

(IV)

BLACK BAZA *AVICEDA LEUPHOTES* (DUMONT) FORAGING WITH MIXED HUNTING PARTIES, DURING NOON - NOT TOTALLY CREPUSCULAR.?

The Black Baza *Aviceda leuphotes* has a disjunct distribution in India, occurring in the southern Western Ghats and Eastern Himalayas where the species occurs in broad leaved evergreen forests, being mostly crepuscular and feeding on insects and lizards (Ali, 1999; Grimmet *et al.*, 1998; Rasmussen and Anderton, 2000). Whistler and Kinnear (1936) reports specimens of the species collected from Trichinapoly in the Tamil Nadu, where the habitat is drier. The Black Baza is more active when overcast and at dawn and dusk, gathers to spend night for communal roosts in winter (Joseph *et al.*, 2007). Foragers have been noted following the movement of mixed species flocks of woodland passerines in Thai-Malay peninsula (Wells, 1999). In this note we provide some observations on the species conducted in Periyar tiger reserve and Parambikulam tiger reserve in Kerala, South India.

At Periyar, the Black Baza was observed in groups of 12 birds at Manakavala around 5 pm in November 1991. A single bird was observed at Mlappara, in the evergreen forest, in March 1995, calling and flying towards a foraging party of insectivorous birds, which included the Brown-cheeked Fulvetta *Alcippe poioicephala*, Western Crowned Warbler *Phylloscopus occipitalis* and Velvet-fronted Nuthatch *Sitta frontalis*, around 2.30 pm. Because of the mist, the birds could not be followed. At Parambikulam, the Black Baza was observed foraging in a moist deciduous forest, at 12.10 pm on 16 December 1996, in a bamboo clump at a height of about 5m, near the Tamil Nadu border along with a group of insectivorous birds including the Gold-fronted Leafbird *Chloropsis aurifrons*, Common Iora *Aegithina tiphia*, Common Wood-shrike *Tephrodornis pondicerianus* and Western Crowned Warbler *P.occipitalis*. We observed the birds for about 15 minutes and the Baza was very actively hunting with the other constituents of the mixed foraging party. There seems to be no previous mention of Bazas feeding as members of mixed-species

foraging parties or active during the middle of the day.

Primrose (1906) who collected Black Baza in the eastern Himalayas has found grasshoppers and the remains of a "brightly coloured" cicada in the crops of two specimens and one small lizard in the crop of one. Neither of these diet items seems likely to have been taken in twilight, further evidence that the species is not totally crepuscular, as previously suggested. Mohankumar (1999) observed Black Baza near Aakulam backwaters near the coastal area at Trivandrum, South Kerala, foraging actively like a Roller, on 5 January 1997 at 8.30am. Blyth's Baza *Aviceda jerdoni* is also unlikely to be a crepuscular species, as we have seen this species once during day time, at Chembra, in Wayanad, Kerala around 10 am. We saw a single bird which seemed to be looking for prey from an exposed branch of a shade tree, *Grewelia robusta* in a tea plantation. Though it has been reported as a species of evergreen biotope, the Blyth's Baza was sighted at Muthanga in the Wynaad Wildlife Sancturay in the moist deciduous forest bordering the deciduous forests of Karnataka (Kurup, 2011). Observation by the authors and by Thiollay (1993, pers.comm.) and Beehler (Ripley *et al.*, 1987, pers.comm.), the latter having collected the species from the Eastern Ghats suggest the species hunts actively in daytime. D' Abreu (1910) reported 2 agamid lizard, several beetles (longicorns) and mantids in the crop of a juvenile collected by him. These prey species are also not likely to be active in twilight.

Our observations and information on the diet, suggest that the characterization of the two bazas as crepuscular may not be accurate, at least at some times of the year. As very little information is available on the habitats and diets of bazas, we hope this information may stimulate others to collect further observations on the topic.

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