**Comparative morphology of the os coxae in black swan (*Cygnus atratus*) and domestic fowl (*Gallus gallus*)**

**ABSTRACT**

The os coxae of three black swans were collected during post mortem examination from the Department of Veterinary Pathology, C.V.Sc., Rajendranagar. Six os coxae were collected from local butcher shop from apparently healthy domestic fowl for comparative studies. The os coxae of black swan and the fowl consisted of three bones; ilium, ischium and pubis. These bones fused to form acetabulum. The ilium showed a preacetabular and postacetabular part wherein the preacetabular part was slightly longer than the postacetabular part in fowl while the postacetabular part was much longer than the preacetabular part in the black swan. The dorsal surface/gluteal surface of the preacetabular part presented a fossa in both the species which was deeper in case of the black swan. Fusion of the crest of the preacetabular part of the ilium with the spinous processes of the lumbosacral mass formed the canalesilioneurales anteriorly in the both the species which was long and narrow in the black swan. The cranial border of the preacetabular part was much wider and strongly convex in the domestic fowl than in the black swan. Just in front and outside the acetabulum, the pubis gives off a short and blunt process, the prepubic / preacetabular/pectineal process. Pectineal process was prominent in the fowl while it was rudimentary in the black swan. Acetabulum was perforated in both the species.

***Keywords*:** Os coxae, Comparative anatomy, Swan, Fowl.

**1. INTRODUCTION**

Many studies have been performed on the fore limb bones of birds in relation to the functional aspects of flight. However, anatomy of hind limb of birds also acquires more importance because certain features of hind limbs are considered as taxonomic characters (Cracaft, 1971). The avian os coxae is a very big and broad bone which bears the bulk of body weight providing greater surface area for the insertion of muscles. The big size of the pelvic girdle is related to the bipedal standing posture, and the ventrally opened pelvis forms a roof like covering for large part of body cavity and organs contained in it (Mehta *et al.,* 2014). The pelvic bones are fused with the synsacrum to a greater or lesser extent to form a firm structure which aids for flight, locomotion and respiration.

The black swan is a large water bird with black plumage and a red bill and is introduced in many countries as an ornamental bird. However, information on the comparative anatomical structure and variations between the os coxae of the black swan and the common domestic fowl is scanty. Hence this study was taken to compare the various morphological features of os coxae of black swan and the domestic fowl.

**2. MATERIALS AND METHODS**

The os-coxae of three black swans were collected during post mortem examination from the Department of Veterinary Pathology, C.V.Sc., Rajendranagar. Six os coxae were collected from local butcher shop from apparently healthy domestic fowl. By blunt dissection, all the pelvic muscles attached to the bones were removed and the specimens were macerated by wet method. After the bones were cleaned, their gross morphological features were studied.

**3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The os coxae of black swan and the fowl consisted of three bones; ilium, ischium and pubis. These bones fused to form acetabulum in accordance with the reports of Nickel *et al.,* (1977) in fowl and Feduccia (1975) and Mehta *et al.*, (2014) in Japanese quail. The space between the pelvic bones was occupied by rhomboid shaped lumbosacral mass (McLelland, 1990). The ilium and ischium bones did not unite in the ventral aspect, so pelvis was open ventrally as observed by Mehta et al. (2013) in emu, Sasan *et al.*, (2017) in Bar-headed goose, and Sarma *et al.,*(2018) in Indian eagle-owl.

**3.1 Ilium**

In the black swan and the domestic fowl, the ilium was long and a prominent iliac crest divided the dorsal surface into preacetabular and postacetabular part. This concurs with the reports of Nickel *et al.,* (1977) in domestic fowl and Mehta *et al.,* (2014) in Japanese quail. Similar findings were reported in ostrich (Tamil selvan *et al.,* 2015), guinea fowl and pigeon (Lavanya *et al.,* 2017), Indian eagle owl (Sarma *et al.,* 2018) and in crested serpent eagle and brown wood owl (Keneisenuo *et al.,* 2019). However, the ridge was not prominent in pigeon when compared to guinea fowl (Lavanya *et al.,* 2017). In the present study, the preacetabular part was slightly longer than post acetabular part in the fowl while the postacetabular part was longer in the black swan. Longer preacetabular part was reported by Nickel *et al*., (1977) in pigeon and by Deshmukh *et al.,* (2016) in peacock and peahen. Similarly, Sreeranjini *et al*., (2011) reported long pre-acetabular part and short post-acetabular part in peahen and stated that the ridge which separated these parts extended up to the posterior extremity in peahen. In the present study of both the species, the preacetabular part was roughly quandrangular while the postacetabular part was roughly trapezoid. Quadrate shaped preacetabular part and trapezoid postacetabular part was reported in Ostrich (Tamil selvan *et al.,* 2015). The preacetabular part was quadrilateral and the postacetabular part was in the form of an elongated triangle in emu (Lakshmi *et al.,* 2007). The preacetabular part of both the species showed a dorsal and ventral surface. The dorsal surface presented a fossa which was deeper in the black swan than in the domestic fowl. The dorsomedial borders of the preacetabular part of the ilium completely fused with the dorsal spinous processes of lumbosacral mass and formed a thin plate with it which was wider anteriorly in the black swan giving a triangular appearance while the plate was quadrangular in fowl. These borders formed crests were closely placed in the anterior portion but distantly placed in posterior region in both the species ( Fig.1). Keneisonou *et al.,* (2019) reported that the crests which separated the preacetabular and post acetabular parts were very close to each other anteriorly in crested serpent eagle but were not too close to each other in brown wood owl. Fusion of the dorsal crests of the preacetabular part of the ilium with the spinous processes of the lumbosacral mass formed the canalesilioneurales anteriorly in both the species wherein it was narrow and elongated in the black swan. The presence of the canalesilioneurales was also described by Nickel *et al.,* (1977) in the domestic fowl. In contrast, Lavanya *et al.,* (2017) reported the presence of a dorsally opened narrow canalesilioneurales in pigeon. The cranial border of ilium which formed the anterior limit of the wing of ilium was convex in both the species which are in accordance with the recordings in peacock and peahen (Deshmukh *et al.,* 2016), and fowl (Nickel *et al*. 1977). However, the cranial border of the preacetabular part was much wider and strongly convex in the fowl than in the black swan. Lateral border was concave and presented a ridge at the posterior one third of preacetabular part in the black swan whereas the ridge was not appreciated in the common domestic fowl. The ventral border of the preacetabular part was concave and the concavity was more pronounced in the black swan than in the domestic fowl. The posterior border of the preacetabular part was marked by the iliac crest. The iliac crest which separated the pre and postacetabular parts was terminated dorsal to the antetrochanter in black swan and it was extended up to the posterior extremity in fowl (Fig. 2) which is in concurrence with the findings of Sreeranjini *et al*., (2011) in peahen. Sarma *et al.,* (2018) reported that the crest of pre-acetabular part continued as the lateral border of the post-acetabular part in Indian eagle owl.

The postacetabular part in fowl showed a dorsal and a lateral part due to the presence of an elevation anteriorly which disappeared posteriorly and resulted in the formation of a flat plate posteriorly. Such division was not observed in black swan. The dorsomedial border of the postacetabular part fused with the transverse processes of the lumbosacral mass. Close to the junction of the postacetabular part with synsacrum, four large foramina were observed on either side of the median plane for the passage of spinal nerves in domestic fowl. The size of these four foramina increased posteriorly, the fourth one being the largest. Behind this, faint foramina were observed on the synsacrum which abruptly decreased in size and were covered by a plate of bone in fowl. The foramina were also present in black swan but the large postacetabular part concealed the foramina to a great extent. Similar observations were reported in brown wood owl (Keneisenou *et al.,* (2019) and in Indian eagle owl (Sarma *et al.,* 2018) who reported the presence of four large foramina on either side of the median plane. In crested serpent eagle, five large foramina were observed on either side of the median plane on the ventral surface of the ilium (Keneisenou *et al.,* 2019). However, Sathyamoorthy *et al.,* (2012) reported 7-8 openings on either side of the median ridge in spot-billed pelicans. The spinal nerves pass through these foramina. The ventral border of the postacetabular part formed the dorsal boundary of the ischiatic foramen in both the species. This is in accordance with reports of Nickel *et al.,*(1977) in domestic fowl. However, the concavity of this border was much deeper in the black swan than in the domestic fowl. Anteriorly, it was demarcated from the preacetabular part by the iliac crest. Posterior borders of both right and left sides fused with the synsacrum which concurs with the reports of Tamil selvan *et al.,* (2015) in ostrich who reported that the posterior borders fused with synsacrum to form V shape. The internal surface of the ilium is excavated to lodge the kidney in both the species.

Acetabulum is circular and perforated in both the species and is formed by the fusion of ilium ischium and pubis which is in accordance with the reports of Saini and Bansal (2023) in Indian eagle owl. This contradicts the reports of Nickel *et al.,* (1977) that pubis was not involved in the formation of acetabulum in fowl and duck. The acetabulum presented the antetrochanter caudodorsally in both the species. This is for articulation with trochanter major of femur as reported in domestic birds, cattle egret, spot-billed pelicans, and Indian eagle-owl (Nickel *et al.,* 1977; Rezk, 2015; Sathyamoorthy *et al.,* 2012; Sarma *et al.,* 2018).

**3.2 Ischium**

The ischium was long flat, bony plate located below and lateral to the post acetabular part of the ilium in both the species. It was roughly triangular and its thickened anterior part participated in the formation of the acetabulum along with the ilium. The dorsal border of ischium formed the ischiatic foramen with the lateral border of post acetabular part of ilium which concurs the findings of Nickel *et al.,* (1977) in domestic fowl. The ventral border was concave and joined the pubis anteriorly to form the acetabulum This border formed the obturator foramen anteriorly and ischio-pubic fissure posteriorly in fowl, but in black swan -pubic inscisure merged with the obturator foramen anteriorly as in guinea fowl and pigeon (Lavanya *et al.,* 2017). The posterior border of the ischium in both the species presented a projection ventrally, the angulusischiadicus which joined the pubis in both species (Fig. 2). The findings concur with the reports of Nickel *et al.* (1977) in fowl and duck who further stated that the caudal border of the pelvis is formed by ilium and ischium.

**3.3 Pubis**

The pubis was a thin bony rod which projected further backwards and downward beyond the ilium and ischium beneath the ventral border of ischium. However, the pubis did not project beyond the ilium and ischium in Japanese quail (Mehta, 2014) and in emu (Mehta *et al.,* 2013). The pubis was narrower anteriorly and became progressively wider posteriorly in both the species. At the caudal extremity, pubis was in the form of a thin wide circular plate in black swan and such plate was not noticed in fowl (Fig. 1). A small pectineal process was noticed at the anterior end of the pubis below the level of acetabulum in fowl. Similar findings were observed in peahen (Sreeranjini *et al.,* 2011). Pectineal process was rudimentary in the black swan( Fig. 3). Absence of pectineal process was reported in the Indian eagle owl (Saini and Bansal, 2023) and in Japanese quail by Mehta *et al.* (2014). Studies also report rudimentary pectineal process in duck and goose and well-developed process in the domestic fowl (Nickel *et al.,* 1977)



Fig.1 Os coxae of fowl (A) and black swan (b) showing preacetabular part (PrAI) and postacetabular part (PoAI) of ileum (Il), Ishium (Is), Pubis (P), Iliac crest (Ic), dosal crest (Dc), canalesilioneurales( Red arrows), anti trochanter (\*), Ischio pubic fissure (IPF) and pectineal process (Pp)



Fig.2 Os coxae of fowl (A) and black swan (b) showing preacetabular part (PrAI) and postacetabular part (PoAI) of ileum (Il), Ishium (Is), Pubis (P), Iliac crest (Ic), dosal crest (Dc), canalesilioneurales( Red arrow), anti trochanter (\*), Ischio pubic fissure (IPF), Acetabulum (A), Obturator foramen (Of), Ischiatic foramen (If) and pectineal process (Pp)

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**B**

**A**

Fig.3 Os coxae of fowl (A) and black swan (b) showing ileum (Il), Ishium (Is), Pubis (P), Iliac fossa (F), Lumbosacral mass (LS), anti trochanter (\*) and pectineal process (Pp)

**4. CONCLUSION**

The os coxae of black swans and domestic fowl exhibit distinct anatomical adaptations reflective of their differing locomotor and ecological behaviors. While both species share a foundational pelvic structure composed of the ilium, ischium, and pubis forming a perforated acetabulum, the morphology of these bones diverges notably. Black swans possess a longer postacetabular ilium and a deeper gluteal surface fossa, suggesting greater support for powerful leg muscles associated with swimming and walking. In contrast, domestic fowl show a more prominent pectineal process and a strongly convex cranial border of the ilium, features likely optimized for terrestrial stability and perching. These variations underscore evolutionary specialization and functional morphology tailored to each species’ lifestyle.

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