Potential breeding records of the Black-necked Stork *Ephippiorhynchus asiaticus* in Corbett Tiger Reserve, Uttarakhand, India

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The Black-necked Stork *Ephippiorhynchus asiaticus* (Fig. 1), classified as near-threatened (BirdLife International 2008), has declined in India due to population fragmentation, removal of nestlings and habitat loss (Rahmani 1989; Barman & Talukdar 1996; Sundar & Kaur 2001). The breeding biology of Black-necked Stork has been described in a handful of studies from India (Ishtiaq 1998; Sundar 2003; Maheswaran & Rahmani 2006). Information on current breeding sites remains sporadic and scanty.

In this note, we report sightings of Black-necked Stork, comprising adults with young birds between November and June in 2001–2004 inside Corbett Tiger Reserve (CTR).

Corbett Tiger Reserve (29°25′–29°40′N 78°45′–78°5′E), spreads over an area of 1,288 km^2 in the foothills of Uttarakhand Himalaya, between 400 m and 1,200 m above msl. Vegetation is mixed deciduous tropical and sub-tropical forests. The drainage system comprises River Ramganga and its major tributaries Sonanadi, Mandal and Palain, which remain dry for most part of the year. The drainage system has great conservation importance since distribution and abundance of several wildlife species are known to revolve around these water sources.

Fieldwork was carried out along six perennial water bodies covering a riverine stretch of 190 km. The riverine stretch was monitored in winter and summer and sightings of Black-necked Storks were recorded. Our observations cover three breeding seasons between mid-August and October, the prime nesting season (Sundar 2003; Ishtiaq 1998; Maheswaran 1998), however, delayed nesting could occur until December. Fledgelings leave the nest after 60 days (Ishtiaq 1998; Maheshwaran 1998). Therefore, juveniles observed with the adults could have been first year birds or sub-adults (Table 1). Juveniles accompany adults until next breeding season and then disperse. We could not distinguish the fledged young ones by age.

Adult male and female Black-necked Storks were seen inside the reserve; however, total number of pairs couldnot be identified owing to lack of markings. We observed one fledgling in 2002 and two in 2004 accompanying an adult pair (Table 1) and remaining sightings includes single pairs during winter (November–February). The birds were always seen in shallow waters of River Ramganga and on the northern shores of the reservoir, with slow currents, probably with easy access to fish. Since no nests were located inside CTR, we regard this as a possible breeding record for the tiger reserve. There is a possibility of the nesting sites being outside the reserve but that needs to be further explored.

Table 1. Sighting records of Black-necked storks in Corbett Tiger Reserve

Date	Place	GPS location	No. of individuals
24th February 2002	*Shishumkhatta	29°34′41′N 78°45′32′E	1 adult + 1 young bird
	*Chetanala	29°36′15′N 78°46′02′E	2 adults + 1 young bird
19th May 2002	+Gairal	29°32′53′N 78°59′14′E	2 adults + 1 young bird
	*Ringora	29°36′17′N 78°51′40′E	2 adults + 1 young bird
23rd September 2003	*Chipalghatti	29°37′59′N 78°40′17′E	2 adults
21st October 2003	*Gaujda	29°36′52′N 78°50′04′E	2 adults + 1 young bird
9th January 2004	+Nakatal	29°28′15′N 79°02′18′E	2 adults + 2 young birds
21st February 2004	+Gairal	29°33′35′N 78°59′34′E	2 adults + 2 young birds
28th September 2004	+Sajgadi *sot*	29°31′42′N 79°04′25′E	2 adults + 2 young birds

Footnote: *Along the reservoir; +Along rivers and streams.

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Fig. 1. A female Black-necked Stork *Ephippiorhynchus asiaticus* drinks water from an irrigation canal in Mainpuri district, Uttar Pradesh.