

## SOME BEHAVIOURAL OBSERVATIONS OF THE INDIAN ROBIN, *SAXICOLOIDES FULICATA*

KAVITA DAS<sup>a1</sup>, RENU MAHESHWARI<sup>b</sup> AND INDU MANDRIK<sup>c</sup>

<sup>abc</sup>Department of Zoology, Govt. N.P.G. College of Science, Raipur, Chhattisgarh, India

### ABSTRACT

In present study we have made an efforts to document some behavioral aspect of the Indian Robin *Saxicoloides fulicata*, like diurnal activity, nesting behavior, breeding, parenting and most important their reaction towards human habitat. Field observations were made with the help of daily observation of total 10-12 individuals with and without binocular. The Indian robin shows sexually dimorphism in plumage with the male being mainly black with a white shoulder patch or stripe whose visible extent can vary with posture. Each bird holds individual territories. After nesting, territory is defended by a mated pair. Nests are small cup shaped and lined with twigs, feathers, cotton, dry leaves and mud. Robins are famous for nesting in all kinds of unlikely locations, holes on wall, sheds, kettles, hanging baskets, even handle, basket of two wheeler, scooters in daily use. Female lay 2-4 eggs. Ground colour of egg is white with black and brown spots. Only the female incubates the eggs. It is solitary mover the birds pair only for the duration of the breeding season. It is found in scrub jungle and other open habitats including around human habitation. Robin is a human loving bird and is most common garden bird. They are non-migratory and remain close to human habitation. Mainly they are insectivorous in nature but also enjoy taking food grains like cooked rice, and pulses. The study of these species is important because, they could be good indicators of the state of the environment of our surroundings.

**KEYWORDS:** Robin, behavior, solitary, territories.

Robin (*Saxicoloides fulicatus*) is a common visitors to gardens. It is small passerine bird comes under the family Muscicapidae. The present study deals with the behavioral aspects of this small bird (daily routine, breeding behavior, nesting, parental behavior and relation with mankind).

It is sexually dimorphic in plumage and its coloration. Male black with a white shoulder patch or stripe and the females are brownish above and are grayish below or completely brownish with 6-8 cm long tail raised upright (Grimmett *et al.*, 1998). Juvenile birds are much like females (Rasmussen and Anderson, 2005).

### METHODOLOGY

Field observations were made with the help of daily observation of total 10-12 individual with and without binocular. The study of robin were carried out regularly on daily basis. Ehogram of 6-7 pairs were made on the basis of daily observation.

Materials used:

- Stopwatches
- Binoculars
- Bird identification books
- Meter tape

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### Diurnal Activity

In our study we found that Robins are early riser, they start singing early in the morning near about 5-5.30 clock, We found that they are the earliest birds to start the dawn singing and one of the last to stop in the evening. Robins are active also in poor light and are often active in half-light when few other birds are about to sleep. Street lights, garden light and floodlights can trigger singing in the middle of the night, and if roosting robins are disturbed, they can start song even in complete darkness.

#### Feeding

The Indian Robin is an insectivorous species which is a resident breed. We can call them fearless birds, as once they found food they become the regular visitors of our dining table. Mainly they are insectivorous in nature but we found that they also enjoy in taking food grains like cooked rice, and pulses.

#### Territory

Field observations revealed that the robin hold a territory all year round. In summer, during nesting and breeding a territory is defended by a mated pair (Catchpole and Slater, 1995; Kumar 2003;

<sup>1</sup>Corresponding author

Kumar 2004, Kumar 2011), while each bird holds individual winter territories. Breeding territories average 0.35 ha +/- .30 in size - about 4 to 6 feet, while in winter territories are around half of this. The exact size of territories is not fixed and change frequently as circumstances change, depending on the quality of habitat and the density of birds in the area. In areas with well-spaced, mature trees and few shrubs, breeding densities can be near about 10 pairs per sq km. The robin use red breast in territory defence( Kumar 2011): it is not used in courtship. A patch of red triggers territorial behavior, In most passerines the song is mainly used for territory.

### **Singing Habit**

Songs of males found more melodious than females. Males sang during the breeding season mostly in the morning (05.00–10.00 hrs) and evening (16.00–1730 hrs) with some times mainly in the morning (Kumar, 2012) whistles. Individuals were observed singing from exposed branches of trees, rocks, walls, electric wires roof of house and on the ground (Kumar, 2012). Autumn and spring songs are distinctly different. The autumn song starts after the moult, from late summer onwards, while the spring song is powerful, confident and upbeat. The spring song can start as early as mid-December, reaching full force in spring. Its purpose is two-fold: to defend a territory and to attract a mate (Kumar 2011). Therefore, spring song is far more powerful in males(Faaborg and Chaplin 1984),.

### **Nesting Behavior**

Robins are famous for nesting in all kinds of unlikely locations, including sheds, kettles, boots, hanging baskets, coat pockets, under car bonnets, in farm machinery, even on scooters in daily use. In our study we found nest s on hole of wall small shrubs, handle and basket of scooters. They also use artificial nest box hanged by us. We hang artificial nest made up of thermocol in wall of home, and found that, robin is the first bird that visited the nest. Sparrow also visited the artificial nest, but the robin is the first to built nest in it. Both male and female select the position and place for nest. Present study revealed that the robins are very sensitive to any disturbance during the nest building and egg laying, and will easily leave the nest and if they think that the nest has been discovered. But we found that when the

birds are used to people, they start building the nest in scooters of daily use and the wall near the home garden. 5 pairs are watched by us in natural habitat and found that, the nest are cup shaped, near about 6-7 c.m. Shaped by the female alone, but males and always help in collecting the materials. Nest are made of dead leaves and moss, lined with hair and feathers(kumar 2011,2012) and take 11-13 days to build nest(Nirmala and Vijayan, 2003). Courtship feeding is a very prominent activity, and the male some times supply food during nest building and egg lay in but female also frequently leave the nest for feed.

### **Breeding**

In a mild winter, January, robins start courtship, but the breeding season is normally begins in March(George J C 1963). Study revealed that the birds pair only for the duration of the breeding season as we found they are solitary mover. In present study we found that most female Indian Robins were accompanied by their mates in nest bulding before laying; males foraged close to the nest during laying,( Weatherhead *et al.*, 1991)

Once the clutch is complete, eggs are incubated by the female alone for near about 12-13 days (kumar2011, 2012). Female removed the shells of the hatched eggs immediately from the nest, but sometimes eats part of them for extra calcium. The chicks hatch naked, and are totally dependent on their parents for food and warmth. Both parents look after the nestlings and feeding (Faaborg J and Chaplin S B 1984). After three days of age feather growth will become evident with the appearance of quills. By five days the eyes start to open and they are completely open by eight days. At that time chick s are black in colour without feathers, and beak with yellow lining. Juvenile birds are much like females with black fur (Rasmussen and Anderson, 2005)

From 6-7 days rows of feathers will start to appear on backs and flanks. The body is completely more or less feathered by 8-10 days. Flight feathers are the last to grow, and as the chicks fledge at 14 days, they will not be able to fly for another couple of days. Chicks are remain in nest up to complete development of feathers, and once they leave the nest they never come back to nest. But the young are

tended by their parents for up to three weeks after

fledging (George J C 1961).



Male



Female



Site of Nesting, Nest Shape, Material Used



Eggs, Juvenile Chicks

### Impact of Human Activity

Robin is a human loving bird and is most common garden bird. They are non-migratory and remain close to human habitation. Mainly they are insectivorous in nature but also enjoy in taking food grains like cooked rice, and pulses given in bird feeding pot. Robins do not normally bother about birds of other species near their nests. Robins are found resident and non-migratory bird. The species is often found close to human habitation and always perch on rooftops, backyard of home, moving in garden. The study of these species is important because, they could be good indicators of the state of the environment of our surroundings

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