normally lay at 24-hour intervals. The eggs were green-blue and unspotted; they measured 19.9 × 25.8 mm, 19.6 × 24.9 mm, and 19.6 × 24.8 mm. These dimensions are comparable with the 18 × 25 mm reported by Banks and Banks (1987).

Nesting behaviour

Observations of nesting behaviour were conducted with 8 × 42 binoculars from a concealed position 15 m from the nest. Before egg-laying, the nest was infrequently visited by two laughingthrushes, although the entire group roosted c.20 m away. Incubation was carried out by at least two birds, although neither of the ringed birds were observed incubating. Usually, the group would approach to within 5–10 m of the nest, and one bird would fly directly to the nest to take over incubation. Incubation change-overs occurred every 10–30 minutes during early morning (07h00–08h00) and late evening (17h30–18h30), but much less frequently during most of the day (every 60–90 minutes). The group only rarely interacted with other species during incubation and remained within an area of about 150–200 m diameter, considerably smaller than the area they normally occupied.

On 11 January 2004, we noticed more frequent incubation change-overs, with three birds coming to the nest for the first time. On the next morning we confirmed that all three eggs had hatched. In contrast to incubation, all group members participated in feeding the chicks. Usually, the group approached the nest together, with birds sequentially feeding the chicks; the last bird to feed would then brood the chicks. Both ringed birds fed the chicks. Time intervals between feeding were similar to the intervals between incubation change-overs. The flock continued to move within the same small area and to use the same roosting site. Food items delivered to the nest appeared to be mostly insects, including small caterpillars, moths and grasshoppers.

At c.17h00 on 21 January, we found the group below the nest, uttering mobbing calls, and the nest was empty, presumably having been depredated. The day before we had noted the laughingthrush group mobbing a Sri Lanka Blue Magpie *Urocissa ornata* that approached within 12 m of the nest. It is possible that the magpie was the nest predator, since it is known to have depredated the nests of two other species in the same area (Chaminda Ratnayake verbally 2004). Nest predation appears to be a high risk for this species, as three of the four nests that have been observed have been predated, with the exception being the nest seen by Siriwardhene (2004), found three days before all the chicks fledged.

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First record of Lesser Adjutant *Leptoptilos javanicus* for Bhutan

ANWARUDDIN CHOUDHURY

At about 16h00 on 25 September 2004, I observed a Lesser Adjutant *Leptoptilos javanicus* in flight over Mathanguri (26°48′N 90°58′E) on the border between India (Manas National Park, Baksa district, Assam) and Bhutan (Royal Manas National Park). The bird circled over both sides of the border, before landing in a small marsh 1 km from the border on the Indian side, from where my observations were made.

The bird was easily identified by its long stout bill, glossy black upperparts and white underparts. Greater Adjutant *Leptoptilos dubius* was eliminated by the glossy black (not bluish-grey) upperparts, lack of grey greater

coverts and tertials, naked orange-yellow (not reddish-orange) neck and head, and lack of large white neck-ruff.

Lesser Adjutant is common in Baksa district, but this was the first time I had seen one near Mathanguri, despite regular visits to Manas National Park since the 1980s (although most were during the drier winter season when the small marsh near Mathanguri dries out). Previously, on 31 July 2004, I saw up to ten Lesser Adjutant soaring above Doomni tea garden, also in Baksa district, Assam, 5 km from the international border. On 26 October 2004, four were seen flying southwards high over the eastern part of Manas National Park within 6 km of the international border. While the species may not be a regular visitor at Mathanguri, it is likely to occur more frequently in the east of Baksa district and in Udalguri district (near Daifam in Bhutan), where paddy fields have replaced forest right up to the international border in places.

Only two species of stork had been previously recorded in Bhutan: Black Stork *Ciconia nigra* and Woolly-necked Stork *C. episcopus* (Grimmett *et al.* 1998, Inskipp *et al.* 1999). Lesser Adjutant had not previously been recorded, although it is found in good numbers in Assam (Choudhury 2000) and in varying abundance elsewhere in India and South-East Asia to the Greater Sundas. It is listed as Vulnerable because it has a small population which is declining as a result of habitat loss and degradation, hunting and disturbance (BirdLife International 2004).

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Foraging techniques of the Chinese Pond Heron *Ardeola bacchus*

STEPHANIE J. TYLER

Members of the heron family (Ardeidae) most commonly forage either by 'standing still' and awaiting prey, in an upright or crouched posture, then spearing the prey when it comes within reach, or by 'walking slowly' searching for prey on land or in shallow water (del Hoyo *et al.* 1992). Sometimes birds will move faster or even run after prey. 'Foot-probing' where a foot is probed into the mud, or 'foot-stirring' where a foot is rapidly moved about in mud, water or vegetation are also frequently used techniques by some species. Rarely, aerial fly-catching or diving may be employed; so too the techniques of 'hovering', where a bird flies over water, pausing in mid air to capture prey, or 'hovering-stirring' where the bird strikes the water surface with its legs to confuse prey.

Foraging techniques used by Chinese Pond Herons *Ardeola bacchus* are little known (del Hoyo *et al.* 1992) but birds most commonly appear to use the techniques of 'standing still' or 'walking slowly'. The following brief observations on Chinese Pond Herons were made in Vietnam between September 2003 and February 2004.

In rural areas of Vietnam, birds were frequently seen throughout the day using the 'standing still' technique, hunched by ditches or in rice paddies, awaiting an opportunity to lunge at and spear prey, or 'walking slowly' after prey. However, at a lake, Ho Bay Mau (c.500 × 250 m), in Lenin Park in Hanoi in northern Vietnam, Chinese Pond Herons fed in a very different way. Numbers varied during the six-month period from less than a dozen to over 80. Pond herons roosted for much of the day in trees on a small island in the lake. Their peaks of foraging activity were, as in Hong Kong (del Hoyo *et al.* 1992), just after dawn and before dusk, but hunting was observed throughout the day, particularly in the morning up to 10h30.

Pond herons typically flew out from tree perches to snatch prey that they had spotted on the surface of the lake. During part of the observation period there were large numbers of dead and dying fish available because of high nutrient levels from storm overflows and sewage drains, and consequent low oxygen levels in the water. A total lack of aquatic or emergent vegetation exacerbated the problem. Another frequent technique was for one or more pond herons to fly out from the island and fly over the surface of the lake. The bird(s) thereby frightened shoals of fish which then swam quickly close to the surface where the bird(s) could catch them. Forays by groups of pond herons, which were reminiscent of the feeding behaviour of marsh terns *Chlidonias* spp., lasted for several minutes with the birds flapping slowly across the lake, sometimes dropping lower or stalling for a closer look. On seeing prey a bird dangled its legs down and beat its wings rapidly to maintain its position, hovering over the spot. It then dropped feet first into the water, quickly snatching the fish in its bill before rising from the water and flying to the island trees to eat the fish. Sometimes the