

Breeding record of the Indian Courser *Cursorius coromandelicus* (Gmelin, 1789) in Koonthankulam Bird Sanctuary, Tamil Nadu

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Koonthankulam Bird Sanctuary (08°28'12''N & 77°43'48''E) is a unique area effectively protected and managed with the cooperation of the Koonthankulam Village community. This 129.33 hectare area is known for the massive heronry, which is the largest breeding water bird reserve in southern India, located 35km south of Tirunelveli Town. Amidst the cacophony of Painted Stork fledglings, on 14th May 2008, a bright sunny morning, as we were walking around the dry bed of Kadankulam Tank, a part of the Bird Sanctuary, five unfamiliar birds crossed our path in a jiffy. Perplexed by the sighting, we followed the track and were excited to identify them as Indian Courser. At this point in time we were not aware that something more exhilarating was in store for us. They were nothing but four nests with two eggs each of the Indian Courser on the ground (Figures 1 & 2), separated by each others approximately with 15m. So perfect was camouflage, the thick spotted eggs, easily mistaken for scattered stones on the dry ground, which informed us that we just missed seeing the birds incubating!

According to Rasmussen & Anderton (2005) and BirdLife International (2013), Indian Courser is one of the resident and locally migrant birds found from Indus Valley and Nepal, east to south-west Bengal and south through drier parts of peninsular India to Sri Lanka. Ali & Ripley (1969) and Praveen *et al.* (1997) highlighted that it is a common bird but rather patchily distributed everywhere; also partly nomadic and or locally migratory. According to Grimmett *et al.* (1999) there are only isolated records of the species from southern peninsula. Even though Santharam (1996) and Ratnam (2004) reported its



Fig 1. Incubating Indian Courser (photo by S. Jayakumar)



Fig 2. Eggs of Indian Courser (photo by S. Jayakumar)

occurrence from Chengalpet and Tirunelveli districts, no information is available on its breeding from Tamil Nadu. Avid birdwatcher and local Sanctuary keeper Mr. Bal Pandi (per. comm). at Koonthankulam Sanctuary confirms that Indian Courser was not seen breeding in the Sanctuary until 2008 and subsequently Chinna Sathan & Bal Pandi (2009) confirmed the Indian courser's breeding in

Koonthankulam. Therefore, it concludes that the breeding observation of the species in the

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Sanctuary is a new addition to the breeding range of the species. More intensive monitoring, detailed studies and appropriate measures to protect the breeding ground of the species from human disturbances are essential for the conservation of this species.

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Announcement

World Wetlands Day 2015: Wetlands for Our Future

World Wetland Day is celebrated 2 February each year. This day marks adoption of Ramsar Convention on Wetlands on 2 February 1971 in Iran. Theme of this year's day is "Wetlands for Our Future". <http://www.worldwetlandsday.org/en/>

Since 1997, the Ramsar Secretariat has provided materials so that government agencies, non-governmental organizations, conservation organizations, and groups of citizens can help raise public awareness about the importance and value of wetlands.

The future of humanity depends on wetlands

They purify and replenish our water, and provide the fish and rice that feed billions. Wetlands act as a natural sponge against flooding and drought, and protect our coastlines. They burst with biodiversity, and are a vital means of storing carbon. Unfortunately, these benefits are not widely known. Often viewed as wasteland, 64% of our wetlands have disappeared since 1900.

Here's how you can get involved:

Download materials: <http://www.worldwetlandsday.org/en/documents>

Photo Contest: A Wetlands Youth Photo Contest will ask entrants aged 15-24 to snap and upload a picture taken in a wetlands location between 2 February and 2 March. The photographic challenge is to highlight one of the many ways wetlands ensure our future.

Make a pledge for Wetlands: Make a personal commitment to take action for wetlands. Starting on 2 February 2015.