

## Editors, be polite to your reviewers!

Suryanarayanan<sup>1</sup> raised an interesting problem that I believe many researchers have been facing in recent years: a flood of invitations from scientific journals to review manuscripts that are not related to the addressee's research profile.

What has worried me even more is that such letters are sometimes sent to 'undisclosed recipients' (so, the addressees' e-mails are blinded). This can mean they are sent to many potential reviewers. But, how many. Ten, twenty, a hundred? All in a database?

And yet I want to add another problem to the long list of problems of peer review<sup>2</sup>. I believe that journal editors and officers need to be more polite towards their reviewers who, *nota bene*, spend much of their time and energy in reviewing for their journals, usually for free. I

have encountered just the opposite, which perhaps is more irritating. I was once asked to review a manuscript for a new agricultural journal. Surprisingly, this time the topic did lie within my research interests and thus I agreed to review the manuscript. But there was no reply. Some 2–3 months later I received an invitation letter to review another manuscript for the same journal and I again agreed to do it. No reply again. Yes, I did receive a third invitation letter to review yet another manuscript for this journal.... No one will be surprised to hear that I did not agree.

The point is that editors of journals who are impolite to their reviewers make a poor advertisement for the whole community of science editors. Editors of most journals do not behave like this,

and they are aware that without reviewers their journals would not be viable. I think the scientific world of publishing faces many problems and we do not need additional ones arising from unscrupulous people trying to make money out of our hard work.

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1. Suryanarayanan, T. S., *Curr. Sci.*, 2012, **103**, 871.
  2. Henderson, M., *BMJ*, 2010, **340**, c1409.
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## More conservation efforts are required for saving flamingoes

Mahato *et al.*<sup>1</sup> have emphasized on the conservation of Indian flying fox (*Pteropus giganteus*). Many of the bird species, including the California condor (*Gymnogyps californianus*), also faced a decline in population and were pushed to the brink of extinction due to inadequate conservation efforts<sup>2</sup>. The flamingoes (*Phoenicopterus ruber* and *P. minor*) are categorized as near-threatened species in the IUCN Red List. They are currently bearing the brunt of unplanned development in and around their feeding and breeding grounds. Sewri-Mahul mudflats along the Mumbai–Thane coast, a favourite feeding ground of flamingoes, is a glaring example of negligence towards the conservation of these birds. In spite

of being a designated Important Bird Area (IBA), the mudflats and the adjoining areas are used for effluent and sewage discharge, and boat repairing and painting activities. The IBA is surrounded by industries (Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd, Oil and Natural Gas Corporation, Hindustan Petroleum and Rashtriya Chemical and Fertilizers Ltd are within a 5 km distance). Apart from flamingoes, about 150 bird species, including globally threatened species such as *Tringa guttifer*, have been recorded from this IBA. The major threats to IBA include pollution due to chemicals, oil and grease, release of untreated sewage, dye wastes and hot water discharge into the sea<sup>3</sup>.

The plight of the flamingoes is increasing due to the upcoming residential areas adjoining the IBA with a commensurate increase in the number of high-tension cables. In the past, hundreds of birds were electrocuted by these cables in Gujarat. Therefore, such incidence in Sewri-Mahul mudflats is not a remote possibility. A proposed trans-harbour link traversing right through IBA will add another increment of stress on these birds. Therefore, a better perception about the ecological services provided by

the migratory birds either in the form of nutrient input through faecal matter or better oxygenation and mixing of the sediments in the mudflat during feeding seems to be a major pre-requisite for shifting the focus of conservation planning towards migratory birds.

In the backdrop of the above, greater awareness among the masses, adequate baseline information about the ecology of IBAs, and a more judicious and pragmatic planning for developmental activities around IBA can save the home of the flamingoes.

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1. Mahato, A. K. R., Kumar, V. V. and Patel, N., *Curr. Sci.*, 2012, **103**, 354–355.
  2. Subramanian, M., *Nature*, 2012, **486**, 451; doi: 10.1038/486451a.
  3. Islam, M. Z. and Rahmani, A. R., Indian Bird Conservation Network, Bombay Natural History Society, Mumbai and BirdLife International, UK, 2004, pp. xviii + 1133.
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**Figure 1.** Flamingoes in Sewri-Mahul mudflats along the Mumbai coast (Photo: S. K. Sharma, CIFE).