

species. The barbets are most probably breeding at Rishi Valley now and seem they are here to stay.

More on the Marshall's lora *Aegithina nigrolutea*: Since my first few sightings of Marshall's lora at Rishi Valley in January 2009 (Santharam 2010), I have been observing the birds at the same locality fairly regularly. On 7 August 2011, I even noticed the female carrying twigs in her beak, accompanied by the male (which did not carry any twigs) flying to an *Albizzia* sp., tree.

More recently, on 21 November 2012, Suresh Jones and I came across three Marshall's loras calling and actively flying from tree to tree at the Marippadu Reserve Forest, near Vayalpad to the east of Madanapalle (Chittoor district, Andhra Pradesh). A few more individuals called from nearby trees. We followed the birds and had good views for a few minutes. The habitat here consisted of natural scrub vegetation interspersed with short-statured trees. A little away, in an *Eucalyptus* plantation belonging to the State Forest Department we came across Common loras *A. tiphia*.

The Marshall's sighting prompted me to deduce that the species may have been widely present in the natural forests in this arid region before exotic tree plantations gave Common loras a foothold in the territories of the Marshall's. This could easily be the case with various other native fauna, like Yellow-throated Bulbul and five-striped palm squirrel *Funambulus pennantii*, which can be seen in isolated pockets undisturbed by plantations of non-native tree species (Santharam 2008). A wider survey is required before this theory can be validated.

Yellow-throated Bulbul: After initial sightings of this rare bulbul, there have been regular reports from at least three locations on campus and two sites outside. Usually two and rarely more individuals were seen or heard. From Cauvery House I would hear the birds from the scrub-covered hillside and sometimes even on trees closer by. As mentioned earlier, the birds even visited my birdbaths in the dry months. The birds were seen all through the year and it seems safe to assume the birds are breeding here.

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# Records of the Andaman Barn-owl *Tyto deroepstorffii* from North-, and Middle Andaman Islands

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The Common Barn Owl *Tyto alba* is known to be resident (distributed up to 1,000 m in peninsular hills), widespread, local, and uncommon in mostly open non-desert habitats in India, often associated with man (Grimmett *et al.* 1978; Rasmussen & Anderton 2005). The global status and distribution of its 46 recognised races is still uncertain and a review of the entire group is long overdue (del Hoyo *et al.* 1999).

Hume (1875) first described the barn owl found on South Andaman Island as *Strix De-Roepstorffii* (Jathar & Rahmani 2007). Later, Baker (1927) treated it as a subspecies *T. a. deroepstorffii* of the mainland bird. Following that, some authorities recognised

two subspecies, *T. a. stertens* found on the sub-continental mainland, and *T. a. deroepstorffii* on the Andaman Islands (Ali & Ripley 1969; Grimmett *et al.* 1998; Kazmierczak 2000).

On the basis of König *et al.* (1999), Rasmussen & Anderton (2005) re-elevated the island race of the barn owl to full species level, Andaman Barn-owl *Tyto deroepstorffii*. This is based on distinct morphological differences between the mainland and island birds.

The Andaman Barn-owl is believed to be scarce, and reported only from South Andaman Island, and from the nearby islands of Viper, Ross, and North-, and South Cinque. It has been recorded



Photo: S. Manchi

54. Andaman Barn-owl *Tyto deroepstorffi* in a cave at the northern west coast of Interview Island.

Map: S. Subramanyam

Fig. 1. Google earth map showing distribution records of Andaman Barn-owl in North and Middle Andaman Islands.

Table 1. Islands with locations of the Andaman Barn-owl detected in North and Middle Andaman Islands

Island Name	Location	Mode of detection
Interview Island (Middle Andaman Island)	12°55'N, 92°40'E	Sighting
Pagget Island (North Andaman Island)	13°25'N, 92°50'E	Call
Thomhill Island (North Andaman Island)	13°32'N, 92°54'E	Call
East Island (North Andaman Island)	13°38'N, 93°02'E	Call
Chalis-ek (North Andaman Island)	13°02'N, 92°59'E	Call

roosting in buildings or tree hollows along the coasts and in fields. It is believed that the species is found mostly on the large islands with an area greater than 20 km<sup>2</sup> (Davidar *et al.* 2008). Since the IUCN still treats the Andaman Barn-owl as a race of the Common Barn-owl, it is not yet listed in the Red Data Book.

In March 2012, I surveyed all the caves on North-, and Middle

Andaman Islands to ascertain the breeding population of the Edible-nest Swiftlet *Aerodramus fuciphagus*. While surveying the coastal caves on the north-western part of the Interview Island Wildlife Sanctuary, I encountered an Andaman Barn-owl [54] inside a cave (12°55'410"N, 92°40'284"E; 2 m asl). This is the first record of an Andaman Barn-owl from the Middle Andaman Island group. This is also the first time that the species was recorded from inside a cave. The individual was seen roosting in a dimly lit area on a rocky ledge on the inner wall just above the cave's south-west facing opening. The dry cave measured 6 m in height, and was almost 1 m wide and 5 m long. The light inside the cave, entering through a crevice, was dim but sufficient to see things without artificial light.

Surprisingly I also encountered the species on various islands comprising the North Andaman Island group, like Pagget-, Thomhill-, and East Islands (Fig. 1). At night I heard calls of the Andaman Barn-owl on each of these three islands. I also heard its calls near the caves at Chalis-ek (Pattilevel village), in North Andaman (Table 1).

As the Andaman Barn-owl was never recorded in the North- and Middle Andaman Islands, nor is there any previous record of its roost in caves, the above observations add significantly to what is known about this species.

Given that this owl is endemic to the Andaman Islands, research into various aspects of its ecology should be prioritised with a view towards its conservation.

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