village, where a very high percentage of understory is cut out, repeatedly, I presume. But it is now a long hike from Lava to find undisturbed and undamaged forest. The upper track east of Lava leads to Neora Valley N.P. I was informed by Mr Phonur Sherpa, the owner of the Green Valley Lodge in Lava where I stayed this year, that requests by westerners to visit the national park are normally refused by the office in Kalimpong. I am sure this is correct as there is no proper accommodation or facilities in the park. However, Mr Sherpa was able to arrange a two-night visit for me, as he had done in a previous year for Edward Vercruysse. So I walked in with a porter/guide and all my food. It is a hike of four hours or so, depending on fitness and birding stops, and the national park checkpoint and primary forest is reached after 4-5 km (minimum two hours) from Lava. Further on is a long, steep descent into the valley where a water scheme pipeline provides a trail southwards downstream from the accommodation site (very basic huts, manned permanently by water scheme personnel).

I enjoyed two half-days and one full day in the valley, but even here was alarmed by the constant thwack of an axe on the east side of the river, several kilometres downstream from the base: clearly some illegal logging was taking place even within the national park.

Lava is promoted as a hill resort, mainly for residents of Calcutta, and there is an increasing number of lodges being built, with, of course, an ever increasing need for firewood and an increasing quantity of garbage, most, if not all, of which is dumped around the village. There are small areas on both the north and south facing slopes below the village where some replanting has taken place, part of it being a dense monoculture stand of young saplings.

The overall future for the village and the general area is extremely grim, and undoubtedly the ongoing large-scale logging is going to be of no benefit to the village whatsoever.

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Kashmir Flycatcher Ficedula subrubra nesting in Sri Lanka?

A pair of Kashmir Flycatchers Ficedula subrubra displaying distinct nesting behaviour were observed on 3 August 2000, at 1,700 m elevation in a tea plantation at the Dambatenne Estate (6°46' N, 80°59' E) close to Haputale, in the southern part of the Sri Lankan highlands.

Both male and female birds were observed at close range (3-15 m) over a period of about 20 minutes. Both birds were easy to observe and were not disturbed by our presence. The birds were first observed on the ground, flicking wings and tail - a typical behaviour of the species.1 The male then took off to a nearby bush where he sang and was also seen catching insects. The female continuously caught insects, either on the ground 3 m away from us or over nearby tea bushes and then flew off with the catch to a tea bush fewer than 10 m from our observation point, where she disappeared. This was repeated at least five times. On one occasion the male was also seen carrying insects to the same tea bush, but most of his time was spent singing.

The work we were involved in did not allow observations for more than 20 minutes and no attempt to find a nest was made. However, the behaviour of the birds clearly indicates an ongoing nesting. The Kashmir Flycatcher is normally a winter visitor to Sri Lanka and I have not been able to find any previous record in the literature of nesting in Sri Lanka. However, there are other examples of bird species nesting in what is normally their wintering area. In southern Africa several Palearctic birds have been noted to occasionally nest. Most reports seem to be of large conspicuous species such as raptors and stork, but small passerines such as the House Martin Delichon urbica have also been noted.2 It is possible that small birds nesting in their wintering area are often overlooked and that this is a more common phenomenon than realised.

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References


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