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RESPONSE OF BROADCAST CALLS OF CHEER PHEASANT *Catreus wallichii* ON RAPTORS IN MAJATHAL-HARSANG WILDLIFE SANCTUARY, HIMACHAL PRADESH, INDIA

The term raptor has a Latin origin, meaning 'to seize' and has been loosely applied to a number of predatory bird species. In strict sense, it is used to define members of the avian order Accipitriformes, which includes three families, the largest being the hawks and eagles (Accipitridae), falcons (Falconidae) and the monotypic osprey (Pandionidae) (Yong, 2011).

The crested serpent eagle (*Spilornis cheela*) and shikra (*Accipiter badius*) both are wide spread residents but the crested serpent eagle is unrecorded from most of the northwest and northeast subcontinent whereas, shikra is unrecorded from some parts of the northwest. The common kestrel (*Falco tinnunculus*) is a resident raptor of the mountains of Pakistan, Himalaya and Western Ghats and Sri Lanka and is a widespread winter visitor across the subcontinent (Grimmett *et al.*, 2011).

Out of its distribution range, the crested serpent eagle is an extant breeder in most of the regions of the Himachal Pradesh while shikra has been described as extant resident throughout its distribution range in the Indian subcontinent (Birdlife International, 2012a & b). The common kestrel is extant resident with breeding and non-breeding distribution ranges dependent on altitudes within Himachal Pradesh (Birdlife International 2012c). Though, these raptor species are widely distributed throughout subcontinent, information pertaining to their behavior is very scarce.

Bird vocalisations have many functions, ranging from attracting mates to alarming others of danger (Catchpole and Slater, 1995). Vocalisations that function in mate-attraction or territorial defense are often elaborate and conspicuous displays (Catchpole and Slater, 1995), whereas vocalisations for alarms are typically brief and simple signals that draw minimal attention to the location of the signaler (Marler, 2004).

One evening when we were conducting call count surveys for cheer pheasants (*Catreus wallichii*) during breeding season in Majathal-Harsang Wildlife Sanctuary. The moment we started playing audio-cassettes of the pheasant's calls (Garson, 1983; Shah, 2012), the crested serpent eagle flying nearby started to get very near to the player in order to look for potential prey the cheer pheasant. It kept on looking in the same direction, where we had put the stereo, for the whole duration we were there conducting call counts.

We observed the same behavior in shikra and common kestrel also later on during the sampling period in breeding season of Cheer Pheasant. To confirm the affinity of these raptors to the broadcasted calls we placed the stereo at different places and all the time these raptors got attracted towards the direction of the player. So, we strongly believe that the raptors respond to the broadcasted calls in search of prey.

References

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