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# A large congregation of black-shouldered kite *Elanus caeruleus* at Ranthambore National Park

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According to Khacher (op. cit.), there is lack of quality data collection. Besides this, I feel that the confusion is mainly due to the common English name grey pelican used by Ali and Ripley (1983) for *P. philippensis* and by Dharmakumarsinhji (1954) for *P. crispus*. Thus, it can be concluded that the occurrence of this

species is not established in Gujarat state.

November 29, 1999      B. M. PARASHARYA  
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### 9. A LARGE CONGREGATION OF BLACK-SHOULDERED KITE *ELANUS CAERULEUS* AT RANTHAMBORE NATIONAL PARK

Naoroji (1987) has reported a large communal gathering of over 15 black-shouldered kites from Ranthambore National Park, Rajasthan, India, on an afternoon in May 1984. A larger gathering of more than 50 kites was observed in the same Park, in the last week of May 1999, at about 1600 hrs near the Raj Bagh Lake (26° 01' 49" N, 76° 28' 03" E). Although the black-shouldered kite is distributed throughout India, such a phenomenon has not been reported from within the country. In Africa, it is known to roost communally, sometimes in very large congregations (Brown *et al.* 1982). Even at Ranthambore, though they are known to roost communally, such a large number has not been recorded so early in the day before roosting time (Naoroji 1987).

What is interesting is the striking similarity in both these observations that are 15 years apart and from the same area. During another research investigation, I had stayed for five continuous weeks, making trips (each of three hours duration) both in the morning and evening, everyday, but had not noticed such a gathering on any other occasion.

The species is known for its nomadic movements throughout its distributional range (del Hoyo *et al.* 1994) and in Africa is known to appear in areas with temporary rodent abundance and above average rainfall (Brown *et al.* 1982, Cramp and Simmons 1980). In India, especially at Ranthambore, it would be interesting to see if such gatherings occur every year and if local rainfall patterns or abundance of prey influences

it. Could such a gathering have significance in migration, seasonal or nomadic population movements?

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January 8, 2000

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10. ATTEMPTED FEEDING BY A SHIKRA *ACCIPITER BADIUS*,  
FAMILY ACCIPITRIDAE, ON BUFFSTRIPED KEELBACK  
*AMPHIESMA STOLATA*, FAMILY COLUBRIDAE

According to Ali and Ripley (1987), the food of the shikra *Accipiter badius* includes all live animals of manageable size, like mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians and various insects. Its reptilian food includes various kinds of lizards, e.g. *Calotes versicolor*, *Mabuya carinata*, *Hemidactylus* sp., and *Lygosoma* sp. However, Naoroji (1985) recorded *Calotes versicolor* as its main food.

On January 7, 1999 while walking on the roadside along *Chander More*, a wetland in Murshidabad district, West Bengal at around 1400 hrs, I saw a shikra *Accipiter badius* cross the road in front of me and fly overhead, carrying a rope-like object in its feet. As it settled on an eucalyptus tree, some 70 m away, I moved quickly

near the tree and found it was holding a small snake, 30-40 cm in length. I identified the snake as a buffstriped keelback *Amphiesma stolata*, the commonest snake in this area. The shikra had, perhaps, captured it in the nearby marsh as it came from that direction when I first saw it. The snake was still alive, and in trying to free itself, had coiled around the leg of the shikra, which looked uncomfortable. A few minutes later it flew off with its prey and I could not see the fate of the snake.

November 9, 1999

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