

An observation of courtship behavior of *Gallinula chloropus*

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ABSTRACT

This document reports an observation of courtship behavior of Common Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus* in Maharashtra. This occasional observation was made in the region of Chalisgaon Tehsil, Dist. Jalgaon. It was noted that the species prefer open areas near water bodies to perform courtship, also the time extent to which the courtship was displayed varied from previous reports.

KEYWORDS

Gallinula chloropus,
Courtship
behavior,
Maharashtra

INTRODUCTION

The common moorhen *Gallinula chloropus* is a member of the rail family, has a worldwide distribution and is considered to be one of the common birds of India. Its occurrence is distributed all over India except Jammu and Kashmir, and some places in the north-east India (Grimmett *et al.*, 2001). In Maharashtra it is of common occurrence inhabiting wetlands in urban and rural areas.

The species is a wide spread resident and a winter visitor as well. It has a black body with white under tail coverts, breeding adults has red bill with yellow tip and red shield (Grimmett *et al.*, 2001). Present paper reports the courtship behavior in common moorhen *Gallinula chloropus*, which was opportunistically observed.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Study Area: The courtship behaviour was observed in the outskirts of Town Chalisgaon, District Jalgaon. The Town Chalisgaon is located at co ordinates 20°28'00"N & 75°01'00" E with an altitude of 343 M ASL, the climate is hot and dry with approximately 80 cms of rainfall.

The observation site is a sparsely populated and had a good vegetative cover till recent past, with abundant presence of water in the nullahs till end of January. The thorny and grass vegetation is

dominant with plants like *Typha domingensis*, *Colocasia esculanta*, *Acacia nilotica*, *Senna auriculata*, *Senna tora*, *Polygonum glabrum*, *Prosopis julifera* and *Alternanthera sessilis* are present.

OBSERVATION

The reported observation is a rarely observed courtship display. The given observation was made in the morning of September 2012. Though the bird activity was often observed since July 2010.

The method used was ad libitum (Lehner, 1996); an Olympus binocular of magnification 8-16x40 mm was used for this purpose.

The *Gallinula chloropus* is a monomorphic species (Petrie, 1983) thus the male and female individuals were not distinguished, and all the subjects are designated as alphabets A, B and C.

The individual A was standing with the head upwards the individual B walked rapidly in circles over the substrate field vegetation keeping individual A to its right. And on stopping its head was positioned at substrate level and the tail directed upwards. This happened 4-5 times and an individual C was also observed to approach the individual the individual A, which was attacked by individual B, only to run away from the scene. After this the individual B resume its walking activity. At

the end of this individual A moved rapidly to B. Three more laps were done together.

This behavior was recorded for a period of 10 minutes though the birds have been observed from 15 minutes prior to the incident. The mating was not observed as the pair moved into dense vegetation and was out of sight.

DISCUSSION

The diameter of the circle which individual A walked was 15M approximately. The individual A was not exactly in the centre of circle and was standing near the water body rather it seemed that the place at which the given incident occurred, was deliberately chosen as it was the only place having such an open area beside water body. And other places were filled with bushes and constructions. This was evident by the fact that the birds were never observed to move to such far extent from water and both the individual A and C were present near the water and Individual B, only individual performing the act was away from water in the open area. The time extent to which courtship behavior occurs is not mentioned in the literature(Wallau *et al.*, 2009)

CONCLUSIONS

From the given incident it can be concluded that this birds prefer open areas near water bodies for the courtship displays.

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