

Doon Watch Nature Series for Dehradun Live Hindustan Times by Sanjay Sondhi

Published on 23 July 2010

Bulbul babies!

With the misty mountains of Mussoorie forming the back drop, monsoon morning walks near our house are really pleasurable. As I often take my camera and binoculars during the morning strolls, I am familiar sight to the locals (*yeh paagal kaun hai jo din bhar camera ke saath ghumta rehta hai!*). Yesterday morning, Kuldip Sharma, the owner of the Surbhi Dairy on Sahastradhara road beckoned. He said that there were a pair of nesting bulbuls in his house at Dhoran, and would we care to take a look?

It gives me great pleasure when people take time out to observe nature, even in their own gardens, so saying "no" to Sharma-ji was not an option. We met Sharma-ji at his home that evening, and he pointed out the nest to us. The bulbuls had built their nest on a small bush, no more than ten feet from Sharma-ji's verandah! Of course, bulbuls are known to build nests very close to human habitation, and surprisingly, are not very secretive when it comes to nest locations.

Now came the tricky part. While we did want to see the nest, we were wary of disturbing the nesting birds. Watching the bush, we observed the adult Red-vented bulbuls take turns to take food to the nest, hence, we deduced that the eggs had hatched and the nest had fledglings. Sharma-ji mentioned to us that he observed the nest only when the adult birds started taking food for their young, and not when the nest was being built.



Anchal, my wife, and I concurred that we would take a quick look, squeeze off a few photographs, and quickly back off, so as not to disturb the fledglings. Parting the branches, revealed three really cute bulbul fledglings. The fledglings thought we were their parents returning with food, opened their mouths wide in the hope of tasty morsels! Squeezing off a few pictures quickly, we fled the nest location, leaving three very disappointed bulbul babies.

Soon the adult birds returned to feed their young. One of the birds stood guard on a guava tree, watching for predators while the other bird disappeared into the bush. So well camouflaged was the nest, that the adult bird was not visible when it entered the bush to feed its young. Emerging from the bush, the adult bird did not linger and immediately flew away, ensuring that it did not draw any attention to the nest site.

We sat with Sharma-ji in his verandah and watched this wondrous cycle of life take its course in his garden. You can be certain scenes of this kind happen near your home too, if only you take the time to look!

Sanjay Sondhi is a Dehradun based naturalist. Feedback on this column is welcome at sanjay.sondhi1@gmail.com

© Sanjay Sondhi

Making a difference: Observing nature only means keeping your eyes and ears open! Of course, when it comes to watching nesting birds or other creatures, please be very careful not to disturb the animals. If you have any interesting observations on nature, drop me an email and we can write about them together!