

Apparent depredation of an egg of Pheasant-tailed Jacana by a House Crow

Magarmudian Wetland (32.0920 N, 75.3757 E) is a small wetland near a village of the same name, to the north of Gurdaspur, Punjab. On 24 August 2024, during a birdwatching visit there, at about 0800 h, the second author noticed a Pheasant-tailed Jacana *Hydrophasianus chirurgus* chasing a House Crow *Corvus splendens*. The crow circled back, to be again chased away by the jacana.

The observers suspected that the crow was trying to snatch eggs from a jacana nest. This was confirmed, as after a few more unsuccessful attempts, the crow was able to take one egg. It held the egg in the bill and was again being chased by the jacana. There were two jacanas at the nest site and the nest was continuously being guarded by one, while the other kept

chasing the crow. However, the crow was able to escape with the egg which it presumably consumed.

As we became busy in observing other birds, it was seen that the House Crow made repeated attempts to steal more eggs that must have been there in the jacana's nest. The jacana repeatedly chased away the crow. As the bird-watching session concluded around 0900 h, the interaction was still continuing.

Generally, Pheasant-tailed Jacana can be sexed using some visual cues. For instance, females are heavier than males (Dunning 2007) and females have longer wing spurs (Rand 1954). However, in the present case, we were unable to assign a sex. Males do not incubate eggs all the time, but



Pheasant-tailed Jacana chasing a House Crow with Jacana's egg in the bill.
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Pheasant-tailed
Jacana again
chasing the
House Crow
away.

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mostly by night and during the hottest period of the day (1100–1500 h), while attending the nest for egg turning at other times (Thong-aree et al. 1995). However, as per Fernando et al. (2021), males undertook most defence against all intruder types, with the exception of aerial predators, for which females defended more. Thus, we presume that in the present case, the jacana chasing the crow was possibly a female as the crow was making aerial attacks.

The House Crow is an opportunistic feeder. As per Ali & Ripley (1987), its diet is all embracing; practically everything that can be eaten (including eggs). In a study by Suratissa et al. (1998) egg depredation by crows was recorded as the highest in case of Pheasant-tailed Jacana. Fazili et al. (2013) also reported predation of eggs of Pheasant-tailed Jacana by House Crow (and other predators). The present observation further confirms that House Crows, at least sometimes, prey upon the eggs of the Pheasant-tailed Jacana.

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