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B. N. R. INDIAN HIGH SCHOOL,
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Subject The most interesting features
of bird and animal life in my neighbourhood

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The most interesting features
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Midnapore District, BENGAL.

(1)

I am an inhabitant of a village in eastern Bengal. I spent the early days of my childhood in my native village and had occasions to observe the life and doings of birds and beasts amidst natural surroundings. These are no less an interesting study than those of human beings.

The bird which first comes to my mind is the crow. ^{Crows} ~~They~~ are accustomed to caw as soon as they see the day-light. and since then all the quarters

(2)

lung with the cries of 'caw'—
— 'caw' throughout the whole
day. Though they are unwelcome
guests, still whenever any feast
~~or~~ festival is held, these are
the first to visit, as if to
announce by their unbearable
'cawing' that something un-
usual is going on. There is
something peculiar about
their way of bathing. Just
before they repair to their
nests in the evening, they
sprinkle water all over their
bodies with their beaks and
flutter their wings. They
never water the whole body.

(3)

It is very interesting to see a crow bathing. Another peculiarity of these birds is that they can never sleep in day-light. We often ~~see~~ hear these birds cawing even at mid-night, when the earth is bathed in moon-light. Perhaps they mistake the moon-lit night for the dawning day.

Another interesting and common bird is the 'Charui' (sparrow). It is very active and constantly moves from place to place owing to its natural restlessness. We often see it

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hopping hither and thither. Its fashion of walking is really a strange feature. 'Charuis' cannot walk step by step like the tiny 'Shaliks' which walk in a lordly style. We often see the 'Charuis' covering their whole body with dust. Then they flutter their wings and fly away. People often consider this to be the process of their bathing. There is a mirror in my reading-room. A few days back I saw two 'Charuis' sitting

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near the mirror and pecking at it thinking the reflected sparrows to be ~~a~~ real ones. They pecked so hard at the mirror that blood began to leak out of their beaks.

One day I saw a ~~sh~~ bottle-shaped nest of two 'Babuis' hanging from the branch of a mango-tree. ~~One day,~~ Out of curiosity, I climbed the tree and found a lump of clay at the bottom of the thick nest. Immediately, I realised that the lump of clay was put to prevent

(6)

the nest from swinging during storms. This is really a clear proof of the intelligence of these two insignificant birds. When these birds finish building their nests, their joy knows no bounds.

Beside our pond there were two 'pankauris' (black-divers). Whenever I went near the pond, I would see those two birds intently looking at the pond with a steadfast look. Now and then they would plunge into the pond and

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come out carrying fish in their beaks. They were not successful in every attempt, but I ~~cannot~~^{could} help admitting their cleverness in catching fish.

Next we come to 'Kokils' (cuckoos). They are migratory and visit our country as soon as the spring sets in. Their 'two-fold notes', 'kuhoo'—'kuhoo'—are specially interesting to children who listen to their songs with a feeling of wonder. They are seldom seen as they hide

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themselves among the leaves of trees. They are very intelligent. One day, while I was going to the market, I saw a male 'kokil' (cuckoo) approaching the nest of a crow. The crow, too, for fear of its eggs being stolen and spoiled by the 'kokil', chased it. The 'kokil' flew away beyond my sight being chased by the crow. In the meantime, a female 'kokil' came with an egg in her beaks and put it in the nest of the crow. She managed to keep all

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her eggs in the nest of the crow in its absence. When I realised that this clever trick was played by the 'kokils' only to get their eggs hatched by the crow. This trick proves the marvellous intelligence of cuckoos.

Now let us study some of the beasts. The beasts are as busy as human beings. Of course, some of these creatures have to do nothing except eating and collecting food for their young ones

(70)

or for their future use. Some, again, have to serve their masters faithfully.

We had a dog in our village-home. The dog used to follow my grandfather wherever he went. When my old grandfather returned from the market, the dog used to wag his tail and move about him only to indicate that he wanted to have his breakfast. This dog, whenever ^{he} saw any stranger at night, not only barked aloud to warn us, but also chased him, until he fled away.

(11)

There was a cat in our house. One night, I saw the cat looking at a mouse with shining and steadfast eyes. It remained in that condition for a little while. Then, suddenly it jumped upon the mouse and devoured it up. This process reveals its rare skill in hunting.

There are many other strange features of different animals. But the common and interesting feature of both birds and animals is 'affection for their little ones.'

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One day, to test the genuineness of their 'affection' I began to throw stones at a nest belonging to a kite. But the kite stretched its wings and covered the nest in order to protect the young ones, as if it did not care a fig for its own life. One day, I touched the body of a new-born calf, but instantly the mother-cow ran angrily at me. These prove that 'affection for the young ones' is not the monopoly of men.

The daily life of all

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these animals are highly interesting and instructive. The industry of ants and bees, the affection of birds and cows and the faithfulness of dogs are indeed praiseworthy. We can learn a lot of things from the behaviour of these animals.

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