

Breeding biology of Yellow-throated Bulbul (*Pycnonotus xantholaemus*) in Gingee Hills, Villupuram Forest Division, Eastern Ghats, Southern India.



Submitted to

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Summary

To Study of breeding biology of *Pxantholaemus*, field surveys were followed in the Gingee hills. Further habitat and threats also documented. The various habitats such as thorny rocky patches and dry deciduous were covered during the study period. The following species nesting were recorded during entire survey, which includes *Pycnonotus xantholaemus*, *P.cafer*, *P.jocosus*, *P.luteolus*, *Falco peregrinus*, *Acridotheres tristis* and *Saxicoloides fulicata*.

A total of two nests of *Pxantholaemus* were recorded during the survey in the Gingee range forest in Tamil Nadu. Previous records of *Pxantholaemus* nesting in ground and thorny plant vegetation. Current records show this species nesting in cave areas also.

Pxantholaemus is known very restricted area, threats such as wood collection and grazing were noticed in the rocky habitat. Exchange of information with on-ground staff of the Tamil Nadu Forest Department was also undertaken and they were very supportive of the study. In order to inform the local peoples regarding the plight of the *Pxantholaemus* and other avifaunal species nesting.

Introduction (include description of community involved/species/habitat and importance of area for birds)

Species

Bulbuls (Family Pycnonotidae) are one of the large groups of passerines of the Old World tropics, widespread in southern Asia, Africa, Madagascar, islands of the Western Indian Ocean (Sibley and Monroe 1990; Fishpool and Tobias 2005). They occupy a broad range of habitats from semi-arid deserts to rainforests, with centre of diversity in the Afrotropical and Sundaic regions. Of the 27 genera currently treated within the Family Pycnonotidae, 11 are exclusively Asian, 14 are restricted to Africa and islands of the Western Indian Ocean while the remaining 2 occur in both continents. The Family comprises nearly 140 species and 355 subspecies (Fishpool and Tobias 2005) with several complex taxonomic uncertainties (Pasquet *et al.* 2001; Fishpool and Tobias 2005; Moyle and Marks 2006). Only a few widespread and lowland Pycnonotids have been well studied, in their native and other introduced ranges. Information on the ecology of mid and higher elevation bulbuls are restricted mostly to natural history notes (Fishpool and Tobias 2005). Moreover, information on the life history traits, including developmental rates and nesting success, for majority of the species is not known. Of the 22 species of bulbuls recorded in India (Rasmussen and Anderton 2005), 8 are seen in southern or peninsular India. Most of these species are common in their habitat and are open-cup nesters. Detailed examination of the breeding ecology of these birds is important to understand the evolution of life history strategies of open-cup nesting birds in the tropics.

The aim of the present study was to provide a detailed description of the breeding biology of Yellow-throated Bulbul. The Yellow-throated Bulbul *Pycnonotus xantholaemus* (Jerdon 1845) is an endemic bird to southern India (Ali & Ripley 1987, Birdlife International 2012, Subramanya et al. 2006). The species locally distributed in Southern Andhra Pradesh, Eastern Karnataka, Eastern Kerala and Northern Tamil Nadu (Subramanya et al. 2006, Narayan et al. 2006). Yellow-throated Bulbul is a resident and it generally associated with boulder strewn hill sides or rocky outcrops with dense undergrowth, usually under either thorn scrub-jungle, scrub jungle, mixed dry or moist deciduous forest from 300-1800 m (Birdlife International 2012). A plain uncrested grey and yellow bulbul with bright yellow crown, chin and throat.

Thighs and under tail-coverts yellow, wings and tail brown, the latter tipped with pale yellow. Sexes alike (Ali & Ripley 1987). The breeding biology of this species is poorly known and only limited characteristics of the nests and eggs have been described (Venkatesamappa and Chaitra 1999; Subramanya et al. 2006).

Habitat and importance of area for birds

Gingee is one of the Panchayath towns in Villupuram district of Tamil Nadu. Gingee hills located 12°14'N, 79°23' E, It has an average elevation of 92 Meters (301 ft). The town comprises of a number of small and large hills, Rocky outcrops are found here and there inside the town area. The town has undulating terrain with hard rocky surface. The study area was carried out in Gingee Range covering 7043.74 hec, it is divided having five Reserve Forests namely, Muttakadu R.F(1298.77 hec), Siruvadi R.F(1441.05 hec), Padipallam R.F(1457.27 hec), Pakkam Malai (East) R.F (2237.90 hec) and Karai R.F (608.75 hec). This range forests habitat is mainly thorny scrub, Tropical dry deciduous forest and Tropical dry evergreen forest (Balachandran et al.2015 & Smart et al.2014).

Community involved.

Gingee Forest Range staffs and Cattle grazers of Gingee hills.

Project objectives

- To systematically survey for identifying nest-site location of Yellow-throated Bulbul *Pycnonotus xantholaemus*.
- To describe nesting ecology of *P.xantholaemus*.
- To describe ecological isolation of *P.xantholaemus* with other sympatric bulbul species present in Gingee Hills.
- To identify the on-going and potential threats to the species and habitat.

Methods (describe the activities you carried out including how you carried out your evaluation of the project)

- During this survey period (February 2015 to October 2015) totally 45 hills are surveyed once, in this hills 10 locations are selected for detailed nesting survey.
- Totally 200 km walked during this survey period for the nesting survey in Gingee Range Forest.
- Association with the Villupuram Forest Division staffs for conservation of *P.xantholaemus* habitat in coming years.
- Submitted short note about Cave nesting of *Pycnonotus xantholaemus* for Birding ASIA.

Project evaluation results (include the number of people who were reached by your project and the number who took part in your evaluation)

- *P.xantholaemus* two cave nests are recorded in Gingee Hills, Villupuram Forest Division, Tamil Nadu
- Villupuram Forest Division staffs and cattle grazers are sensitised about importance of *P.xantholaemus*.
- Sálím Ali Centre for Ornithology (SACON) Scientists and researchers of took part in the evaluation.

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