

Records of Red-winged Crested Cuckoo *Clamator coromandus* from Bhitarkanika National Park, Orissa

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The Red-winged Crested Cuckoo *Clamator coromandus* is found in north India, Nepal, east China, Indo-China and, Myanmar (Hoyo et al. 1997). Previous records have shown it to be a resident in north India, a passage migrant through central India, wintering in south India, Sri Lanka, Malay Peninsula, Sumatra, Java and Borneo (Hoyo et al. 1992). However, Grimmett et al. (1999) have referred to it as being a passage migrant in India that breeds in Himalaya, north-east India and Bangladesh.

Other records of the bird from different countries have mentioned it as a local breeding summer visitor in Bangladesh breeding there in March-August (Harvey 1990) and as a very local summer visitor at lower reaches (Grimmett 2000) in Nepal, a regular but scarce winter visitor to Sri Lanka arriving about October and departing in April (Henry 1971) and in Myanmar (former Burma) it is found in light forest, scrub and open country frequently visiting gardens and probably breeding in April-June (Smythies 1940).

In peninsular India it has been recorded as a passage migrant, or a rare straggler along the eastern coastal areas, or scarce but regular rainy season or winter visitor, in Kerala, Karnataka, Tamilnadu and Maharashtra states (Ali and Ripley 1969).

Spread over an area of 164km² on the east coast of India, Bhitarkanika mangroves (20°30'-20°48'N, 86°45'-86°03'E) are famous for being the largest known nesting beach of Olive Ridley Turtles *Lepidochelys olivacea* in the world. Pandav (1996) has recorded at least 173 species of resident and migratory birds from the area.

However, sightings of Red-winged Crested Cuckoo are quite rare from Bhitarkanika National Park. Pandav (1996) saw one bird in March 1993. Chadha and Kar (1999) did not record it. In fact it appears to be a rare, scarce or uncommon species everywhere except for few areas of Nepal (Jerdon 1862; Henry 1971; Hoyo et al. 1997). Though not globally threatened the population levels are inadequately known (Hoyo et al. 1997). I first spotted the bird on 30.ix.2001 at about 11:00hrs, in Dangmal forest block from 5-6m without binoculars. It was perched on higher branches of an approximately 2.5m tall *Tamarix dioca* tree, in a comparatively open area with a water body nearby.

The present record of the cuckoo is of a dead bird, found at about 18:00hrs on 9.iv.2002. I found a dead bird that was badly entangled in the fishing nets used for fencing a nursery (about 0.02ha) in the Dangmal forest block. The thin filaments were all entwined around the bird's head and both its feet. There were no signs of extreme decay apart from ant eaten eyes and it was inferred that it might have got entrapped during a gale-storm two days back.

This record confirms the earlier records of the bird being a shy forest loving species, most often seen in flight across a jungle road and preferring the lower levels of forest growth for its hunting grounds (Henry 1971). It is substantiated by the fact that this particular bird was found entrapped quite low at a height of only 1m. Also, the bird is not strong on the wing (Smythies 1940). This character makes it quite vulnerable to

strong winds. Driven by strong winds it apparently did not see the 2.25m high fishing net fence. The forest department has subsequently replaced the nylon nets with thick plastic covered wire nettings of fixed mesh size.

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Report of an injured Ceylon Bay Owl *Phodilus assimilis* from Karnataka, India

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Bay Owls (*Phodilus* sp., Family Strigidae, Order Strigiformes) are among the rarely sighted owls of India (Ali and Ripley, 1987). The bird is a rare resident of semi-evergreen and evergreen forests; and perhaps owing to its nocturnal habit and restriction to the dense forests, the records of its sightings are very few. In India, it has been reported from two distant geographic regions namely, north-east India (Oriental

Bay Owl *Phodilus badius*), and Western Ghats of Kerala / Tamilnadu (Ceylon Bay Owl *Phodilus assimilis*) (Baker 1897; Robinson 1927; Inglis 1945; Ali and Ripley 1987; Kannan 1992, 1993, 1998; Sugathan and Jacob 1995; Muddappa 1998; Uthaman 1999; Johnsingh 2001; Raman 2001). Rasmussen and Anderton (2005) treat the races of this genus as distinct species, as shown above. This species has been

sighted only once before in Karnataka at Bandipur National Park (Ahmed and Yekanthappa 1998). Here we report a rare sighting of this species and share our experience in the initial rehabilitation of the bird.

On 6.i.2005, a helpless, strangelooking owl was sighted in the nursery area of the College of Forestry, Sirsi, Uttara Kanara, Karnataka (14°36.33'N, 74°50.98'E; 619m

a.s.l.). The bird had taken shelter in a small crevice beside a water tank. It apparently had an internal injury in its right wing and could neither fly nor flap the wing properly. It appeared to be in a state of shock. The bird was carefully taken out and placed in a carton box. Based on the characteristic bay colour on top of its head, broad bridge above beak and on forehead, short ear-like tufts above sides of head, yellowish grey hair on tarsus, and black and white bands on primaries, the bird was identified as a Bay Owl (Grimmett *et al.* 1998).

The carton was later shifted to a partially darkened room. The bird was not active, inside the box, during day and sat quietly with eyes shut. But as the night progressed, it became restless and made some attempts to come out of the box. We had intended to release it in the forest on the night of its recovery. However, when we tried to release it at night in the forest, about 12 hours after it was rescued, it only sat quietly for many minutes. When it tried to walk, it got entangled in herbs and shrubs, and could cover only a couple of meters in about 3-5 minutes. As the bird seemed totally helpless, it was decided to retain it for a few more days.

In captivity, the bird, which weighed 230g, was fed at night with about 20-50g boneless chicken / mutton mashed into small pieces, provided on a small plate. The bird sensed the presence of the meat only when a small piece was brought near its beak, indicating that it possibly used an olfactory cue. Later it fed on its own directly from the plate. It fed only once in a night even when sufficient meat was offered.

After a couple of days of feeding, the bird gained strength to freely move around and looked energetic. However, its right wing remained drooped and showed no

signs of recovery from the internal injury. The bird was given preliminary veterinary attention in the form of an injection to treat the internal injury of the wing. Later it was handed over to the Forest Department (Sirsi Division) for further care. At the Sirsi zoo, the bird recovered quite well and exhibited the characteristic bobbing of the body.

On 29.i.2005, the bird was examined by Mr Saleem Hameed from the Bannerghatta Rehabilitation Centre, Bangalore. An X-ray of the damaged right wing showed a major fracture of the humerus. The bone could not be set, as the bone had moved away after the fracture. We realised that the severe injury completely incapacitated the bird and there was no question of rehabilitating it. The bird was shifted to Bannerghatta National Park, Bangalore.

This is an important sighting of the Ceylon Bay Owl, as it happens to be only the second sighting of the species in Karnataka and the northern most record within the Western Ghats.

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Predation by Forest Eagle-Owl *Bubo nipalensis* on Mouse Deer *Moschiola meminna*

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The Forest Eagle-Owl *Bubo nipalensis* (Strigidae) inhabits humid and riparian forests up to an elevation of 2,100m in South Asia (Sibley and Monroe 1990) and is rare in distribution in India (Grimmett *et al.* 1999). It is a large owl, and though chiefly nocturnal, has been observed hunting opportunistically during the day (Ali 1984). The Forest Eagle-Owl is known to predate

on mammals like golden jackals *Canis aureus*, young barking deer *Muntiacus muntjak*, hares *Lepus* sp. (Ali 1984), Indian giant flying squirrel *Petaurista philippensis* (Henry 1971), civets (Viverridae) and carrion of tiger *Panthera tigris* and goat (Bovidae: Caprinae) (Baker 1927), and also on large birds like Indian Peafowl *Pavo cristatus*, junglefowl *Gallus* sp., and Kaleej Pheasant

Lophura leucomelanos (Ali 1984), monitor lizards *Varanus* sp. (Baker 1927), snakes and fish (Ali 1984).

An incident of predation on Indian chevrotain or mouse deer *Moschiola meminna* (Artiodactyla: Tragulidae) by a Forest Eagle-Owl was observed in Puduthottam, a rain forest fragment (1,090m a.s.l.) approximately 90ha in size, bordering