

TANGENTS

BY IHTISHAM KABIR

The Ecotone

In 2017 I went to Madagascar to look for birds and wildlife. The fourth largest island in the world is home to a large collection of plants and wildlife seen nowhere else. It has several distinct types of terrain: mountainous forests, rainforests, dry (spiny) forests and deserts. This is one of the reasons for the variety of life there.

One of the first places many visit in Madagascar is Perinet, a group of wilderness areas in the rainforest. From Antananarivo, the capital, we drove half a day and checked into a hotel in Perinet, where Andasibe National Park was going to be the starting point of our adventures.

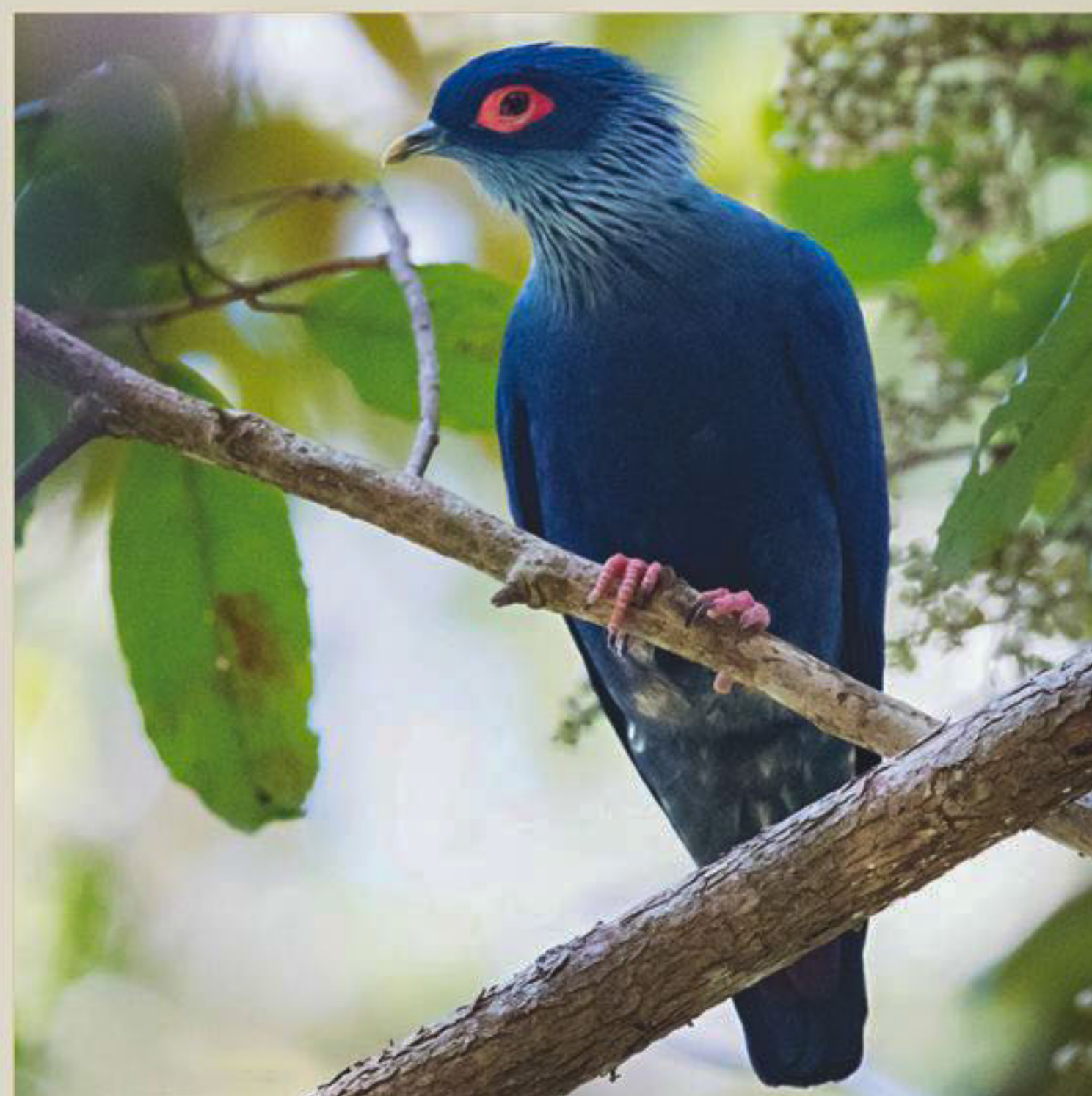
After resting for the night, we headed for Adasibe early next morning. We had to cross a large grassy area. At its edge, before entering the forest, we found a surprising number of birds including sunbirds, white-eyes, stonechats, doves and bulbuls. Inside the forest we found some birds but they were hard to photograph due to the darkness and height of the trees. At one point I saw a beautiful Madagascar Blue Pigeon which I tried hard to capture without luck.

We headed out of the forest in the late afternoon. At forest's edge, before entering the open grassy area, I saw a group of Madagascar Blue Pigeons once again. This time they were easy to photograph.

We had a similar experience the next day at the Mantadia National Park – many of the birds we saw, including Sakalava and Nelicourvi Weavers, were at the edge of the forest.

For me, finding so many birds at forest's edge was unexpected as I had anticipated finding most birds deep inside the forest.

Later, I learned that in both



Madagascar Blue Pigeon.

PHOTO BY: IHTISHAM KABIR

these spots – before entering the forest and just after leaving it – I had found luck in the ecotone. An ecotone is an abrupt change in vegetation or two adjacent, different community types, producing a narrow ecological zone between them. An ecotone can exist on many different physical sizes, from narrow to wide, from local to regional.

In practical terms, if you are observing nature, an ecotone is where interesting things happen. Ecotones provide home for a large number of species, but also see influx of animals looking for food and nesting sites. Thus they become home to a larger gene pool than the neighbouring areas. An ecotone can serve as a buffer and protect an area from possible natural or environmental disaster. In a broad sense, the Sundarban forest can be considered an

ecotone, serving as a transition between the ocean and mainland Bangladesh. As such, it absorbs the shocks of major storms such as Sidr and Aila, saving mainland Bangladesh from disaster.

Within Sundarban, too, there are ecotones of a smaller scale which are richer in life than places deep inside the forest. In a recent research project, Dr. M. Sayedur Rahman counted the number of plant species in Sundarban. In his findings, he singles out forest margins as being the most common habitat of diverse plants.

So the next time you are in the field, forest or water, keep an eye out at the edges, where interesting things can happen out in the open.

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KILLING OF FF SELIM UP chairman's son arrested, put on remand

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

Son of Pakshey Union Parishad chairman was placed on a five-day remand on Thursday in freedom fighter Mostafizur Rahman Selim murder case after he was arrested from his village in the afternoon.

The arrestee, Roky Biswas, son of Enamul Haque Biswas, is a local Awami League leader.

"His name came up during investigation," said Bahaiddin Faruki, officer-in-charge of Ishwardi Police Station.

On February 6, 70-year-old Selim was shot by two unidentified persons near his home in Ishwardi upazila of the district. He died on the way to Rajshahi Medical College Hospital.

The murder sparked a huge public outcry.

On Sunday, Jubo League leader Abdulla Al Baki Arzu, nephew of the UP chairman, was arrested and placed on a seven-day remand in the case.

Breaking perceptions

Human Library Bangladesh holds storytelling session on Women's Day

SHOAIB AHMED SAYAM

Human Library Bangladesh (HLB) started with a mission to break prejudices. HLB organises storytelling sessions and discussions where individuals participate as "books", narrating their stories to "readers" (participating audience). Yesterday they held the fifth session to further this cause.

Held at Bengal Boi in Dhaka, the session titled "Boi Hoya Jai" started at 4pm and went on for two hours. The session was divided into three sub-sessions where readers got to pick a single book they wanted to listen to for half an hour each.

Marking International Women's Day, the organisers invited women from different backgrounds to talk about the various forms of discrimination they have experienced.

"HLB is a nice platform to interact with people from all walks of life," said Sutrishna Nandy Prithu, one of eight "books" at the session. "Unlike a regular book that does not offer a conversation with the reader, here you get to discuss, question and reply to fully empathise with the stories."

"Telling your personal stories to others gives one a new appreciation of the hard-

ships one overcame," she added.

The stories themselves were regarded by readers as unique. One such story was that of a teacher who spoke about the various impressions we hold about madrasas, and what the reality is. "At this platform, people bring the truth to the table; the stories are raw and unrestricted," said Kazi Naseef Amin, a reader of the book.

The event also gave way to talk about important social issues. "The government gave recognition to us Hijras but did not follow through to make our lives easier," said Ivan Ahmed Katha, transgender woman. "We are still not allowed to enter many restaurants and malls. I urge everyone to look at us with a bit of empathy."

When asked about the particulars of the event and the platform as a whole, Maisha Zaman, one of the organisers of HLB, said, "Primarily readers who participate in our events are youngsters but this time older individuals took part as well. Possibly because Bengal Boi urged us to write synopses of the books in Bangla."

"We love the curiosity with which people listen to the stories, and are glad that we get to play a part in helping others form balanced perspectives on various issues that are often not talked about," she added.



Readers engrossed by the story of a human book at the latest session of Human Library Bangladesh yesterday.

PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY OBSERVED ACROSS COUNTRY

'CHT women still facing violence'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangamati

Speakers at a discussion yesterday stressed the need for ensuring equal rights for women.

Parbatya Chattogram Mahila Samity and Hill Women's Federation organised the programme at Shilpakhala Academy in Rangamati town, marking International Women's Day.

Ushatan Talukder, vice president of Parbatya Chattogram Jana Samhati Samity (PCJSS), was present as the chief guest. Ushatan said equal rights for women will not be ensured without proper evaluation which is crucial for development in the country.

Even after the CHT peace accord, violence against women -- including rape and torture -- are still taking place in the region, he said. "We have to change our mindset towards women," he added.

Kalpana Chakma, women affairs secretary of the Samity's central committee; Prokriti Ranjan Chakma, president of Bangladesh Adivasi Forum; and Jewel Chakma, president of Pahari Chhatra Parishad's central committee, among others, spoke on the occasion.

Jorita Chakma, president of Parbatya Chattogram Mahila Samity's central committee, presided over the programme.

Meanwhile, the District Administration brought out a colourful procession from Rangamati DC office to Gymnasium premises on the occasion. Many NGOs also observed the day.

RMG workers in Savar seek an end to discrimination

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Savar

To press their various demands, female workers of several garment factories formed a human chain in Savar yesterday.

Under the banner of "Bangladesh Garment and Industrial Workers Federation", more than 300 workers joined the programme in front of Rana Plaza site.

Their demands include a six-month maternity leave, putting a stop to workplace violence and discrimination against women, reopening of closed RMG factories and payment of due salaries.

Halima Begum, a worker of a closed garment factory, said the factory was closed on February 20 without any notice and paying due salaries.

Rofiqul Islam Sujon, president of Bangladesh Garments and Industrial Workers Federation, who was present at the human chain, said most of the RMG workers are women.

So, women mostly suffer due to such closure, he said.

Gaibandha Santals want adequate law to ensure rights

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gaibandha

Santal people joined a procession in Gobindaganj upazila of Gaibandha yesterday, demanding establishment of women's rights.

With placards and festoons, they paraded the main road in the area.

Upazila administration and Abalambon, a voluntary organisation, held the event. The participants later gathered at the Upazila Parishad auditorium where a discussion was held.

The speakers said women -- especially from the indigenous communities -- are deprived of proper education, healthcare facilities, jobs and shelter.

They often fall victim to murder, repression and rape, they said.

In this regard, they demanded that the government formulate adequate law.

Later, Santal women presented their traditional dances and songs.

Besides, various women and socio-cultural organisations in the district held programmes including rally, human chain and discussion.

Appeal for help

CITY DESK

Shahana Akter, a second year student of social science department at Jagannath University, has been suffering from Guillain-Barre syndrome, says a press release.



Presently, she is undergoing treatment at the ICU of Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

Doctors say she needs to be vaccinated immediately. Tk 5 lakh is needed for her treatment which the family alone cannot afford.

So, they seek financial help from the people of the society.

Aid can be sent to Md Ferdaush Hossain, A/C no: 0200013206524, Agrani Bank, Jagannath University Branch; Md Zihad, bKash A/C no: 01686564282 or Rocket no: 016865642826.

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