

RESEARCH NOTES

(I)

FIRST RECORD OF THE PIED CROW (*CORVUS ALBUS*) FROM INDIA, IN AND AROUND JODHPUR, RAJASTHAN

The present paper is regarding the sighting of the Pied crow (*Corvus albus*) in and around Jodhpur. During long Vulture ecological studies, I observed feeding behavior of different vulture species at Municipal dumping ground Keru, Jodhpur. Several resident and migratory Vultures species, Eagles, Crows, Ravens, alongwith other raptors and mammals feeding on the dead animals at Keru Dumping ground Jodhpur (Chhangani, 2002 a & b, 2004 a & b, 2005, 2007, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2014; Chhangani and Mohnot, 2004, 2006, 2008; Hall *et al.*, 2012 and 2015). During these studies, I observed, crows and ravens species feeding together with different vultures on the dead carcasses several time. This includes House crow *Corvus splendens*, Indian Jungle Crow *Corvus macrorhynchos culminatus*, Punjab Raven *Corvus [corax] subcorax*. In the winter months from November to February some individuals (2-5) of Brown necked Raven *Corvus rufficollis* feeding at the Keru dumping ground Jodhpur were also observed. Many times I noticed some unusual morph and plumage crows including albino house crow, some time confused with Eurasian Jackdaw or Daurian Jackdaw or Pied crow, for the bird identification Ali and Ripley (1987); Kazmierczak (2000) and Grimmitt *et al.* (1998, 2011) book for Indian Subcontinent birds were used. In absence of proper Identification and confirmations the crow species with unusual morph and plumage the sighting records remains unpublished, but were well noted in my field notebook. Meanwhile I visited Ethiopia, Africa from 21-25 June, 2015. During my stay at Addis Ababa, I saw the crow species, similar to the crow species observed at Keru dumping ground and Dugar, Jodhpur. This further confirmed after visiting Natural History Museum of Addis Ababa University and identified as Pied crow (*Corvus albus*) (M. Balakrishnan and Abebe Getahun, Pers. Communication) the sighting records of Pied crow (*Corvus albus*) near Jodhpur with GPS locations are given in Table 1.

These are the first known sighting records for *Corvus albus* from India, with occasional observed records for this species in India do not indicate that this species is spreading or managed to establish. However, it is possible that rare and occasional sighting of the *Corvus albus* in the Thar Desert draw attention of ornithologists and bird watchers. It usually takes some time for a species to become widespread and invasive (Simberloff, 2009). The global population size of Pied crow (*Corvus albus*) has not been quantified, but the species is described as common and locally abundant in African continent. This species has an extremely large geographical range in Africa like, Angola, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Comoros, Congo, Congo, Equatorial Guinea Eritrea Ethiopia, Gabon, Gambia and other countries (IUCN, 2016). Pied crow also recorded out of Africa in Brazil, South America (Silva and Olmos, 2007) Madagascar and Yaman (Birdlife International, 2016).

The large dumping grounds like Keru, Jodhpur and Joorber, Bikaner in the Thar Desert of Rajasthan with 20-30 skinned carcasses every day and availability of scattered carcasses throughout Thar desert are favorable feeding ground for many resident and migratory Vultures, Eagles, Crows and Ravens (Chhangani, 2011). *Corvus albus* feeds on a wide range of organisms as well as carrion (Anjos *et al.*, 2009). Although there is no direct evidence of how *Corvus albus* arrived the Thar Desert of India, the most likely vector of introduction can be merchant ships. There are several large ports nearby Jodhpur, Great Indian Thar Desert such as Kandla port (460 km.), Mundra port (500 km.), Porbandar (620 km.) and Karachi port (600 km.), whereas Yamane with the wild population (Birdlife International, 2016) of *Corvus albus* is 2380 km. from Keru Dumping ground, Jodhpur. The ports are known hubs for the entrance of several invasive species (Lockwood *et al.*, 2007). Scientific studies on the ecological impacts for this

Table 1: Locations of the Pied crow (*Corvus albus*) Sighting in and around Jodhpur.

S.No.	Name of place	Location	Date	Remark
1	Keru Dumping ground Jodhpur	26°18'23"N 72°54'01"E	31 July, 2008	Feeding on carcass with Raven and large billed crow
2	Keru Dumping ground Jodhpur	26°18'17"N 72°54'00"E	5 August, 2011	Feeding on dead cow carcass
3	Dugar, Agolai, Jodhpur	26°16'56"N 72°39'14"E	5 August, 2011	Near Dugar Talab
4	Keru Dumping ground Jodhpur	26°18'17"N 72°54'00"E	19 August, 2016	Feeding on dead cow carcass

species are lacking, but there is a report of heavy predation pressure on a native Tortoise (Fincham and Lambrechts, 2014) and of potential negative interactions

with raptors (Simmons and Barnard, 2011). This information allows ornithologist and bird watchers a better surveillance.

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