

SACON News

Vol 20(1)

Jan – Mar 2023



Sálim Ali Centre for Ornithology and Natural History,
Anaikatty, Coimbatore - 641 108, Tamil Nadu, India.



Contents

INSTITUTIONAL ACTIVITIES

SACON Faculty at a National Conference, Madhya Pradesh, Bhopal	3
11 th Coimbatore Bird Race 2023	3
Transfer of SACON Property	4
Visit from Central University of Tamil Nadu	4
Open Talk by a Guest from Jain University	5
Visit of Deputy Inspector General (Wildlife)	5
Republic Day Celebrations at SACON	6
Vegetation Sciences and Forestry course for SACON MSc students	6
Dr Sálím Ali Memorial Lecture	7
Lecture by SACON Faculty at Tamil Nadu Forest Academy, Coimbatore	9
Coimbatore City Bird Atlas Meeting	9
DST-SERB Sponsored Workshop on Avian Wildlife Forensics	10
Open Talk by a Guest from Himalaya Wellness Company	10
SACON-Purdue University Research Collaboration	11
Training Programme for the Narikuravar Community	11
SACON EIACP's Mission LiFE Activities – January to March 2023	12
Nature Education Alumni Meet	14
Nature Programme with Coimbatore School Students	15
Stay camp for Children at SACON	16
Nature Programme with College Students	17
Training program for Forest Official Trainees	19
POPULAR ARTICLES	
The Tale of a Tree and Its Winged Visitors in SACON Campus	20
Nesting of Calotes calotes (Linnaeus 1758) in Anaikatti Forest Reserve	23
Bombax ceiba – A Party Spot for Avifauna	25

Design and Layout - Vigneshwaran, Swaathi Na

Cover page photograph credits

Front (Feature article images)

Top - Black-hooded Oriole © Bhawani Sabat,
Bottom - Chestnut Bob © Swapna Devi Ray

Back

Top - Red-whiskered Bulbul © Bhawani Sabat,
Bottom - Eurasian Hoopoe © Praphul G.

INSTITUTIONAL ACTIVITIES

SACON Faculty at a National Conference, Madhya Pradesh, Bhopal

The Society of Nature Healers, Conservators and Local Tourism Development, an NGO based in Bhopal, organised the National Conference on Lesser known species of Madhya Pradesh from 2–21 January 2023. Dr Shomita Mukherjee, Senior Principal Scientist, was invited to present at the conference, where she gave a talk titled "Small Cats of Madhya Pradesh: Present Status and Conservation Challenges".



11th Coimbatore Bird Race 2023

SACON, in partnership with HSBC (Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation Limited), held the 11th edition of Coimbatore Bird Race on 08 January 2023. The all-India coordinator for the India Bird Races is 'The Yuhina Canopy' in Mumbai. A total of 26 teams participated, with more than 100 participants recording 246 bird species. The participants also uploaded their observations to the e-bird platform. Eurasian Spoonbill, Greater spotted eagle, White-naped woodpecker, Red-breasted flycatcher, Taiga flycatcher, Rufous-bellied eagle, Garganey, Spot-billed pelican, Wayanad laughing thrush, Lesser whitethroat, blue throat were some of the birds sighted during the day.



Transfer of SACON Property

As instructed by the MoEFCC, Gol vide F.No. W-19/2/2020-CoE dated 09.09.2022, 54.73 acres of SACON land together with the buildings was handed over to the MoEFCC, Gol by a Transfer Deed registered at Sub-Registrar, Vadavalli, Coimbatore on 11.01.2023. On behalf of SACON, Dr. S. Muralidharan, Director in charge has signed the Transfer Deed as Executor and Shri. Rakesh Sharma, Deputy Secretary (GA) of MoEFCC, Gol has signed as Claimant.



Visit from Central University of Tamil Nadu

Prof. S. Nagarajan, the Controller of Examinations & Dean (Academics), Central University of Tamil Nadu (CUTN), Thiruvavur, visited SACON on 23 January 2023. An interaction meeting of all faculty members with CoE was scheduled to discuss academic collaboration between SACON and CUTN in PG and PhD programmes. Subsequent to the interaction sessions, CoE visited all the facilities on SACON Campus, including laboratories, library, and classroom.



Open Talk by a Guest from Jain University

Dr Chetan Nag, an Associate Professor and Deputy Director at the Centre for Urban Ecology, Biodiversity, Evolution and Climate Change, Jain University, Bangalore, visited SACON for an open talk on 25 January 2023. Dr Nag is a well-known primatologist and behavioural ecologist. His talk was titled 'A twist in the ta(il)le: How common is the common Hanuman Langur? Taxonomic status of Hanuman langurs (*Semnopithecus* Desmarest, 1822) in Peninsular India' wherein he explained the use of multiple lines of evidence (morphology, ecology, demography & molecular) to delineate species boundaries focusing on Common Langur in Peninsular India.



Visit of Deputy Inspector General (Wildlife)

Shri Rakesh Kumar Jagenia, Deputy Inspector General (Wildlife) of MoEFCC; Shri Raghu Kumar Kodali, Scientist 'F', MoEFCC; Dr K. Ramesh, Scientist 'F' of Wildlife Institute of India (WII); and Sh. Manoj Srivastava, Director (IFD), visited SACON on 30 and 31 January 2023 for a discussion with faculty and staff members of SACON concerning the merger of SACON with WII. During the visit, Shri Rakesh Kumar interacted with the faculty and staff members of SACON and visited the facilities at SACON.



Republic Day Celebrations at SACON

SACON celebrated the 74th Republic Day on 26 January 2023. On this occasion, Dr Rajah Jayapal, Senior Principal Scientist and Head, Ornithology Division of SACON, hoisted the tricolour and delivered his Republic Day speech by evoking the importance of this day.



Vegetation Sciences and Forestry course for SACON MSc students

IFGTB, Coimbatore organised a course on 'Vegetation Sciences and Forestry' for the MSc students of SACON from 3-7 January 2023. The course was inaugurated by Dr. C. Kunhikannan, Director, IFGTB. DR. R. Yasodha, GCR and Dr. S. Saravanan, Head Extension were also involved in conducting the course.



Dr Sálím Ali Memorial Lecture

Dr Sálím Ali Memorial Lecture is organised annually, where eminent and distinguished personalities from different walks of life are invited to speak on the subjects of topical interest. The memorial lecture is always a dual celebration wherein the 'Salim Ali Trophy Nature Competitions (SATNC)' winners are also felicitated. This year, the Memorial Lecture was organised on 14 February 2023, at the Central Academy of State Forest Services (CASFOS), Coimbatore. The event commenced with greetings and a welcome address by Dr S Muralidharan, Director in charge, SACON. Dr Muralidharan welcomed the distinguished guests of the event, Dr VS Vijayan, Guest Speaker, Founder Director of SACON, and currently the chairman of the Sálím Ali Foundation, and Shri S Ramasubramanian IFS, Conservator of Forests and Field Director Anamalai Tiger Reserve. In the audience, along with SACON and CASFOS faculty, officer trainees and researchers, 136 school children who were winners of SATNC competitions were also present. This year more than 4000 children from 50 schools across Coimbatore district participated in the competitions under various categories.



Dr. Sálím Ali Memorial Lecture at Champion Hall, CASFOS, Coimbatore

Dr Vijayan, an eminent Ornithologist and disciple of Dr Sálím Ali, under whom he did his doctoral research, shared fascinating stories about Dr Sálím Ali with the audience. Dr Vijayan then spoke about the turmoil the country's environment is going through at present and how the Indian economy is getting affected by the current state of affairs. While speaking on "Conservation and Sustainable Development," Dr Vijayan explained the economic values of various ecological services. He explained various physical, chemical, and biological processes or attributes of different kinds of ecosystems, especially wetland ecosystems and how they contribute to the economy.



From L to R -Dr P Pramod (SACON), Shri S Ramasubramanian IFS (CF & Field Director ATR), Dr VS Vijayan (Founder Director, SACON and Keynote Speaker), and Dr S Muralidharan (SACON Director in charge)

This was followed by a Presidential Address by Shri S Ramasubramanian IFS, Conservator of Forests and Field Director Anamalai Tiger Reserve. The prize distribution ceremony then took place following the addresses of the distinguished guests. The school that emerged as champions of the SATNC Competition 2022–2023 was Kongu Vellalar Matriculation Higher Secondary School, Karumathampatti. First Runner-Up was Vijayalakshmi Matriculation Higher Secondary School, Sirumugai, and Second Runner-Up was Yuvabharathi Public School, Kanuvai. Dr Vijayan and Shri Ramasubramanian were felicitated with mementoes presented by Dr Muralidharan, Director in charge of SACON. The prestigious lecture and the event concluded with a vote of thanks delivered by Dr Pramod, Sr. Principal Scientist, SACON.



Winners of the Salim Ali Nature Trophy Competition 2022–2023,
Kongu Vellalar Matriculation Higher Secondary School, Karumathampatti, Coimbatore



First Runner-Up, Vijayalakshmi Matriculation Hr. Sec. School, Sirumugai, Coimbatore



Second Runner-Up, Yuvabharathi Public School, Kanuvai, Coimbatore

Lecture by SACON Faculty at Tamil Nadu Forest Academy, Coimbatore

Dr Ashutosh, Scientist, was invited to deliver a lecture on "Zoonotic Diseases and its Transmission in Wildlife" at Tamil Nadu Forest Academy, Coimbatore, during One-day training on Wildlife Health and Health Monitoring Zoonotic Diseases for Forest Range Officers and Foresters on 23 February 2023.

TAMIL NADU FOREST ACADEMY COIMBATORE.



Coimbatore City Bird Atlas Meeting

The Coimbatore City Bird Atlas (CCBA) is a citizen science initiative that will use field surveys to study the abundance and distribution of birds in Coimbatore. A total of 42 birdwatchers attended the Coimbatore Bird Atlas 2023 meeting held at SACON on 26 February 2023. The CCBA team had an interactive session with Dr R. Jayapal, Senior Principal Scientist, Ornithology Division, SACON.



DST-SERB Sponsored Workshop on Avian Wildlife Forensics

A one-day training workshop on Avian Wildlife forensics was organised at National Avian Forensic Laboratory as part of the Scientific Social Responsibility program of DST-SERB under the project titled "Taxonomic characterisation of select Galliformes of India using feather morphometrics and DNA for application in Wildlife Forensics" on 24 February 2023. In total, 15 researchers representing five institutions attended the program. Dr Ashutosh Singh, Scientist, Avian Physiology and Genetics Division, coordinated this workshop and invited Dr Vipin Sharma, Research Director, DeerAge, Missoula, MT, and Dr Vinita Sharma, Assistant Professor, Central University of Jammu, as the resource persons. The workshop aimed to sensitise researchers on different aspects of avian forensics using molecular and morphometrics techniques. The participants attended lectures and received exposure to various techniques at Avian Forensic, Ecotoxicology and Microscopy Laboratories.



Open Talk by a Guest from Himalaya Wellness Company

Dr Percy E. Avari, MVSc., PhD, working with Himalaya Wellness Company, visited SACON and delivered an open talk on "Vulture Biology and Conservation" on 20 March 2023. Dr Percy is a Poultry Industry Professional with over 15 years of academic experience in poultry teaching, research and extension (community outreach). He has co-authored 22 publications in journals of national and international repute and successfully mentored four MVSc. Students. Dr Percy is an environmentalist at heart and works passionately towards vulture conservation.



SACON-Purdue University Research Collaboration

Prof. Patrick A. Zollner from the Department of Forestry and Natural Resources, Purdue University, USA, visited SACON from 10–25 March 2023 as part of SACON-Purdue University Research Collaboration. Prof. Patrick's research focuses on quantitative ecology, integrating behavioral ecology and landscape ecology to inform wildlife conservation and management. His accomplishments are exemplified by a field-defining paper published in *TREE* in 1996 and a Science publication in 2016 that focused on how modelling approaches can improve forecasts of the implications of climate change. His research combines field experiments and simulation models to improve scientific understanding of how changes in landscape composition and structure caused by resource management and land-use practices affect wildlife species of conservation concern. He has applied cutting-edge modelling approaches to learn how forest management can help conserve North American bat species threatened by white-nose syndrome. He uses this same approach to study other species, such as the American marten and the swamp rabbit. During his visit, he took MSc lectures and also gave an open talk on "Informing Wildlife Management and Conservation by Considering Landscape-Level Implications of Animal Behavior".



Training Programme for the Narikuravar Community

Eleven members from the Narikuravar and Kuruvikarar Communities visited SACON on 15 March 2023 as a part of their training programme organised by the Tamil Nadu Forest Department and Urban Tribes, a Non-Governmental Organisation. The participants came from Mayiladuthurai, Cuddalore, Villupuram and Chengalpattu districts. Dr P Pramod, Senior Principal Scientist, gave a talk on "Conservation of natural resources". Later Ms Lini Kaladharan, Researcher, and Ms Sri Sowmiya, Nature Education Assistant, took them on a nature walk at SACON trails.



SACON EIACP's Mission LiFE Activities – January to March 2023

Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi introduced Mission "LiFE" at COP26 in Glasgow on 01 November 2021 as a mass movement for "mindful and deliberate utilisation, instead of mindless and destructive consumption" to protect and preserve the environment. The programme aims to nudge individuals and communities to practice a lifestyle that is synchronous with nature and does not harm it. People who practice such a lifestyle are recognised as "Pro Planet People". As part of the Mission LiFE campaign, SACON EIACP (Environmental Information, Awareness, Capacity Building and Livelihood Programme) team organised multiple awareness and outreach activities both online and offline in which around 4000 people, including school children, college students, general public and stakeholders were sensitised about Mission LiFE Programme.



Questionnaire survey on sustainable lifestyle

The SACON EIACP team prepared a questionnaire based on seven themes of mission LiFE (energy saved, water saved, single-use plastic reduced, sustainable food systems adopted, waste reduced (Swachhata actions), healthy lifestyle adopted, and e-waste reduced) and shared the Google form link on social media handle and also distributed the hardcopy to the college students who visited SACON campus. The students actively participated in the survey and shared their sustainable lifestyle practices in their day-to-day life.

National Workshop on LiFE

The SACON EIACP team participated in the National Workshop on LiFE organised by the MoEFCC, New Delhi, on 30 January 2023. Shri Bhupendar Yadav, Hon'ble Minister, MoEFCC, inaugurated the exhibition where the EIACP programme centres displayed the eco-friendly products made by the GSDP participants to promote Mission LiFE. As part of the exhibition, the SACON EIACP team put up a stall and displayed eco-friendly products such as t-shirts, badges, brochures and bookmarks to promote Mission LiFE. The school children who visited the stall were attracted to the Ladder game on sustainable LiFEstyle designed by the SACON EIACP team and registered their participation. In addition, to sensitise the EIACP programme centres on LiFE, the Ministry conducted seven technical sessions based on the seven themes of Mission LiFE. The technical session discussed major proposed activities to be undertaken in Mission LiFE under four components - Awareness, Creativity, Conservation, and Scientific Innovation.



Awareness campaigns at schools

SACON EIACP PC-RP (Programme Centres and Resource Partners) conducted awareness programmes at various schools in and around Coimbatore City, highlighting the themes Save Water, Save Energy and Reduce Single-use Plastics. The team created brochures, standees, infographics, calendars and bookmarks and disseminated the information kits to schools and colleges.

International Day of Forests & World Water Day 2023

During these environmental days, the SACON EIACP team published posters highlighting this year's theme, "Forests & Health", "Accelerating Change", in connection with Mission LiFE. The posters were shared on social media pages for wider dissemination. As part of these events, Mr Bhoopal Santhosh, Founder Eco Vibes, an NGO and an Alumni of the SACON Green Skill Development Programme, was invited as a guest speaker who interacted with the school children on the impacts of single-use plastics towards the environment and discussed the action points to be followed to reduce, reuse and recycle the single-use plastics.

Mobile van advertisement

Under the Mission LiFE programme, SACON EIACP PC-RP promoted sustainable lifestyle practices through a mobile van advertisement campaign. The vehicle roamed in and around Coimbatore city, targeting the general public, school children and college students, raising awareness on seven themes of Mission LiFE, viz. Energy saved, water saved, single-use plastic reduced, sustainable food systems adopted, waste reduced (Swachhata actions), healthy lifestyle adopted and e-waste reduced. This campaign received an overwhelming response from the general public and school children. The mobile van comprised information on Mission LiFE in English and regional language.

Nature Education Alumni Meet

SACON's Nature Education division hosted an alumni gathering on 26 March 2023, for all past and present members. Senior Principal Scientist Dr P Pramod shared his past experiences, and his students related memories of their own. Those who couldn't attend the offline session connected online to share their experiences. With laughs and recollections, it was a joyful get-together.



Nature Programme with Coimbatore School Students

During the reporting quarters of January 2023 to March 2023, 191 students (3rd to 11th grade) and 22 teachers from 5 schools visited SACON for one-day nature programmes. The program allows the students to connect with the natural world, deepen their understanding of ecosystems, and foster a sense of appreciation for the environment. This one-day program combines experiential learning, interactive activities, and expert guidance to provide a comprehensive and enjoyable educational experience. The students were taken for nature walks on the SACON campus trails in all the sessions. Ms Sri Sowmiya, Nature Education Assistant, moderated the activities, along with SACON's Research Volunteers, Bhawani Sabat, Pradesshwar, Ashiq PP, Praphul G, and Intern Vishnu Prasad.

In addition, the SACON EIACP team's Mission LiFE activities, awareness talks, games, and questionnaires were also part of the sessions, along with the showing of wildlife documentaries and short films. We also held nature activities and an interactive presentation on "How to Watch Birds" to develop a stronger bond and to create awareness of the natural world.



Bharath Vidhiya Nikethan Matric HR Sec School



Vidya Vanam School



Hindustan International School, Nava India, Coimbatore



Vrikshaa International School

List of Schools that visited SACON from January 2023 to March 2023

S.No	Date	School name	No. of Students	No. of Staff
1	01.02.2023	Vrikshaa International School	31	2
2	17.02.2023	Vidya Vanam School	17	3
3	20.02.2023	Bharath Vidhiya Nikethan Matric HR Sec School	46	5
4	21.02.2023	Bharath Vidhiya Nikethan Matric HR Sec School	58	6
5	23.03.2023	Hindustan International School, Nava India, Coimbatore	39	6

Stay camp for Children at SACON

SACON hosted eighteen students with dyslexia from Helikx Open School and Learning Centre for a two-day stay camp (9 & 10 February 2023). The students and three staff members were exposed to nature and natural surroundings through nature games, interactive sessions, wildlife art sessions, nature walks, bird watching and wildlife film screenings. SACON's Junior Research Biologists Mr Gourav Sonawane, Mr Sunil Kumar Gupta, Mr Ashiq PP, Ms Kanchan Sonawane, Mr Civin Solomon and intern Mr Vishnu Prasad along with Ms Sri Sowmiya, Nature Education Assistant moderated the programme.



Nature Programme with College Students

In this quarter, 361 college students and 24 staff from eleven colleges had an exposure visit to SACON. Dr P Pramod, Senior Principal Scientist, and Dr Aditi Mukherjee, Scientist, briefed the students on SACON's past and ongoing research activities. They also visited various facilities of SACON, including the Library and Avian Physiology Genetics and Ecotoxicology Laboratory, wherein Dr K. Nambirajan, Project Scientist, and Research Scholars Mr Sharma Kalamathan, Mr Gourav Sonawane, Mr Prateek Dev and Ms Anamika Gautam, briefed the students about lab's activities, practical tools and techniques. On each visit, the students went on the nature trails on the campus to learn and explore the wilderness with Ms Sri Sowmiya, Nature Education Assistant, Ms Bhawani Sabat, Mr Aravindan BK, Mr Ashiq PP, Junior Research Biologists, Mr Vishnu Prasad, MSc intern and Mr Pradesshwar RJ, MSc Student.

List of Colleges that visited SACON from January to March 2023

S.No	Date	College name	No. of Students	No. of Staff
1	05.01.2023	Sri G.V.G Visalakshi College for Women	63	2
2	20.01.2023	NGP College of Arts and Science	35	2
3	27.01.2023	Department of Social Work, Gregarious College of Social Science	29	2
4	07.02.2023	Department of Environment Science, Bharathiar University	19	2
5	09.02.2023	Department of Zoology, Avinashilingam Univesity	25	2
6	27.02.2023	Department of Biotechnology, CMS College of Science and Commerce	42	2
7	28.02.2023	St. Mary's College for Women, Kerala	29	6
8	02.03.2023	KG Arts and Science College	46	2
9	07.03.2023	MES Mampad College, Kerala	23	2
10	21.03.2023	Sri Vasavi College, Erode	50	2



NGP College of Arts and Science



Department of Environment Science,
Bharathiar University



Department of Zoology, Avinashilingam University



Department of Biotechnology,
CMS College of Science and Commerce



MES Mampad College, Kerala



Sri Vasavi College, Erode



St. Mary's College for Women, Kerala



KG Arts and Science College

Training program for Forest Official Trainees

Training was conducted for 53 Coimbatore Course-II Officer Trainees (23 trainees from Karnataka & 30 trainees from Rajasthan) of 2022-2024 State Forest Service of CASFOS, 66 IFS Probationers (2021-23) of Indira Gandhi National Forest Academy, Dehradun, 47 FRO Trainee Officers Batch (2022-24) of Chandrapur Forest Academy of Administration, Development & Management, Chandrapur (Maharashtra), and 57 Range Officer Trainees of 2021-2023 batch of Odisha Forest Rangers College, Angul. Principal Scientists Dr. Manchi Sirish S and Dr. H.N. Kumara interacted with the trainees and conducted sessions about the various research initiatives of SACON. Dr. Ashutosh Singh, Scientist, Mr. Prateek Dey, PhD Scholar, and Dr. Nambirajan, Project Scientist, took the trainees through the Avian Physiology & Genetics laboratories and Avian Eco-toxicology laboratories, explaining the lab's various functions. The training came to an end with a nature trail around the SACON campus. Dr. Bibhu Prasad Panda, Research Associate, Ms. Sri Sowmiya, Nature Education Assistant, Ms. Santhosini R., Ms. Yashaswini N., Mr. Ankit Moun, Ms. Anamika, Mr. Gaurav Sonawane, Mr. Hari Krishnan CP, Mr. Ashish Agarwal, PhD Scholars, and Mr. Sudhanva Jahagirdar, MSc Student were involved in conducting the programme.

List of Colleges that visited SACON from January to March 2023

S.No	Date	College name	No. of trainees
1	11.01.2023	CASFOS, Coimbatore	53
2	27.01.2023	Indira Gandhi National Forest Academy, Dehradun	66
3	05.02.2023	Chandrapur Forest Academy of Administration, Development & Management, Maharashtra	47
4	15.03.2023	Odisha Forest Rangers College, Angul	57

Training for Range Officer Trainees of 2021-2023 batch of Odisha Forest Rangers College, Angul.



Mr. Prateek Dey explaining the activities of the Avian Physiology and Genetics laboratory



Interaction with Dr. Manchi Sirish

POPULAR ARTICLES

The Tale of a Tree and Its Winged Visitors in SACON Campus

By: Ms. Swapna Devi Ray, PhD Scholar
Avian Physiology and Genetics Division,
Correspondence: swapnadray555@gmail.com

Pithecellobium dulce, often known as the Manila Tamarind or Camachile, is a tree species introduced to South Asia from the Pacific Coast and nearby highlands of Mexico, Central America, and northern South America. The flowering plant is a member of the Fabaceae family. "Jungal jalebi," "Ganga imli," "Vilayati chinch," and "Kodukkappuli" are some vernacular names used in some parts of India. The observations reported below pertain to a single *P. dulce* tree from SACON Campus. Numerous species of different taxa visited the tree, according to the seasonality and tree's breeding phenology (Figure 1.1 and 2). I observed and recorded the birds and butterfly species visiting the tree for a year, from January 2021 to January 2022. I referred to Grimmett et al. (2016) and Cornell Lab of Ornithology (<https://www.birds.cornell.edu>) for bird species identification and Kehimkar (2016) for butterfly species.

A total of 26 bird species were seen on the *P. dulce* tree throughout the year, engaging in various activities, including roosting, foraging, feeding, resting, and preening (Figure 1.3-1.5). I categorised the birds and butterfly species into three groups: regular visitors (observed daily on the tree), seasonal visitors (observed only during the specific season), and occasional visitors (seen only sometimes throughout the year). Among the total visited birds, 58% of species were regular visitors, 31% were occasional visitors, and only 11% of species were seasonal visitors. Indian Peafowl (*Pavo cristatus*), Rufous Treepie (*Dendrocitta vagabunda*), Purple Sunbird (*Cinnyris asiaticus*), Purple-rumped Sunbird (*Leptocoma zeylonica*, Figure-1.4), Yellow-billed Babbler (*Turdoides affinis*), Red-vented Bulbul (*Pycnonotus cafer*), Red-whiskered Bulbul (*Pycnonotus jocosus*), Black Drongo (*Dicrurus macrocercus*), White-bellied Drongo (*Dicrurus caerulescens*), White-browed Bulbul (*Pycnonotus luteolus*), House Crow (*Corvus splendens*), Common Myna (*Acridotheres tristis*), Small Minivet (*Pericrocotus cinnamomeus*) and Pale-billed Flowerpecker (*Dicaeum erythrorhynchos*), were among the regular (15 species) visitors to the *P. dulce* tree that were frequently observed preening, hopping, and resting. The Spotted Owlet (*Athene brama*), another regular nocturnal visitor of the *P. dulce*

Figure 1. Flowers and fruits of the tree Madras thorn (*Pithecellobium dulce*) and different visited winged species. © Swapna Devi Ray



Fig 1.1. Flowers of *P. dulce*



Fig 1.2. Fruit of *P. dulce*



Fig 1.3. Malabar Parakeet
(*Psittacula columboides*)



Fig 1.4. Purple-rumped Sunbird
(*Leptocoma zeylonica*)



Fig 1.5. White-cheeked Barbet
(*Psilopogon viridis*)



Fig 1.6. Chestnut Bob
(*Iambrix salsala*)

tree, was observed resting and grooming at midnight during the feeding bouts. It would call daily, and as *A. brama* usually perches on the same branch of the tree, it was pretty simple to locate every day. During the year, I saw eight bird species as occasional visitors. These were Jerdon's Leafbird (*Chloropsis jerdoni*), Common Iora (*Aegithina tiphia*), Indian Golden Oriole (*Oriolus kundoo*), Black-naped Oriole (*Oriolus chinensis*), Blue-faced Malkoha (*Phaenicophaeus viridirostris*), Greater Coucal (Southern) (*Centropus sinensis parroti*), Indian Paradise-Flycatcher (*Terpsiphone paradisi*), White-cheeked Barbet (*Psilopogon viridis*, Figure-1.5). Only one individual of each species visited the tree and was observed resting for a short while. There were three seasonal bird species. Both the Rose-ringed Parakeet (*Psittacula kramera*, 2–5 individuals) and Malabar Parakeet (*Psittacula columboides*, 2–4 individuals, Figure-1.3) were observed feasting on the fruits during the fruiting season, coinciding with the monsoons. The Streak-throated Woodpecker (*Picus xanthopygaeus*, single individual), another seasonal migrant, was only seen frequently in the post-monsoon season.

Three lepidopteran species, Common Lineblue (*Prosotas nora*), Chestnut Bob (*Iambrix salsala*, Figure-1.6), and Yellow-Orange Tip (*Ixias pyrene*), were seen choosing the flowers of *P. dulce* as a nectar source. Many different butterfly species have previously been identified using *P. dulce* as an “early stages larval host plant” (Nitin et al., 2018; Karmakar et al., 2018; Churi and Kawthankar, 2023).

I observed how one tree of *P. dulce* is a resource for species from different taxa. Additionally, I noticed that livestock and goats, often brought to the campus by the shepherds of the nearby villages, utilised the tree as a source of fodder. Most intriguingly, during *P. dulce*'s flowering season, Asian Elephants (*Elephas maximus*) were seen eating the plant's young leaves, flower buds, and fruits. An Indian Palm Squirrel family (*Funambulus palmarum*) occupied the *P. dulce* tree, resting, roosting, playing, foraging, and displaying aggressive territorial behaviour towards other passing flying species. Although very few trees are on the SACON campus, they greatly impact the campus's biodiversity and are a great host to its winged visitors among others.

References

- Churi, P. & N. Kawthankar (2023). *Pithecellobium dulce* (Roxb.) Benth. – Madras Thorn, Manila Tamarind. In Kunte, K., S. Sondhi, and P. Roy (Chief Editors). *Butterflies of India*, v. 4.12. Published by the Indian Foundation for Butterflies. [URL: <https://www.ifoundbutterflies.org/pithecellobium-dulce>, accessed 2023/04/12.]
- Grimmett, R., Inskipp, C. & T. Inskipp (2016). *Birds of Indian Subcontinent*. Bloomsbury Publishing, New Delhi.
- Kehimkar, I. (2016). *BNHS Field Guides, Butterflies of India*. Bombay Natural History Society, Mumbai.
- Karmakar, T., R. Nitin, V. Sarkar, S. Baidya, S. Mazumder, V. K. Chandrasekharan, R. Das, G. S. G. Kumar, S. Lokhande, J. Veino, L. Veino, R. Veino, Z. Mirza, R. V. Sanap, B. Sarkar & K. Kunte (2018). Early stages and larval host plants of some northeastern Indian butterflies. *Journal of Threatened Taxa* 10(6): 11780–11799; <http://doi.org/10.11609/jot.3169.10.6.11780-11799>
- Nitin, R., V. C. Balakrishnan, P. V. Churi, S. Kalesh, S. Prakash & K. Kunte (2018). Larval host plants of the butterflies of the Western Ghats, India. *Journal of Threatened Taxa*, 10:11495–11550. <https://doi.org/10.11609/jott.3104.10.4.11495-11550>.

Nesting of *Calotes calotes* (Linnaeus 1758) in Anaikatti Forest Reserve

By: Mr Singh Gaurav Sanjay, Junior Research Biologist
Extension Division,

Correspondence: gaurav12wl@gmail.com

Calotes is a diverse and widely distributed genus in the Agamidae family (Pal et al. 2018). There are 26 species in the genus *Calotes* Cuvier, 1817, with the type species being *Lacerta calotes* Linnaeus, 1758. This genus is part of the subfamily Draconinae under the family Agamidae. Except for *Calotes nigriplicatus* Hallermann, 2000, on the Indonesian island of Ambon, the range of this genus is confined to South Asia and Indo-China. A large portion of Iran, Afghanistan, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Maldives, Nepal, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, southern China, portions of Myanmar, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam, Peninsular Malaysia, and sections of Indonesia are home to lizards that belong to the genus *Calotes*. In addition, *Calotes versicolor* has been introduced to the areas of Kenya, Borneo, Sulawesi, Seychelles, Mauritius, Oman, and Florida (USA) (Das et al. 2008; Manthey, 2008; Uetz and Hoek, 2016; Pal et al. 2018). The Western Ghats and Sri Lanka are home to the highest species richness in the genus. *C. calotes*, *C. grandisquamis*, *C. nemoricola*, and *C. cf. versicolor* are all found in the Western Ghats, although only *C. grandisquamis* and *C. nemoricola* are indigenous to the area (Pal et al. 2018). Current knowledge indicates that *C. calotes* is most frequently found in the arid regions of southern India and the wet regions of Sri Lanka at 1000 m above sea level (Pal et al. 2018). The species is also reported from the Nicobar Islands by Smith (1935); however, it was not included in later works (Harikrishnan et al. 2010). It is a diurnal species, preferring arboreal and semi-arboreal habits. The species is mostly seen in scrub, secondary deciduous forests, and plantations (Pal et al. 2018). The species can be distinguished from



Calotes calotes digging hole



Calotes calotes resting at the hole entrance



Calotes calotes resting at the hole entrance

other members of the genus by its SVL of 73.6–96.8 mm, 30–35 midbody scale rows, ventral scales that are equivalent to or slightly larger than laterals, the absence of a crescent-shaped patch of granular scales in front of the shoulder, and a row of 8–9 compressed supratympanic spines. On the field, the species can be identified by its uniform green colour on the dorsum and the head, with five narrow white transverse stripes that extend into fuzzy bands on the tail; Laterally, the head is a brilliant green colour, and the cheeks are lighter. The nuchal spines are brown, and there is a brick-red horizontal line from the posterior corner of the eye to the end of the orbit. The area behind the eye is darker, and there are just a few blackish scales below the eye; the gular scales are lighter and yellowish green. The back part of its tail is a dull greyish brown with alternating white bands, and its tympanum is a pale grey with a greenish edge and a uniform pale green colour on the ventral side (Pal et al. 2018).

The present article describes the nesting behavior of *C. calotes* from Coimbatore, observed once on 28 January and another on 27 February 2023. During the current observation, the gravid female of *C. calotes* was seen excavating a nest hole on 27 February 2023, at 4:40 pm near the SACON library building (11.092500, 76.786603). While the observation was being taken, the female's head was within the hole, and its forelimbs were flinging soil backwards. The female was digging the hole with one forelimb at a time. The female dug for 8 to 32 seconds at a time, pausing for 18 to 64 seconds in between. The female was panting and completely motionless during the interval of rest. The excavation lasted for almost 60 minutes. Later, the female positioned her posterior at the entrance to the nesting hole and began depositing eggs there. Throughout the egg-laying process, the entire body remained still. It took over 27 minutes for egg laying, after which the female concealed the nest's opening with soil and leaf litter. The habitat was covered with Java olive tree leaf litter (*Sterculia foetida*). The ovipositional behaviour of *C. calotes* was first observed in Sri Lanka (Gabadage et al. 2009), and recently reported in Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu (Sayyed et al. 2021). While previous literature suggested the nesting was between April and September (Deraniyagala 1953, Das and de Silva 2005), however, the current observation from January and February is supported by the observations of Gabadage et al. (2009) and Sayyed et al. (2021). The variation in nesting of *C. calotes* could be different due to seasonal changes. However, more studies on the breeding of *C. calotes* are required to know the exact nesting period of the species.

References

- Das, I. and A. de Silva. 2005. A Photographic Guide to Snakes and other Reptiles of Sri Lanka. New Holland Publishers, London, UK.
- Das, I., Charles, J.K. & Edwards, D.S. (2008) *Calotes versicolor* (Squamata: Agamidae)—A new invasive squamate from Borneo. *Current Herpetology*, 27 (2), 109–112.
- Deraniyagala, P.E.P. 1953. A Colored Atlas of Some Vertebrates from Ceylon. Volume Two. Tetrapod Reptilia. Ceylon National Museums Publication, The Ceylon Government Press, Colombo, Ceylon.
- Gabadage, D.E., A.A.T. Amarasinghe, and M.M. Bahir. 2009. Notes on the ovipositional behaviour of *Calotes calotes* (Linnaeus, 1758) (Reptilia: Agamidae) in Sri Lanka. *Herpetotropicos* 5: 21–24.
- Harikrishnan, S., Vasudevan, K. & Choudhury, B.C. (2010) A review of herpetofaunal descriptions and studies from Andaman and Nicobar Islands, with an updated checklist. In: Ramakrishna, Raghunathan, C. & Sivaperuman, C. (Eds.), Recent Trends in Biodiversity of Andaman and Nicobar Islands. Zoological Survey of India, Kolkata, pp 387–398.
- Manthey, U. (2008) Agamid Lizards of Southern Asia, Draconinae 1. Edition Chimaira, Frankfurt, 160 pp.
- Pal, S., Vijayakumar, S. P., Shanker, K., Jayarajan, A., & Deepak, V. (2018). A systematic revision of *Calotes* Cuvier, 1817 (Squamata: Agamidae) from the Western Ghats adds two genera and reveals two new species. *Zootaxa*, 4482(3), 401–450.
- Sayyed, A., Nale, A., Ahire, K., Bandgar, M., Awale, H., Jagtap, V., & Gokulakrishnan, G. (2021). Nesting and egg-laying behavior of a Common Green Forest Lizard, *Calotes calotes* (Linnaeus 1758), from Tamil Nadu, southern Western Ghats of India. *Reptiles & Amphibians*, 28(2), 318–319.
- Smith, M.A. (1935) The Fauna of British India, Including Ceylon and Burma; Reptilia and Amphibia. Vol. II. Sauria. Taylor and Francis, London, 440 pp.
- Uetz, P. & Hošek, J. (2016) The Reptile Database. Available from: <http://reptile-database.reptarium.cz> (accessed 6 May 2016)

Bombax ceiba – A Party Spot for Avifauna

By: Ms Sri Sowmiya M, Nature Education Assistant

Ms Bhawani Sabat, Junior Research Fellow

Mr Pradeeshwar RJ, M.Sc Student

Correspondence: srimsowmiya@gmail.com

Being in a mutually beneficial relationship, the trees and birds depend on one another for their survival and well-being. Trees are considered mostly as a home for birds and one of the base sources of food, and shelter. While we observe many birds perching, foraging, and breeding on trees, have you ever noticed how many birds share a single tree every day? In this article, we are narrating a tree *Bombax Ceiba* Linn. commonly called as "Red Silk Cotton Tree" or "Semal Tree" that we observed in our campus area (11°05'34.2"N 76°47'11.9" E). These dry and moist deciduous species blooms red-crimson flowers from February to April. Whenever they bloom, it is an attractive spot for wildlife species. A mixed species of birds flock and chirp together by perching on numerous branches over the tree. Some birds visit its flowers to collect nectar and for the stored water within the cup-shaped calyx, while some visit only for perching. In addition, these foraging birds play a major role in the pollination biology of this Red Silk Cotton Tree. We, therefore, planned to observe the tree for 30 minutes every day for a week (7 days) during its blooming season between February and March on our campus.



© Bhawani Sabat

We made a total of 210 minutes of observations. From 26 February to 03 March 2023, we spent selected alternative time intervals of 30 minutes each day from 6:00 am to 09:30 am. For the observation, we utilised Nikon Aculon 10x50 mm binoculars. We used Nikon Coolpix P510 and Canon 700D DSLR cameras to take pictures. During the visit, we observed 27 species of birds performing various behaviour (Table no.1). Overall, we noticed Passeriformes were the highlighting species among all others. Bird species encountered once during the observation were also recorded. Not only birds but squirrels were also noticed foraging on bombax flowers. In addition, the presence of honey bees on the tree acted as attractants for insect eaters. We compared our observations to studies from Southern Rajasthan that documented 29 bird species using Bombax trees (Jain et al., 2011) and another from Amaravati, Maharashtra, that recorded 81 bird species (Wagh et al., 2019). The studies suggested that Bombax is recommended to be one of the trees to be planted among avenues, gardens, and roadsides to attract birds and other faunal species.

Table no.1: Bird Species and their Interactions with ***Bombax ceiba*** Linn.:

S.No	Order	Common name	Scientific Name	Observations
1	Piciformes	Brown-capped Pygmy Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos moluccensis</i>	Perching
2	Piciformes	White-cheeked Barbet	<i>Psilopogon viridis</i>	Foraging, Perching
3	Coraciiformes	Blue-bearded Bee-eater	<i>Nyctyornis athertoni</i>	Perching
4	Psittaciformes	Malabar Parakeet	<i>Psittacula columboides</i>	Foraging, Perching
5	Psittaciformes	Vernal Hanging Parrot	<i>Loriculus vernalis</i>	Foraging, Perching
6	Passeriformes	Small Minivet	<i>Pericrocotus cinnamomeus</i>	Perching
7	Passeriformes	Black-hooded Oriole	<i>Oriolus xanthornus</i>	Foraging, Perching
8	Passeriformes	Indian Golden Oriole	<i>Oriolus kundoo</i>	Perching
9	Passeriformes	Ashy Drongo	<i>Dicrurus leucophaeus</i>	Foraging, Perching
10	Passeriformes	White-bellied Drongo	<i>Dicrurus caerulescens</i>	Perching
11	Passeriformes	Large-billed Crow	<i>Corvus macrorhynchos</i>	Nesting, Perching
12	Passeriformes	Purple-rumped Sunbird	<i>Leptocoma zeylonica</i>	Perching
13	Passeriformes	Purple Sunbird	<i>Cinnyris asiaticus</i>	Perching
14	Passeriformes	Golden-fronted Leafbird	<i>Chloropsis aurifrons</i>	Foraging, Perching
15	Passeriformes	Jerdon's Leafbird	<i>Chloropsis jerdoni</i>	Foraging, Perching
16	Passeriformes	Cinereous Tit	<i>Parus cinereus</i>	Perching
17	Passeriformes	Common Tailorbird	<i>Orthotomus sutorius</i>	Perching
18	Passeriformes	Red-whiskered Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus jocosus</i>	Foraging, Perching
19	Passeriformes	Red-vented Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus cafer</i>	Perching
20	Passeriformes	White-browed Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus luteolus</i>	Perching
21	Passeriformes	Greenish Leaf Warbler	<i>Seicercus trochiloides</i>	Perching
22	Passeriformes	Chestnut-tailed Starling	<i>Sturnia malabarica</i>	Foraging, Perching
23	Passeriformes	Common Myna	<i>Acridotheres tristis</i>	Foraging, Perching
24	Passeriformes	Jungle Myna	<i>Acridotheres fuscus</i>	Foraging, Perching
25	Passeriformes	Oriental Magpie Robin	<i>Copsychus saularis</i>	Foraging, Perching
26	Passeriformes	Asian Brown Flycatcher	<i>Muscicapa dauurica</i>	Perching
27	Passeriformes	Indian Blackbird	<i>Turdus simillimus</i>	Perching

References:

- Jain, V., Verma, S. K., Sharma, S. K., & Katewa, S. S., 2011. *Bombax ceiba* Linn.: As an umbrella tree species in forests of southern Rajasthan, India. *Research Journal of Environmental Sciences*, 5(8), pp 722.
- Praveen, J., & Jayapal, R., 2022. Taxonomic updates to the checklists of birds of India, and the South Asian region—2022. *Indian Birds*, 18(1), pp 1–3.
- Wagh, A., Qureshi, H., Tiwari, P., & Wagh, S., 2019. Birds associated with red silk-cotton plant (*Bombax ceiba* Linn.), Amravati district, Maharashtra. *International Journal of Basic and Applied Research*, 9 (1), pp 267-283.



Vernal Hanging Parrot



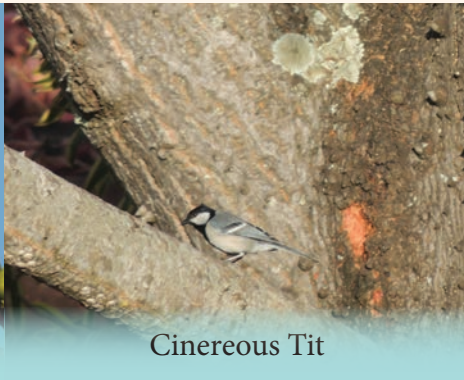
Oriental Magpie Robin



Large-billed Crow



Purple Sunbird



Cinereous Tit



Black-hooded Oriole



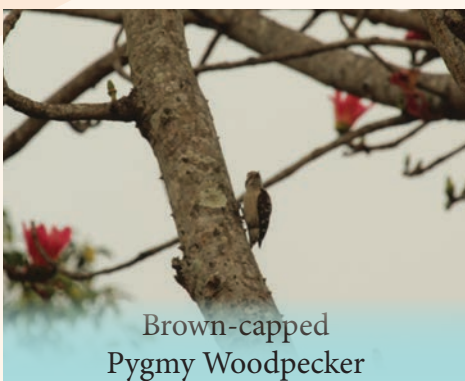
Indian Golden Oriole



Chestnut-tailed Starling



White-bellied Drongo



Brown-capped
Pygmy Woodpecker



Blue-bearded Bee-eater



Common Myna



Ashy Drongo

Photo credits

Image 1-6 © Bhawani Sabat

Image 7-12 © Sri Sowmiya M

Image 13 © Pradeeshwar RJ

सालिम अली पक्षिविज्ञान एवं प्रकृतिविज्ञान केन्द्र
Sálim Ali Centre for Ornithology and Natural History
South India centre of Wildlife Institute of India,
Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Govt. of India
आनैकट्टी, कोयम्बतूर - 641 108
Anaikatty (Post), Coimbatore – 641 108
Tamil Nadu, INDIA
Tele: +91 - 422-2203100, 109; Fax: +91 – 422 – 2203132
Website: www.sacon.in
Email: salimali@sacon.in, salimalicentre@gmail.com



Editorial Board

**Dr. Aditi Mukherjee, Dr. T. Ramesh &
Mr. R. Jayakumar**

Views expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily
those of the Editors or the Sálim Ali Centre for
Ornithology and Natural History.

To



January - March 2023

Printed & Published by the Director, Sálim Ali Centre for Ornithology and Natural History,
Anaikatty, Coimbatore - 641 108, Tamil Nadu, India.