

On the occurrence of Jerdon's Baza *Aviceda jerdoni* in Similipal Tiger Reserve, with notes on behaviour

Manoj V. Nair

Nair, M. V. 2007. On the occurrence of Jerdon's Baza *Aviceda jerdoni* in Similipal Tiger Reserve, with some observations on behaviour and vocalization. *Indian Birds* 3 (2): 61–62.

Manoj V. Nair, Deputy Director, Similipal Tiger Reserve, Baripada, Mayurbhanj, Orissa. E-mail: mvnmanu@yahoo.co.uk
Mss received on 29.vi.2006.

Jerdon's Baza *Aviceda jerdoni*, a near-threatened bird of prey (Collar et al. 1994) is one of the discontinuously distributed Indo-Malayan species inhabiting the evergreen biotope of north-eastern India and the Western Ghats. The southern subspecies *A. j. ceylonensis* is separated from the nominate *A. j. jerdoni* of the north-east by at least 1,900km of ecologically unsuitable country (Ali & Ripley 1983). Its presence elsewhere in peninsular India is extremely scanty, but for a single specimen of a non-breeding female *A. j. jerdoni* taken at Lankapakalu in the Eastern Ghats of Visakhapatnam on 16.iii.1985 (Ripley et al. 1988) and various sightings in Kerala (see elsewhere in this issue). Here, I report its occurrence in Similipal Tiger Reserve (STR), Mayurbhanj district, north-eastern Orissa, India.

Encompassing an area of 2,750km², STR lies in the Deccan peninsula biogeographic zone and harbours mainly moist and dry deciduous types of vegetation, with a few patches of semi-evergreen forest in between (Srivastava 2001). It is also an Important Bird Area (Site Code IN-OR-06), with special biogeographical importance, because it forms a link between the flora and fauna of southern India and the Himalayas (Islam & Rahmani 2004).

While watching birds on 24.v.2006 at 08:20 hrs, I sighted a medium-sized raptor that was immediately identified as Jerdon's Baza, a species with which I was familiar, having seen and photographed it earlier in Assam. It was seen in a patch of riparian forest fringing the Budha Balanga River at Nawana in central Similipal (21°53'56"N 86°23'69"E; 780m a.s.l.). The bird, which appeared to be an adult male, was confiding and allowed me to watch it for about 20 minutes during which I could also take a few photographs. It allowed a minimum flushing distance of about 10m, and took short flights from tree to tree, when approached. A moderately loud "kik-kik-kik-kik-qwaeeee" call (with a second's pause between two kiks; the last qwaeeee being about three seconds in duration) was uttered in spurts throughout the period, very reminiscent of one of the calls of the Shikra *Accipiter badius*, but not so piercing or high pitched. Once, from a perch, it made a clumsy dash into the foliage and emerged with a rock agama *Psammophilus blanfordianus* in its talons, which it then proceeded to devour, tearing off small chunks of flesh with its

beak. Subsequently, it flushed on my approach, and was lost to sight. After about ten minutes, I observed a baza (the female?) soaring c100m above a nearby meadow, uttering a plaintive "petweeer" call repeatedly. While I was watching it, another smaller bird (the male?) flew low past me across the meadow, carrying what appeared to be a lizard in its talons, and perched on a horizontal branch of a sal tree *Shorea robusta*. Immediately, the soaring bird stooped with folded wings, and within a second alighted on the same branch, and started making rapid "kipkipkip" calls, upon which it was presented with the lizard. It took the prey and flew off into the forest, followed by its presumed mate.

This is the second sighting of Jerdon's Baza in STR—the first being by Samant et al. (1995). The tell-tale courting behaviour observed, strongly indicates that it possibly breeds here.



Jerdon's Baza *Aviceda jerdoni*

References

- Ali, S. & Ripley, S. D. 1983. *Handbook of the Birds of India and Pakistan*, Compact Edition, Oxford University Press, Bombay.
- Collar, N. J., Crosby, M. J., Stattersfield, A. J. 1994. *Birds to watch 2: The World list of threatened birds*. BirdLife International, Cambridge.
- Islam, M. Z. & Rahmani, A. R. 2004. *Important Bird Areas in India: Priority sites for conservation*. Indian Bird Conservation Network: Bombay Natural History Society & BirdLife International (UK).
- Ripley, S. D., Beehler, B. M. & Raju, K. S. R. K. 1988. Birds of the Visakhapatnam Ghats. *J. Bombay Nat. Hist. Soc.* 84 (3): 540–559. (1987).
- Samant, J. S., Prakash, V. & Naoroji, R. K. 1995. *Ecology & behaviour of resident raptors with special reference to endangered species. Final Technical Report 1990–1993*. Bombay: Bombay Natural History Society.
- Srivastava, S. S. 2001. Management plan of Similipal Tiger Reserve (2001–2002 to 2010–2011), Department of Environment & Forests, Govt. of Orissa.

Notes on the breeding of Jerdon's Baza *Aviceda jerdoni* in Wayanad district, Kerala

C. K. Vishnudas

Vishnudas, C. K. 2007. Notes on the breeding of Jerdon's Baza *Aviceda jerdoni* in Wayanad district, Kerala. *Indian Birds* 3 (2): 62–64.
C. K. Vishnudas, Vishnu Nivas, Karinkutty P.O, Kalpetta, Wayanad 673121, Kerala, India. Email: ckvishnudas@yahoo.co.uk
Mss received on 11.viii.2006.

Jerdon's Baza *Aviceda jerdoni* is considered one of the least studied raptors in India. Its distribution is discontinuous and locally it is uncommon-to-rare (Ferguson-Lees & Christie 2001). Of the two races found in India, the nominate, *Aviceda j. jerdoni*, is present in Sikkim, Assam, northern West Bengal and the north-eastern hill states. The southern, *Aviceda j. ceylonensis*, is found south of c12°N, in the Western Ghats of Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu, and the Eastern Ghats of Andhra Pradesh (Ali & Ripley 1983; Grimmett *et al.* 1998).

Nair (see elsewhere in this issue) reports the bird from Similipal (at the northern tip of the Eastern Ghats range) in Orissa, which is almost midway between north-eastern India and the Western Ghats, indicating a likely intergradation of races in the Eastern Ghats (Praveen J., *in litt.*). Ripley *et al.* (1988) collected a specimen of a non-breeding female *A. j. jerdoni*, south of Similipal in the Visakhapatnam ghats. In Kerala it has been sighted at Kurichyat range of Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary and Eravikulam National Park (Sashikumar *in litt.*). There are also random sightings from Silent Valley, Peechi, Nelliampathies, Parambikulam, Eravikulam and Periyar (Praveen J., *in litt.*). Ali (1969) reports of an 1890 record of nesting (?), through the contributions of the oologist, J. Stewart, documented by Baker (1935). There is no report since, of breeding in this region. "There is also a juvenile specimen from the Wayanad in the British Museum" (Baker & Inglis 1930).

This note documents the first breeding record, in over a century, of Jerdon's Baza *Aviceda jerdoni* from Vaduvanchl in Wayanad district, Kerala (India), during two breeding seasons, 2006 and 2007.

Methods

Breeding behavior was observed for eight days in 2006, between 15.v–20.vi and again for a total of 20 days between

1.iii.2007 and 5.vi.2007. Most observations were carried out between 09:30hr–17:00hr, from a 15m tall hide placed c.6m from the nest. Some observations were made from the ground. Details of nest tree and nest site were collected as per methods adopted by John *et al.* (1993).

Location

The Wayanad district region of Kerala is characterized by undulating hills and valleys, in the foothills of Chembra Peak (2,100m), the highest geographical point in the region. Isolated human habitations and plantations of tea, coffee, arecanut, *etc.*, surrounded the nesting location. These areas originally comprised semi-evergreen forest, but during the 1960s they were cleared for planting various cash crops like coffee, pepper, tea, *etc.*

A nest was first observed on 6.vi.2006, in an isolated tea garden on a hilltop, 1,000m a.s.l., at Vanduvanchal (Wayanad district, Kerala), supporting Ali & Ripley's (1998) observations. The nest was built among the top branches in the dense canopy of a previously pruned rubber tree, using twigs and leaves. The tree had a diameter, at breast-height, of 68cm. The cup-shaped nest was 13m above the ground and c.50cm from top of the tree. The birds were never worried about the presence of human beings (plantation workers) under the nest tree and in its vicinity.

Breeding

2006 season: On 7.vi.2006 there were two nestlings in the nest. They sported a white-tipped black crest and white underparts with chestnut buff. Bars on the tail were much narrower than those of the parents. Their heads had noticeable black streaks and the bills were slaty black.

Both parents were seen feeding the nestlings, at intervals of c.30min. A major portion of their diet comprised lizards. 12 lizards and three frogs were fed on 8.vi.2006 between 10:00hrs–16:30hrs. Other prey included large beetles and a