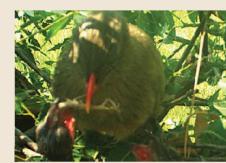






Food:





Praying mantis



Scrub thorn forests with sparse deciduous vegetation; stone covered grassy, semiarid country with ravines, on plains and

Habit:

Secretive. Diurnal. Seen single or in pairs in thickets. Mostly terrestrial; runs swiftly. Flight clumsy; hops on branches to ascend a tree where it preens and roosts.

Distribution:

Over a large range including India, W. Pakistan, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangla Desh and Sri Lanka; up to 1000 m.

Status:

Resident; Rare.





Terrestrial habit. Preferes to run than fly

Moth



Grasshopper

Grasshoppers, locusts, butterflies and moths, worms, centipedes, millipedes, spiders, lizards, small snakes, etc. Food is taken from the ground. Malkoha is a territorial bird and usually finds food close to the nest.

Rare Glimpse of Natural Predation:



A photo frame captured on an automatic camera shows a mongoose predating on a nestling of the Sirkeer Malkoha. The mongoose devoured the helpless nestling and walked away in search of new prey

Visitors to the Nest of Sirkeer Malkoha:

Threats:

Tree felling for firewood and habitat modification are major threats. We have recorded natural predation of eggs and chicks by treepie, coucal, crow and mongoose, as corroborated by camera photographs.





Perching on a branch in the morning



• Adult plumage spinous: earthy brown to

• Head and breast feathers faintly streaked.

• Bill bright cherry red, yellow tipped, stout,

curved. Upper mandible festooned.

• Tail long, broad, graduated. Broad black

• Iris - brown. Coarse bristles surround the

• Legs - scaled, slaty; claws horny brown.

Young: Body feathers edged with pale

black. Beak slaty, becomes red after six

rufous; of head, chin, breast streaked with

Key Features:

• Wings rounded.

and white bands.

eyes except behind.

Sexes alike.



Long graduated banded tail



The brown iris and slaty beak of the juvenile are visible

The secret life of the Malkoha:



Rufous Treepie visiting the empty nest



Perching on the nest with tail elevated



A Five-striped Palm Squirrel near the nest

The Malkoha with cryptic plumage is often overlooked



Incubating the eggs



Preening is a favourite activity

Juvenile:- Details of the wings, tail, beak, mouth and leg:



Strengthening relations by fecal sac exchange:



The fecal sac of chicks in the first week contains undigested food remains and is rich in proteins. In this amazing sequence of photographs the Malkoha parents do not waste the fecal sacs and are seen exchanging this unique source of food!

Amazing Facts:

Sirkeer Malkoha is a non-parasitic cuckoo. The nest is very difficult to detect and the bird becomes particularly secretive during breeding. This Malkoha is an amazingly swift runner in the undergrowth.

Sirkeer Malkoha Taccocua leschenaultii (Lesson, 1830).

Type locality: No locality=Cawnpore; Sasan, Junagad, Saurashtra. TSN: 705310 (Avibase).

Mungshya (Marathi); Jungli Tota (Hindi); Adavi Chiluka, Potu Chiluka (Telugu); Kalli Kuyil (Malayalam); Pathang atti-kukkula (Simhala).

- **Size:** 42 44 cm.
- **Weight:** 250 280 g.
- Wing: Male/Female 147-162 mm. Tail 214-230 mm.
- Tarsus: 38-40 mm. **Bill:** 30-34 mm.
- Breeding season: March – October.



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- **Eggs:** Oval; Chalky white, tinged with brown, no markings.
- **Egg Size:** 33.9 x 26.1 mm (Baker).
- **Incubation:** 18 19 d. Sexes alike.
- Nuptial displays: Both sexes - Tail cocking, fanning and fluffing; bowing.
- **Call:** Usually silent: Kek, kek, kik, kik, krree, Krree. Hissing sounds by nestlings.



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Sirkeer Malkoha

- Order: Cuculiformes Family: Cuculidae
- Status: Resident

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orest Department Maharashtra **Principle Chief** Conservator of Forests (RET), Pune

Phenology:





6 days old chicks





Parent tightly incubating the eggs



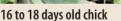








3 days old chick: feathers in pin





18 days old chick



20 days old chick



34 days old chick



37 days old chick

Protected under Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972. Research and 'Rural Outreach Programs'

undertaken by Ela Foundation, stressing

conservation of habitats, are proving useful.

Conservation:

Nest:

The saucer shaped stick nest is built in to the fork of a Neem or *Acacia* tree, 4 to 6 m above the ground; or in the tangle of *Euphorbia* cactus; made of twigs, it is neatly lined with green leaves. Both parents incubate.

species:



Blue-faced Malkoha inhabits scrub semi-arid habitats

Etymology:

Mal-Koha means flower-cuckoo. Phoiniko (Gr) - crimson, and phaes, eyes or face, referring to the Red-faced Malkoha: leschenaultii commemorates the French botanist Jean Baptiste Leschenault de la Tour (Pande, Satish 2009).

Cultural aspects: The Sirkeer

Malkoha runs on the ground with head and tail extended in a mongoose-like manner, hence the Marathi name **Mungshya**- one like a mongoose!

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