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

More on the Marshall’s Iora Aegithina nigrolineata: Since my first few sightings of Marshall’s Iora 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 Albizia sp., tree.

More recently, on 21 November 2012, Suresh Jones and I came across three Marshall’s Ioras calling and actively flying from tree to tree at the Maripadu 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 Ioras 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 Ioras 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 in this area and a region before exotic tree plantations gave Common Ioras 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 in this area and a region before exotic tree plantations gave Common Ioras 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.

To 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-Roepstorffi (Jathar & Rahmani 2007). Later, Baker (1927) treated it as a subspecies T. a. deroepstorffi of the mainland bird. Following that, some authorities recognised two subspecies, T. a. stertens found on the sub-continental mainland, and T. a. deroepstorffi 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 deroepstorffi. 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

Records of the Andaman Barn-owl Tyto deroepstorffi from North-, and Middle Andaman Islands

S. Manchi


S. Manchi, Division of Conservation Ecology, Sálim Ali Centre for ornithology and Natural History, Anaikatti P.O., Coimbatore 641108, India.

Email: ediblenest@gmail.com

Manuscript received on 5 September 2012.

References


Prashanth, M. B., 2005. URL: http://groups.yahoo.com/group/bngbirds/message/7361


Prashanth, M. B., 2005. URL: http://groups.yahoo.com/group/bngbirds/message/7361


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.

Acknowledgements

I acknowledge WWF India, for funding the survey in the Andaman Islands. I am very thankful to Vardhan Patankar, and Efrika D’Souza for the joint exploration during the survey. I deeply acknowledge Saw Alexander, Saw Yoyela, and Saw Phothada for their support, without which this survey wouldn’t have been so successful. My sincere thanks to Saw Alexander for his help in finding and surveying the caves. I thank H. N. Kumara for helping me improve the manuscript. Last, but not least, I thank my wife, Harshada, for joining me throughout the journey, motivating, and helping me to prepare the manuscript.

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.

Acknowledgements

I acknowledge WWF India, for funding the survey in the Andaman Islands. I am very thankful to Vardhan Patankar, and Efrika D’Souza for the joint exploration during the survey. I deeply acknowledge Saw Alexander, Saw Yoyela, and Saw Phothada for their support, without which this survey wouldn’t have been so successful. My sincere thanks to Saw Alexander for his help in finding and surveying the caves. I thank H. N. Kumara for helping me improve the manuscript. Last, but not least, I thank my wife, Harshada, for joining me throughout the journey, motivating, and helping me to prepare the manuscript.

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Island Name</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Mode of detection</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interview Island (Middle Andaman Island)</td>
<td>12°55′N, 92°40′E</td>
<td>Sighting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pagget Island (North Andaman Island)</td>
<td>13°25′N, 92°50′E</td>
<td>Call</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thomhill Island (North Andaman Island)</td>
<td>13°52′N, 92°54′E</td>
<td>Call</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Island (North Andaman Island)</td>
<td>13°58′N, 92°02′E</td>
<td>Call</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chalis-ek (North Andaman Island)</td>
<td>13°02′N, 92°59′E</td>
<td>Call</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

References


Barn-owl, it is not yet listed in the Red Data Book.

It is believed that the species is found mostly on the large islands with an area greater than 20 km² (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