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INDIA NEPAL BHUTAN

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KORERHAT PART-II

Barking deer an eves dropper's glimpse



WE got up very early in the morning, anticipating our guides (two forest guards) to join us. But they did not turn up till the sunrise. They had promised to show us Barking deer, one of the most elusive creatures in the wild. The rest house was built on the western foothills of the Korahat Hill range, which obstructed the incoming sunlight from reaching the western slopes where we were.

In the early morning haze our microbus took us uphill from the rest house. It brought us to a viewpoint beside a small bridge on the Dhaka-Khagrachari road. The beauty of the place captivated us. From there we

could see the small but spectacular gorge of the little stream and ranges of lower hills of the eastern extension of the south eastern Himalayan folds in Bangladesh and Indian state of Tripura.

It was the flowering season of the teak plants. We could see their creamy bunches that turned golden in the morning sunlight. We could smell them, but were overpowered by the odour of Jasurey lota- a creeper that can be found almost all over the tracts. The creepers provide shelter and food for the insects especially for mosquitoes and leeches.

As our guides suggested we were scanning the dark undergrowth of a

hillside stretching from east to west. We saw nothing! Suddenly one of the guides told us that it was there. He pointed his index finger towards the crest of the hill. Aligning my binocular, I saw a dark stationary object; hardly distinguishable from the surroundings. We were confused. In a while we noticed a little agitation on the bushes and a small dark brown animal emerged into the open area; unmistakably - it was a barking deer.

We were at the same elevation of the beautiful ungulate. The distance between us was about one 150 meters. I tried to photograph the animal with my 400 mm 5.6 lens. But the shutter speed displayed a hopeless 1/8th of a

second.

After a while we left the place hoping for an improvement in light condition.

Walking down the metal road the guide took us to a game track leading to the ridge of a hill. Here the trees were taller and healthy. We halted on a slope overlooking a dense forest and an unspoiled ravine that testified its former glory. By now it was time for colorful butterflies to flutter around, hill myna, blossom headed parakeets, sunbirds, flower peaker, lesser caucals to scream, twitter and sing. The forest guard told us that on rare occasions they encountered bears at the ravine below.

Back to the bridge we saw the deer again. This time a pair of them. Barking deer are solitary creatures they are hardly spotted in pairs. Reddish brown coat of the animals was dazzling and majestic against the deep green background of the forest. We hope these animals will thrive throughout the valleys and man could enthrall themselves by listening to their high pitched barks at the dark hours of the night.

Story: KHASRU CHOWDHURY
Photo: INAM AHMED, KHASRU CHOWDHURY
Courtesy: Forest Department

BIRD WATCHING WITH DR REZA KHAN



Common Redshank *Tringa totanus*

ONE of the commonest medium-sized waders that visits Bangladesh during main migration in winter and in passage during autumn and spring. Its long reddish legs and long bill are characteristic. It breeds in north Europe and in Siberia. So it flies a very long distance to reach our country. Feeds by walking on shore and in shallow water along the coast and in countryside wetlands. Due to hunting pressure its population is going down in the country.

Actual size ± 29 cm with a bill of ± 5.5 cm.

