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Seasonal food and feeding diversification in common myna, (*Acridotheres tristis*), Linnaeus, 1776 in Larkana district, Sindh, Pakistan

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Abstract

The Common myna *Acridotheres tristis* belongs to the Family Sturnidae Genus *Acridotheres*. During the present study, 72 adult as well as juvenile birds were collected from different localities of Larkana District viz: Berochandio; Goth Ali Bux Kalhoro and Kheirodero. An analysis of stomach food contents were made in the laboratory. Due to the seasonal disparity, great difference was recorded in the frequency of food contents during the summer and winter periods these includes; insect, wheat, rice, dates, earthworm, papaya, grasshopper respectively.

Keywords: Aves, Passriformes, stomach contents, food and forages of common myna *Acridotheres tristis* Linnaeus, 1766, district Larkana, Sindh, Pakistan

Introduction

The Common myna bears dirty brown color with white patches along the sides of wings and below tail feathers^[1]. The head, neck and upper breast of the adult is glossy black, whereas the under tail coverts. The tail tip and the outer feathers are white and can be seen during the flight^[1]. The bill, legs and the feet are bright yellow, while the adult myna has yellowish spot behind the corner of eyes^[1]. The Common myna is referred to as the farmer's friend because it protects agricultural crops by feeding on insect pests. In fact the myna was deliberately introduced in continental landmasses and islands having tolerance for temperate to tropical climates.^[2]

They also feed on the ripening fruits, plant and seeds such as figs, papaya, dates, apple, pear, tomato, and cereals of crops such as maize, wheat and rice. Egg predation has also been seen in mynas^[2] especially the birds' eggs as well as chicks and small reptiles i.e. Lizards.

Common mynas are highly adaptable to human habitations and fond of human pet food... and forage on the seashore such as, worms; mollusks; crustaceans and other seafood of their interest. They also scavenge rubbish dumps; pastures; farmyards and roads.

They are predominantly ground feeders, picking prey from the surface of small pasture and grain but will also opportunistically feed on flowering nectar; fruiting tendrils; coplics; and bushes^[3]. In their native range of southern Asia, the myna forms flocks in rural areas, which feast on insects and grubs emerging from ploughed cultivated lands soil^[4].

Like most starlings, the common myna is omnivorous. It feeds on insects; arachnids; crustaceans; small reptiles; small mammals; seeds; grain and fruits and discarded waste from human habitation. It forages on the ground among grass insects especially the grasshoppers, from where it gets the generic name *Acridotheres*, "grasshopper hunter"^[5,6].

Few reports of previous workers Jerdon, 1863; Mason; Maxwell- Lefroy, 1912 and Baker, 1926 showed insects as the major food of the Common myna. Inglis, 1910 had once found the Common myna foraging on pied myna (*Sturnus contra*). Whistler, 1949 recorded grasshopper; termites; earthworm; beetles; bugs and variety of other insects; fruits; frogs; lizards and flower nectar as food of the Common myna. However, the diversification of food items so recorded from the present studies are shown in table (Table. 1)

Materials and Methods

Regular study of Common myna *Acridotheres tristis* Linnaeus, 1776 was made to examine the food and feeding behavior on the basis of seasonal disparity.

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For the stomach analysis, the birds were captured during 2015 to 2016 in various seasons of the year from different localities of Larkana District. The birds were weighed in grams with the help of weight machine (Electronic compact sale SF-460),

autopsied and their stomach was analyzed under the dissecting microscope having magnification 10 times 3.5, or total magnification 3.5x.

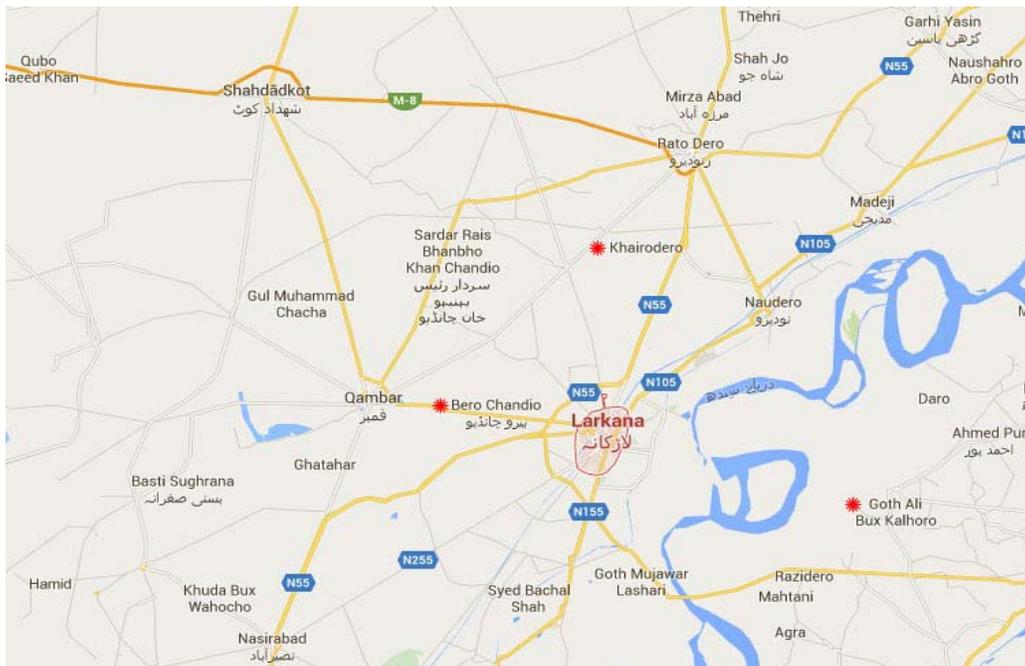


Fig 1: Map of District Larkana, showing various studied areas focused by asterisk areas where in collection of Common myna *Acridotheres tristis* Linnaeus 1766, was made.

Results

Table 2: Seasonal disparity of food in Common myna *Acridotheres tristis*, 1776 were recorded from various localities of Larkana District during summer and winter period 2015 to 2016.

S.NO	Food items	Summer frequency	Weight	Winter frequency	Weight
1.	Insect	10	68.15	6	55.19
2.	Wheat	ND	49.10	3	50.52
3.	Rice	19	40	ND	49.32
4.	Earthworm	15	52.12	16	50.38
5.	Dates	2	40	ND	40.23
6.	Papaya	2	42.15	ND	41
7.	Grasshopper	9	55.52	5	56.20

ND. No detectable
 F. frequency of food items
 No. of birds examined 72



Fig 2: Common myna forages on Earthworm



Fig 1: Photographic view of Common myna



Fig 3: Common myna forages on Grasshopper



Fig 4: Common myna forages on Dates

Description

During the present studies different food items were recorded due to seasonal disparity during the summer and winter, wherein the frequency of insect was 10-6 and bird having weight 68.15-55.19 gm; the frequency of wheat was 0-3 and bird having weight 49.10-50.52 gm; the frequency of rice was 19-40 and bird weight 40-49.32 gm; the frequency of earthworm was 15-16 and bird weight 52.12-50.38 gm; the frequency of dates were 2-0 and weight of bird 40-40.23 gm; the frequency of papaya was 2-0 and bird weight 42.15-41gm; the frequency of grasshopper was 9-5 and bird weight 55.52-56.20 gm correspondingly.

Discussion

The frequency of food items during summer and winter was found as under: insect 10-6 (summer > winter); wheat 0-3 (winter > summer); rice 19-0 (summer > winter); earthworm 15-10 (summer > winter); dates 2-0 (summer > winter); papaya 2-0 (summer > winter); grasshopper 9-5 (summer > winter) correspondingly.

This refers that the frequency of insect; rice; earthworm; dates; papaya and grasshopper were highest in the summer and lowest in winter whereas the frequency of wheat was highest in the winter and lowest in the summer.

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Conclusion

Present studies reflect highest frequency of stomach contents during the summer while lowest one during the winter.

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