

— Short Notes —

Sighting of the Lesser Frigate Bird *Fregata ariel* at Ranganathittu Bird Sanctuary, Karnataka

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Huilgol, A. K. 2007. Sighting of the Lesser Frigate Bird *Fregata ariel* at Ranganathittu Bird Sanctuary, Karnataka. *Indian Birds* 3 (3): 103–104.

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On 24.vi.2007, I visited Ranganathittu Bird Sanctuary (RBS: 12°24'0"N 76°39'0"E) near Srirangapatnam, Karnataka along with my colleagues. We were herded on to a boat to go round the islands, mid-stream Cauvery River, to watch the nesting activity of waterbirds (Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis*, Indian Pond-Heron *Ardeola grayii*, Black-crowned Night-Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax* and, Oriental White Ibis *Threskiornis melanocephalus*), which were well in progress in the heronry.

During the boat-ride, as we neared the large island to the left of the jetty, one of the team members sitting in the front of the boat drew my attention to a bird perched on a rain tree *Samanea saman* growing on the island. The back of the bird was turned away from us and its beak was hidden. It looked like a Great Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo* in size, but the feathers on its back were different. Just then, it lifted its head and we could see its beak and left eye. The beak was long and thin and was prominently curved at its tip. Around its black eye was a pink ring! The head was black and the breast was whitish. Unable to identify the bird right then, I turned for help to Govinda, our boatman, and even he was as puzzled as I, confirming that he had not seen anything like this in his 28-year career as a guide at Ranganathittu. We circled the island to get a better view, but the bird was 'shy' and soon buried its head into its feathers. After we had finished going around various islands, we went back to see the mystery bird again, but could not get any better views. In the meantime several pictures of the bird were taken. Based on its features, the bird was later identified as an adult female Lesser Frigate Bird *Fregata ariel*. When I returned to take a look at the bird at RBS that evening, it was nowhere to be seen.

Frigate birds are oceanic and pelagic, and are mainly storm-swept stragglers along India's coasts, occasionally tossed towards the coast by gusty monsoon winds (Ali & Ripley 2001). Several records of the Lesser Frigate Bird's occurrence along the southern Indian shoreline exist. The species has been seen around:

Mumbai (Maharashtra): Bandra (Abdulali 1961), 'Bombay' (Ali 1970, 1971), Malad beach (Monga 2001), near United Services Club, Colaba (Naoroji 2007), near Versova village (Monga 2006), Marine Drive flyover (Singh 2001) and, Colaba (Andheria 2001).



Lesser Frigate Bird *Fregata ariel* at Ranganathittu Bird Sanctuary

Goa: off Anjuna (Lainer 2004a, 2004b).

Kerala: Kooli Bazaar near Thalassery, Kannur (Sashikumar *et al. in prep.*), Kole wetlands, Thrissur (Jayson & Sivaperuman 2003), Aranattukara, Kole wetlands (Nameer 2007a), Chavakkad beach, Thrissur district (Nameer 2007b), Quilon (=Kollam) coast (Faizi 1985) and, Perumathoray, 16 km from Trivandrum (Fergusson & Bourdillon 1904).

Pondicherry (Tamil Nadu): Bommaiypalayam beach (Ali 2007; V. Santharam, *verbally*), Elliot's beach, Chennai (Vageeshwar 2007) and, Adyar Estuary, Chennai (Santharam 1982).

All the previous records have been along the coast or short distances inland from it, with the sole exception of the bird taken 16 km inland near Trivandrum (Fergusson & Bourdillon 1904). The present record from RBS, about 175 km from the nearest coast, is the farthest inland record of the species for southern India and the first sighting for Karnataka, thus of considerable interest. The bird had obviously been blown in by the stormy monsoon weather that prevailed during the days preceding our sighting.

Acknowledgement

I thank S. Subramanya for help with the manuscript.

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Occurrence and breeding of Black-necked Stork *Ephippiorhynchus asiaticus* in Kachchh district, Gujarat, India

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Varu, S. N. & Pomal, A. S. 2007. Occurrence and breeding of Black-necked Stork *Ephippiorhynchus asiaticus* in Kachchh district, Gujarat, India. *Indian Birds* 3 (3): 104–105.

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Occurrence

The near-threatened Black-necked Stork *Ephippiorhynchus asiaticus* is an uncommon resident in Kachchh district, Gujarat (India). In thirty years of birdwatching in Kachchh, one of us (SNV) has seen it at various places (Table 1). In all, he recorded 34 sightings of the birds at these places.

Breeding

Ali (1945) states that, "on September 10 (1943) a bird was observed sitting on empty nest on a mangrove tree top in a

heronry of Reef Herons on an island in Kandla Creek. No further data." On 17.xi.2002 we saw two juveniles with an adult pair at Budiya village of Abdasa taluka. On 26.xii.2004 we also saw one juvenile with a pair of adults at Ganga creek of Mandvi taluka. During 1998–1999, Mr R. D. Jadeja, R.F.O., Naliya, had seen nests of this species at Vayor of Lakhpat taluka and, near Jakhau of Abdasa taluka (*verbally*). In December 2005, Ranjeetsinh Jadeja and Fakirmamad Turk saw this bird nesting at Vadi between

Moti Khakhar and Kandagara of Mundra taluka (*pers comm.*). We visited this place on 17.ix.2006 along with members of Pelican Nature Club, Bhuj, and found one nest on top of a banyan *Ficus bengalensis* tree. While we watched, the incubating bird changed positions with its partner. This seems to be a regular breeding site for the species, as they are nesting here for the second consecutive year. We feel

that a regular watch by birdwatchers, for breeding Black-necked Storks in Kachchh, would definitely yield positive results.

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Table 1. Areas in Kachchh district where Black-necked Stork was sighted.

Taluk	Area
Abdasa	Budiya village, Khara creek at Mohadi, Khaudhar Bet, Lala village, salt-pans at Jakhau, salt-pans near Darar Vandh, seashore at Jakhau.
Bhuj	Rudramata Dam.
Gandhidham	Nakti creek.
Mandvi	Don Reservoir, Ganga creek Reservoir, Layja creek Reservoir, Vijay Sagar Reservoir.
Mundra	Faradi Reservoir, Gajod Reservoir.
Nakhtrana	Chhari Dhandh.



Black-necked Stork *Ephippiorhynchus asiaticus* (female)

A first record of the Little Crake *Porzana parva* from Assam

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Choudhury, A. 2007. The first record of the Little Crake *Porzana parva* from Assam. *Indian Birds* 3 (3): 106.
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Mss. received on: 26.xi.2006.

The Little Crake *Porzana parva* is a scarce winter visitor to the Indian Subcontinent, mainly affecting Pakistan with isolated records from the western coast, Uttar Pradesh and Bangladesh (Ali & Ripley 1987; Kazmierczak 2000). P. Thompson and D. Johnson reported a pair of Little Crakes from Hail Haor (Bangladesh) on 25.xii.1991 (Robson 1992). Dave Johnson, John O'Malley, Sue O'Malley and Paul Mondal reported another pair at Tangua Haor (Bangladesh) on 22.ii.1995 (Crosby 1995). Both Bangladesh records were reported as "largely unconfirmed". Choudhury (1990) did not list it from Assam. In this short note I report of its sighting in Assam, way back in 1991, inadvertently overlooked during my subsequent works (Choudhury 2000). The species is known to affect marshes.

While going through my old field-notes recently, for the Anatidae atlas that is being produced by the Bombay Natural History Society, I came across my notes with a field sketch dated 17.ii.1991. The sketch had been entitled, 'rail / crake to be identified later,' but inexplicably, it remained unattended and unresolved. On that day, I had conducted a waterfowl census in Bordoibam-Bilmukh Bird Sanctuary (27°20'N 94°20'E), located in Dhemaji and Lakhimpur districts. At that time the area had not been proclaimed a sanctuary. Now it has also been identified as an Important Bird Area (Islam & Rahmani 2004) and covers an area of 11.25km², comprising a large perennial lake with marshy fringes.

I began the census from a boat at 08:45hrs that day, and around 10:00hrs saw a small rail in the marshes by the side

of the *beel*. It was walking in the marsh with its legs partially submerged. Its grey face, throat and breast, and mottled brown upperparts were conspicuous. Its bill was greenish-yellow. Since the bird was on the move further details could not be observed. It was considerably smaller than Common Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus*, of which many were present. The only rail with which it could be confused in size and colouration was Baillon's Crake *Porzana pusilla*. However, a darker grey breast, throat and face (lighter in *pusilla*), and the lack of distinct barring on belly and under tail coverts (which is distinct and extends well into the flanks in front of legs in *pusilla*) were diagnostic.

Though a single swallow does not make a summer, do these sightings of the Little Crake, so far east of their 'normal' winter distribution, indicate an expansion of range?

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Breeding records of Purple Moorhen *Porphyrio porphyrio* from Kerala, India

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Ravindran, P. K. 2007. Breeding records of Purple Moorhen *Porphyrio porphyrio* from Kerala, India. *Indian Birds* 3 (3): 106-107.
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The Purple Moorhen *Porphyrio porphyrio* is a resident water bird of Kerala state. It is found in virtually every reed-covered, inundated wetlands and paddies. In the wetlands it is found throughout the year. However, its numbers seem to increase during winter (*pers. obs.*). This richly coloured, 'meaty' bird attracts the attention of all kinds of local inhabitants, especially flower- and egg-collectors. Some farmers

blame these birds for damaging paddy and support its poaching by local *shikaris* during the cultivation period, as well as in other seasons. Hence the number of the Purple Moorhen in this state is under constant threat and may be declining.

According to Ali & Ripley (2001), the breeding season of the Purple Moorhen is chiefly during the south-west monsoon, i.e., from June to September. They also recorded

breeding in other months e.g., Andhra Pradesh—November and February; Karnataka—November–January; Sri Lanka—January, May and occasionally July–August. However, Ali (1984) states that the breeding season of the Purple Moorhen in Kerala is July–August, based on the observations of H. S. Ferguson. Further to these, I give below some recent breeding records of the Purple Moorhen.

Perhaps these birds are extending their breeding season into the summer months, depending on the availability of water.

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Purple Moorhen *Porphyrio porphyrio*

Table 1. Breeding records of Purple Moorhen from Kerala.

Date	Observations
15.i.1989	Kannur district, Kattampally: a pair of Purple Moorhens accompanied by a dark brown downy chick (C. Sashikumar).
10.vii.1992	Malappuram district, Biyyam Kayal: I observed birds making breeding displays. Also a variety of loud calls.
23.viii.1992	Same place: I saw two nests with five eggs each.
30.viii.1992	Same place: <i>ibid</i> .
10.ix.1992	Same place: saw two nests and a downy black chick in one nest.
15.viii.1993	Malappuram district, Maranchery Kole: saw two nests with five eggs each.
01.ix.1993	Same place: saw four nests with three or four eggs in each.
30.i.1994	Same place: saw one nest with four eggs.
03.i.1997	Thrissur district, Enamavu Kole: one juvenile walking along with parents.
03.ii.1997	Thrissur district, Kattakkambal Pullanichal Kole Padavu: two downy black chicks feeding along with two adults.
11.viii.1998	Malappuram district, Maranchery Kole: saw three nests with six eggs in five and three in one, respectively.
25.vi.1999	Same place: saw a pair mating, accompanied with some call notes.
17.viii.2003	Palakkad district, Kullamukku Kayal (near Koottanadu): mating pair observed by Shino Jacob.
19.x.2003	Palakkad district, Puliymbatta Kayal, Koottanadu: some chicks seen by Shino Jacob.
24.x.2003	Same place: Shino Jacob reports nest and chicks.
25.xii.2003 & 01.i.2004	Same place: Shino Jacob reports some downy black chicks.
02.ix.2004	Thrissur district, Uppungal Kole Padvu (near Punayurkulam): two nests and a scattered group of fourteen downy black chicks feeding and walking along with adults.
28.x.2004	Thrissur district, Enamavu Kole: a downy black chick walking with parents.
02.i.2005	Malappuram district, Maranchery Kole: one juvenile.
24.vii.2005	Thrissur district, Enamavu Kole: four downy black chicks and one juvenile observed by P. M. K. Paul and author.
iii.2006	Enamavu Kole Wetlands: two fishermen report some chicks with adults.
iv.2006 (1 st week)	Same place: same fishermen saw two nests.

Tawny Fish-Owl *Ketupa flavipes* in Arunachal Pradesh, India

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Ritschard, M. & Marques, D. 2007. Tawny Fish-Owl *Ketupa flavipes* in Arunachal Pradesh, India. *Indian Birds* 3 (3): 108.
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On 1.iv.2006, while walking along the eastern bank of Kameng (Bhareli) River near Bhalukpong at the border between West Kameng and East Kameng districts (Arunachal Pradesh), Claudio Koller, Stefan Wassmer and the authors flushed a large owl from a nearby tree. After flying a few dozen metres along the forest edge, the owl landed in a big tree close to the river and subsequently gave us excellent views down to a distance of about 40 m. It was a bulky bird with very prominent ear-tufts and yellow eyes with black irises. The owl had a warm tawny ground colour, boldly black blotched scapulars and mantle and boldly black-banded wings. The underparts showed heavy black streaks. The ear-coverts were unstreaked tawny with a strong rufous tinge. The bird was identified as Tawny Fish-Owl *Ketupa flavipes*. It was told from the con-generic Brown Fish-Owl *K. zeylonensis* by its warm tawny ground colour, lack of white spots on the scapulars, unstreaked ear-coverts and lack of cross-bars on the underside. Buffy Fish-Owl *K. ketupu*, the other con-generic in the region, is a noticeably smaller and slimmer-looking bird, which shows no or finer black streaks on flanks and belly.

The habitat was old-growth tropical semi-evergreen forest next to a river c 100 m a.s.l., inside Pakhui (Pakke) Wildlife Sanctuary (WLS), which is bounded by Kameng River at its western end.

Discussion

The Tawny Fish-Owl is a resident of northern India, central and southern China, Taiwan and parts of South-east Asia. It is classified as a Lower Risk species by the 2006 IUCN Red List of Threatened Species, although it is described as 'uncommon' in at least parts of its range (BirdLife International 2006). In the Indian Subcontinent, the Tawny Fish-Owl occurs along the Himalayan foothills from Himachal Pradesh to Bhutan as well as in the Khasi Hills in eastern Meghalaya, the Lushai Hills in Mizoram, in Manipur and in north-eastern Bangladesh (Rasmussen & Anderton 2005). It has also been listed from Kaziranga National Park (Barua & Sharma 1999) in Assam and from Nagaland (Choudhury 2001). The Tawny Fish-Owl is scarce within the Indian Subcontinent and has recently been reported from a few locations in India and Bhutan only. In Arunachal Pradesh, most surveys have failed to locate it, e.g., Singh (1994) and Choudhury (2003). However, Choudhury (1998) came across a preserved pair of legs and some feathers of a Tawny Fish-Owl allegedly trapped at Mehao Wildlife

Sanctuary of Dibang Valley District at an altitude of 2,450m. The origin of this bird, however, may be considered uncertain, as it is not known to occur above 1,500m (occasionally up to 2,100m; Rasmussen & Anderton 2005). Our observation from Pakhui WLS confirms the occurrence of Tawny Fish-Owl in Arunachal Pradesh.

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Tawny Fish-Owl *Ketupa flavipes*, Arunachal Pradesh (1.iv.2006)

Rice in the diet of Lesser Golden-backed Woodpecker *Dinopium benghalense*

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Venkatraman, C., Prabhakaran, S. & Jothinayagam, J. T. 2007. Rice in the diet of Lesser Golden-backed Woodpecker *Dinopium benghalense*. *Indian Birds*. 3 (3): 109.

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1 2v.2006 was a scorching day. After lunch, we (CV, SP) placed the leftovers on the windowsill, just 2m away from our seats. The House Crow *Corvus splendens* and a three-striped palm squirrel *Funambulus palmarum* fed on those morsels. While we were watching them a Lesser Golden-backed Woodpecker *Dinopium benghalense* joined them and surprisingly, started pecking at the cooked rice. Mukherjee (1998) reported this behaviour from Vadodara (Gujarat). The crow flew away on the arrival of the woodpecker while the squirrel withdrew and watched from the corner. The woodpecker pecked two or three grains of rice and flew to the nearest coconut tree *Cocos nucifera*. The woodpecker returned thrice to the 'feeding table' and consumed a considerable amount of rice. The squirrel too ate along with it. We observed the same behavior on the next few days.

The area adjacent to our office was a fallow ground with tree species such as tamarind *Tamarindus indicus*, coconut and *Bauhinia tomentosa* bordering it, surrounded by multi-storied buildings. Previously we had observed woodpeckers foraging on the trunk of either tamarind or coconut trees. Ali & Ripley (1983) state that this woodpecker is insectivorous, feeding on insects, larvae, beetles, and black ants picked from tree trunks and boughs and the ground, and pulp of ripe fruit as well as flower nectar. The present observation and those cited above, indicate that the shortage of appropriate food or non-availability of foraging sites in urban areas might be the reason for the woodpecker's omnivorous diet.

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Mukherjee, A. 1998. Lesser Goldenbacked Woodpecker and Koel feeding on cooked rice. *Newsletter for Birdwatchers* 38 (4): 70.

Editors' note: Lesser Golden-backed Woodpeckers have been taking rice from Nalini Choudhury's windowsill in Dehra Dun for several years now (Fig. 1).



Fig. 1: Lesser Golden-backed Woodpecker & Babbler (*Turdoidea* sp.)



Fig. 2: Lesser Golden-backed Woodpecker & Indian palm squirrel *Funambulus palmarum* feeding on boiled rice in Dehradun

Yellow spots on the wings of Wallcreeper *Tichodroma muraria*

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Singh, A. P. 2007. Yellow spots on the wings of Wallcreeper *Tichodroma muraria*. *Indian Birds* 3 (3): 110–111.

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The Wallcreeper *Tichodroma muraria* (Tichodromadinae), is a palaeartic species that occur as two races, *muraria* and *nepalensis*. The latter occurs in the Himalayas and mainly breeds between 3,300–5,000 m from Safed Koh (Pakistan) eastward to western Arunachal Pradesh (India). In winter it descends in the foothills to 250 m in the outer ranges, with individuals wandering southwards, well out into the plains, up to Rajasthan. *T. m. nepalensis* has been described as a beautiful but bizarre slate-grey bird of rock-faces with a very long, thin, slightly curved black bill, bright reddish-pink wing-coverts, and a short squared black-tail with

white tips. The breeding male of *nepalensis* has an extensive black face and bib while the breeding female, typically, has a smaller, duller, blackish bib—than male. The non-breeding adult has white throat, upper breast and eye ring. The juvenile is shorter-billed, with grey throat and breast (lacking contrast with lower underparts), with a paler mantle and somewhat paler and less extensive pink on wings. In flight, very broad and rounded, pink and black wings have a double row of white spots in primaries that are conspicuous (Whistler 1949; Ali & Ripley 1987; Inskipp & Inskipp 1991; Grimmett, *et al.* 1998; Rasmussen & Anderton 2005). The pale spots on the tail and primaries



Fig. 1. Wallcreeper *Tichodroma muraria* showing yellow spots on its wings

Appendix 1. Specimens of Wallcreeper with yellow spots in the collection of the Bombay Natural History Society

Date	Number	Collector	Specimen tag notes
13.iii.1921	26699	A. E. Jones	Jagadhri, Ambala, Punjab. Juvenile female.
09.iii.1966	25519	BNHS party	Gompchu, E. Bhutan, c. 7,500'. Female.
13.xi.1968	25521	Salim Ali	Chapcha, Bhutan, 8,000'–9,000'. Female.



Fig. 2. Wallcreeper

average larger in the race *nepalensis* than in *muraria* (Harrap & Quinn 1996).

Apart from the presence of a parallel row of four elliptical white spots on the primaries, the presence of yellow spots on the wings of *T. muraria* has not been described in literature on Indian avifauna. Only Kazmierczak (2000) depicts a row of three buffy spots next to and in line with the inner row of four white spots present on the primaries for this species that are visible in flight (pl. 87, p. 281). However, Saniga (1995) reports the presence of such spots on birds he studied in the Velka Fatra and Mala Fatra mountains.

However, a brief account is presented here on the extent of yellow spots observed on the stretched wing of a non-breeding adult *T. m. nepalensis*, observed in January 2007 on the rocky slopes of Suwakholi village (2,000 m), near Mussoorie in the Garhwal Himalayas, India. The yellow spots were present on (i) the inner web of three primaries (P6–8) in continuation with the white spots on the inner web of the previous four primaries (P2–5). In addition, (ii) yellow spots were also observed on the black portion (inner web) of the four outermost secondaries (S1–4), separated from one another by the reddish pink colouration on outer web of each secondary. Thus, between the three primaries and four secondaries with yellow spots, were two primaries (P9–P10) without yellow spots (Figs. 1, 2 & 3). Aasheesh Pittie reports similar yellow spots on at least three specimens, all female, in the collection of the Bombay Natural History Society (Appendix 1).

The yellow spots on the secondaries have not been reported earlier in literature from India. One reason for this

could be that the plumage colours are known to fade rapidly in dried skin specimens (Meinertzhagen *vide* Ali & Ripley 1987), which formed the basis of plumage description in literature, as also bourn out by Saniga (1995).

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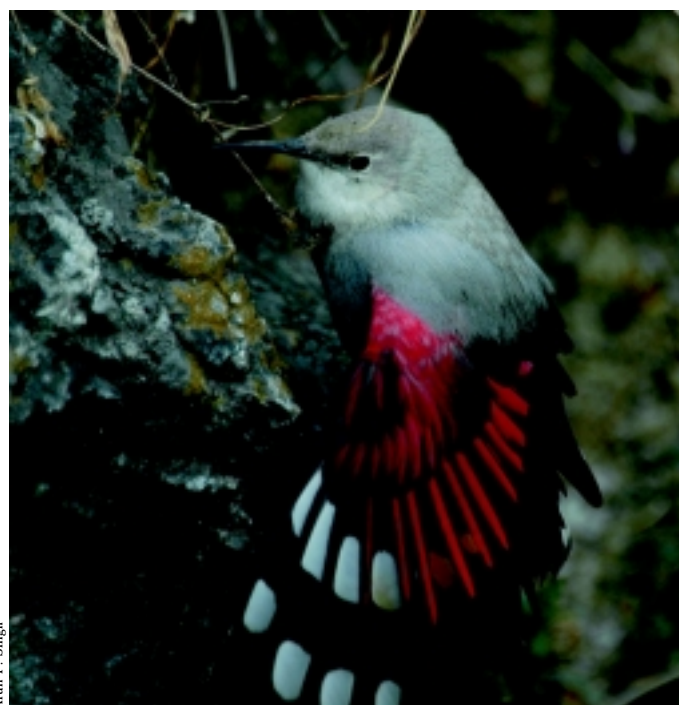


Fig. 3. Wallcreeper

Photographic record of leucistic Jungle Babbler *Turdoides striata*

Tarique Sani & Raju Kasambe

Sani, T. & Kasambe, R. 2007. Photographic record of leucistic Jungle Babbler *Turdoides striata*. *Indian Birds* 3 (3): 112.
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On 25.vi.2005 at 11:30hrs, while birding near the dargah on Amravati road (Nagpur, Maharashtra state, India), we located a leucistic Jungle Babbler *Turdoides striata* among a flock of normal Jungle Babblers. All the feathers on its body, including the wings, were completely white. The bill and legs were yellow in colour. The iris was also white and the pupil was black. There was a light shade of brown on the face. The bird behaved just like all its brethren.

Albinism in birds is an uncommon phenomenon though it has been reported

in several species, with over 70 published records sprinkling South Asian ornithological literature (Aasheesh Pittie *verbally*). Though albinism in *Turdoides* sp., has been reported earlier (Gupte 1969; Sharma 2003), this may be the first time a photograph is being published of an albino Jungle Babbler.



Albino Jungle Babbler

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First record of Pied Tit *Parus nuchalis* in Thar Desert of Rajasthan

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Dookia, S. 2007. First record of Pied Tit *Parus nuchalis* in Thar Desert of Rajasthan. *Indian Birds* 3 (3): 112-113.
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While conducting fieldwork in the Rajasthan Agricultural University campus in Bikaner district (Rajasthan, India), as part of the Zoological Survey of India's project work, I heard an unusual and unfamiliar bird call on 12.ii.2002. I went up to the area from where the sounds had come and found a flock of seven birds inside a thicket of *Acacia tortillis*. I immediately identified the birds as Pied Tits *Parus nuchalis* from their external appearance with the help of Grimmett *et al.* (2000). I went there again next day to reconfirm my sighting and found the six birds at the same location. I visited this area once again from 22-28.vii.2004 and recorded the Pied Tit again.

The exact location of these sightings was at Rajasthan Agricultural University's field station at Rojari village on the Bikaner-Sri Ganganagar border, in western Rajasthan,

situated near the irrigation canal called Indira Gandhi Nahar Pariyojna (IGNP). This area has a typical desert habitat with large sand dunes on both side of the IGNP and its tributaries, along with a massive *A. tortillis* plantation, created by the Command Area Development Department and the State Forest Department, to fix the moving sand dunes. This facilitates the growth of thorny-xeric vegetation, and attracts a large number of desert as well as forest birds. Other interesting sightings in this area included a large number (more than 50) of Jungle Babbler *Turdoides striata* and six Rufous Treepie *Dendrocitta vagabunda*.

Pied Tit is an endemic to India with restricted distribution within the country (Ali & Ripley 1987). Hussain *et al.* (1992), Tiwari & Rahmani (1997) and BirdLife International (2001) have described its recent distribution range in India. This

species has a limited geographical range with a disjunctive distribution. ICBP lists the Pied Tit as 'threatened' (Collar & Andrew, 1988), and BirdLife International (2001) as 'vulnerable'. Tiwari (2001) conducted an intensive survey in the arid tracts of Gujarat and the semi-arid districts of Rajasthan, but did not mention the Pied Tit from this part of the Thar Desert. Tehsin *et al.* (2005) recorded it from the foothills of the Aravalli range in Kumbalgarh Sanctuary (Pali district, Rajasthan).

Acacia sp., trees are preferred by the Pied Tit and IGNP has a chain of *A. tortillis* and *A. nilotica* and, in some places, *Tecomella undulata* plantations along both sides of the main canal and its tributaries. These could support a substantial population of this endemic species. Therefore, there is a need for more extensive surveys for the Pied Tit in the Thar Desert, importantly from the head of IGNP at Birdhwal near Suratgarh town (29°32'N 73°9'E) in Sri Ganganagar district to its end at Nachna (27°30'N 71°43'E) in Jaisalmer district. These surveys may lead to a better understanding of the species in Rajasthan and help record interesting observations on the Pied Tit and may even reveal other such populations from the area.

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House Crow *Corvus splendens* chasing Greater Adjutant-Stork *Leptoptilos dubius*

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The Greater Adjutant-stork *Leptoptilos dubius* is an endangered species (BirdLife International 2004) and is among the very rare birds of south-east Asia, occurring mainly from north-eastern India to Indo-China (BirdLife International 2001). In north-eastern India, its main stronghold is the Brahmaputra Valley of Assam (Choudhury 2000).

On 14.v.2001, at about 14:00 hrs I saw a Greater Adjutant-Stork flying in the Bamunimaidam area of Guwahati city in Assam. Since I was in my office without binoculars, I could not observe details but could see that it was not flying 'normally'. Soon, when it came slightly closer, I saw that a House Crow *Corvus splendens* was chasing it! The stork was circling and the crow, flying close to it. The latter then tried to peck it (not specifically targetting any part) but the stork dodged away. This continued for about a minute when both went out of sight.

This was interesting considering the difference in their sizes. Black Drongos *Dicrurus macrocercus* chasing larger birds, especially during the drongo's breeding season, is a familiar sight—but they usually chase away potential predators. House Crows have been observed chasing Black Kites *Milvus migrans* but an adjutant-stork, due to its size, is another cup of tea and speaks volumes of the corvid's bravado.

Later, from the fourth floor of a building, I noticed a few nests of House Crows, in the neighbourhood trees, which perhaps was the reason for this unusual chase.

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