

Public participation in bird ringing training workshop organized by the BNHS at Singhgad Valley, Pune

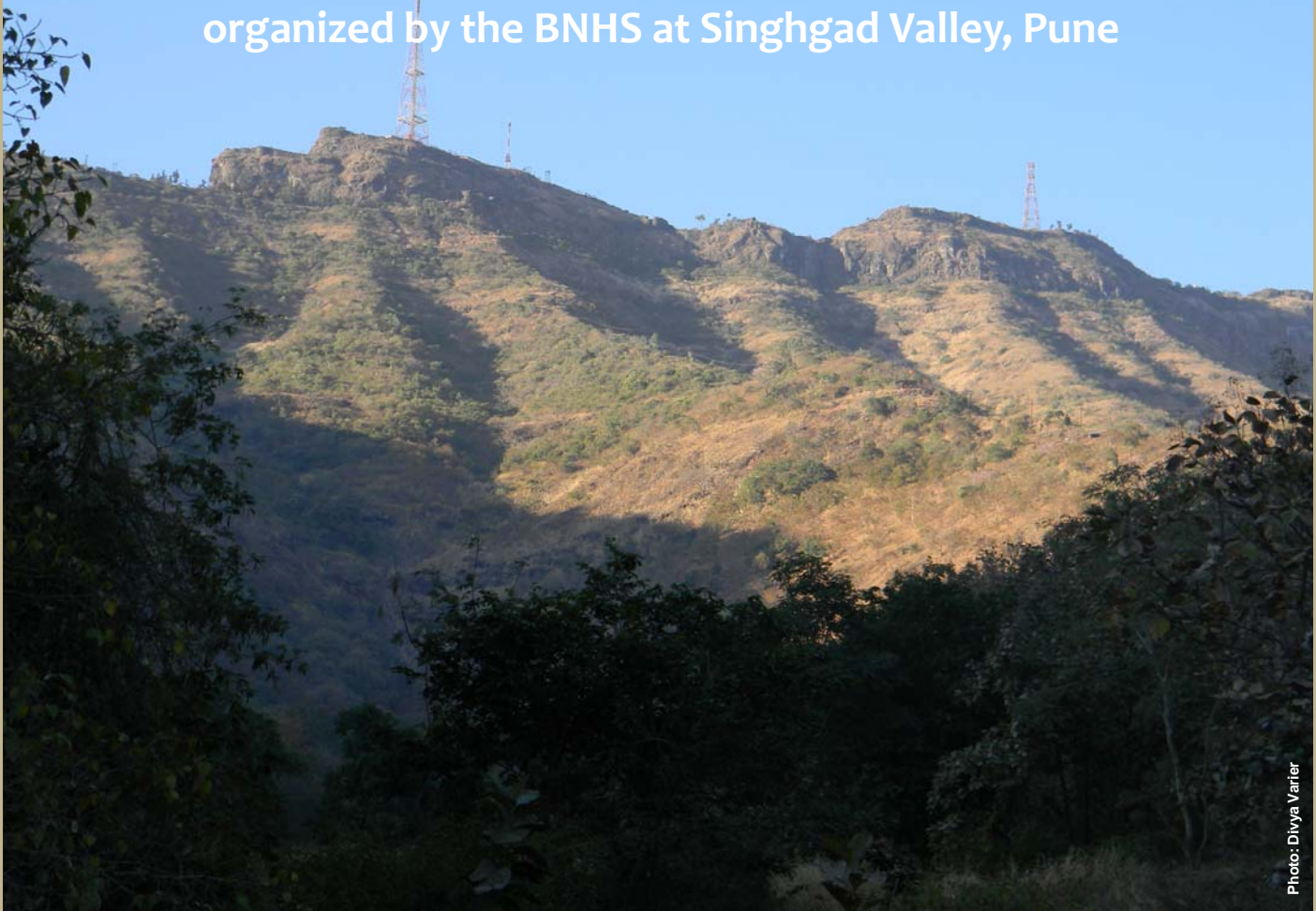


Photo: Divya Varier

A Bird Banding Training workshop was conducted by the BNHS, at Sinhagad valley of Pune, Maharashtra, from 23rd to 27th January 2011. The workshop was sponsored by Mr. B.G. Deshmukh, President, Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS) from the Jayati Deshmukh Memorial Fund. The motive behind this workshop was to give a first-hand experience in handling and ringing birds, to BNHS staff, members and forest officials from the Pune region to create awareness among masses and involve them in bird ringing study.

An eight member team from BNHS led by Dr. S. Balachandran, Deputy Director, BNHS, was present at the banding venue from 23rd to 27th January 2011. The team members were Dr. P. Sathiyaselvam, Scientist, Bird Migration Studies, Mr. Sujit Narwade, Scientist-In-Charge, ENVIS Centre, Ms. Mirium Abraham, Conservation Officer, Ms. Divya Varier, Information Officer, ENVIS Centre, Mr. Vandan Jhaveri, Associate Programmes Officer, Programmes Department, Mr. Ali Hussain, Senior Bird Trapper and Mr. K. Sivamani, Field Assistant, BNHS Bird Migration Study Centre, Point Calimere.

Ringing is an important tool in ornithological studies particularly in studying life histories, migration pattern and population dynamics of birds. Of the numerous techniques,

using mist nets is the most harmless way of trapping birds. Mist nets are hoisted on bamboo poles about 8-9 ft long. The bamboo poles are nailed along their lengths and the mist net is furled and stretched between two poles. Such arrangements are fixed at sites where birds can be caught in flight. Once a bird gets entangled in the net, it is freed carefully with a firm but sensitive grip called the Bander's grip, keeping in mind the safety of the bird.

Rings used are of negligible weight as compared to bird's body weight and the ring size varies according to the size of bird. There are nine different ring sizes currently being used, namely Z, A, AB, B, C, F, G, K and L arranged in the increasing order of size. Rings are mostly made of aluminum and are inscribed with a unique identification number and address of the nodal agency (in this case, Bombay Natural History Society).

Coloured plastic leg and neck bands are also used in large birds such as geese. The rings used are partially open and have to be carefully fitted onto the leg of the bird with help of pliers. The leg on which ring/ band is fitted also varies according to the year. The band is usually put on the left leg, if ringing is done during odd years (e.g. 2011, 2013 etc.), and on the right, if done during even years (2012, 2014, etc.).

Following is a brief summary of the activities carried out during the above mentioned workshop.

First day

The BNHS team along with a local acquaintance made a brief survey of the Sinhagad valley surrounding the Sinhagad fort, Pune. The places where activity of birds was good and away from the predators' view were selected for installation of mist nets.

Second day

The team visited the offices of the Conservator of Forests and Chief Conservator of Forests (Territorial), Pune and informed them about the workshop. Mr. Adkar, Assistant Conservator of Forests (Wildlife), Pune division and Mr. B.P. Jadhav, Range Forest Officer, Sinhagad area, expressed their support for the programme and also promised attendance of staff of the forest department. The team acquired some of the equipment required for banding like bamboo poles for setting up mist nets, crowbar, nails, etc., from the locals. Bamboo poles were set up at the selected places.



Red-breasted Flycatcher (male) was one of the migrant species ringed during the workshop. (Inset) Rings of various sizes are available according to the size of the bird (Photo: Sujit Narwade)

Third day

Mistnets were put up on the bamboo poles. Participants including BNHS members as well as other bird enthusiasts were present early in the morning. Copies of *Indian Bird Banding Manual*, authored by Dr. Balachandran, and BUCEROS newsletter of ENVIS Centre were distributed among the participants.

Twenty one birds belonging to ten species were ringed on the first day. Of the ringed birds, a male Asian Paradise Flycatcher was the centre of everyone's attention. The delicate bird with its white body, black, crested head and overwhelmingly long, white tail feathers was a beautiful sight indeed. Other birds ringed included the Red-breasted Flycatcher, Indian Robin, Oriental Magpie-robin, Red-vented Bulbul, Ashy Prinia, White-spotted Fantail, Olive-backed Pipit and Jungle Babbler. Each bird's morphology was studied for their age, reproductive stage and moult. Besides, lengths of their wing, tail, tarsus and bill were also noted in a datasheet. The ringed birds were then



Dr. Balachandran, demonstrating the technique of bird ringing to the forest guards (Photo: ENVIS library)



Participants at the bird banding workshop (Photo: ENVIS Library)

released near the place of capture. Dr. Balachandran gave a brief talk to the participants regarding the work done by him in satellite tracking of migratory birds in India. Dr. P. Sathiyaselvam, who completed his doctoral studies under the guidance of Dr. Balachandran, also shared interesting results of the work he conducted during his study.

Fourth day

The second day of the workshop, being a public holiday, had a good turnout of people. News about the workshop in local newspapers also helped in bringing bird enthusiasts to the venue. Some new species like the Indian Blackbird, Yellow-throated Sparrow, Spotted Dove, Common Rosefinch, Tickell's Blue Flycatcher and Red-whiskered Bulbul were added to our ringed birds list.

Mr. Adkar, Assistant Conservator of Forests, Pune, visited the workshop and enjoyed the experience thoroughly. Citing wildlife conservation to be the need of the hour, he opined that all forest staff should be encouraged to attend such training workshops because of their proximity to the forests and they can very efficiently stay vigilant and protect wildlife. He explained that people's appreciation will only increase when they observe wildlife at such a close range.

Fifth day

Besides previous participants, about 40 forest staff from various divisions of Pune district attended the last day of the workshop. It was an entirely new experience for all of them. After understanding the process of bird ringing, they were eager to help in their own way to the cause. They also looked forward to more of such training programmes

in the future. The last day of ringing had Grey-breasted Prinia, Indian Pond Heron and Rufous Treepie as new additions to the total species ringed.

A total of 75 birds belonging to 23 species were ringed during the three days of the workshop as given in Annexure 1.

Annexure 1: List of bird species ringed during the Bird Banding Training workshop, Pune

No.	Common Name	Scientific Name	No of Birds ringed	Status*
I)	Order: Ciconiiformes Family: Ardeidae Indian Pond-heron	<i>Ardeola grayii</i>	1	R
II)	Order: Columbiformes Family: Columbidae Spotted Dove	<i>Streptopelia chinensis</i>	3	R
III)	Order: Passeriformes (no. of species 21) Family: Motacillidae Grey Wagtail	<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>	1	M
	Olive-backed Pipit	<i>Anthus hodgsoni</i>	2	M
	Family: Pycnonotidae Red-vented Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus cafer</i>	19	R
	Red-whiskered Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus jocosus</i>	1	R
	Family: Laniidae 'Rufous-backed' Long-tailed Shrike	<i>Lanius schach</i>	3	R
	Family: Muscicapidae (no. of species 12) Asian Paradise Flycatcher	<i>Tersiphone paradise</i>	3	M
	White-spotted Fantail	<i>Rhipidura albogularis</i>	7	R
	Indian Blackbird	<i>Turdus simillimus</i>	3	M
	Oriental Magpie-robin	<i>Copsychus saularis</i>	3	R
	Indian Black Robin	<i>Saxicoloides fulicatus</i>	3	R
	Red-breasted Flycatcher	<i>Ficedula parva</i>	3	M
	Tickell's Blue Flycatcher	<i>Cyornis tickelliae</i>	1	R
	Jungle Babbler	<i>Turdoides striata</i>	6	R
	Ashy Prinia	<i>Prinia socialis</i>	6	R
	Grey-breasted Prinia	<i>Prinia hodgsonii</i>	2	R
	Blyth's Reed-warbler	<i>Acrocephalus dumetorum</i>	1	M
	Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus</i> spp.	1	M
	Family: Fringillidae Common Rosefinch	<i>Carpodacus erythrinus</i>	1	M
	Family: Passeridae Yellow-throated Sparrow	<i>Petronia xanthocollis</i>	3	R
	Family: Sturnidae Brahminy Starling	<i>Temenuchus pagodarum</i>	1	R
	Family: Corvidae Rufous Treepie	<i>Dendrocitta vagabunda</i>	1	R

* Key: R - Resident M - Migrant

Acknowledgment

First and foremost, we would like to thank Mr. B.G. Deshmukh, President, BNHS for initiating the idea of a bird banding workshop in Pune district and the Jayati Deshmukh Memorial Fund for providing monetary assistance for conducting this workshop.

We would like to extend our sincere thanks to the Forest Department (Wildlife) and Territory division, Pune, for supporting BNHS throughout the banding workshop. Our special thanks to Mr. Adkar, Assitant Conservator of Forests (Wildlife), Pune for encouraging the Forest staff to attend the workshop. We would also like to thank Mr. Rahul Rao, Foliage Outdoors, who helped us while surveying the Valley for sites suitable for trapping birds. Lastly we would like to thank all those who participated in the workshop.