

A record of Oriental Bay-owl *Phodilus badius* from Kaziranga National Park, Assam, India

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Oriental Bay-owl *Phodilus badius* is scarce and uncommon in the forests of north-east India. Baker (1901) reported this bird from the bamboo forests of North Cachar and mentioned that at times it may stray into secondary forest. Stevens (1915) recorded it once from the plains of Dibrugarh in 1904 and once from Pathalipam of north Lakhimpur in 1908. It was recorded in February 1998 in Namdapha National Park, Arunachal Pradesh (Paul Holt, verbally, to Maan Barua) and from Pakee Tiger Reserve, Arunachal Pradesh (Aparajita Dutta, verbally, to Maan Barua). In 1999 Maan Barua had an unconfirmed record of this bird from the eastern range of Kaziranga National Park, Assam. Choudhury (2000) listed this bird as rare and uncommon and had no sightings from Assam himself.

On the morning of 29.i.2003 an adult Oriental Bay-owl was rescued by some villagers when it was strayed into a house in Bokakhat Town, Assam. It was

immediately brought to the Centre for Wildlife Rehabilitation and Conservation (CWRC), which is a facility to rescue and rehabilitate wild animals, established by Wildlife Trust of India and Assam Forest Department at Borjuri, near Bokkhat, the head quarters of Kaziranga National Park. Eyewitnesses said they saw an uncommon bird being chased by a crow (Corvidae) in the morning. The bird tried to fly away, but somehow dropped into the courtyard of a house on the outskirts of the town. It was picked up by residents who realized it was an owl. The bird was examined at CWRC and no external injury was found. It was then kept in a carton for further observations for any internal injuries, if any. At the end of the day, none were apparent. The bird was perfectly healthy and it was decided to release it at night. Photographs were taken and it was released at night. It waited for five minutes in the open carton before vanishing into the darkness. The

photographs taken during its brief stay at CWRC were the first ever photographs taken of this bird, in Assam and probably in India, as few experts said.

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Range extension of Blue-eared Kingfisher *Alcedo meninting* in the northern Western Ghats, Maharashtra, India.

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While on a trek in the northern Western Ghats in Pune district of Maharashtra, a solitary Blue-eared Kingfisher *Alcedo meninting* was observed at the Mangala Ganga stream, a tributary of River Mula near Payalichiwadi village, at the foothills of Kalad Gad Hill. This place is located in the valley between Kalad Gad and Ganachakkar range of hills, the eastern expanse of the Western Ghats. The forest type that is seen here is a stunted evergreen forest. The bird was seen at 07:30hrs on a cold morning. It was almost the size of the Small Blue Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis* but with an intense blue back, distinct blue ear coverts and deep rufous under parts.

The bird was busy fishing, and behaved like a Small Blue Kingfisher. It was perched

on a low overhanging branch of a tree, keenly watching the water below. It made several unsuccessful attempts to catch fish. After each dive, it flew to a new position on a rock nearby or to other low branches of the tree. The bird was observed for twelve minutes when the harsh sound of a diesel pump startled it and it flew away.

Ali & Ripley (1987) list this kingfisher's domain as the humid Western Ghats strip in Goa, Mysore, Tamil Nadu (Nilgiri hills) and Kerala. Prasad (2004) lists it from Hedvi Konkan and Sindhudurg district (Maharashtra). This sighting is noteworthy to establish the range extension of the Blue-eared Kingfisher to the northern Western Ghats in Maharashtra. It also indicates that the kingfisher could possibly occur in the

intervening ghat forests in the state where suitable habitat is present.

Reference

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