



128. Spot-billed Pelican. Photo: S. K. Dutta

## Sighting of Spot-billed Pelican *Pelecanus philippensis* in Bastar Plateau, Chhattisgarh, India

Sushil Kumar Dutta

Dutta, S. K., 2016. Sighting of Spot-billed Pelican *Pelecanus philippensis* in Bastar Plateau, Chhattisgarh, India. *Indian BIRDS* 11 (4): 100. Sushil Kumar Dutta, Assistant Professor, Department of Zoology, Govt PG Collage, Jagdalpur, Distt. Bastar, Chhattisgarh, 494001. Manuscript received on 01 November 2013.

The Spot-billed Pelican *Pelecanus philippensis* is sporadically distributed in peninsular India, and is reported to breed in southern, and north-eastern India (Grimmett *et al.* 2011). From Madhya Pradesh, in central India, it was known only from Shivpuri District (Chandra & Singh 2004).

On 10 March 2012, an immature Spot-billed Pelican [128] was sighted at Jagdalpur town, Chhattisgarh (19.099°N, 82.013°E). The bird first landed in Dalpat Sagar, moving then to a nearby tree, and then again to the Dalpat Sagar. The bird was not seen in the area after this, till an individual was sighted here on 09 July 2013; it remained there till 27 August 2013. The bird was roosting on a small island at the center of Dalpat Sagar, alternatively perching on mobile towers, and trees. It finally left the area on 27 August 2013. Spot-billed Pelicans are known to be widespread during their non-breeding season, for which it is assumed that Jagdalpur is on the migratory route of the species.

Dalpat Sagar, spread over an area of 142.45 ha, is a dammed lake, and an artificial water body in Jagdalpur town. More than 50 species of wetland-dependent birds have been observed roosting, and breeding in the lake. Some of the submerged, and emergent hydrophytes in the lake are *Hydrilla verticillata*, *Potamogeton* sp., *Nelumbo nucifera*, *Lotus stellata*, *Typha angustifolia*, and *Oryza rufipogon*. *Ipomoea carnea* var. *fistulosa*, and *Indigifera pulchella* are the most abundant plant species along the littoral, and a little above the littoral zone. There are two islands in the middle of the water body, approachable only by boat. Large portions of these land areas get submerged during rainy season but get exposed during summer. The land mass

supports of trees like *Ficus bengalensis*, *F. religiosa*, *F. glomerata*, *Mangifera indica* and *Lannea grandis*.

Chandra & Singh (2004) recorded 517 species, and subspecies of birds belonging to 69 families, of which 197 taxa were from Chhattisgarh and 488 from Madhya Pradesh. The present observation of Spot-billed Pelican in Jagdalpur city is the first record of the species from Chhattisgarh State. As this is a large species, it is prominent, and there is virtually no chance of it going unnoticed. It is probable that this species has started migrating to or through the Bastar area. Bastar District, situated in the southern part of Chhattisgarh, is dominated by several tribal communities that hunt birds, and it was feared that this individual would get poached. However, due to the active surveillance of the Forest Department, and the local media, it was left unharmed, and undisturbed. Further study on the occurrence of this species in other parts of Chhattisgarh is necessary to understand its local movements.

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## Eyebrowed Thrush *Turdus obscurus* in Bengaluru, India

Aditi Sridhar & Shubha Bhat

Sridhar, A., & Bhat, S., 2016. Eyebrowed Thrush *Turdus obscurus* in Bengaluru, India. *Indian BIRDS* 11 (4): 100–101. Aditi Sridhar, Indian Institute of Science (IISc), Bengaluru 560012, Karnataka. E-mail: [aditi.31march@gmail.com](mailto:aditi.31march@gmail.com)  
Shubha Bhat, Indian Institute of Science (IISc), Bengaluru 560012, Karnataka, E-mail: [shubhanava@gmail.com](mailto:shubhanava@gmail.com)  
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This note describes the sighting of an adult Eyebrowed Thrush *Turdus obscurus* in Bengaluru (India).

The bird was first sighted on the morning of 19 February 2016 at 0730 hrs, near the rocky area around water at the Jubilee Garden in the Indian Institute of Science campus (13.02°N, 77.56°E; hereinafter, IISc). While we were observing Tickell's Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus affinis*, Purple-rumped Sunbird *Leptocoma*

*zeylonica*, and Forest Wagtail *Dendronanthus indicus*, an unfamiliar bird suddenly appeared in the bushes. It took a while to pinpoint the bird, as it was well camouflaged against the dry bushes. It remained very still, with minimal movement. It was probably waiting for its turn to swoop down and sip some water, but the gregarious babblers, followed by bulbuls, kept hovering around the water area. Before the bird disappeared,

a few photographs [129] were taken, from which it can clearly be identified as an Eyebrowed Thrush. Pale tips to greater wing coverts indicate it to be a first winter bird.



Photo: Aditi Sridhar & Shubha Bhat

129. Eyebrowed Thrush *Turdus obscurus* in Bengaluru, India.

At 0840 hrs, it was spotted again near the big pond in Jubilee Garden. Perhaps this time, it was successful in getting some water to drink. A video was recorded, while it was perching on a branch over the water pond ([https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z8RO7wC7nKo&feature=em-share\\_video\\_user](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z8RO7wC7nKo&feature=em-share_video_user)). The bird disappeared after about three minutes.

The next day, it was spotted again at 0830 hrs at a slightly different location near the Jubilee Garden. This time, it was wandering in the bushes, presumably searching for food. A female Tickell's Thrush *T. unicolor* first appeared on the scene near the bushes, eating berries of *Ziziphus oenoplia* that had fallen on the ground. As soon as it disappeared, the Eyebrowed

Thrush entered the scene. It started feeding on the *Ziziphus* berries and spent about five minutes in the area (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qw5b1OXtIT4&feature=youtu.be>).

Then after a gap of about 12 days, the Eyebrowed Thrush was spotted again, very briefly, on 03 March at 1600 hrs. The bird was in flight. The fifth sighting was on 06 March at 1800 hrs, in the same area where it was first spotted.

The distribution map of the species in Grimmett *et al.* (2011) shows that it winters in the Eastern Himalayas, and north-eastern India, with several isolated sightings from the Indian Peninsula. Thus, due to the absence of previous records of the species in Bengaluru (Krishna *et al.*, 1994; Wikipedia 2016), this IISc sighting is considered the first-ever sighting from the city. The nearest records in southern India are from Chennai (Santharam 1985), and Belgaum (Baker 1924). The bird is probably a vagrant during spring migration, and must have spent a few days at IISc.

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## First photographic record of the Red-throated Diver *Gavia stellata* from India

Abhijit Avalaskar

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Abhijit Avalaskar, 02/102, Indraprastha Honest, Mohindarsingh Kabalsingh School Road, Near Adharwadi Chowk, Kalyan 421301, Thane District, Maharashtra, India. E-mail: [abhijit.avalaskar@gmail.com](mailto:abhijit.avalaskar@gmail.com)

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On 26 December 2015 I visited Vijaydurga Fort (16.55°N, 73.33°E), in Sindhudurg District, Maharashtra. The fort is situated at the tip of a sandbar that separates the Arabian Sea from a 40 km creek formed by the Vaghotan River. This landmass, jutting into the sea, provides an ideal vantage point for sea watching. A single bird floating quietly in the sea, about 120–150 m away from the shore, attracted my attention. From a distance, it looked like a grebe (Podicipedidae). The bird remained on the surface of the water for more than ten minutes. Initially the bird was quite far away for photography, but slowly it floated closer, and I was able to take photographs when it was

about 50–70 m from me [130, 131]. The bird never flew while I was there, and was still floating when I left.

After checking my field guide (Rasmussen & Anderton 2012), it was clear that the water bird was not a grebe. Overall, the bird seemed to have a dark grey-brown upper side, white on its throat, greyish-white on sides of throat, and sullied white under parts. It had a sharply pointed bill that it held slightly raised, white in front of the eye, sloping forehead, and a short tail that eliminated the equally rare Black-throated Diver *Gavia arctica*, but confirmed this to be a Red-throated Diver *G. stellata* in non-breeding plumage. Since field guides indicated this bird to be a vagrant along the