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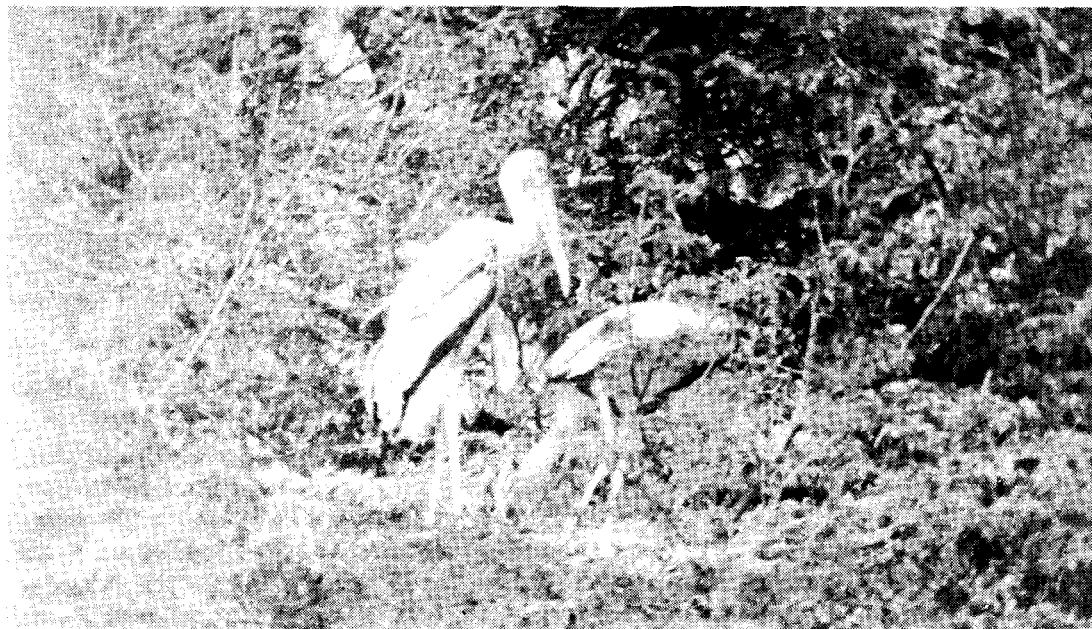
**BREEDING OF PAINTED STORKS AT VEDURUPATTU, NELLORE DISTRICT, ANDHRA PRADESH : CO-EXISTENCE OF MAN AND WILDLIFE**

Vedurupattu is a small hamlet in Nellore District of Andhra Pradesh situated 85 km from Nellore. It is a breeding centre for Painted stork, (*Mycteria leucocephala*). There are about 35 houses in the hamlet. The hamlet is situated on the banks of River Swarnamukhi which merges with Pulicat lake located 20 km away. All the inhabitants here are small farmers or landless labour. Every year the migratory birds come to Vedurupattu in the months of

November-December and leave in the month of May.

Painted storks arrive in the month of November or December. During November 1998 about 315 birds arrived here. They build nests in the month of December. These birds occupy Tamarind, Mango, Borasses, Neem and Banyan trees in the backyards of houses for nesting. For nesting they use pencil thick or thinner branches of Babul,

**Fig. 1****Pairing of Painted storks**

**Fig. 2**

Nesting by pair

Prosopis, Tamarind and Ipomea for preparation of platform with a central depression. They build independent nests on the tops of the trees. Dried and green grass is spread over the platform for preparation of soft bed. The shape of the nest built is irregular.

Pairing of males and females occurs in the month of December. Eggs are laid in the end of December or first week of January. Incubation period is about 30 days. Both mother and father incubate the eggs. When one bird goes for feeding the other sits on the eggs. Normally 2 to 3 eggs are laid by each female. Second batch of birds arrive in the month of January. The new birds try to occupy the nests already built. Fights will be serious for intrusion and defence. Sometimes eggs in the nests also fall down and are destroyed or lost. In the nesting season all the backyards are littered with sticks and droppings of birds.

Hatchlings come out in the month of February. About 400 chicks came up in the month of February, 1999. Right from the time of coming out of hatchlings till they grow to flying stage, the hatchlings produce crackling sound continuously for feed and parents, which attracts everybody passing through the village. Both the parents take care of the chicks for protection and feeding. Generally one bird stays at nest and the other goes to lake for feeding and procurement of feed for the chicks. Adults provide shelter to the chicks against the hot sun by opening their wings. The storks go to Pulicat lake and nearby village tanks for feeding. The adult feeds the half digested food to the chicks. In the third month they directly feed fish to the chicks. Sometimes chicks come down to ground and drink water from the tubs in the backyards of houses. The villagers treat the chicks as their children.

**Fig. 3**

Incubating of eggs by mother

The villagers do not mind even when they lose Tamarind and Mango crops due to arrival of birds which coincide with the fruiting season. On an average each Tamarind tree produces 500 kg of fruits which can fetch a sum of Rs. 2,000/-. Likewise an average Mango tree produces a cart load of fruits, which can fetch an amount of Rs. 1,500/-. Even then the villagers neither complain against the birds nor cause any harm to them.

The chicks attain full size in one and a half months time but develop feathers for flying only in the third month. In the month of May, when chicks are 3 months old they are in a position to fly. Even then they do not develop colorful plumage here. The birds leave the place in the month of June.

Although, the villagers are losing the crop every year, backyards are littered by thorns, sticks and droppings, but they are protecting the birds. The villagers feel that the arrival of birds is part of their life style and the chicks are their children. In 1984, when heavy floods washed away the houses and properties due to the cyclone, the villagers shifted the houses to other places, the birds also abandoned the inundated place and moved to the trees in the backyards of the make-shift hamlets. It proves that these birds love and enjoy the association of the inhabitants of Vedurupattu village.

The Painted storks in Vedurupattu provide very good example of "co-existence of man and wildlife".

P.K. Sharma\*  
P.S. Raghavaiah\*\*

\*Conservator of Forests, Wildlife Management Circle, Tirupati, (Andhra Pradesh).

\*\*Divisional Forest Officer, Wildlife Management, Sullurpet, (Andhra Pradesh).