

A short note on parental care in Indian robin *Saxicoloides fulicatus* as observed in a house garden at Bikaner, Rajasthan, India

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Abstract: The Indian robin *Saxicoloides fulicatus* is widespread in the Indian subcontinent ranging across India and is sexually dimorphic. The species is often found close to human habitation. Individuals may forage late in the evening to capture insects attracted to lights. The present observations were made in the garden of my house in the city of Bikaner (28°N latitude and 73°18'E longitudes), Rajasthan, India where, there is a plantation of ornamental plants in the month of April. The nest made under Jade plant and well concealed was a shallow cup made up of thin twigs with fine inner linings. The female laid 3 eggs and incubated them while, males were noted to guard the nest. The eggs were of regular oval form, speckled with lavender-brownish patches. The incubation period was 12 days. After hatching both sexes participated in parental care by bringing food for the chicks and guarding the nest from predators in tandem i.e., nest was guarded by either of the parents one by one. If the male was busy in collecting the food material, at that time female guarded the nest and vice-versa.

Key words: Indian Robin, *Saxicoloides fulicatus*, Parental care, Feeding.

1. Introduction :

The Indian robin *Saxicoloides fulicatus* belonging to family Muscicapidae¹ is widespread in the Indian subcontinent ranging across India, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. The Indian robin is sexually dimorphic in plumage, with the male being mainly black with a white shoulder patch or stripe whose visible extent can vary with posture (Plate 1). The females are brownish above, have no white shoulder stripe and are greyish below, with the vent a paler shade of chestnut than the males^{2,3,4} (Plate 2).

This bird is found in open stony, grassy and scrub forest habitats. The species is often found close to human habitation and will frequently perch on rooftops⁵. Individuals may forage late in the evening to capture insects attracted to lights⁶.

2. The study area

The present observations were made in the garden of my house in the city of Bikaner (28°N latitude and 73°18'E longitudes), Rajasthan, India where, there is a plantation of ornamental plants in the month of April. The Jade plant where the nest was built is a potted plant (Plate 3).

3. Observations and discussion

The nest made under the potted Jade plant and well concealed was a shallow cup made up of thin twigs with fine inner linings (Plate 4). The female laid 3 eggs and incubated them while, males were noted to guard the nest. The eggs were of regular oval form, speckled with lavender-brownish patches. The incubation period was 12 days and chicks hatched out (Plate 5). After hatching both sexes participated in parental care by bringing food for the chicks (Plates 6,7) and guarding the nest from predators in tandem i.e., nest was guarded by either of the parents one by one. If the male was busy in collecting the food material, at that time female guarded the nest and vice-versa (Plates 8,9).

Avian species want to lay their eggs and care for them in a place where they are protected from predators⁷. Different species go about choosing a nesting site in various ways. In many species, both partners work together to decide on the site, while in others, the female takes the lead⁸. Generally, this species constructs cup-shaped nests using grass, leaves, twigs, and other plant materials typically placed in concealed locations, such as shrubs, dense vegetation, providing protection from predators and adverse weather conditions⁴.

Both male and female birds actively participate in feeding the young, indicating their cooperative breeding behaviour^{9,10}. This cooperative effort not only contributes to the survival and growth of the offspring but also enhances the reproductive success of the parents¹¹. The division of feeding duties between the sexes may be influenced by factors such as foraging efficiency, territory defines, and resource availability^{12,13}.

The author earlier has made observations related to parental care, breeding behaviour, feeding behaviour of different bird species¹⁴⁻²¹.

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Plate 1. Male Robin



Plate 2. Female Robin



Plate 3. Potted Jade plant in the house garden



Plate 4. Nest of Robin concealed beneath Jade plant



Plate 5. Nest of Robin beneath Jade plant with three chicks



Plate 6. Male Robin with food in mouth to feed the chicks



Plate 7. Female Robin with food in mouth to feed the chicks



Plate 8. Entry point to nest and Robin ready to enter



Plate 9. Male Robin preparing to leave the nest while female preparing to enter