


Survival of Purple-rumped Sunbird chick

The Purple-rumped Sunbird *Leptocoma zeylonica* (Aves: Passeriformes: Nectariniidae), a tiny bird feeds mainly on nectar. Often seen hopping and hovering around flowers, the male has a green metallic crown and shoulder patch, a dark brown body with purple rump, a purple throat, lemon-yellow underparts, and whitish flanks. The female is light greyish-brown above and pale yellow below. This species is found in a variety of habitats with trees, including scrub, flowering plants, and cultivation.

On 21 July 2021, one of our neighbours brought two Purple-rumped Sunbird chicks in a coconut shell. The chicks had fallen from a nearby tree due to heavy winds. We kept the chicks in a pot that was filled by coconut coir pith. We brought a few termites and tried to feed the chicks, the chick started chirping and suddenly two adult Purple-rumped Sunbirds (male & female) came into a nearby tree and started. We moved the pot to the corner of the balcony. One of the two chicks died after a few hours (probably from injury from the fall). The adults came to the pot and fed the chick with insects throughout the day. Most of the day they rested on Yellow Bells *Tecoma stans* (Lamiales: Bignoniaceae) tree very close to that balcony. We observed this behaviour till 1800 h after that parents did not come. To keep the chick safe from domestic cats, we kept the pot inside our home during the night.



Purple-rumped Sunbird
Leptocoma zeylonica
(male).



Purple-rumped
Sunbird chicks.



Pot kept in the
corner of the
veranda.



Yellow Bells
Tecoma stans.



Insect feeding by adult
Purple-rumped Sunbird.



Healthy chick.
© R. Athirsta.

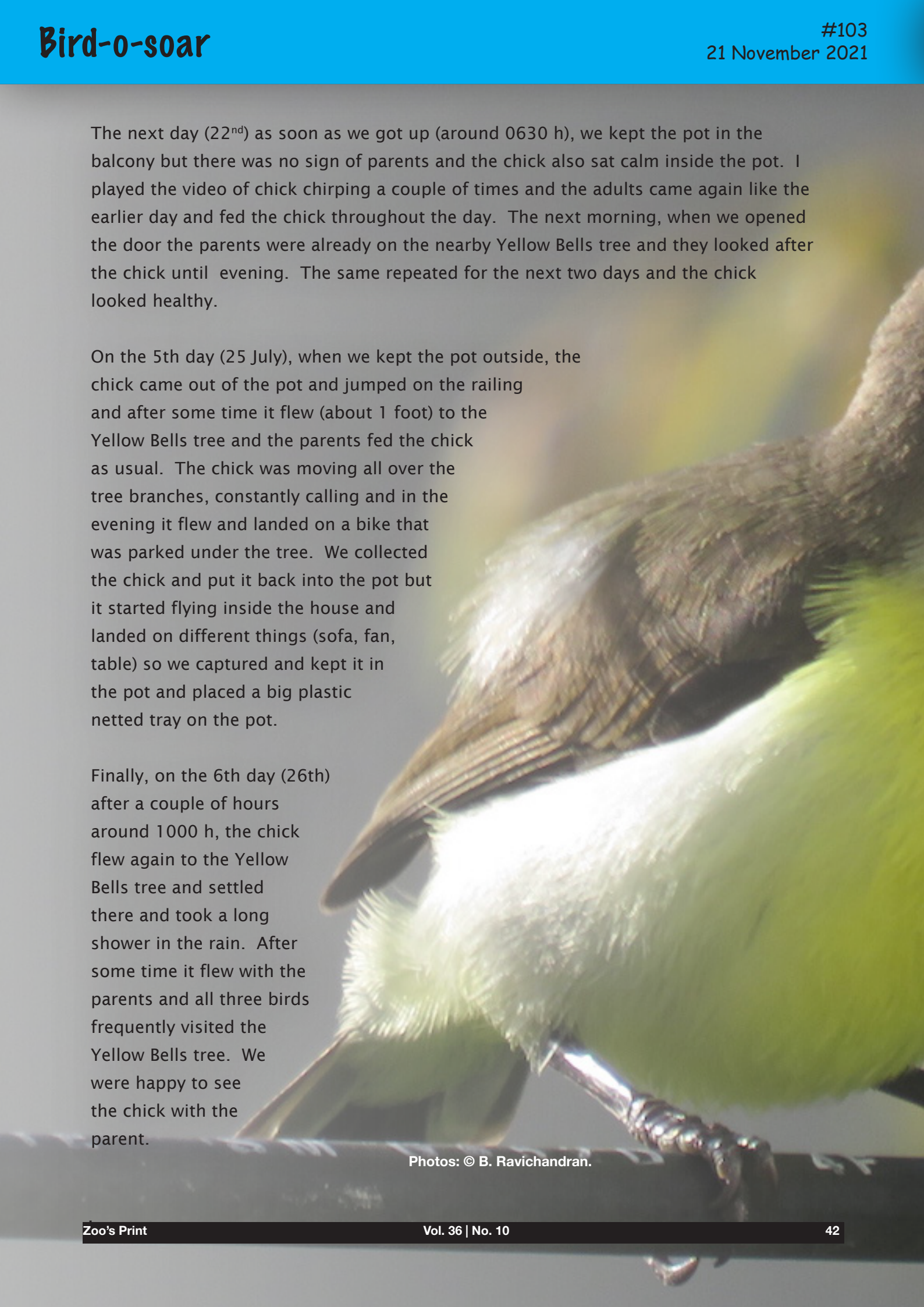


The next day (22nd) as soon as we got up (around 0630 h), we kept the pot in the balcony but there was no sign of parents and the chick also sat calm inside the pot. I played the video of chick chirping a couple of times and the adults came again like the earlier day and fed the chick throughout the day. The next morning, when we opened the door the parents were already on the nearby Yellow Bells tree and they looked after the chick until evening. The same repeated for the next two days and the chick looked healthy.

On the 5th day (25 July), when we kept the pot outside, the chick came out of the pot and jumped on the railing and after some time it flew (about 1 foot) to the Yellow Bells tree and the parents fed the chick as usual. The chick was moving all over the tree branches, constantly calling and in the evening it flew and landed on a bike that was parked under the tree. We collected the chick and put it back into the pot but it started flying inside the house and landed on different things (sofa, fan, table) so we captured and kept it in the pot and placed a big plastic netted tray on the pot.

Finally, on the 6th day (26th) after a couple of hours around 1000 h, the chick flew again to the Yellow Bells tree and settled there and took a long shower in the rain. After some time it flew with the parents and all three birds frequently visited the Yellow Bells tree. We were happy to see the chick with the parent.

Photos: © B. Ravichandran.



We have heard that the parents would reject the abandoned/ fallen chick in case a human touched it, but in this case we observed the parents take care of the chick for six days and finally fly off with it.



Chick outside the pot (4th day).



Chick moved to a nearby tree branch (5th day).



Chick in the rain (6th day). © R. Athirista.

Purple-rumped Sunbird
Leptocoma zeylonica
(female).

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