
CHAPTER SEVEN

OTHER OBSERVATIONS

a) Feeding Activity :

Daily activities of Pariah kites start a little before Sunrise. All the kites depart from the communal roost 5 to 12 minutes after Sunrise, one by one or in pairs. They disperse in different directions for feeding. While departing from roost, unlike arrival they make no circular flights overhead and fly straight in a particular direction very rapidly as if they are in a hurry.

During daytime, the kites were observed feeding either solitarily or gregariously. Much of their daytime is spent in manoeuvring in the sky in search of food. Pariah kite being a regular scavenger it feeds upon a variety of animal matter including kitchen scraps, dead rats, animal offal and poultry dressing yard left-overs. Besides dead food it takes young animals, birds and insects on ground and on wing. The insects which were identified in the stomach of Pariah kites were Gryllotalpa africana, Chrotogonus sp., Brachytryps achutinus in addition to remains of mice, lizards, frog, chickens etc. (Mason and Lefroy, 1912). Ali and Grubh (1984) have reported the following items in the diet of Pariah kite, grasshopper/locusts (15 species), termites and winged ants (7 species), butterflies, moths (including their caterpillars (20 species), cockroaches, beetles, earwig, stick insect, cricket (17 species) lizards (4 species), snakes (5 species), rodents i.e. rats, mice & gerbille and shrew (8 species).

With such a wide choice of food Pariah kites normally manage to meet their daily food requirements in an inhabited

area quite easily, but their numeric abundance in the area depends upon the extent of the availability of food supply. Kites flew in varying numbers all over city area throughout the day, their numbers usually but not being large at any one spot. They were unevenly distributed over the entire area of human habitations.

The major sites where regular food supply is available are slaughter houses, carcass dumps, garbage dumps, mutton and fish shops and other locations where there are easy pickings to be had. Three such major sites were observed in Kolhapur city as feeding areas for the kites populations which included i) Central mutton and fish market, ii) Carcass dump near Ramanandnagar and iii) Feeding place at Subhashnagar (Fig. 2).

Crows often compete with kites and try to chase them away from the feeding grounds. Vultures are also seen feeding in the company kites in feeding areas. Table number 17 shows that the number of Pariah kites whitebacked vultures and Scavenger vultures at the above places during the period of investigations.

1) Central mutton and fish market :- This is the main marketing centre for mutton and fish in the Kolhapur city and is centrally located in the crowded urban area. There are 30 fish and 50 mutton stalls in the market. A group of 5-6 trees is located outside the market. A near by building was also used as a perching place. During the observations on an average 22 kites were observed feeding at this site (Table 17). The highest number of kites recorded at one time was 35 birds in roost.

Table 17 : Sightings of Pariah kite (Milvus migrans), white-backed Vulture (Gyps bengalensis) and Scavenger Vulture (Neophron percnopterus) at three feeding sites in Kolhapur city from January 1987 to March 1988.

Sr. No.	Site	Bird type	Monthly average number of birds seen at the sites per visit												Average No.	Total visits	Maximum no. seen at a time
			Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	April	May	June	July	Aug.	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.
1.	The Central meat and fish market	Pariah kite	18	20	21	16	20	22	26	32	24	30	23	15	--	20	--
		Whitebacked Vulture	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	--
		Scavenger Vulture	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	--
2.	Carcass dump at Ramanandnagar	Pariah kite	37	25	20	--	40	07	20	12	15	06	10	20	10	25	30
		Whitebacked Vulture	40	17	40	--	60	57	65	02	20	85	00	20	60	10	31
		Scavenger Vulture	00	00	00	--	00	00	00	00	00	00	01	01	00	00	00
3.	Subhashnagar	Pariah kite	30	35	16	00	00	18	--	--	40	70	84	59	60	40	59
		Whitebacked Vulture	00	00	00	00	00	00	--	--	00	00	00	00	00	00	00
		Scavenger Vulture	40	20	16	--	18	00	--	--	00	--	28	18	09	06	--

A sizeable number of crows were also seen during feeding time in company of kites. Kites and crows generally occupied nearby trees and the building waiting for tid-bits and offal which was thrown outside the mutton shops. From early morning birds could be observed at this place upto Sunset. Little before Sunset kites, crows leave this place and go towards their roosting places. During the study period of 15 months on two occasions dead kites were found in the market. Both these kites died because of the electric shock they received from the overhead electric wires. Whitebacked vultures and Scavenger vultures were never reported near this place during the period of investigations.

ii) Carcass dump site :- The carcass dumping site is located near Ramanandnagar, on the out skirts of the city on Southern boundry. Carcasses of livestock died naturally or accidents are regularly brought here. However regular processing of hides or bones does not take place on the site. Sometimes domestic animal carcasses skinned here. At this site kites, whitebacked vultures crows and occasionally scavenger vultures are recorded.

A monthly average of about 10 kites and 36 whitebacked vultures were recorded on the site, Only 1 scavenger vulture at a time was reported here and sizeable number of crows were also seen during study period. The highest recorded number of the individual species were kite 40, whitebacked vulture 114 and scavenger vulture 1 (Table 17).

Whitebacked vultures were seen over the feeding area almost throughout the day in all seasons. Their presence

Plate 11 : a) Feeding site of P.kite in Subhashnagar

**Plate 11 ; b) P.kites feeding on winged termites and other
insects in the morning at Subhashnagar.**



depended on the availability of carcass on the site.

Vultures often ride thermals during the warmer parts of the day; soaring in gigantic spirals and drifting in various directions. They sit on any available perch including tree, broken wall, a small construction and even on raised ground.

Before gathering of vultures, kites and crows collected in significant numbers to grab their share of the carcass and went away only when the vultures came kites were seen more in numbers in the post-breeding season as compared to the other seasons. Whitebacked vulture is a carrion feeder mostly soft meat and offal from large animal carcasses. The vultures gathers in large numbers at any carcass and their long, bare neck and sharp bills are adopted for feeding off the muscle and viscera of large ungulate carcasses (Houston, 1976). The head and neck, devoid of contour, feathers, enable them to push the head deep into any opening in a carcass and scoop out meat (Grubh, 1970).

Vultures without apparent selectiveness feed upon all soft tissues available in a carcass including tongue, eyes, muscles, heart, lung, intestine and kidney. The only items left untouched are the skin, bones, cartilage and hard connective tissues surrounding them. Occasionally they swallow piece of old dry bones. Similar observations were reported by Grubh (1974).

A carcass unless opened by animals or man is difficult for vultures to tackle especially when it is fresh and of full

grown large ungulates such as buffaloes and cattle (Altwell, 1963; Houston, 1947; Grubh, 1973) Vultures consume such preopened carcasses swiftly and more thoroughly. Consumption is faster and complete when hide has been removed. About 114 vultures were seen to finish off the skinned carcass of an adult bullock in 30 minutes. Similar observations have been made by Ali & Ripley (1968), Ali (op.cit.) and Houston (1974). A free living whitebacked vulture on an average would require a little over 300 gm of animal meat per day in order to maintain himself (Grubh, 1974) when a carcass is not fully demolished before dusk, some vultures will settle on trees near by dump upto late dusk, but most of vultures would moved directly to their roosting place which was nearby to this carcass dump. Next morning after sunrise the birds would start heading towards the carcass. They will first settle on a perch i.e. adjacent trees building, broken wall, rock etc. and then descend on the carcass (after they arriving of large number). Even when carcass were produced in the early morning hours the vultures arrived only after 3 to 4 hours after sunrise. On certain occasions the carcass was undected by the vultures and was left alone. Only twice the scavenger vultures were seen feeding at this place. They taking offal available from the carcasses.

iii) Feeding site at Subhashnagar :- This feeding site of Scavenger birds is near Subhashnagar-Jawarhalalnagar. At this place unwanted pieces of cattle skin from leather factory, still having edible tissues were thrown about on the open

ground for drying purpose. These pieces are later used in manufacture of dyes, fevicol etc. This place appears to be providing major feeding attraction for kites, scavenger vultures and crows.

An average of about 40 kites and 16 scavenger vulture and sizeable number of crows were seen on the site. Kites occupied trees and a large abandoned building on the site and also the agriculture fields. (Plate 11a)

Scavenger vulture with weaker beak is adopted to a variety of food items including tid-bits from garbage dumps maggots produced in putrefying carcass, fragments of soft meat, offal available from large and small carcasses and even large insects and human excrement. At this site scavenger vultures fed upon human excrement and also fragments of soft meat. The Scavenger Vultures used the feeding ground till late afternoon and left this place perches for their roost which was not recorded in the city limits during the investigation.

Kites were seen from morning upto sunset at this place. After sunset in November, December and January kites left the place and went towards roost which was seen close to this place. Crows also left just before sunset and went to some other roosts beyond the feeding ground.

In the characteristic flights on the thermals all the three study birds species were observed on the feeding grounds but strikingly the whitebacked vultures did not come to the site any time during the studies.

Plate 12 : a) Perching whitebacked Vulture at the
feeding site Ramanandnagar.

Plate 12 : b) Carcass Dump with Whitebacked Vultures.



iv) Slaughter House :

Slaughtering of animals for meat is being regularly carried out at certain sites. Kolhapur city has its municipal slaughter house at Bapat Camp (near Market Yard) which is used for small animals like goat and sheep. For large animals like buffalo and cattle there is another slaughter house at Sadar Bazar.

The slaughter houses were not observed regularly on the occasional observations some kites, crows were sighted at main pig slaughter house. This reflects upon the inefficient handling of waste disposal at this slaughter house. Wastes are dumped near the slaughter house in a small water tank.

v) Garbage Dump :

Garbage is temporarily dumped in small open places. Kites, crows are particularly attracted to these small places for a short period after fresh dumping. Certain animal wastes including those from poultry dressing yards dumped at those sites are a great attractions to kites.

At number of places in the city these are mini dumping grounds for the daily garbage which is collected by the municipal public health department and carried to five specific large dumping sites. The Pariah kite population visits these sites regularly in varying population density.

Shivaji University Campus on the South east corner of the city provides an excellent mixed habitat to a variety of birds including Pariah kite. These are gardens, of vast grass lands and the Rajaram Tank (40 ha). In the pre-monsoon months

Plate 13 : a) A new born Scavanger Vulture,
Neophron percnoptus.

Plate 13 : b) Scavanger Vultures at the feeding site
in Subhashnagar.

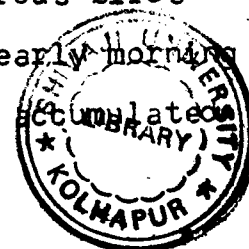


i.e. in the post breeding season, large flocks of P.kite were seen behind the Boys hostels. During March to June the number of kites was around 40. The birds used to be either busy in preening their feathers or just resting on ground. They were also observed engaged in feeding on termites, tid bits, garbage from hostel. A times they were observed in company of Scavanger Vultures near hostel sewage overflows perhaps enjoying on some creatures here and there. Just before sunset they all use to leave the place all of a sudden without any apparant reason. After May 1988 no kites were reported in the area as their favourite feeding and resting ground was used for massive Social Forestry Operations which changed the entire environment.

After the early monsoon showers, specially in the evenings, winged termites emerged from ground in many grassland areas i.e. University Campus, Rajendranagar, Kore Nagar etc. The kites were found in large numbers upto 150 kites at one place busy feeding on the winged termites in company of crows. Similarly at Sambhajinagar in an agriculture and a flock of kites was observed busy feeding on ground near an ant hole. After some premonsoon thunder storms the kites were seen feeding insects which emerge out of ground. On the overcast days the kites spent entire day, upto sunset, feeding and resting with intervals and than went to roost at the time of Sunset.

Similar observations have been made by Ali and Grubh (1984) on their studies on bird hazards. During the first monsoon showers, termites grow wings and rise up in the sky at dusk in swarms, but the rest provide nourishing food to several insectivorous birds including P.kite which came on to runways during the early morning hours to pick up the dead and dying termites that had accumulated around runway the previous night.

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b) Nesting Behaviour :

Post monsoon is the breeding season in Pariah kite and therefore during the investigations in the month of October to January a large number of kite nests were studied in Kolhapur city. The general profile of the nesting activities in the study area is given in detail in Table 18. Altogether 30 nests were spotted in the study area and out of them 21 nests were studied by periodic observations in subsequent visits to the nesting sites.

According to Ali (1941) Pariah kite nest is an untidy platform of sticks, iron, wire, rags, tows and rubbish of every discription. The nests observed during the study period had material like dry twigs, small sticks, paper, rags, dry leaves, feathers, cotton dry creepers etc. In addition to this one nest had an empty scrapped coconut.

There are reports of the same nest being used by kite year after year (Desai & Malhotra, 1979). Kites were seen adding extra material to the old nests (repair). The nest building activity begins in the month of October-November and at times continues till January. The nesting activity which follows the nest building activity continues till March-April.

The first step for a kite pair towards the construction of nest is the selection of suitable site. Normally kite nests are situated in a forking trunk or crotch of branches of large and prominent trees. The main tree species and the percentage of total nests observed on them is as follows, Cork tree, Millingtonia hortensis 12 (40 %), Banyan Ficus bengalensis

Table 18 : Observations on nesting activities of Pariah kite in Kolhapur city.

Nest No.	Nest site	Tree Species	1st Obs. Date	Nest size	Nest Observations		
					Successive Pro- Obs. date gress of nest	Kite in the pair	Single/ Young one
1.	Near Laxmi market	<u>Polyalthia longifolia</u>	20 Nov. 86	S	18 Dec. 86 L		
					18 Jan. 87 L	✓	Single
					18 Feb. 87	✓	Pair
					28 Mar. 87	-	-
						✓	✓
			20 Nov. 87	S	20 Dec. 87 NP	✓	Pair
					18 Jan. 88 NP	-	-
2.	Near Jay-Prabha Studio	<u>Ficus bengalensis</u>	6 Jan. 87	S	16 Feb. 88 NP	-	Single
					6 Mar. 88	-	-
3.	Near roost R-III	<u>Ficus religiosa</u>	8 Nov. 86	S	8 Jan. 87 L	✓	Single
					10 Feb. 87	-	-
			20 Oct. 87	S	14 Feb. 88 S	-	-
4.	Near Central meat market	<u>Ficus religiosa</u>	1 Jan. 87	S	2 Feb. 87 NP	-	-
			2 Jan. 88	NP	2 Feb. 88	-	-
5.	At Rankala tank	<u>Millingtonia hortensis</u>	6 Nov. 86	M	25 Feb. 87 L	✓	Single
			8 Nov. 87	S	7 Mar. 87	-	Pair
					20 Jan. 88 L	✓	Single
					17 Feb. 88	✓	Single
					3 Mar. 88		

Table 18 : (Contd.,)

6. At Rankala Tank	<u>Millingtonia hortensis</u>	6 Nov. 86	S	12 Jan. 87	L	✓	Single	
				17 Feb. 87		✓	Single	
				14 Mar. 88		-	-	
		8 Nov. 87	M	20 Jan. 88	L	✓	Single	
7. At Rankala Tank	<u>Millingtonia hortensis</u>			17 Feb. 88		✓	Pair	
				31 Mar. 88		-	-	✓
		6 Nov. 86	M	7 Feb. 87	L	✓	Single	
				27 Feb. 87		-	Pair	
8. Near Radha- Krishnana Children's Remand Home	<u>Ficus bengalensis</u>	6 Nov. 87	L	7 Jan. 88	L	✓	Single	
				20 Mar. 87		-	-	
				1 April 87		-	-	
		12 Oct. 86	S	12 Nov. 86	M	✓	-	
9. At Ramanand nagar	Dead			12 Jan. 87	L	✓	Single	
				12 Jan. 87		✓	Single	
				12 Feb. 87		-	Single	
				16 Mar. 88		-	Single	
		12 Dec. 87	S	16 Feb. 88	L	✓	Single	
				16 Mar. 88		✓	-	
				1 April 88		-	-	
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10. Rajarampuri 10th Lane	<u>Millingtonia hortensis</u>	11 Jan. 88	L	22 Feb. 88	L	✓	-	-
				22 Mar. 88		✓	-	-
				2 April 88			-	-
11. Shahumill Colony	<u>Eucalyptus sp.</u>	11 Nov. 86	L	22 Feb. 87	L	✓	Single	Young one
				12 Mar. 87		✓	-	-
12. Tarabai Park	<u>Millingtonia hortensis</u>	11 Nov. 87	S	22 Feb. 88	S	-	-	-
				12 Mar. 88	-	-	-	-
13. At Laxmipuzi	<u>Eucalyptus sp.</u>	12 Nov. 87	S	12 Dec. 87	S	✓	Single	-
				20 Jan. 88	L	-	-	-
				22 Feb. 88		-	-	-
				2 Mar. 88		-	-	-
14. At Kawala Naka	<u>Eucalyptus sp.</u>	29 May. 87	L	29 May 87	L	✓	-	-
				1 June 87	S	-	-	-
				10 June 87			-	-
		10 Nov. 87	L	22 Dec. 87	L	✓	Single	Young One
				22 Feb. 88		-	-	-
15. In Agriculture field	<u>Ficus bengalensis</u>	12 Dec. 87	L	12 Jan. 88	L	✓	Single	Young One
				16 Feb. 88		✓	-	-
16. In Agriculture field	<u>Ficus bengalensis</u>	12 Dec. 87	L	13 Jan. 88	L	✓	-	-
				17 Feb. 88		✓	-	-
				10 Mar. 88			Pair	Young one

Table 18 : (Contd..)

17. In Agriculture field	<u>Ficus bengalensis</u>	12 Jan. 88	S	17 Feb. 88	-	-	-
18. At Shahupuri	<u>Eucalyptus sp.</u>	10 Oct. 87	S	10 Dec. 87	L	✓	Single
				1 Jan. 88		✓	Single
				2 Feb. 88		✓	Single
				20 Mar. 88	S	✓	Single
				22 Mar. 88		-	Pair
				1 April 88		-	-
19. Pratibhanagar	<u>Eucalyptus sp.</u>	20 Nov. 87	S	11 Jan. 88	S	-	-
				18 Feb. 88		-	-
				11 Mar. 88		-	-
20. At Laxmipuri Police Station	<u>Millingtonia hortensis</u>	20 Jan. 88	L	12 Feb. 88	L	-	Pair
21. At Shalini Photo Studio	<u>Ficus bengalensis</u>	20 Oct. 87	L	12 Dec. 88	L	-	Pair
				12 Feb. 88		-	Young One
				12 Mar. 88			,"
22. At Dasara Chowk	<u>Millingtonia hortensis</u>	20 Feb. 87	S				
23. At Subhash-nagar	<u>Ficus bengalensis</u>	11 Feb. 88	L				
24. ,,	,"	,"	,"				

Table 18 : (Contd..)

25.	Tarabai Park	<u>Millingtonia hortensis</u>	12 Dec. 88
26.	"	"	"
27.	At Bawada	"	"
28.	"	"	"
29.	"	"	"
30.	In Agriculture field	<u>Ficus bengalensis</u>	"

Nest Size - S. Small, M-Medium, L- Large,

NP- No. Progress in nest size.

- Preence.

X - Absence.

feeding sites had no success.

Considering the maximum number of nests recorded in the crowded areas in city and the high observed success in nesting it is clear that the Pariah kite depends on human settlements not only for feeding but also for the vital nesting activity. The human settlement in the crowded area provides plenty of wastes used by kites as nest building material similarly a wide spectrum of food in the form of tid-bits and garbage is available in plenty in close vicinity. This is a very favourable condition for the nesting pairs and the fast growing youngs as they require significant quantity of food at short intervals.

The Banyan trees, Ficus bengalensis were observed mostly in and around agriculture lands and the nests on them were as compared to the nests from other areas, larger in size. Majority of the cork tree Millingtonia hortensis were in crowded locality where as the Eucalyptus trees were near the new settlements.

All the trees near settlements were eucalyptus where 50% the success in the nesting activity was recorded. Out of four nest sites reported near feeding grounds nests on Banyan tree Ficus bengalensis near Subhashnagar and Central meat market and another on a dead unidentified tree near carcass dump were observed. There was no success in the nesting activity on these trees, It appears that the feeding grounds attract lot of inter and intra species competition for food which makes adverse impact on the nesting activity in the near vicinity. The three nests near a water body, Rankala tank were on cork tree. One of the tree was also showed by a crow nest, young birds were

Table 19 : Habitat utilization by Pariah kite in Kolhapur city.

Sr. No.	Nest-tree	n	%	Comments
1.	Cork <u>Millingtonia hortensis</u>	12	40.00	These trees were sparsely scattered in crowded area and near water reservoir.
2.	Banyan <u>Ficus bengalensis</u>	9	30.00	These trees were in the <u>agri.</u> field and sparsely scattered.
3.	Eucalyptus <u>Eucalyptus sp.</u>	5	16.66	Mostly these trees were near residential settlements
4.	Peepal <u>Ficus religiosa</u>	2	6.66	These trees also sparsely scattered
5.	Ashok <u>Polyalthia longifolia</u>	1	3.33	This tree at crowded bazar
6.	Other tree Dead tree	1	3.33	This tree in the outskirts of the city.

Plate 14 : Pariah kite nesting site on Indian Cork tree
Millingtonia hortensis at Rankala Tank.



Table 20 : Habitat selection and success of nesting in Pariah kite.

Sr. No.	Nest	In Agri. Field	In crowded area	Near settle-ment	Near feeding site	Near roosting site	At water body	Near ruderal environ-mental	Total Nest
1.	Nest number	2,15, 16,17, 29.	1,10,12,13, 20,22,25,26, 27,28,30	11,14, 18,19	4,9,23, 24	3,8	5,5,7	21	30
2.	Observed nests	4	5	4	2	2	3	1	21
3.	Observed nest tree	B,B, B,B	A,C,C,C,E	E,E,E, E	D,P	P,B	C,C,C,C	B	70%
4.	Nest tree	B,B	A,C,C	E,E	-	B	C,C,C,C	B	57%
5.	% of successful nest	50%	60%	50%	0	50%	100%	100%	

B = Banyan; A = Ashok; C = Cork; E = Eucalyptus; P = peepal; D = Dead.

noticed in the three nests in February.

Out of the 21 nests studied 12 (57 %) were successful i.e. young birds were observed in them. In case of the remaining 9 nests (43 %) either the nests were not built completely or abandoned by the kite pairs after formation. The real cause of the nests failure could not be confirmed. Apparently in two cases human disturbance was responsible for the failure in utilization of the nests i.e. No. 11 and 18, where the branches of the eucalyptus trees were cut during breeding season.

An important features of the Pariah kite nesting behaviour is that the nesting responsibility is shared by both the partners. The pair also guards the nest and its territory from other intuding kites. In all the nests studied at no time there were two kite nests observed on the same tree. Except at nest No. 8 where a new nest was attempted near the old nest, at the end only the old nest was occupied. Pariah kite does not resist the nest of other bird species on the same tree on nest site No. 5, two crow nests were observed.

As in most of the cases when the nests were observed in the afternoon only one partner was found at the nest. This may be because the other partner had gone to collect food material. Normally at the end of the breeding season the youngs were seen alone in the nest without parents.

An attempt was made to evaluate the success of breeding

Table 21 : Reuse of the nesting site and success of reproduction
in Pariah kite Milvus migrans.

Sr. No.	Nest No.	Nest tree type	1986-87	1987-88
1.	1	Ashok	✓	x
2.	8	Banyan	✓	x
3.	5	Cork	✓	✓
4.	6	Cork	✓	✓
5.	7	Cork	✓	x
6.	14	Eucalyptus	x	✓

in old nests (Table 21). The study of six nests reused by kites revealed that in the breeding season of 1986-87, 5 nests out of that 6 were successful but in 1987-88 only in three nests young one were seen i.e., success of reused nest out of them nest No. 5 and 6 on Cork tree were successfully reused for the second time and young one was also seen in nest No. 14 on Eucalyptus tree in the year i.e., 1987-88.