Birds in the Backyard

Oriental Magpie Robin (*Copsychus saularis*)

Common across most of the Indian subcontinent, the Oriental Magpie Robin is now classified under the Old World flycatcher family. The male is black above with white underparts, wingbar and outer tail feathers. Like the paradise flycatcher previously featured, females and immatures are differently coloured than breeding males, with duller grey-brown plumage instead of black. The black plumage of breeding males is likely to be an example of what is called a U-absent cue, for recognition (by females) of suitable individuals for mating in this case. The cue is absent in “Undesirable” individuals, which, here, are other females and immature males.

Magpie robin males are known for their diverse songs during the breeding season, which usually ends in July. Studies show that urbanization seems to have changed song variables.

Trivia: The oriental magpie robin is the national bird of Bangladesh.

By: T N C Vidya

**Photo Credits: Male (top), female
(middle): Satyajit Ganguly;**

Immature: Mohamed Musthafa Iqbal.