C Perennou *et al*) found it in 1990 in India.

During the Midwinter Waterfowl Census — 1991 seven *V. gregarius* were seen in Madhav National Park (77°15' — 78°30' E. and 24°50' — 25°55' N) on 12.1.1991. Earlier six birds were seen on 1.12.1990. This sighting was duly reported in the census report sent to IWRB. One major reason of its not having been recorded in Mid-Winter Waterfowl Census is that it is less addicted to jheels and marshes (Handbook: Ali & Ripley). In Madhav National Park also, it was sighted on the rocky area with some bushes. As it is regarded as endangered species (Birds to Watch: JN Collar & P Andrew) by ICBP, it should be closely looked for in Jan 1992.

BIRD SPECIES. FRED SWENGEL, Minnesota Zoo, Apple Valley, Minnesota 55124

I was surprised by the figure of 9672 bird species in Sibley & Monroe as well. The widely quoted figure of 8600 species apparently comes from an estimate that Ernst Mayr made in 1946. Two other recent checklists give estimates of 8904 (Clements, 1974, *Birds of the World: A check list*) and 9016 species (Morony, Bock, & Farrand, 1975, *Reference List of the Birds of the World*). Since only a handful of new species have been described since 1975, I assume that Sibley & Monroe have elevated a number of birds to species level that the earlier checklists considered to be subspecies. I have only used species recognized by Ali & Ripley in my checklist and didn't check Sibley & Monroe to see if they considered any of the endemic subspecies mentioned by Ali & Ripley to be valid species.

I am glad to hear that the various conservation organizations in South India are keeping in close contact. I would be most interested in receiving information on the current status of the Nilgiris Tahr in the Palnis and nearby areas for inclusion in the next edition of my studbook if possible. Anything from a short note to a full fledged article would be very welcome.

Announcement

**IV WORLD CONFERENCE ON
BIRDS OF PREY AND OWLS
Berlin, Germany, 10-17 May 1992**

Please address all inquiries to the
World Working Group on Birds of Prey (WWGWP)