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## **Breeding Behavior of *Copsychus saularis* in Indian-Sub-Continent: A Personal Experience**

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**Abstract:** *Copsychus saularis* is a small passerine bird that was earlier classified as a member of the thrush family turdidae, but now placed in a family muscicapidae. The present study deals with the breeding behaviour of magpie robin in an Indian sub-continent, based on personal experience in a natural habitat.

**Key words:** *Copsychus saularis*, breeding, behavior

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Magpie robin is a national bird of Bangladesh. Here is a general account on *Copsychus saularis*, based on personal experience and observations. The study deals with the behavioral aspects of *C. saularis* as studied in the Indian sub-continent.

### **DISTRIBUTION**

*Copsychus saularis* is a resident breeder in tropical Southern Asia from Bangladesh, Pakistan, India and Sri Lanka east to Indonesia, South China and the Phillippines. In Indian sub continent except the regions experiencing extremes of climate. It usually avoids the hot and arid climatic region of Western Rajasthan. Magpie is basically a non-migratory bird and its activities may be influenced by the surrounding environmental factors (Salim, 2003).

### **ETYMOLOGY**

The common name dhaiyal was first used by Albin in 1737. Levaillant thought it referred to a sundial and he called it cadran. E. Buckley sends a male robin with the name saularis (Hindi) from Madras, India to Petiver, who first described the magpie robin (Pittie, 2004).

### **MORPHOLOGICAL FEATURES**

#### **Size**

The size of magpie ranges from about 18 to 20 cm in length.

#### **Plumage**

The feathers and their colouration forms the basis of sexual dimorphism.

Sexual dimorphism is distinct and well marked. The male *Copsychus saularis* is entirely coloured black. The female is somewhat small in size but breeder. The dorsal feathers are light black while the breast is greyish in colour. The ventral portion of the trunk in both the sexes is covered with white contours, white are more predominant in female. The tail feathers are of intermingled white and black rectrices (Salim, 2003).

### Food Habits

*Copsychus* is basically insectivorous in nature feeding generally upon small worms and insects (Strange and Jeyarajasingam, 1993).

### BREEDING BEHAVIOUR

The breeding season begins in early May and last till the month of July. The male *Copsychus* attracts its partner by its appealing song especially early in the morning or late evening. The characteristics oscillatory movement of the tail co-ordinates with the song. Both the partners contribute in choosing a place for building a nest. Approximately 95% of the nest building is done by the female; while the male only initiates the construction. The nest building activity begins about a week or so before egg laying. Nest is constructed mainly of thin and slender, dried turfs and sticks which is built in the holes of the wall houses and even in holes of tree trunks and in Buhsy plants. Nest is stoutly built measuring about 15 to 18 cm. in length which usually varies. It has concave depression which lodges the eggs. The nest can again be made at the same place for the next season. The female lays about 4 to 5 eggs at time with an intervening period of 22 to 24 h. The eggs are oval in shape usually pale bluish green in colour with specks of light brownish or brownish colour. A characteristics odour is emitted from the nest. Eggs are incubated only by the female. The incubation lasts for 8 to 13 days after which their eggs are hatched. The young ones are helpless and depend entirely upon parental care. The eyes remain close for the first three days. They are probably fed by the secretion of the crop gland. The female only exhibits the parental care, with crop gland secretion. While the male assists the female during the incubation period by providing food for her. The young ones take about 4 to 6 weeks to grow into independent birds. During incubation period or during the time when the young ones are still in the nest the female takes the leading role in protecting and safeguarding the nest. In case of approach of any danger it makes a cheez-cheez call quite violently while the male is less intense in safeguarding the nest. The male and female both contribute in tending their young ones. They produce Chur.....Chur.....! sort of noise which the young ones try to enact. When the young ones mature and in general the male ones have grown up then the adult male rebukes and attacks them. This negative response is due to the reason that the young males may now fly off to lead a separate life. The female adult makes an alarming noise when an unknown male *C. saularis* approaches her. This call is made in order to alarm her original partner who on return fights with the intruder and sends it away. During the fight both the males make sounds like of Chu.....! Chu.....!

During the incubation period, when the female is in the nest, then the male may come in contact with another female who has no partner. In such a case the male now will not attend to the domestic services of his previous mate. In this condition the female will have to manage the upbringing of the young ones. This condition may even persist if the sudden death of the male occurs.

### CONCLUSION

Magpie is vanishing at an incredible speed. It is known for its charming singing and its attractive plumage. It facilitates in maintaining ecological balance and proves beneficial for agriculture as it generally feeds on harmful insects and disease causing worms. All efforts should be made in promoting awareness about *C. saularis* and in saving a natural treasure. The wildlife organization related to conservation, development and upliftment of bird should make an earnest desire of safeguarding and in implanting measure which will help in conserving *C. saularis* from being eradicated from the face of the world.

**SYSTEMATIC CLASSIFICATION**

Phylum	-	Chordata
Group	-	Vertebrata
Sub phylum	-	Gnathostomata
Class	-	Aves
Sub Class	-	Neornithes
Super order	-	Neognathae
Order	-	Passeriformes
Family	-	Muscicapidae
Genus	-	<i>Copsychus</i>
Species	-	<i>saularis</i>

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