

Additions to the bird list of Kanha Tiger Reserve, Madhya Pradesh

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Kanha Tiger Reserve (KTR) is situated in the Satpuda–Maikal landscape area of Madhya Pradesh (22°01'05"N–22°27'48"N–80°26'10"E–81°04'40"E). Established in 1973, Kanha Tiger Reserve's avifauna has been particularly well studied (Güntert & Homberger 1973; Newton *et al.* 1987; Ghosal 1995; D'Cunha 1998; Moulton & Hulsey 1999; D'Cunha & Ali 2001). Dookia & Gupta (2008) added to the comprehensive list of birds published by Chandra *et al.* (2006).

I regularly surveyed the tourism zone of KTR, for birds, between September 2006 and April 2008. During this period 252 species of birds were recorded out of a total of 297 species reported by Chandra *et al.* (2006). Seven species were observed which have not been reported in previous literature and are reported here as additions to the bird list of KTR.

Alpine Swift *Tachymarptis melba*: Flocks of 40–50 birds were seen during February–March in Bamni dadar. Presumably a passage migrant. The bird cannot be mistaken due to its large size, white throat and belly with brown breast-band. It calls in flight.

Richard's Pipit *Anthus richardi*: This bird was observed on the Kisli meadows close to the roads from December to February. About five to six individuals were seen in the meadows foraging on insects and grass seeds. The birds were very commonly seen during this period and were observed boldly perched on the rocks and chirping. This species was distinguished from the other pipits seen in KTR—especially Paddyfield *A. rufulus* and Blyth's *A. godlewskii* Pipits—by size, upright stance, black stripes on the back and more orange buff flanks. Though Richard's Pipit is a common winter visitor to the entire peninsular India (Rasmussen & Anderton 2005), surprisingly it has not been recorded from KTR before.

Black-crested Bulbul *Pycnonotus melanicterus*¹: This bird was observed only once in the forest below Bamni Dadar in January. Two birds were seen of which one was perching on top of a tree and had adult plumage. The other bird was a semi-adult, with brownish head and was observed flying nearby. Though it is known to occur in hills of Madhya Pradesh (Rasmussen & Anderton 2005), this is the first record of the species from KTR.

Marshall's Iora *Aegithina nigrolutea*: This species was commonly seen in Kanha Ghat, Chamar Ghat, Silhari Talao, Cheetal fire-line road, Bapsa Behara, Neela Nalla throughout the survey period. Birds were often seen foraging for insects at the mid-canopy level and frequently in mixed hunting parties. Once it was seen with a Common Iora *A. tiphia*. The Common Iora forages on the top canopy of the trees. Marshall's Iora is found on mid level of the trees and in dense foliage. There is clearly distinction between the habitats of both the birds. It gives a distinct call while flying and foraging. This is again a first report for KTR. The call of Marshall's Iora is different than the Common Iora.

Tickell's Thrush *Turdus unicolor*: Presumably a passage migrant, this bird is common in October and in early March in sparse forest, foraging on the ground, rummaging leaf litter. It is a shy bird, and seen typically in Mocha and in forests close to Banjar River. The birds are very parochial, as they seem to occupy the same patches during their spring and autumn migrations.

Himalayan Rubythroat *Luscinia pectoralis*: A single bird responded to the playback of a recorded call of Siberian Rubythroat *L. calliope* in Nakti

Ghati anikut in January. It was perched on the ground and then flew on to a tree, providing opportunity for clear identification. It was seen close to a stream, foraging in low bushes and reeds in the wet area. Himalayan Rubythroat is clearly distinguished from the *L. calliope* by the presence of black tail with white tips, black breast band and absence of sub-moustachial streaks. This is a new record for peninsular India as this species is reported only from the Himalayan region (Grimmett *et al.* 1999; Rasmussen & Anderton 2005). The bird was seen in the first half of March 2008 with Siberian Rubythroat and Bluethroat *L. svecica*. More observations are needed to understand if it is a regular winter visitor to central India or a vagrant.

Paddyfield Warbler *Acrocephalus agricola*: This bird was seen on the Bandri-Chappar road in Nakti ghati and on the 7 number link road, close to the percolation tank. The bird forages in low grass and reeds. It is an uncommon winter visitor and stays in KTR till mid-March. Its typical call and manner of sitting and foraging is useful for identification. The bird has a white supercilium, which extends behind its eye and is uniformly pale brown above with pale whitish-cream throat and belly. Apparently a first record for KTR. Nick Burry, Tikaram Giri, Lluís Sanz and the author have seen it in December–February (2006–2007).

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¹ Rasmussen & Anderton (2005) treat this as *P. flaviventris*.