

Date. 21 April 2001

Time. 00.10

Place. Kyanjing

Weather. Cool with a clear blue sky.

Altitude. 3900 M.

Observers. Som G C, Christine and Barry Hancock.

OBSERVATION OF HIGH FLYING BIRDS IN NEPAL.

OBSERVATION.

Whilst on holiday in Nepal on a birdwatching trek up the Langtang valley, we were approaching the village of Kyanjing Gumpa, when our ornithologist leader pointed out to my wife and I, a raptor soaring high against the slopes of the nearby mountain of Kyanging Ri (4773M). Looking at the raptor through our binoculars, we all noticed at the same time 15 –20, apparently white birds fly through our field of vision. They were flying in a westerly direction and we thought very high. They flew in a 'V' formation for most of the 2 minutes we observed them except for a period of transition when they were roughly 'in line' formation. They were large birds with long necks, white in colour, although the coloration may have been affected by the sun on the snow clad peaks.

CONCLUSION

Although at first, we thought that they were swans, geese or cranes, with hindsight we could equally add pelican, ibis or egret. But the fact was that they were flying above the Himalayan peaks 7/8000m and in a westerly direction, we concluded that they were on migration. After some investigation, later that day, we all agreed that they were probably black necked cranes flying from their wintering grounds in China to breeding grounds in the valleys of the western Himalayas.

Barry Hancock.