

Biodiversity in Wild Fauna of North Sahyadri in Nashik District, Maharashtra

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ABSTRACT

Forests play an important role in the life and economy of any country. The moist and dry tropical deciduous forests provide natural and varied ecological habitats for the varied fauna. Nashik district is one of the northern part of Sahyadri in Maharashtra. On the basis of ecological aspects a scientific study has been carried out with respect to wild animal biodiversity in Nashik region. The present investigation was done to enlist, identify and number of different species of mammals, reptiles and birds. The moist and dry deciduous forests of north Sahyadri lead to a better natural habitat for wildlife.

INTRODUCTION

Forests play an important role in providing different types of habitats for the growth of biodiversity. The different types of vegetation patterns like trees, shrubs and herbs provide significant parameters for wild animal diversity. The tropical moist and dry deciduous forest of north Sahyadri provides natural and varied ecological habitats for fauna. Due to suitable natural habitats a number of mammals, reptiles and birds species are present in the forest. The floristic habitat provides nesting bed for birds in the form of tall trees, and thick grasslands and swampy areas for residence to different fauna.

The study area is a habitat of rich biodiversity in Maharashtra. Hence, it is necessary to protect and maintain the biodiversity in the area. The present investigation was undertaken to enlist, identify and quantity different species of mammals, reptiles and birds.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

North Sahyadri is a part of Nashik district covering areas of Peint, Surgana, Kalwan, Baglan, Trembakeshwer, Igatpuri, Dindori and Chandwad talukas. The district is located between latitudes 19°35' and 20°50' and longitudes 73°30' and 74°55' extending over an area of 15,582 sq. km. The forest cover shows hills, valleys and plains with large number of artificially planted trees of many species. The maximum temperature in the area remains 43°C, while minimum temperature 8.5°C.

The average rainfall is about 1000 to 1200 mm, well distributed from June to October. The destruction of animal habitat in the region, surrounding people, and grazing of agricultural crops by wild animals are routine phenomena causing man and animal conflict in this area.

The observations on mammals, birds and reptiles were taken from August 2006 to November 2008. The birds were identified as per standard handbook of birds of India and Pakistan by Ali and Ripley and book of Indian birds by Salim Ali (1979). Identification of the animals was made by standard texts (Deoras 1965, Shailaja 1978).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The district is reported to have abundant wildlife and birds a score of years ago (Anonymous 1975). Their disappearance from the area could be attributed mainly to the opening up of these forests, felling of forests for cultivation and poaching activities of the adivasis. *Panthera tigris* (tiger), *Acinoyx jubatus* (chitta), *Axis axis* (spotted deer), *Boselaphus tragocamelus* (Nilgai), *Melursus urisnus* (aswal) and various other animals, which were in considerable number prior to 1880, have now disappeared. The present position of game is precarious. The vary existence of animals in the district forests is in danger unless serious remedial measures are taken to rectify the situation. During field visits a large number of animals were recorded belonging to mammals, reptiles and birds.

Mammals: The common mammals found in the study area are given in Table 1.

Reptiles: Reptiles are the cold blooded animals and highly developed creatures. During the present study following dominant common reptiles were observed in various places of district, i.e., valleys, grasslands and plains. The list of reptiles encountered in the study area are given in Table 2.

Birds: Birds are warm blooded vertebrates able to survive in greater climatic extremes than other animals. The migrant birds commonly fly at up to 7000 m.

North Sahyadri is an important locality for birds because of the favourable natural set up. The area shows plains, valleys, hilly regions and aquatic zones with different plant communities. They include naturally occurring herbs, shrubs and different birds for their nesting as well as for residence.

Nashik district is bestowed with varied habitats where up to 325 bird species have been noted by Nature Conservation Society in 2004. In the present study different species of birds have been recorded. A list of different dominant birds with specific nomenclature is given in Table 3.

The present study revealed that the northern Sahyadri is a good native habitat for all the species discussed here. The present investigation recorded the common fauna comprising of 19 mammal species, 7 reptile species and 51 bird species. In the Nashik district, *Panthera tigris* was common in the area in the past but due to heavy deforestation this has become extinct in 1998. Hence, it is necessary to make protective measures to conserve the fauna.

Table 1: List of common mammals in the Nashik district.

| Sr. No. | English name | Latin name |
|---------|---------------|----------------------------------|
| 1. | Taras | <i>Hyaena hyaena</i> |
| 2. | Jackal | <i>Canis aureus</i> |
| 3. | Khokad | <i>Vulpes bengalensis</i> |
| 4. | Chowsingha | <i>Tetracerus quadricornis</i> |
| 5. | Dukkar | <i>Sus scrofa</i> |
| 6. | Ud manjar | <i>Paradoxurs hermaphroditus</i> |
| 7. | Bibalya | <i>Panthera pardus</i> |
| 8. | Barking deer | <i>Mmmtiacus muntjak</i> |
| 9. | Sasa | <i>Lepus nigricollis</i> |
| 10. | Salu (Sayal) | <i>Hystrix indica</i> |
| 11. | Khar | <i>Funa mbulus</i> |
| 12. | Ranmanjar | <i>Felis chaus</i> |
| 13. | Sambar | <i>Cervus unicolor</i> |
| 14. | Llandga | <i>Canis lupus</i> |
| 15. | Mongoose | <i>Harpester edwardsi</i> |
| 16. | Monkey | <i>Macaca mulatta</i> |
| 17. | Hanuman wanar | <i>Langur sp.</i> |
| 18. | Jalmanjar | <i>Smooth ottar</i> |
| 19. | Bat | <i>Cynopterus petropus</i> |

Table 2: List of common reptiles in the Nashik district.

| Sr. No. | English name | Latin name |
|---------|---------------|----------------------------|
| 1. | Nag | <i>Naja naja</i> |
| 2. | Rat snake | <i>Varanus inelicus</i> |
| 3. | Common crait | <i>Bungurus caeruleus</i> |
| 4. | Russel viper | <i>Vipera russelli</i> |
| 5. | Garden lizard | <i>Calotes versicolor</i> |
| 6. | Chamaeleon | <i>Chaemeleon vulgatis</i> |
| 7. | Ghorpad | <i>Qtyas mueosus</i> |

Table 3: List of common birds in Nashik district.

| Sr. No. | English name | Latin name |
|---------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1. | Grey heron | <i>Ardea cinerea</i> |
| 2. | Indian pond heron | <i>Ardeola grayii</i> |
| 3. | Cattle egret | <i>Casmerodius albus</i> |
| 4. | Large egret | <i>Casmerodius albus</i> |
| 5. | Little egret | <i>Egretta garzetta</i> |
| 6. | White naked stork | <i>Ciconia episcopus</i> |
| 7. | Great cormorant | <i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i> |
| 8. | Black ibis | <i>Pseudibis papillosa</i> |
| 9. | Greater flamingo | <i>Phenicopterus ruber</i> |
| 10. | Lesser whistling duck | <i>Dendrocygna javanica</i> |
| 11. | Common shelduck | <i>Tadorna tadorna</i> |
| 12. | Pintail | <i>Anas acuta</i> |
| 13. | Shikra | <i>Accipiter badius</i> |
| 14. | Booted eagle | <i>Hieraaetus pennatus</i> |
| 15. | Lesser spotted eagle | <i>Aquila pomarina</i> |
| 16. | Cinereous vulture | <i>Aegypius monachus</i> |
| 17. | Crested serpent eagle | <i>Spilornis cheela</i> |
| 18. | Peregrine falcon | <i>Falco peregrinus</i> |
| 19. | Grey francolin | <i>Famcolinus pondiceranus</i> |
| 20. | Indian peafowl | <i>Pavo cristatus</i> |
| 21. | Purple moorhen | <i>Porphyrio porphyrio</i> |
| 22. | Black winged stilt | <i>Himantopus himantopus</i> |
| 23. | Yellow wattleed lapwing | <i>Vanellus malbaricus</i> |
| 24. | River tern | <i>Sterna cunrata</i> |
| 25. | Brown rock pigeon | <i>Columba livia</i> |
| 26. | Red collared dove | <i>Streptopelia tranquebarica</i> |
| 27. | Rose ringed parakeet | <i>Psittacula krameri</i> |
| 28. | Brainfever bird | <i>Hirundo asiatica</i> |
| 29. | Indian cuckoo | <i>Cuculus micropterus</i> |
| 30. | Asia koel | <i>Eudynamis scolopacea</i> |
| 31. | Greater coucal | <i>Centropus sinensis</i> |
| 32. | Barn owl | <i>Tyto alba</i> |
| 33. | Spotted owlet | <i>Athene brama</i> |
| 34. | Sykes nightjar | <i>Caprimulgus mathrattensis</i> |
| 35. | Alpine swift | <i>Tachymarptis melba</i> |
| 36. | Small blue kingfisher | <i>Alcedo atthis</i> |
| 37. | Indian roller | <i>Coracina bengalensis</i> |
| 38. | Indian grey hornbill | <i>Ocyrops birostris</i> |
| 39. | Coppersmith barbet | <i>Megalania haemcephala</i> |
| 40. | Yellow fronted pied woodpecker | <i>Dendrocopos maharattensis</i> |
| 41. | Common swallow | <i>Hirundo rustica</i> |
| 42. | Brown shrike | <i>Lanius cristatus</i> |
| 43. | Eurasian golden oriole | <i>Oriolus oriolus</i> |
| 44. | Black drongo | <i>Dicrurus macrocercus</i> |
| 45. | Common myna | <i>Acridotheres tristis</i> |
| 46. | House crow | <i>Corvus splendens</i> |
| 47. | Jungle crow | <i>Corvus macrorhynchos</i> |
| 48. | Red vented bulbul | <i>Pycnonotus cafer</i> |
| 49. | Common babbler | <i>Turdoides caudatus</i> |
| 50. | Forest wagtail | <i>Dendronanthus indicus</i> |
| 51. | Small sunbird | <i>Nectarinia minima</i> |

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