

Indian Pied Starling (Myna)

Gracupica contra

Order: Passeriformes

Family: Sturnidae

Genus: *Sturnus*

Species: *contra*



STATUS

Resident/ Common

MORPHOLOGY

- Size: Slightly smaller than the Common Myna.
- Field Characters: An obvious myna of pied--black and white—plumage, with a bright orange-red and yellow bill. Sexes alike. Flocks about open cultivation

DISTRIBUTION

- India east of a line from Ambala to Hyderabad (Deccan), Assam and Burma. Four races are recognised on depth and other details of colouration, viz., the India-Assam race contra, the doubtful dehrae, the Burma race superciliaris and the Siamese floweri. The last may just cross over into our boundary in South Tenasserim

HABITS

- This species inhabits cultivated country and is rarely met with away from human habitations.
- Unlike the Common Myna, however, it does not appropriate dwelling houses though often entering gardens and compounds to hunt grasshoppers or dig up earth-worms on a flooded lawn, or to roost amongst groves of large trees.
- It is essentially a ground feeder and much more insectivorous in its diet.
- It keeps in flocks— often associated with other mynas - in the neighbourhood of villages and towns, feeding at the refuse dumps on their outskirts or attending on grazing cattle on the moist grassy margins of village tanks.
- In Calcutta, particularly large flocks may be seen about the brackish lakes and in the sewage outflow locality.
- It has a number of pleasant musical notes, some of them rather like snatches from the flight-song of the Finch-Larks.

NESTING

- The season ranges between March and September and often two successive broods are raised.
- The nest is very different from that of the other mynas, being a large untidy globular structure of twigs, leaves, grass and rubbish.
- It is placed on an overhanging
- branch of a mango or similar large tree near cultivation, 15 to 30 feet from the ground.
- The birds do not nest in colonies as such, but it is not unusual to find 3 or 4 nests on the same tree.
- The eggs - four or five in number - are a glossy blue, without markings. Both sexes share in building and care of the young