

## *Editorial*

Birds. Wherever you live, you see birds. Colourful birds, songbirds, birds of prey; big birds and small birds. They are warm-bodied and so can live everywhere on earth. And birds are not just beautiful or sing - they do very important things for the environment. They carry seeds when they eat fruits, pollen when they drink nectar. That is how they pollinate plants or disperse seeds.

By eating insects and worms they control pests. Their waste become fertilisers and some eat dead animals thus cleaning the environment.

Our activities have led to extinction and fall in numbers of many birds. We need to keep their habitats clean and plant the right trees to provide them shelter and food.

In this issue we have books and stories and news about beautiful birds around us.

-Anupa Roy



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# YOUNG LOBTULIA

No. 4



In this issue: Birds around us

# CRANE MAGIC

by Anupa Roy

The crane shook her silky-grey feathers in the wind. The water in the paddy field was cold today. She stepped towards the long grasses at its edge, where the marshes began. Her pretty red head turned this way and that searching... searching. Mother crane parted the grass with her long beak - there was her nest. But it had only one egg in it, not two.

Where could it have gone? Mother crane lifted her head, her long beak pointing to the sky and let out a long angry call. She had only moved a little bit, just to stretch her long legs and catch the tiny catfishes swimming amongst the growing paddy. She started to search - again around her nest.

Her mate arrived, folding his wide wings, his beak full of fish. He dropped it in the nest. Mother crane was hungry but she did not eat. They began to search near the marsh. It was evening.

At last they stopped searching. The other egg was getting cold. And the lost egg was either broken or too cold to live. Sadly, Mother crane went back to sitting on the egg in the nest. Father Crane walked about, his head turning every way, making sure no jackals came. Nearby, from the chimney above the farmer's hut, smoke curled up into the sky.

Farmer and his wife sat at a table eating. Farmer licked the last of the yolk off his plate and smacked his lips. "This is good, we should have tried it earlier. After all they use our field to nest in every year," "I wish you had not brought the egg home, we could eat our own hen's eggs", said his wife. She was troubled and had not touched any of the large eggs. Her husband had eaten it all. "The rice has two more long months yet to ripen. Money is scarce. You know this is a good meal. And they steal my paddy, pecking it every year, even if it's a few grains. This is just one egg."

The farmer's wife sighed. "It is a full moon tonight, I will offer a prayer to the moon." After all cranes were said to be the Moon's daughters and it was ancient practice for women to worship the moon Goddess.

"Huh! Women's superstitions!" grumbled the farmer. But though she did not answer, the Farmer's wife knew cranes were loyal and caring birds. Like humans they took great care of their young. And she must offer a prayer and help the birds.

It was a windy night and the moon's shadows lay sharp on the field. The farmer's wife walked carefully over the narrow path towards the marshes. She knew the cranes nested in the tall grasses at the field's edge. But before she went too near, she stopped. The cranes would be extra alert and angry. And their beaks were sharp. Sure enough she heard a sharp hiss of warning.

She opened the banana leaf wrapping, laying her offerings of rice and fish. "Forgive my husband. May you always nest here. I will protect you," she whispered.

Every morning for thirty one days the farmer's wife brought her little food offerings to the cranes. In the beginning, the Father Crane hissed a warning not to come too near.

But in time the cranes ignored her and the food was gone by the next day. She knew he spent more time near the nest protecting it and had less time to search for food.

On the thirty second morning the farmer's wife heard a soft cheep cheep. "Oh the baby chick has hatched." She was delighted.

The grain was beginning to ripen and she knew that soon they would be pecking at it to feed the baby crane. It was very little and they didn't lose much grain. Still it annoyed her husband. Soon the cranes would go to the marshes to catch frogs and



fish. The farmer's wife continued to bring softened rice and tiny fishes for the baby crane; she loved to see the baby follow its mother at the edge of the paddy field and in the marsh. Mostly though they stayed near the marsh edge so the baby could hide easily from the kites and crows who were flying above looking for prey.

Three months later one afternoon. As she stood near her window, she saw the little chick rise, fluttering its wings. It was its first short flight between the parent cranes. It was bigger now and the farmer's wife clapped, then lowered her hands. There should have been two young cranes. She would never allow their eggs to be taken again. If they returned next year....

Few days later the farmer's wife entered her weaving hut. Soon the harvest festival would arrive and she needed to weave two new shawls for them to wear. She had been so busy with the crane family.

She opened the door and began to sweep - threads picked up dust, she needed a clean floor. As she went to sweep under her small loom, she noticed some white shiny stuff underneath it. Bending down, the farmer's wife gasped.

There lay under the loom a pile of the shiniest, smoothest feathers - crane feathers! She picked them up and sat on the floor. How did they come in? The room was shut!

She stroked a feather in awe. And it began to unravel - like a thread - a long thread. All white and silky. A thread she could weave with. Picking up her spindle, she wound it slowly around. As she tugged the other feathers, they all unraveled into threads. She put them all on her spindle.

Then farmer's wife put the threads on her loom - she created the horizontal warp. Then she laughed. Beautiful and magical as it was, it was too little to weave with. She cleaned out the room and decided she would start her weaving the next day.

Next morning, when she came in, again there lay a new pile of feathers under her loom - as beautiful as the ones she had found the day before.

This time she made the weft, the vertical threads on the loom. It was still too little but who knew what magic was at work. Thanking the cranes in her heart, she left the room.

Every day when the farmer's wife came into her weaving room, she found a new pile of feathers, all of which unraveled into silken threads. Everyday, she wound them on her spindle; then she wove a little more. She kept the design simple. The thread was so beautiful. Soon her shawl was done.

Wrapping it on her shoulders, she looked into the mirror and smiled. She almost felt she could fly. She opened the window to see a flock of birds far above, on their way to the marsh.

'Thankyou,' she said. It was not the cranes but she was too happy to care. She still had one more shawl to weave. So she wove an ordinary shawl from her own threads for her husband. There were no more feathers in the room. On harvest day everyone gathered in the village hall. There was new rice and sweets and singing and dancing. All the villagers wore their best clothes. And every villager looked at the farmer's wife.

'What a beautiful shawl! You look like you have feathers.' they said.

'Where did you get that from?' asked her husband, looking at his ordinary shawl.

'Just some threads I found in the weaving room,' smiled his wife.

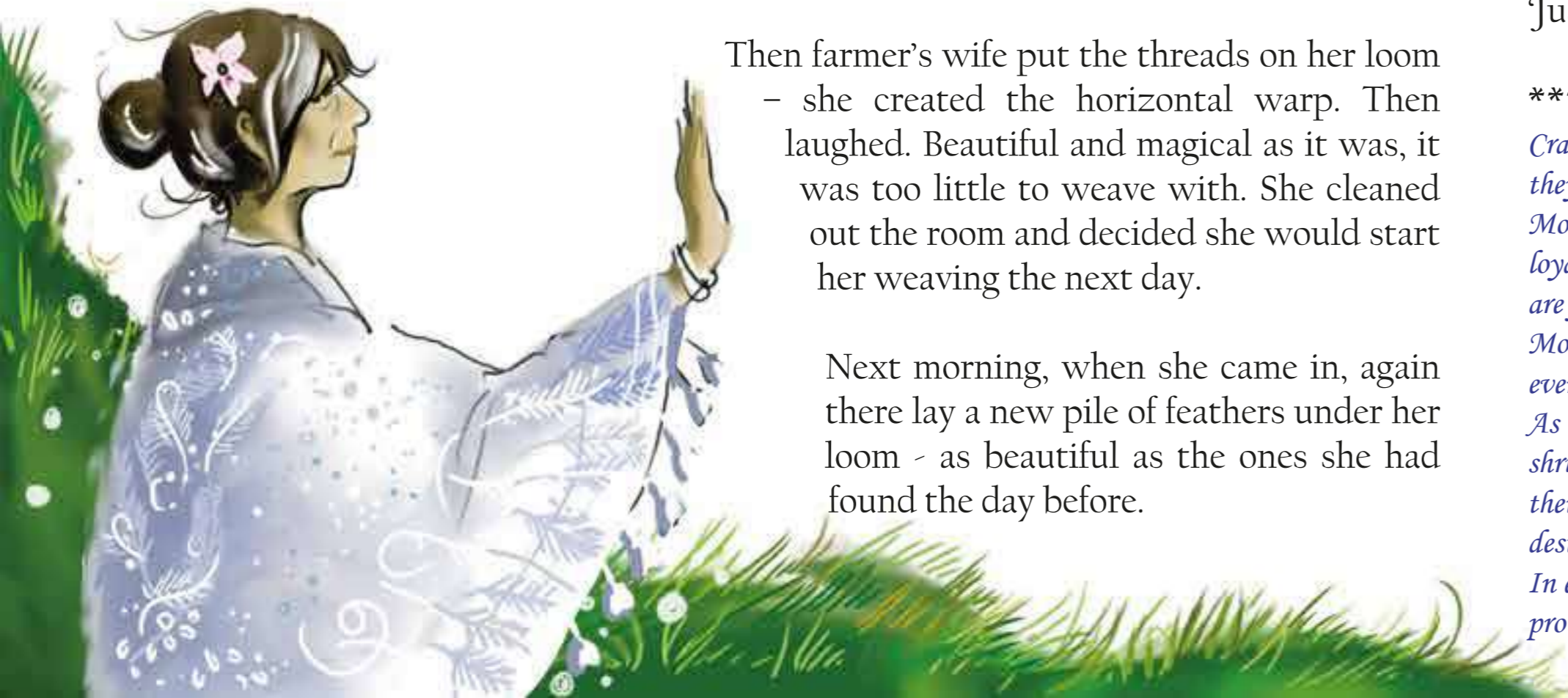
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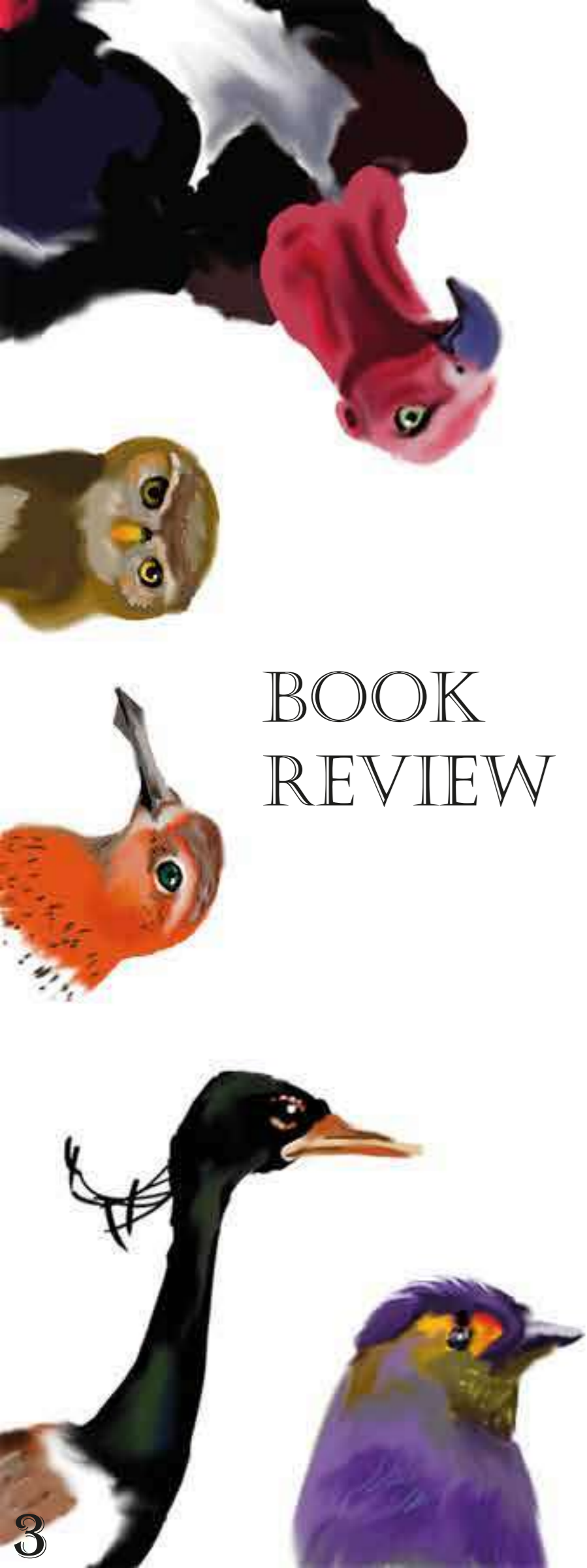
*Cranes are found throughout the world and are a part of folklore everywhere. They are considered special as they inhabit the three realms of water (wetlands), land and sky. They are messengers and linked with the Moon Goddess in many cultures. In southeast Asia, China and Japan cranes are a symbol of prosperity and loyalty. The sarus crane was a common sight throughout South Asia and different crane species are common are found all over the world.*

*Mostly they live on the edges of wetlands and rice fields catching small mammals and sometimes eating whatever grain is planted.*

*As human settlements and houses have increased and wetlands are being destroyed, the cranes' habitat has shrunk. Their populations, especially of the sarus crane is endangered. People often kill the chicks and eat their eggs to prevent them destroying the rice grains. But the birds do not do much damage. In fact they destroy the pests like rats and frogs and insects.*

*In earlier days the birds were treated as sacred and symbols of loyalty. Cranes mostly mate for life. If we can protect this beautiful bird its populations might soar again.*





## BOOK REVIEW

# The Jungle Radio: Bird songs of India

Written & Illustrated by Devangana Dash

*"To her left three friends she met,  
Singing in a honey-coated voice -  
A Babbler, Fairy and Thrush,  
Whistling tunes of their choice.  
Tew too too, tew too too."*

Birds 'are all around us and  
we all around them.'  
- Devangana Dash



Gul is sitting in her balcony one morning. Suddenly the radio makes 'strange sounds and jingles' - It's a jungle orchestra! Gul finds herself magically transported to an Indian forest. A forest full of birds in all shapes and 'countless colours': birds singing and chattering and calling and even imitating. There are koels(Asian cuckoo), doels(magpie-robin), thrushes, babblers, hoopoes and Shammas, and many more. Covering thirty birds from sub-tropical India, there is a hand-painted chart at the end of the book with bird names, which you can identify. Even in city parks and neighbourhood trees. Jungle Radio is an invitation for children and their parents to listen to Nature - in parks, from balconies in cities and villages and not just in a forest. Beautifully and colourfully illustrated, the book is included in the Honours list of South Asia Book Award

Publisher: Puffin Books, 2019  
Pages: 40  
ISBN:9780143447139  
Audience: 5 - 9 years  
Format: Picture book [Audiobook also available]

Links & Resources:  
<https://www.devanganadash.com/thejungleradio>  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3QiThRr11c>

# Dancing with birds

by Bulbul Sharma

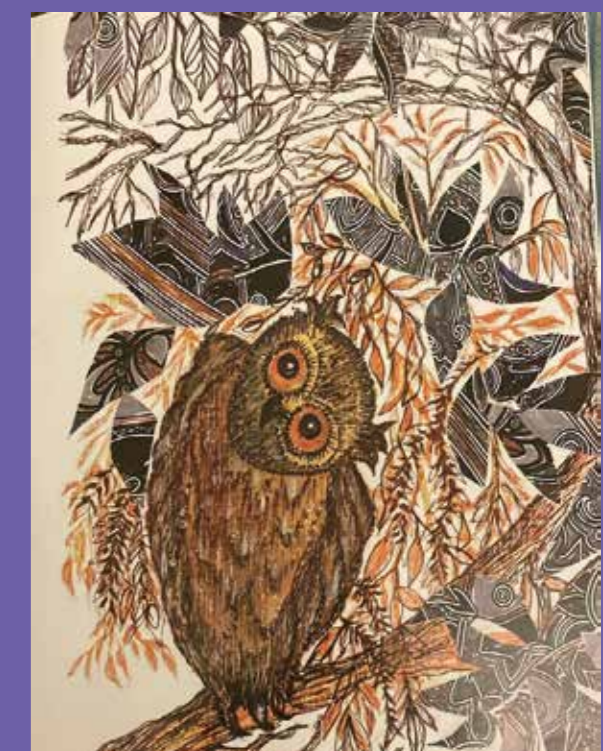
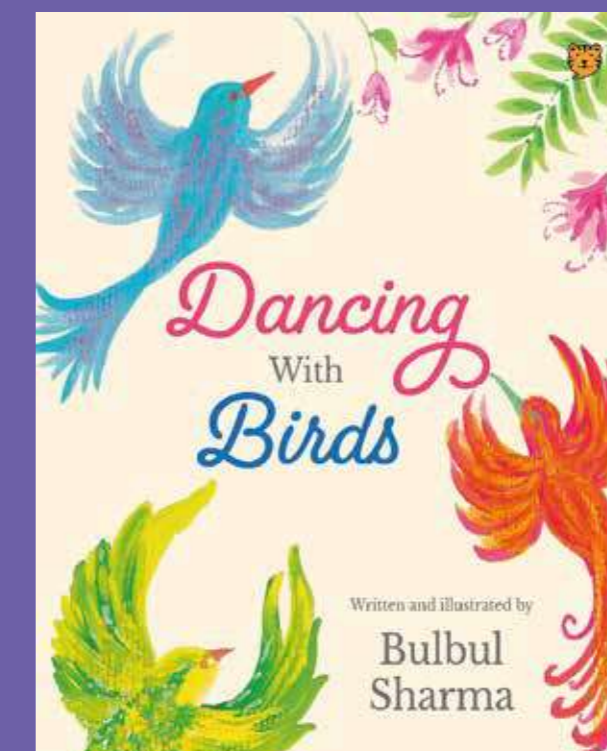
Beautiful pictures which are attractive and colourful, this book uses a little bit of rhyme and word-play to talk about the common birds around us.

It begins with some fun fantasy in the 'red and gold toffee tree where all the sweets are free. This is where the lorikeet and bees are found. Then it talks of eagles and owls, woodpeckers and crows.

The story brings in a child who enjoys the birds and trees and Nature - 'The sunlight laughs and makes a crazy line as it falls on my nose .....

Publisher : Talking Cub  
Reading age: 3 - 5 years

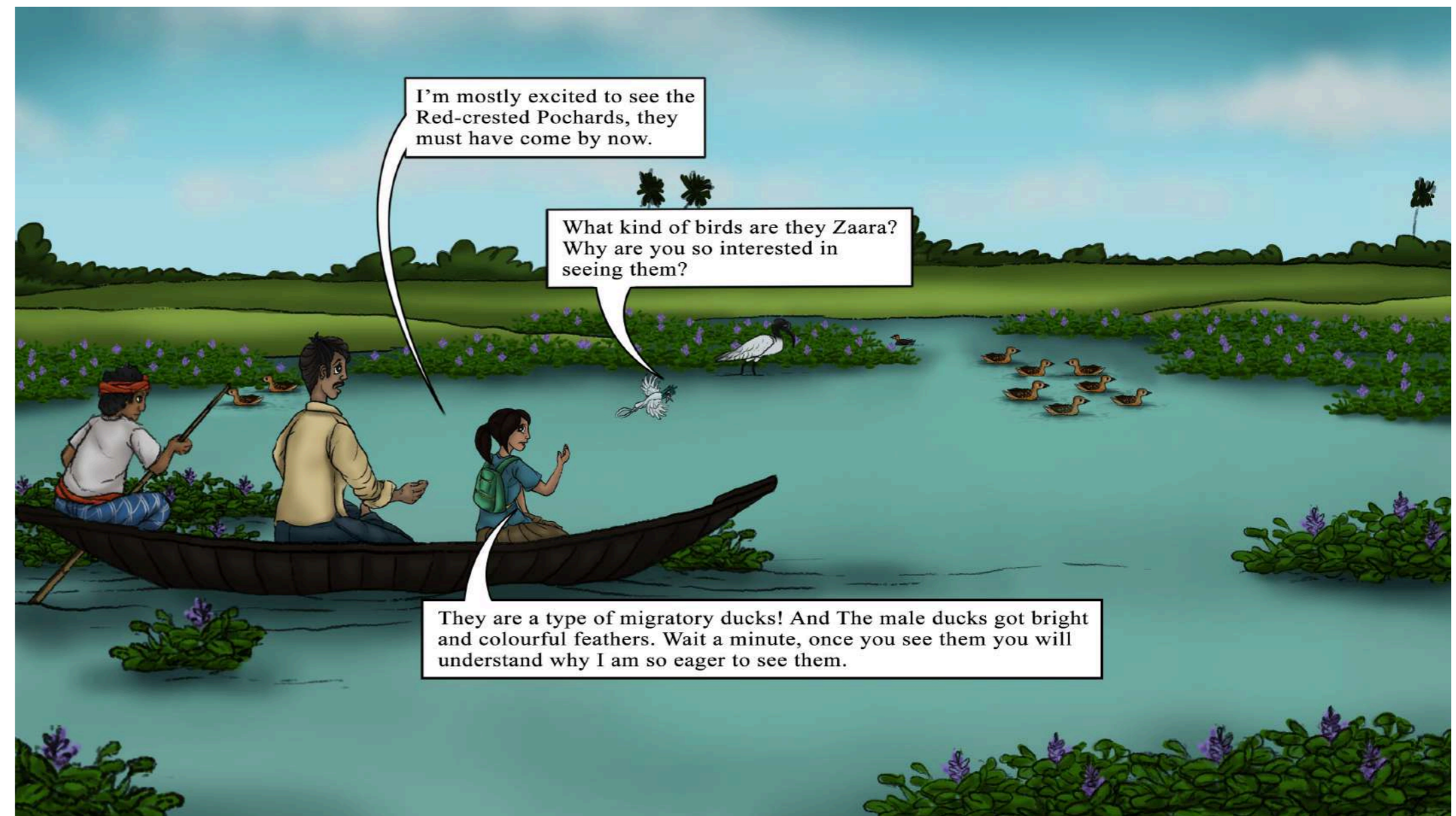
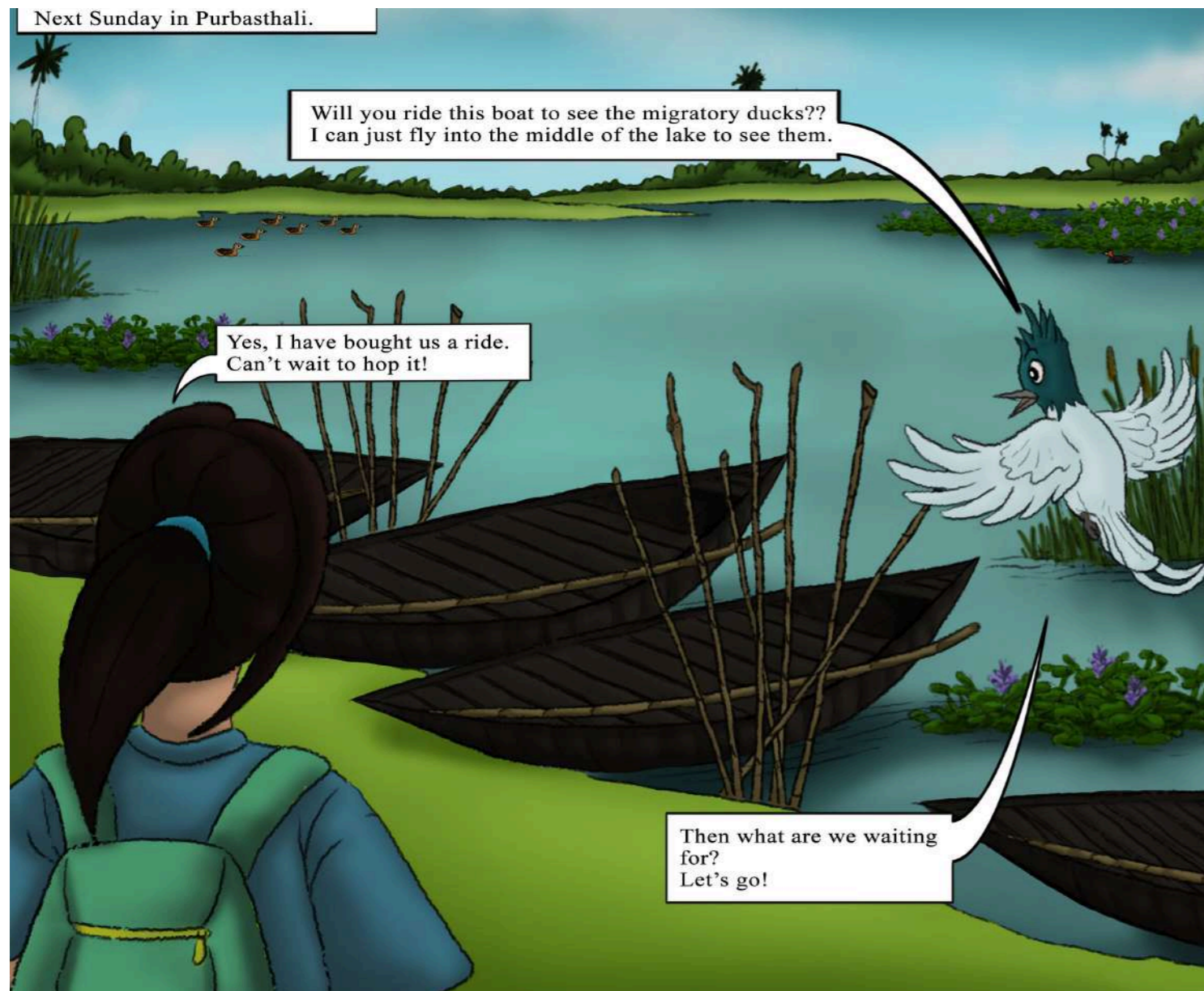
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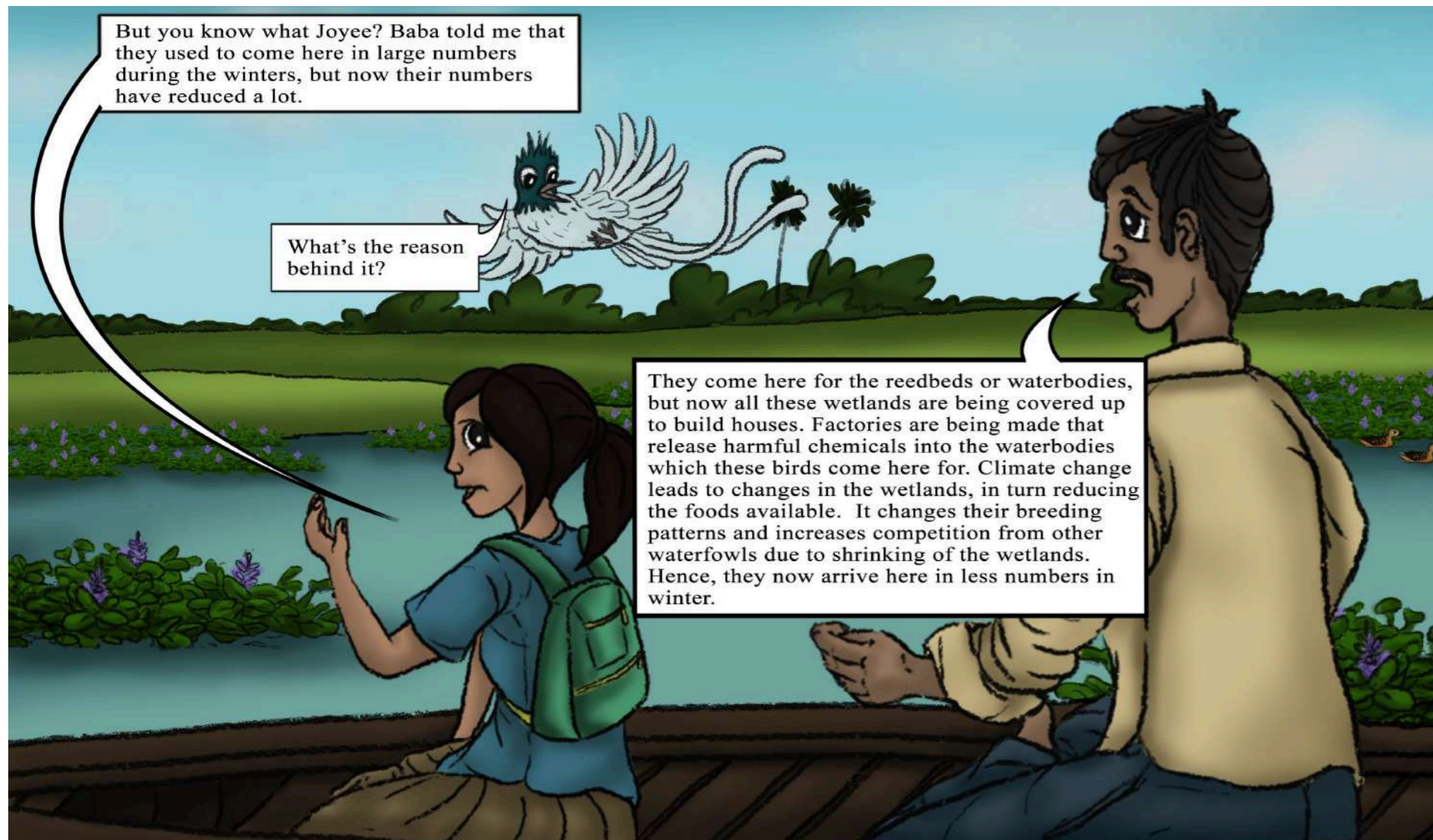
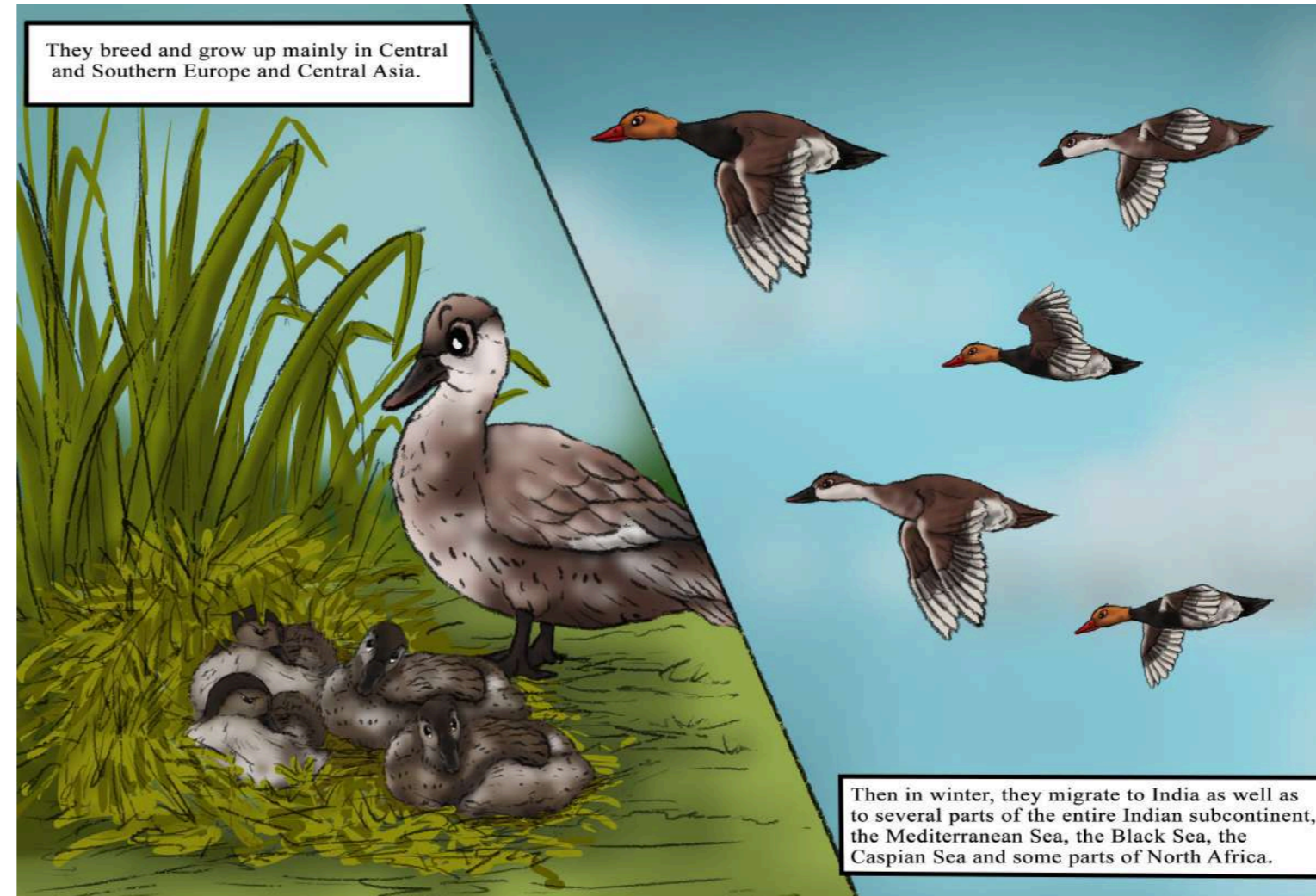
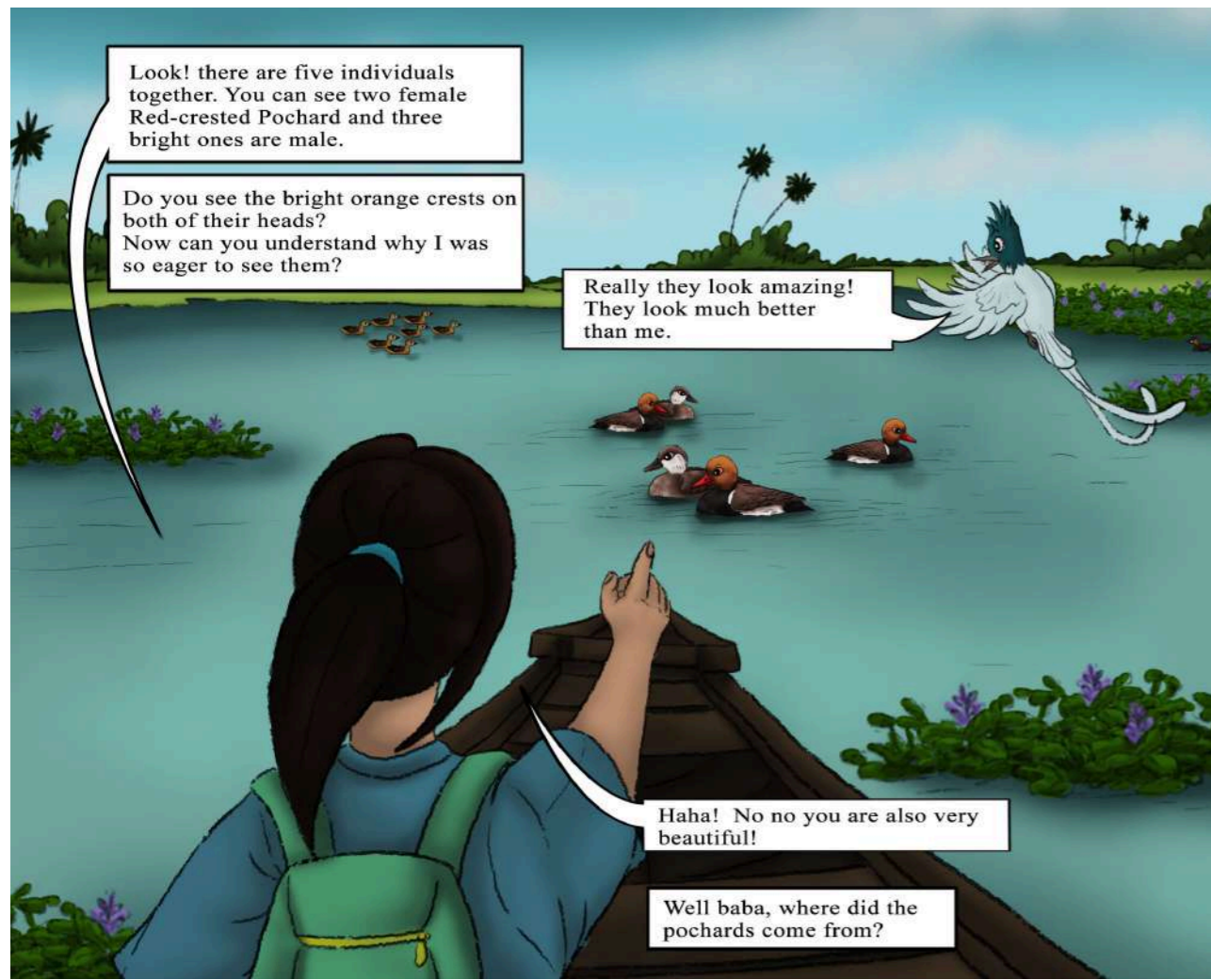


Sridipta Manna

# Zaara & Joyee

In search of  
Red crested Pochard...





by Dyuti Karmakar

## When foes become friends

In October 2012, Nagaland made news for hunting thousands of Amur falcons near the Doyang reservoir. These amazing birds visit Northeast India every October on their long journey from Siberia to Somalia, Kenya, and South Africa, traveling 22,000 kilometers and even flying over the sea at night.

To stop the hunting, conservationists informed the government, which imposed a ban since India protects migratory animals by law. However, the hunters were unhappy with the ban.

To solve this, nature lovers started Amur Falcon EcoClubs to teach hunters and villagers why these birds are special. They learned how important it is to protect the falcons instead of harming them.

Thanks to these efforts, villagers in Nagaland began protecting the falcons, allowing them to safely continue their incredible journey. This change turned a sad story into one of hope and care for nature.



## Protect Insects to Protect Birds

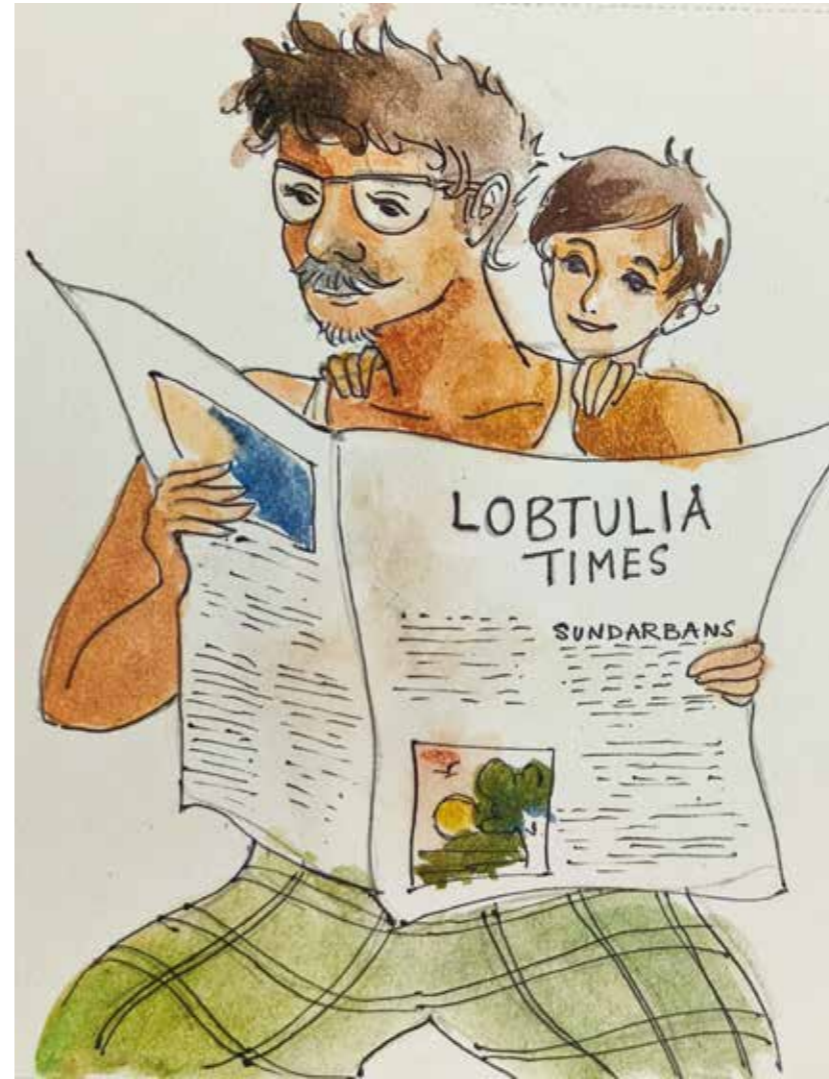
October 12th is celebrated as World Migratory Bird Day, a day to educate ourselves about the birds that travel long distances across the world. This year, the focus is on protecting insects, which are super important for these birds. Insects are like snacks that give birds the energy they need to stay strong during their long journeys.

But insects are in trouble. People use too many pesticides and fertilizers, and building roads or other structures destroys their homes. Climate change also makes things worse by causing hunger, disease, and even increasing the number of predators for insects.

Without enough insects, birds find it difficult to complete their migrations successfully. So, protecting insects helps the birds too! World Migratory Bird Day reminds us how everything in nature is woven into a network and we can bring big changes by saving the tiniest creatures on earth.

## Endangered birds are not pets: CITES suspends Bangladesh

CITES is an agreement signed between countries to ensure that trading wildlife,



including plants and animals, doesn't harm their survival in nature. Recently, it was found that Bangladesh has been importing endangered birds and selling them as pets, which is illegal. Thus Bangladesh faced suspension as a CITES member.

These birds are already in danger because their numbers are going down, and they need to be protected. To stop this, the Forest Department of Bangladesh has taken the issue seriously and is working to stop the illegal pet trade.

CITES helps remind everyone how important it is to protect endangered animals so they can live safely in their natural homes.

Every step to stop such illegal actions helps keep our wildlife safe for the future!

## Mimicking the strong friend to not appear weak

Recent studies in Chitwan National Park, Nepal, show that the Lesser necklaced laughingthrush copies the Greater necklaced laughingthrush when they search for food together. Even though they look alike, they are not related.

When these birds forage in the same area, the smaller bird changes its feather color to match the bigger bird. But when it's alone, its feathers look different. Scientists believe the smaller bird does this to gain protection from predators. The Greater laughingthrush is more aggressive and can scare off threats, which helps the smaller bird stay safe.

However, the bigger bird doesn't copy the smaller one because it doesn't need any benefits from looking like it. This clever mimicry by the smaller bird shows how animals can adapt to survive and thrive in the wild!



# NEIGHBOURHOOD NATURE

by Dyuti Karmakar

## birds through my lens...

Being unable to study, I stood up and walked towards my balcony. I was too lucky that day because a Purple Sunbird made its presence known by showcasing its lustrous purple feathers while foraging for sweet nectar from the papaya tree. I wasted no time to grab my camera and capture the picture of this little bird with its curved beak actively sucking out the juice it loves.



I was out in the garden with my camera and spotted a small bird, looking like a bluish sparrow, hopping from one branch to the other, I was excited to learn about it and clicked a picture. It was the Great Tit. I couldn't stop smiling all day as discovering a new bird species in my garden feels like an achievement!



This is one of the most common bird which you'll spot in your neighbourhood, the Red-vented Bulbul. It has an overall dark brown appearance with a red tuft of feathers under its tail feathers. I remember a bulbul couple collecting straws and dried leaves to build a nest in our veranda. The mother gave birth to three spotted eggs in the nest!

A tree devoid of any leaves can attract a lot of birds, and I make sure to check whether there is any bird resting on the bare branches. It so happened that a Coppersmith Barbet sat down on one of the tree branches and I luckily noticed its presence. Oh how wonderful it looked! It has a strange sound - imagine a coppersmith hitting a metal with a hammer...there you go!

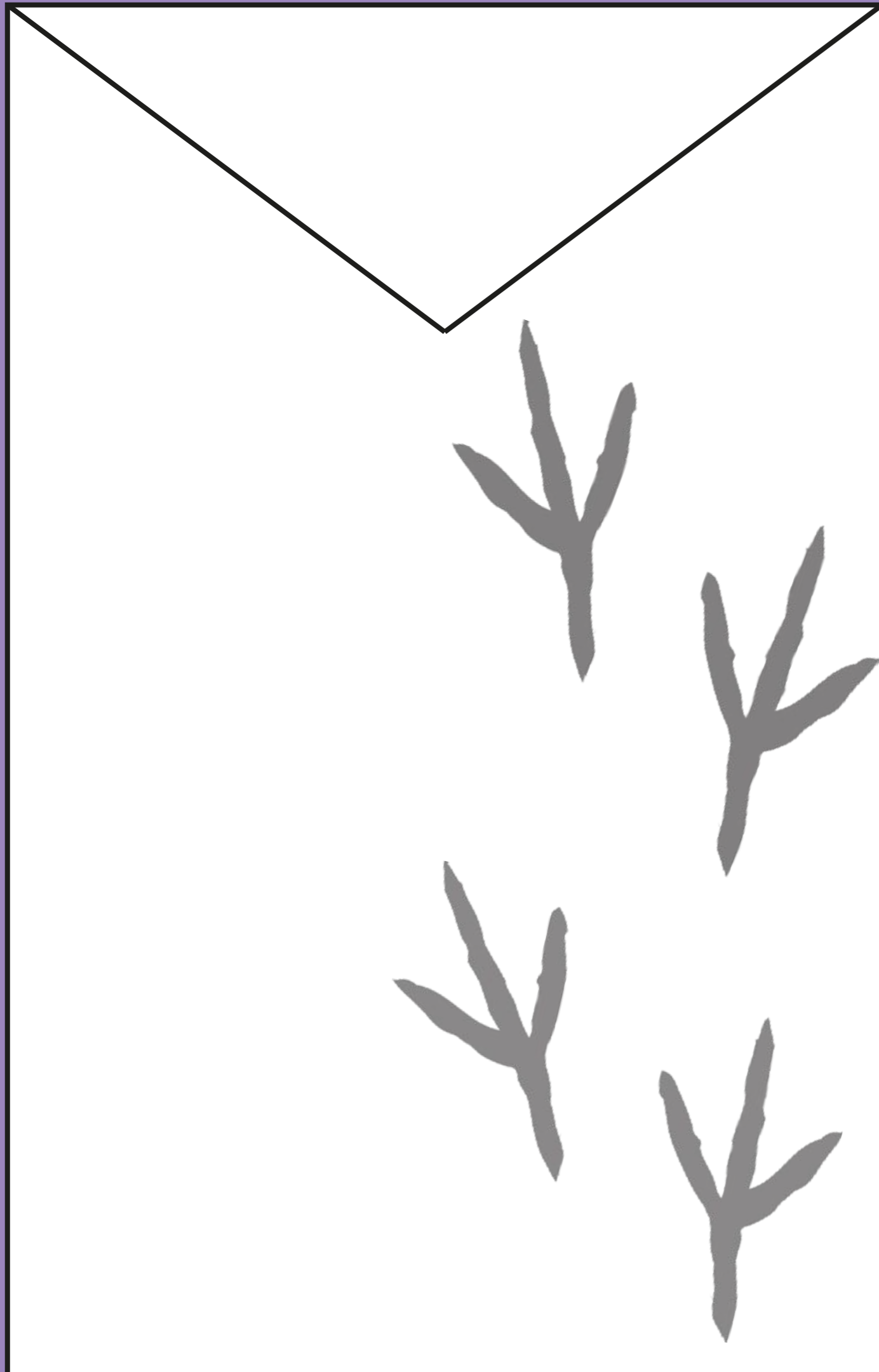


A female Asian Koel looks completely different from a male Koel - it has spots on its whole body. This picture is one of my favourite as it captures the way it eats papaya fruits from our garden. It is a favourite spot for all the birds as the ripened fruits are too delicious to resist. After all, who doesn't like fresh and juicy fruits?



They definitely are the most talkative birds in my surroundings. They bring their friends in the early morning and talk their heart out while foraging for insects. Their feathers help them camouflage better and you may need to squint a little before you can notice their active and agile bodies.





Please write to us with your thoughts and experiences about the environment. We may even publish it here!  
Address it to The Editor, Lobtulia.



*be nature's mate*

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