

Indian BIRDS

Vol. 12 No. 1



Taimyr Gulls
White-eyed Gull
Lapland Longspur



Indian BIRDS

www.indianbirds.in

VOL. 12 No. 1

DATE OF PUBLICATION: 26 AUGUST 2016

ISSN 0973-1407

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editor.indianbirds@gmail.com

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FRONT COVER: Drongo feeding on insects fleeing from burning grassland.

[Awarded 'Photographer of the Year' & winner in 'Animal Behaviour' category at 'Nature in Focus' contest 2016.]

PHOTOGRAPHER: Kallol Mukherjee

BACK COVER: Darter feeding.

PHOTOGRAPHER: Hemant Kumar

Observations of probable Taimyr Gulls *Larus fuscus taimyrensis* at Okha, Gujarat, India

Prasad Ganpule

Ganpule, P., 2016. Observations of probable Taimyr Gulls *Larus fuscus taimyrensis* at Okha, Gujarat, India. *Indian BIRDS* 12 (1): 1–4.
Prasad Ganpule, C/o Parshuram Pottery Works, Opp. Nazarbaug, Morbi 363642, Gujarat, India. E-mail: prasadganpule@gmail.com.
Manuscript received on 28 February 2016.

Introduction

The taxonomy, and identification, of the 'large white-headed gull' group is complex. There are two taxa from this group that commonly winter in India: Heuglin's Gull *Larus fuscus heuglini*, and Steppe Gull *L. f. barabensis* (Grimmett *et al.* 2011; Rasmussen & Anderton 2012). For India, the Caspian Gull *L. cachinnans* was considered 'uncertain' by Grimmett *et al.* (2011), and 'hypothetical' by Rasmussen & Anderton (2012). It is, however, a rare winter visitor, at least to Gujarat (Ganpule 2015). The status of the Mongolian Gull *L. [smithsonianus/vegae] mongolicus* is uncertain, with a record from Odisha (Dutta 2013); photos of gulls similar to *mongolicus*, from different regions of India, have been recently posted on birding websites, e.g., www.orientalbirdimages.org.

I report here observations of probable Taimyr Gulls *Larus fuscus taimyrensis* (=heuglini) (Dickinson & Remsen 2013) from Okha, Gujarat, made over a period of three years from 2014–2016.

Taxonomy

The situation regarding *taimyrensis* is complex. Yésou (2002) described, in detail, the taxonomic status of *taimyrensis*, and stated that it is an invalid taxon, and treated it as a hybrid between *heuglini*, and the nominate *vegae*. However, it was treated as a sub-species of *L. heuglini* by Olsen & Larsson (2004). Based on genetic studies, Collinson *et al.* (2008) proposed *taimyrensis* as a subspecies of *L. fuscus*, with the caveat that though included, 'it may be best synonymised with *heuglini* or be regarded as a transient *heuglini* x *vegae* hybrid population.' Citing work done by Yésou (2002), they also stated that birds breeding within the accepted range of *taimyrensis* are, in fact, phenotypically identical to *L. vegae birulai*. Dickinson & Remsen (2013) synonymise it with *heuglini*, which is a subspecies of *L. fuscus*.

A recent paper on Taimyr Gulls (van Dijk *et al.* 2011), based on studies carried out on birds breeding in the Taimyr Peninsula, showed that they have extensive variations in leg colour (most dull yellow, but pink or grayish in some individuals), but assortative mating with respect to leg colour, or any other characteristic, was not observed. Though it was suggested that these gulls represented a distinct population, with a measurable degree of genetic differentiation, no new genetic data was presented to refute the recommendations of Collinson *et al.* (2008).

Wintering range

The wintering range of the Taimyr Gull is uncertain, and there is confusion regarding this. It was thought that it migrated in a

south-westerly direction to winter in the Caspian Sea, and along the coast of the Arabian Sea (Cramp & Simmons 1983). Recent studies, however, indicated that Taimyr Gulls wintered mainly in Hong Kong (Kennerley *et al.* 1995), and Japan (Ujihara & Ujihara 2008). Its status in South Korea is uncertain as it is believed to be a passage migrant, with birds arriving in September, and seen in large numbers in October. Though a small number of birds remain in winter, most birds are thought to spend winters further south (Moore 2011).

Observations & identification

On 12 January 2014, I visited Okha, Gujarat (22.46° N, 69.06° E), a small village located on the north-western-most point of Saurashtra, on the coast of the Arabian Sea. It is a fishing village, and since fish is processed here, large white-headed gulls are seen in good numbers. There were around 1500 gulls present there on that day, with adults, first-winter, and immature birds roosting in the area. The majority of the birds were Heuglin's Gulls. Many were Steppe Gulls. Caspian Gulls were not noted on this day.

I found a group of around 20 gulls, which were different from the Heuglin's, and Steppe Gulls, present in the area. The former were very pale-mantled (paler than any Heuglin's, and approaching closer to Steppe), late moulting bulky gulls (with p6 or p7 growing in second week of January in some individuals, unlike any Steppe which has completed the moult), with either yellowish or light-pinkish legs, whitish eyes, and with prominent head streaking in adults. There were a few juveniles also in this group. I took photographs of these birds [1–7].



1. Adult Taimyr Gull. Note heavy head streaking, pale mantle, yellowish legs, and pale eye with reddish eye-ring. This bird is moulting (like others), with p8 being longest, in the second week of January, indicating its northern origin. Although there is heavy streaking in the crown area too, as per van Dijk *et al.* (2011), "There is much variation in the extent of head-streaking shown by adults during the non-breeding season". Okha, Gujarat. 12 January 2014.



2. Adult Taimyr Gull. Note streaking on head, pale mantle, yellowish-pink legs, and pale eye with reddish eye-ring. Note late moult—P8 longest. Okha, Gujarat. 12 January 2014.



3. Adult Taimyr Gull. Late moult, with only p7 longest. Pale mantle, deep yellowish legs, and pale eye with reddish eye-ring. The growing primary makes this gull look different. Okha, Gujarat. 12 January 2014.

4. A group of gulls at a small puddle in Okha, Gujarat, 12 January 2014. The individuals standing on the left, and in the center seem like Taimyr Gulls based on the following features: Well-proportioned body appears neat and fairly compact, shortish bills showing a “weak” gonydeal angle, and a rounded head shape. Light yellow bill base, gonys spot orangish-red, reaching cutting edge of upper mandible, with a small dark marking near the gonys. The presence of a slightly longer primary projection, beyond the tail. Rather flat backed. Dull yellow legs with pinkish tinge (Taimyr’s leg colour is frequently yellow in adults, however many show pinkish tones). Pale eyes with red orbital ring. Whitish head with streaking confined to hind parts, and sides of neck. Although not fully visible in the image, the individual on the rear right side (right side second row, with dark eye) shows some *vegae* features too. Can this be a Taimyr sub adult, (or) Taimyr x Vega hybrid, considering its features? Dark eyes with iris spot density (26-50%), longer bill, with a fairly “obvious” gonydeal angle, pale bill base, gonys spot dull orange, not reaching cutting edge of upper mandible, which has no dark marking, more flesh / pink coloured legs, and streaking on head, crown and neck.



All: Prasad Canpule

5. Adult Taimyr Gull. Slightly darker mantle than other birds, but still paler than *heuglini*. Heavy head streaking with blotches on the nape. Pale eye with reddish eye-ring. Streaking similar to *vegae*. A Vega Gull (or) Taimyr x Vega hybrid based on weak rear end with fairly short primary projection beyond tail, somewhat large white mirrors, and heavy streaking on head, neck, and breast. In mid-winter (December-January), most Vega Gulls show extensive grey-brown (tinged warmer) streaking, and smudged “thumbprints” on the hind neck, across the neck sides, and, often, down the breast sides. Okha, Gujarat. 12 January 2014.



6. First-winter. ‘possible’ Vega Gull (or) Taimyr x Vega hybrid. 12 January 2014. Okha, Gujarat.



7. First-winter. ‘Possible’ Taimyr Gull based on the pale plumage, long wings with barred greater coverts, and black bill with pale base and weak gonydeal angle. 12 January 2014. Okha, Gujarat.

I visited Okha on 11 January 2015, and 31 January 2016 to specifically search for these late-moulting, pale-backed gulls. I was able to note about 30–40 in 2015, in about 1000–1200 gulls present, and around 20–25 in 2016, amidst 1600–1800 gulls, taking photos on both occasions [8–9]. I focused on adult birds, as these are easier to identify. The visits were consciously made in January, so that moult timings in these birds could be better studied. However, on a visit to Porbandar (21.63°N, 69.60°E), Gujarat, on 07 February 2016, three similar birds were noted [10].

All: Prasad Ganpule



8. Adult. Pale mantle. Note head streaking. This individual looks quite short legged (like Vega Gull), but the rest of its features are good for Taimyr Gull. Okha, Gujarat. 11 January 2015.

All photographs were taken between 1000 hrs and 1100 hrs in harsh sunlight, and I have refrained from post-processing to retain the true mantle colour. Images were taken with Nikon D7100 DSLR Camera with Nikkor 300mm F4 lens + Nikon 1.7 TC.

The adult birds could be differentiated from Heuglin's, and Steppe Gulls as per the characteristics listed in Table 1.

Though comparative features of the Caspian Gull are not given in Table 1 (a group of six to seven adult Caspian Gulls was noted during my visit on 31 January 2016), they can be ruled out based on the fact that it moults very early (completing its primary moult by November), is very pale-backed [Kodak Grey Scale (4)5–6.5], and has a long, straight, and slender bill. Caspian



9. Adult. Pale mantle; yellowish legs. Note the prominent head streaking. Very late moult, with p8 longest. A Vega Gull (or) Taimyr x Vega hybrid based on the weak rear end, and heavy streaking on head, neck, and breast. 31 January 2016. Okha, Gujarat.



10. Adult: Pale mantle, and fine head streaking on head, with bolder streaks on hind neck, and upper breast, and hence a 'possible' Taimyr x Vega hybrid. Pale eyes, with red orbital eye-ring, and flesh-coloured legs. Beak looks smudged. Late moult, with moult not completed in first week of February. Since this image was taken very late in the evening after sunset, the mantle colour may not be represented properly in the image, and the pale mantle may look little darker (minor sharpening is done for this image). Porbandar, Gujarat. 7 February 2016.

shows very little black on the outer primaries, with mirrors on p9 and p10. Further, it is a rare winter migrant to Gujarat, and is usually seen only in very small numbers (Ganpule 2015).

Similarly, Mongolian Gull could also be excluded, based on the following characteristics: It is mostly white-headed in winter, with faint, narrow dark streaks around its eyes, with a large

Table 1. Comparison of adult *Larus heuglini*, and *L. barabensis* with the gulls seen in Okha, Gujarat

Parameters	* <i>L. heuglini</i>	* <i>L. barabensis</i>	Okha gulls
Mantle colour	Dark slaty, almost blackish	Pale to darkish grey	Pale grey in most individuals, a few darkish grey
Kodak Grey Scale	8–11	7–8.5	6–8
Head marking in winter (January)	Usually brown spots/streaks on hind neck, normally finely streaked	Usually white-headed, but may sometimes show faint streaks around eyes	Most birds heavily streaked, with heavy blotches on nape in few individuals
Moult timings of primaries	Generally late moulting, with moult completed by January to mid-March	Earlier than heuglini, with moult completed by December in most individuals	Late moulting, with moult completed by end of February
Winter eye colour	Pale yellow, rarely dark	Pale to dark	Pale yellow
Head shape	Flatter crowned	Rather rounded	Flatter forehead than heuglini
Leg colour	Yellow or flesh-tinged	Bright yellow	Yellow to fleshy or pink
Bill in winter	Dull yellow, usually with dark markings on upper mandible	Pale and often four coloured, shorter and narrower	Dull yellow, often lacking dark marking on upper mandible

*Details taken from Olsen & Larsson (2004).

bill, and very pale upper parts. It is also an early moulting bird, completing its moult by December, but more information is required regarding this (Olsen & Larsson 2004). There are no definite records of Mongolian Gull from Gujarat, though there are a few uncertain records (*pers. obsv.*).

Discussion

The majority of these gulls observed in Okha were in active moult in the second week of January. Hence these must be Arctic breeders. These are not Heuglin's (the regular wintering Arctic breeder), since their structure, and mantle colour do not match. Buchheim (2006) also noted three similar individuals at Okha, and speculated that these might be *taimyrensis*, *birulai* or *vegae*.

Based on studies carried out in Japan, adult Vega Gulls *L. smithsonianus vegae* are said to be fairly distinct from the *argentatus-cachinnans-fuscus* group, but birds with yellowish legs, seen in Japan, and somewhat similar to the birds seen here, did not fall within the known criteria of identification of Vega Gulls, and were thought to be either *taimyrensis* or *birulai* (Gibbins 2003). However, all long distance ring recoveries from wintering Taimyr Gulls were from the Pacific coast of Asia, mainly the Sea of Okhotsk (van Dijk *et al.* 2011), with the authors stating that birds resembling Taimyr Gulls winter in low numbers in Iran and Bahrain, noting that the unidentified birds seen by Buchheim (2006), in Okha, might belong to this taxon. Olsen & Larsson (2004) also speculate that birds matching *taimyrensis* could frequent western India. Thus the possibility that a small number of Taimyr Gulls could winter in India is not ruled out.

The observations made over a period of three years show that these Taimyr Gulls are rare, but regular, winter visitors to Okha. Since these were baffling, I sent the images to various experts for their opinions [Klaus Malling Olsen, email dated 9 February 2014, Andreas Buchheim, emails dated 23 January 2014 and 18 January 2015, Nial Moores, email dated 27 February 2014, Norman Deans van Swelm, email dated 2 March 2014, Arend Wassink, email dated 29 January 2014]; they confirmed that these are similar to the birds seen in the Taimyr Peninsula, and could be *taimyrensis* based on the structure, pale mantle, late moult, heavier head streaking (more than seen in *heuglini*), and the yellow or fleshy-tinged/pinkish legs. However, Klaus Malling Olsen (email dated 28 January 2015) also opined that birds with pale mantles, and very heavy head streaking with blotches on the nape (similar to *vegae*) are very unusual, and show *vegae* influences, but *vegae* has not been observed outside South-east Asia (Olsen & Larsson 2004), and these are best retained as 'unidentified' until further research determines their origins.

It is possible that these gulls winter in other areas of Gujarat too, as three similar individuals were noted at Porbandar. Further, a sighting was reported from Kerala in January 2015 (George 2015), which was also identified as a probable *taimyrensis*. Hence birdwatchers are advised to be on the lookout for such pale-mantled, late moulting, and heavily streaked (on the head) gulls along the entire western coast of India. More sightings will help in understanding its status here. However, it should be noted that without genetic studies and knowledge of the breeding areas of these birds wintering in Okha, it is not possible to be sure of their origins and taxa. Large scale ringing, or satellite tagging, of an adequate number of gulls on the Taimyr Peninsula, and in other nearby areas, would lead to a better understanding of whether these are Taimyr Gulls or something else. The gulls wintering in

Okha should also be tagged, and suitable blood samples taken for genetic studies. These 'mystery' gulls in Okha are a challenge for gull researchers, and through this paper, attention is drawn to their presence in India.

Acknowledgements

I thank Andreas Buchheim, Arend Wassink, Hans Larsson, Klaus Malling Olsen, Nial Moores, Norman Deans van Swelm, and Praveen J. for all their help. I would like to specially thank the late Martin Garner for his encouragement and for posting a short write-up and images of these Gulls on his very popular 'Birding Frontiers' website. I also thank Ashvin Trivedi, Kapilsinh Zala, Manoj Finava, Maulik Varu and Swadeepsinh Jadeja for their company.

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A 'Round Island Petrel' recovered from India

Vikash Tatayah, Ruth Brown, Mathieu Le Corre, Malcolm Nicoll & Carl G. Jones

Tatayah, V., Brown, R., Le Corre, M., Nicoll, M. & Jones, C. J., 2016. A 'Round Island Petrel' recovered from India. *Indian BIRDS* 12 (1): 5–6.

Vikash Tatayah, Conservation Director, Mauritian Wildlife Foundation, Grannum Road, Vacoas 73418, Mauritius. E-mail: vtatayah@mauritian-wildlife.org

[Corresponding author.]

Ruth Brown, RSPB, Etive House, Beechwood Park, Inverness, United Kingdom.

Mathieu Le Corre, Assistant Director, UMR 9220 UR CNRS IRD ENTROPIE, Université de la Réunion, 97744 Saint Denis Cédex 9, La Réunion, France.

Malcolm Nicoll, Institute of Zoology, Zoological Society of London, Regent's Park, London, NW14RY, United Kingdom.

Carl G. Jones, Scientific Director, Mauritian Wildlife Foundation, Grannum Road, Vacoas 73418, Mauritius.

Manuscript received on 25 February 2016.

A ringed *Pterodroma* petrel was reported from southern India on 21 February 1996, by V. S. Vijayan, then the Director of the Salim Ali Centre for Ornithology and Conservation (hereinafter SACON), at Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu. This bird had apparently been blown inland by strong winds. The bird, a Round Island Petrel, had been ringed as a chick, on Round Island (19.85°S, 57.78°E), Mauritius, on 12 December 1995, and had travelled a distance of 4020 km. This was the first, and to date the only, ring recovery away from Mauritius, and is the first, and only, record from India, and consequently deserves further comment.

Round Island (216 ha) is an uninhabited volcanic islet lying 22.5 km north-north-east of Mauritius in the western Indian Ocean. The island supports globally important breeding grounds for the Wedge-tailed Shearwater *Puffinus pacificus*, Red-tailed Tropicbird *Phaethon rubricauda*, and White-tailed Tropicbird *P. lepturus* (Tatayah 2010). However, one of the most intriguing birds of this islet is the Round Island Petrel [11, 12], a name used to describe a complex of at least three species of gadfly petrels that exhibit some hybridisation between them. The most common species in the population is the Trindade Petrel *Pterodroma arminjoniana*, which interbreeds with the rarer population of the Herald Petrel *P. heraldica*, and the Kermadec Petrel *P. neglecta* (Brown *et al.* 2010, 2011; Tatayah 2010; Jones *et al.* 2013).

In an attempt to understand the breeding biology, and non-breeding distribution of these petrels, individuals have been ringed since the early 1970s. By December 2015, 1650 adults and 1493 chicks had been ringed on Round Island, resulting in over 13,000 recaptures, all but one being from the island.



Nik Cole

11. A typical Round Island Petrel: Upper wing plumage.



Hadoram Shinhai

12. A typical Round Island Petrel: Under wing plumage.

A geolocator study confirms that a proportion of birds cross the equator towards India, both, on the west to the Arabian Sea, and east to the Bay of Bengal (Nicoll *et al.* 2016). This note details the history of the only recovery of the Round Island Petrel, and its relevance.

Ringed & recovery

A light-phase Round Island Petrel (#5H09320), ringed as a chick on Round Island on 12 December 1995, was recaptured in southern India on 21 February 1996. It had apparently been blown inland by strong winds, and had travelled more than 4,000 km. Recovery details were supplied by the Avian Demography Unit ('SAFRING'), University of Cape Town, South Africa, and they indicated that the bird was 'found exhausted, sick or injured; blown inland by gale-force winds'. This record was first published 28 years later in Jones *et al.* (2013). The apparent unlikely occurrence of *P. arminjoniana* had resulted in this record being listed as doubtful for India (Kazmierczak 2009), and hypothetical for South Asia (Rasmussen & Anderton 2012), the latter referring to an unpublished report from southern India.

In a recent review of pelagic rarities from India, Praveen *et al.*

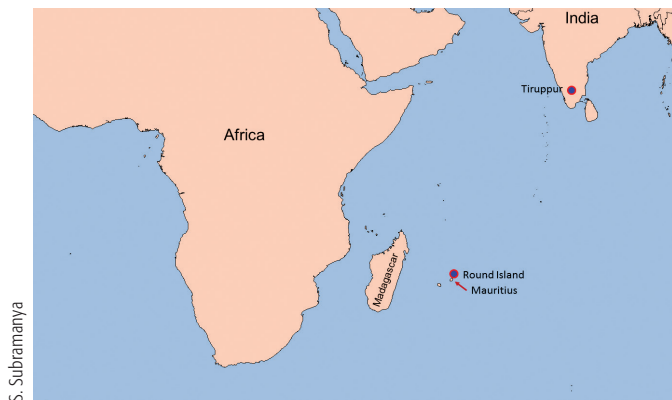


Fig. 1. Map of the ringing (Round Island), and recovery (Tiruppur) sites.

(2013), unaware of the ringed specimen that had been recovered, stated the lack of additional knowledge on the provenance of this species record, and hence its occurrence in India was in dispute. W. R. P. Bourne suggested that Praveen contact us, in Mauritius, for more information. The details of this specimen, after it was recovered, have subsequently been researched by Praveen. He contacted V. S. Vijayan to get further details of the recovery. Vijayan stated that it was recovered near Coimbatore, from Tiruppur (11.11°N, 77.34°E), and brought over to SACON (Fig. 1). Who found the bird, how, and under what condition it arrived in SACON is not known. Tiruppur is more than 150 km from the nearest coastline, which is on the Arabian Sea in Kerala. Vijayan contacted the address on the ring, informing of the capture, and the bird was skinned and the mounted specimen kept for display in his room. After his tenure, the specimen was handed to Lalitha Vijayan, at the same centre, and she confirmed that the specimen was kept in her office. Additionally, she indicated that the details of the ringing were communicated to them by BirdLife International (sic. =SAFRING?). When L. Vijayan retired, she handed over all materials, including this specimen, to another scientist, the late S. Bhupathy. The specimen appears to have been lost since then. Hence, as the record currently stands, the bird recovered from southern India was ringed on Round Island, and is most likely to be *P. arminjoniana*; although, in the absence of a specimen, it could possibly be one of the other species that occur on Round Island, or may even be a hybrid.

Discussion

Newton (1956) observed petrels at sea between Cargados Carajos shoals and Mauritius in January 1955. This was the first evidence that birds were travelling north. Le Corre *et al.* (2012) showed that several seabird species migrate along both, the east, and west coasts of India. A geolocator study on Wedge-tailed Shearwater *Ardenna pacifica* from Round Island also indicates that most birds migrate to the northern, and central Indian Ocean after breeding, with major wintering areas being the south of the Indian Peninsula, and Sri Lanka (Legrand *et al.* In prep.).

An on-going geo-locator study indicates that adult Round Island Petrels spend their non-breeding period travelling widely throughout the Indian Ocean basin north of latitude 40°S, including the Arabian Sea, in the Indian Ocean Important Bird and Biodiversity Area (IBA) 'Western 31- Marine' that lies 600–700 km west of the western coast of India (BirdLife International 2016; Nicoll *et al.* 2016). Tracking data on the movements of juvenile Round Island Petrels during their first year at sea, suggests

that they move into the Arabian Sea, and the Bay of Bengal, and pass through Indian waters (Nicoll *et al.* 2016). This lends further support to the claim that the Round Island Petrel occurs in Indian waters during the non-breeding season.

Historical records (Vinson 1976), and genetic analysis (Brown 2008) suggest that the petrels of Round Island represent a recent colonisation by species originating from the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. While the majority of petrels on Round Island appear most similar to the Trindade Petrel (Brown & Jordan 2009), Kermadec Petrel, and Herald Petrel are also present on the island, and all three species have been found to hybridise (Brown *et al.* 2010). Morphology and plumage are not accurate predictors of parentage as a bird with strong characteristics of one species have been found with haplotypes of the other (Jones *et al.* 2013). In light of this, the Indian bird, if it can be relocated, should be subjected to genetic analysis to confirm its identity.

Acknowledgements

The authors wish to thank Praveen J. for encouraging this recovery to be written up as a proper record, as well as his help, and that of Pramod Padmanabhan, and Rajah Jayapal of SACON for attempting to track the specimen. Thanks also are due to V. S. Vijayan, and Lalitha Vijayan for providing information.

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Does the diet of the Little Cormorant *Microcarbo niger* affect commercial fisheries?

R. Roshnath, George Chandy & E. A. Jayson

Roshnath, R., Chandy, G., & Jayson, E. A., 2016. Do cormorants prey on species of human interest? Diet composition of little cormorants during breeding season. *Indian BIRDS* 12 (1): 7–9.

R. Roshnath, Center for Wildlife Studies, Kerala Veterinary and Animal Sciences University, Pookode, Wayanad, Kerala, India. E-mail: roshnath.r@gmail.com. [Corresponding author.]

George Chandy, Center for Wildlife Studies, Kerala Veterinary and Animal Sciences University, Pookode, Wayanad, Kerala, India.

E. A. Jayson, Kerala Forest Research Institute, Peechi 680653, Thrissur, Kerala, India.

Manuscript received on 09 January 2016.

Abstract

The diet composition of Little Cormorants *Microcarbo niger*, during their breeding season, was studied in the Kannur District of Kerala during July–August 2012 to evaluate whether their diet conflicted with the commercial interests of shrimp, and fish farmers. Regurgitated samples (n=498) revealed that they mainly preyed upon shrimps (91%), to feed their nestlings. Other prey species included various species of fishes (*Mystus vittatus* 6%, *Aplocheilichthys* sp. 1%, *Puntius mahecola* 1%, and *Etroplus maculatus* 0.40%), and an amphibian tadpole (*Euphlyctes cynophlyctus* 1%). Slow-moving bottom dwellers like shrimps and *M. vittatus*, which are easy to catch, constituted most of the recorded prey. The size of prey species was 1–7 cm. Though shrimps constituted the higher percentage of their diet, their mean biomass (0.39 g) was less than that of other prey. Medium-sized shrimps ranging 1–4 cm were preferred. The higher percent of shrimps in their diet, recorded in the regurgitated samples, suggests a possible conflict with commercial shrimp farming. The small-sized fish (*M. vittatus*, and *E. maculatus*) these cormorants preying upon may have negligible economic value, but continued predation of a particular size class may later affect recruitment and thus the population structure of the prey species.

Introduction

An increase in the number of cormorants [Phalacrocoracidae] in Kannur District (Kerala), in the past two and a half decades, has led to a direct conflict with commercial fish farming (Roshnath 2014). In Europe, there has been an increase in the number of cormorants since 1980 (Van Eerden & Gregersen 1995). Thereafter, many studies on the diet of cormorants were carried out all around the world, and several corrective measures to prevent a conflict with commercial fisheries were undertaken (Humpheries *et al.* 1992; Keller 1995; Van Eerden & Gregersen 1995; Veldkamp 1995; Glahn *et al.* 1998; Engstrom 2001; Liordos & Goutner 2008). These studies constitute a baseline on the dietary preferences of cormorants.

The recent increase in the number of Great Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo* in Sweden has led to conflicts with commercial fishery (Engstrom 2001). Considering the species composition of their diet, and the consumption estimates of wintering cormorants in southern Germany, Keller (1995) concluded that these birds imposed a serious threat to commercial fisheries. However, a study in Greece (Liordos & Goutner 2008) suggested minimal competition between cormorants and commercial fishing.

Veldkamp (1995) collected indirect data on the prey captured by breeding cormorants (rearing young) by collecting their regurgitated stomach contents. He concluded that the predation of fish stocks by cormorants might, in some circumstances, reduce fish populations to very low levels, or even completely remove certain size-categories of fishes, but this was highly unlikely to result in local extinctions.

No study of this nature has been conducted in India, despite cormorants being widespread, and given the fact that commercial

fisheries support a vast section of the human population. The present study attempts to address this issue.

Methodology

Study sites

Kannur District in northern Kerala lies along the coast of the Arabian Sea, experiencing a humid tropical monsoon climate. The diet composition of Little Cormorants *Microcarbo niger* was studied at the Valapattanam (Fig. 1) heronry (11.93° N, 75.36° E), located on a small mangrove islet in the Valapattanam River. The main mangrove species growing on the islet were *Bruguiera cylindrica*, *Acanthus ilicifolius*, *Aegiceras corniculatum*, *Kandelia candel*, and *Rhizophora mucronata*.

The diet composition of nesting birds was studied by analyzing their regurgitated pellets. It was assumed that the regurgitated samples approximated the dietary preference of the cormorants, although the one-to-five regurgitated samples that we collected per day constituted only a small proportion of their food intake. Harris & Wanless (1993) suggested that regurgitation could be used to describe the diet of chicks of water birds. The heronry at Valapattanam was observed from 0600 hrs to 1800 hrs, twice a week, during the breeding season. Fish, or other prey, which had fallen to the ground from a nest, and lay within a one-meter radius of it, were collected as samples. Information such as number, size, and mass of the prey was recorded from the samples. Prey taxa were identified with help of literature (Day 1875), and the percentage composition of different prey items was estimated.

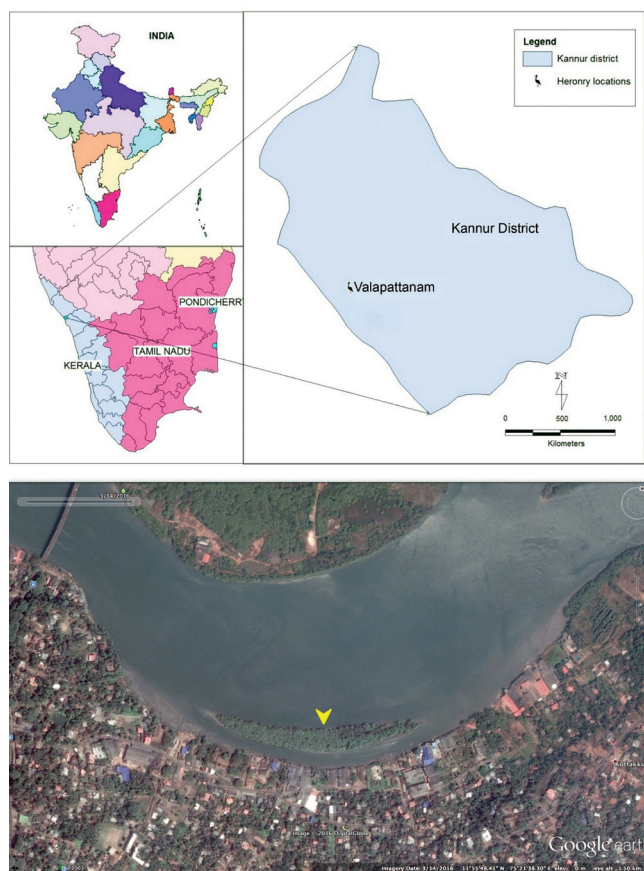


Fig.1: Google map showing location of Valapattanam Heronry in Kannur District (yellow arrow).

Results

A total of 498 regurgitated samples were collected from under the nests in the study site, and analyzed.

Prey composition

The composition of different prey items in the diet of Little Cormorants is shown in Fig. 2. The regurgitated samples ($n=498$) revealed that the major prey constituent was shrimp (91%). The fish species included *M. vittatus* (striped dwarf catfish), *Aplocheilus* species, *Puntius mahecola*, and *Euphrates maculatus* (orange chromide). Four amphibian tadpoles of *Euphrates cyanophlyctis* were also recorded. Bottom-dwelling organisms such as striped dwarf catfish, and shrimps (*Penaeus* species, and *Macrobranchium* species) were recorded more in the diet (Fig. 3). Parent birds fed shrimp fries (mean length 3.2 cm) to chicks in a bolus, each comprising 100–150 fries (Fig. 3). Our samples revealed that shrimps, along with striped dwarf catfish, and orange chromide, constituted 97% of their prey; these were economically important, and also species of human interest, thus causing a potential conflict with commercial fisheries, and humans.

The prey of the Little Cormorant ranged in length from one to seven centimeters: *Euphrates maculatus* (5–5.5 cm), *Puntius mahecola* (4 cm), *Mystus vittatus* (2–5 cm), and *Aplocheilus* species (2 cm); shrimp sizes ranged from 1 cm to 6.6 cm. The only amphibian recorded, *E. cyanophlyctis*, had an average length of 5 cm.

Prey taxa, mean length, and biomass are presented in Table 1. Though shrimp numbers predominated in the regurgitated sample, their mean biomass (0.39 g) was low (4.7% of the total 8.27 g). Among the different fishes, *P. mahecola* (2.88 g; 34.8%), and *E. maculatus* (2.37 g; 28.7%) had a high biomass. *E. cyanophlyctis* (1.27 g), *M. vittatus* (1.16 g), and *Aplocheilus* species (0.2 g) had low a biomass, and were less in numbers as well.

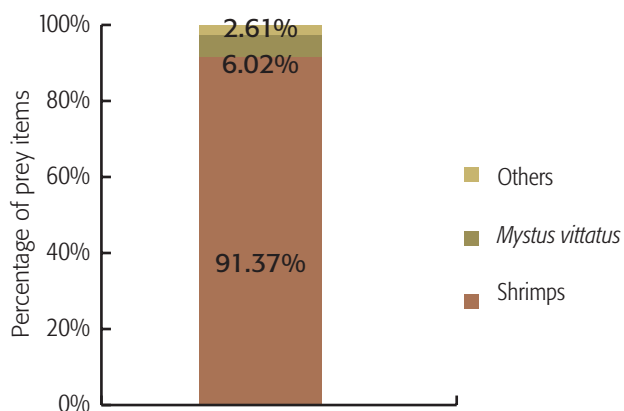


Fig. 2: Prey composition in the regurgitated samples of Little Cormorants in Valapattanam Heronry.



Fig 3: Regurgitated samples of Little Cormorants in Valapattanam Heronry in Kannur, Kerala (A. Regurgitated bolus, B. Contents of the regurgitated bolus after washing with water and straining, C. *Penaeus* sp., D. *Euphrates maculatus*, E. *Mystus vittatus*, F. *Puntius mahecola*, and G. *E. cyanophlyctis*).

Prey	Mean length (cm)	Mean biomass (gm)
Shrimps	3.2	0.3
<i>Mystus vittatus</i> (fish)	4.5	1.1
<i>Aplocheledea</i> sp. (fish)	2.0	0.2
<i>Euphrates cyanophlyctis</i> (tadpole)	5.0	1.2
<i>Puntius mahecola</i> (fish)	4.0	2.8
<i>Euphrates maculatus</i> (fish)	5.2	2.3

Little Cormorants preyed largely (87%) on medium-sized shrimps (2–4 cm); only occasionally preying on larger shrimps (10%). They showed a significantly higher preference for medium-sized shrimps ($\chi^2=419.5$; $df=5$; $p=0.00$; Fig. 4).

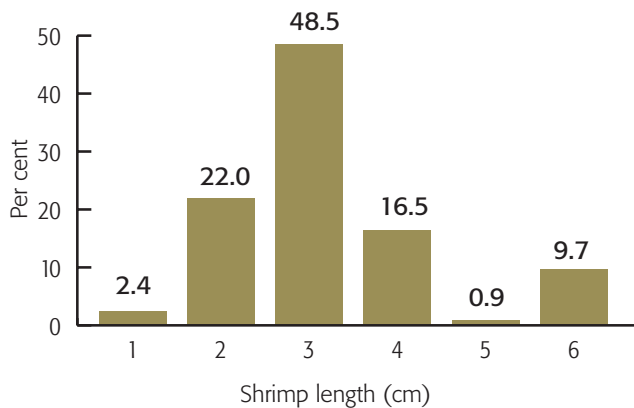


Fig.4: The frequency distribution of the number of shrimps and size in regurgitated samples of Little Cormorant in Valapattanam Heronry.

Discussion

For Little Cormorants, shrimps are easier to catch than other prey species, and are high in protein (Ravichandran *et al.* 2009). Hence it is not surprising that they predominate in their diet. A high source of energy and protein is needed during breeding season, by all birds, thus preying on shrimp accounts for rich food and efficient foraging. Our data may not accurately reflect the full diet of the birds since it is only based on a small proportion of their actual intake that was regurgitated. Besides, regurgitated samples may disproportionately indicate prey rejected by the birds. However, regurgitated samples give a rough idea of prey composition, given the difficulty in obtaining direct observations.

In recent years, there has been a large-scale conversion of natural water bodies into shrimp farms in the district, which might have resulted in shrimps forming the greater part of the cormorant's diet. The cormorants' preference for mid-sized shrimp may result in a possible conflict with commercial shrimp farmers.

Cormorants have been reported to prey on a variety of prey species, mostly of benthic, or inshore forms (Suter 1997; Gremillet *et al.* 1998; Veen 2012). They are opportunistic hunters feeding on diverse prey species including amphibians and arthropods. Their predation is directly proportional to the ease of catching prey, and may be inversely proportional to prey speed. The maximum swimming speed (m/s) of fish is roughly estimated to be ten times its body length in meters (Van Eerden & Voslamber 1995) and, consequently, the escape speed of small fishes will be slower than bigger-sized fishes. This may be one of the reason of cormorants preying on small-sized fishes. Also, smaller-sized prey can be stuffed in larger numbers into the crop, as compared to larger-sized prey. A larger number of small prey helps to feed all the nestling at the same time. Cormorants usually have two to three chicks, but in a few cases four to five fully grown nestlings were observed in the Mahe, and Stadium heronries during the 2013 heronry survey (Roshnath *et al.* 2013). Successful feeding of all the chicks, and their growth to fledgling stage indicated high food availability in the study area. The direct observation of prey species, when cormorant parents fed nestlings, was difficult as chicks insert their heads deep into the parent's gaping beak to induce regurgitation, which they swallow.

The apparent preference for medium-sized shrimps may be coincidental, due to the availability of shrimp fries of that particular size during the study period. Also, the start of shrimp

rearing season, and breeding season of heronry birds coincide. Though shrimps constituted a higher percent of the cormorant's diet during its breeding season, dietary variations might occur in other seasons, due to changes in the available prey species.

Although preying of shrimps has a direct economic impact on commercial fisheries, other prey fish species (*M. vittatus*, and *E. maculatus*) have negligible economic value, considering their size. However, continued predation of a particular size class will later affect the population structure of the prey species.

To determine the actual fiscal loss to fisheries and shrimp farms, total fish production/standard stock has to be compared against the consumption by the birds. This information is very difficult to obtain and thus only a theoretical assumptions can be made, rather than calculations based on actual fish numbers and biomass. The present study suggests that there is a potential for conflict between cormorants and fish/shrimp farming in the study area. More in-depth studies are required to address the actual quantity of prey consumed, the total prey species composition, and the extent to which cormorants make inroads on populations of species that are important to commercial interests.

Acknowledgments

We would like to thank Dinesh Cheruvat (Deputy Director of Fisheries) and C. Sashikumar for their valuable suggestions and help rendered for the completion of this project. We also acknowledge the help rendered by Shaji C. P., Ex-Principal Scientific Officer, Kerala State Biodiversity Board, for helping in identifying the fish species. Special thanks to Rijesh A., Anagh Renjith, Rachin C. V., Akhil Sasidaran, Prasoon Kiran, and Sangeeth Thekkan for their assistance in the field. We also thank M. Ashokkumar for helping to develop the manuscript to its present form. We thank, Jafer Palot, and Praveen J. for reviewing the article.

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Nesting of Purple-rumped Sunbird *Leptocoma zeylonica* in southern Rajasthan, and its occurrence in the Thar Desert

Gobind Sagar Bhardwaj & Harkirat Singh Sangha

Bhardwaj, G. S. & Sangh, H. S., 2016. Nesting of Purple-rumped Sunbird *Leptocoma zeylonica* in southern Rajasthan, and its occurrence in the Thar Desert *Indian BIRDS* 12 (1): 10–11.

Gobind Sagar Bhardwaj, Chief Conservator of Forests (Wildlife), Van Bhavan, New Pali Road, Jodhpur, Rajasthan, India.

E-mail: gobindsagarbhardwaj@gmail.com [GSB]

Harkirat Singh Sangha, B-27, Gautam Marg, Hanuman Nagar, Jaipur 302021, Rajasthan, India. E-mail: harkirat.sangha@gmail.com [HSS]

[Corresponding author]

Manuscript received on 17 March 2015.

The Purple-rumped Sunbird *Leptocoma zeylonica* has been recorded in Banswara, Dungarpur, Pratapgarh, and Udaipur districts of Rajasthan, India (HSS *pers. obsv.*). However, its breeding was recorded for the first time in 2007 in a forest nursery located in the middle of Pratapgarh (24.00°N, 74.78°E), southern Rajasthan. Its nest was discovered on a Manila tamarind *Pithecellobium dulce* tree in a forest nursery. The well-wooded 1.98 ha nursery provided suitable conditions for the sunbird to breed. The main tree species in the nursery included Teak *Tectona grandis*, *Eucalyptus* species, *Cassia siamea*, *C. fistula*, *Zizyphus* species, *Acacia nilotica*, *Dalbergia sissoo*, *Holoptelea integrifolia*, *Azadirachta indica*, *Albizia lebbek*, Mango *Mangifera indica*, *Ficus religiosa*, *Prosopis juliflora*, *Lawsonia* species, *Bougainvillea* species, *Dendrocalamus strictus*, etc.

A pair of the sunbirds was continuously observed in this forest nursery from September 2006 onwards. The male regularly flew to the Divisional Forest Officer's bungalow and pecked at the glass-framed photographs hung on the walls of the *verandah*. A nest was observed on 23 September 2007. It was an elongated pear-shaped nest, which was suspended at the extreme end of a branch of the Manila tamarind tree. The branch was in the lower canopy, hardly 40 cm away from the wall of Forest Rest House. The nest was 19 cm in length and 7.5 cm in diameter and 2.73 m above the ground. The opening of the nest was 3.5 cm in diameter, and faced eastwards. The nest was mainly made of grasses, fibrous material including leaves, pieces of paper, bits of cow dung, pieces of bark, dry excreta of caterpillars, and cobwebs [13]. It appeared to be 'decorated' with a piece of dry leaf dangling from its base with fine cobweb thread; the base of the nest was c. 5 cm thick, composed of dry leaves and pieces of paper. The entrance of the nest had a porch-like covering. The inner lining of the nest comprised very fine grass, and fibers. It matched with the description given by Dewar (1913), 'the completed nest often passes for a small mass of rubbish that has been pitched into a bush, and, in view of the multifarious nature of the material used by the species there is every excuse for mistaking the nest for a ball of rubbish'.

Occurrence of the species in the Thar Desert

We first noticed a pair of Purple-rumped Sunbirds on 15 February 2015 in a small patch of *Aloe vera* growing inside the Arid Forest Research Institute (hereinafter, AFRI) campus (26.21°N, 73.00°E), in Jodhpur. They foraged regularly upon the nectar of *Aloe vera* flowers, with Purple Sunbird *Cinnyris asiaticus*, and Common Tailorbird *Orthotomus sutorius*. Typically they fed upon nectar, flitting from one spike of *Aloe vera* to another. The birds were seen in the campus for three to four months before they disappeared.

The AFRI campus, spread over 20 ha, is a small pocket of biodiversity surrounded by urban concrete. The main tree species in the campus are all planted, and include *Azadirachta indica*, *Terminalia catappa*, *Tecomella undulata*, *Ailanthus excelsa*, *Bougainvillea* species *Leucaena leucocephala*, *Cassia siamea*, *C. fistula*, *Albizia lebbek*, *Carissa carandus*, *Cordia mixa*, *Bougainvillea* sp., *Mangifera indica* etc. There are old strands of natural *Prosopis cineraria* and *Zizyphus mauritiana*.



Gobind Sagar Bhardwaj

13. Female Purple-rumped Sunbird *Leptocoma zeylonica* in nest.

Discussion

The Purple-rumped Sunbird is a common resident in the Indian Subcontinent, and can be found in peninsular India from south of north-western Maharashtra, through Madhya Pradesh, and Bihar (Ali & Ripley 1999; Cheke & Mann 2001). HSS first recorded the species in Banswara in 2001, and recently in Dungarpur on 16 October 2015. It was also recently sighted at Ranakpur, Pali District in September 2015, and at Mount Abu on 31 March 2016 (Sahdev Singh, *verbally*, dated 31 March 2016). It has been seen almost regularly in Phulwari ki Nal Wildlife Sanctuary, Thur Magra forest block, Banki forest research farm, and in and around Sajjangarah Wildlife Sanctuary in Udaipur District, (Satish Kumar Sharma, *verbally*, dated March 2016.) and on 12 August 2013 it was recorded nesting in one of the gardens in Udaipur city (C. V. Singh, *verbally*). The above-mentioned districts are in the extreme southern part of Rajasthan, adjoining Gujarat, where the species is a common resident (Parasharya & Vyas 2002; Rasmussen & Anderton 2012). The presence of the species, from the above-mentioned districts of Rajasthan, is not shown in recent literature (Ali & Ripley 1999; Kazmierczak 2000; Grimmett *et al.* 2011; Rasmussen & Anderton 2012).

The Purple-rumped Sunbird breeds from March to May in West Bengal, and from February to April in southern India, and also from July to September, just after the monsoon (Ali & Ripley 1999). The presence of a nest in Pratapgarh is a possible geographical extension of its breeding range. Further observations may confirm this.

The presence of the species in the southern districts of Rajasthan can be attributed to the proximity to its known distribution in Gujarat. However, the presence of the species in Jodhpur, in the Thar Desert, which is climatically drier, and is more than 300 kms north of its known distribution in Gujarat, cannot be explained with certainty. Earlier ornithological works have not recorded the species from the Thar Desert (Bohra & Goyal 1993; Dookia 2002; and Whistler 1938).

For almost half of all species in this family, not enough is known about their movements although altitudinal shifts or displacements, particularly in the Himalayan region, or movements in association with rains or droughts, in the Western Ghats are recorded (Cheke & Mann 2008). The Crimson-backed Sunbird *Leptocoma minima* is absent during October–March in Coonoor (Tamil Nadu, India) and reappears by April (Khan 1977). In Peechi-Vazhani Wildlife Sanctuary, Kerala the sightings of Crimson-backed Sunbird suggest regular seasonal movements that are possibly linked with the monsoon (Santharam 1996). Dewar (1908) noticed that from August to March the Purple Sunbird was absent in Lahore (Pakistan), but arrived in “hundreds” in April. Sunbirds are also somewhat nomadic, moving in response to food supply, and flowering events, and

will congregate in a place conducive to these. A tree with plentiful blossoms will attract sunbirds, as will a zone of flowering trees or aloes (*Aloe*) (Cheke & Mann 2008).

Cheke & Mann (2001) quote Craig & Hulley (1994) on movements of sunbirds in South Africa, including “nomads” without home bases, which move unpredictably to new areas. Possibly Jodhpur birds were also such “nomads” that disappeared after a few months.

Acknowledgements

HSS thanks Satish Kumar Sharma of Rajasthan Forest Service, C. V. Singh, and Sahdev Singh for sharing their unpublished observations, and M. A. R. Khan for sending reprint of his note.

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Records of a White-eyed Gull *Ichthyaelus leucophthalmus*, and a Black Tern *Chlidonias niger* from the Karwar coast, Karnataka, India

Abhishek Jamalabad

Jamalabad, A., 2016. Records of a White-eyed Gull *Ichthyaelus leucophthalmus* and a Black Tern *Chlidonias niger* from the Karwar coast, Karnataka, India. *Indian BIRDS* 12 (1): 12–14.

Abhishek Jamalabad, 44, Kanara House, Mogul Lane, Mahim, Mumbai 400016, Maharashtra, India. Email: abhishek.jamalabad@gmail.com.

Manuscript received on 17 July 2016.

This note presents the first known record, from within Indian limits as defined in Praveen *et al.* (2016), of the White-eyed Gull *Ichthyaelus leucophthalmus*, and the second conclusively identified record of the Black Tern *Chlidonias niger*. Both birds were observed in Karwar, Karnataka (western coast of India) on multiple occasions over a period of five days in July 2016.

Introduction

The White-eyed Gull *Ichthyaelus leucophthalmus* (Temminck, 1825) is a medium-sized gull, similar in appearance, on some counts, to the Sooty Gull *I. hemprichii*, with which it is known to associate near fishing harbours (Burger *et al.* 2016). The known range of this bird is restricted to the Red Sea, and the Gulf of Aden (Burger *et al.* 2016). Though it has occurred in the Maldives, and listed as a vagrant by Grimmett *et al.* (1999), it is suspected they reached the islands assisted by ships (Praveen *et al.* 2014), on account of which the species is treated as hypothetical for South Asia by Rasmussen & Anderton (2012).

The Black Tern *Chlidonias niger* (Linnaeus, 1758) is a small marsh tern with a wide global distribution. The nominate race is known to breed from southern Scandinavia to southern Spain, eastwards through Europe and Western Asia to Lake Balkash, and Altai; the birds winter mainly on the Atlantic coast of Africa (Gochfeld & Burger 2016). Records of this species, from India, are highly contentious as recounted in Praveen *et al.* (2014), who conclude that the only “exemplarily well-documented, peer-reviewed and readily verifiable” record was the one from Nalsarovar Bird Sanctuary (Bhatt *et al.* 2014).

Observations

A solitary first-summer White-eyed Gull, and an adult Black Tern in breeding plumage, were sighted near Karwar Port on 08 July 2016 at 1550 hrs, and observed until 1625 hrs. The gull was subsequently observed again on 10 July (1448–1645 hrs), 11 July (1525–1700 hrs), and 12 July (1356–1609 hrs). So was the tern, at the same times, except on 10 July. All observations were made from one of two points on a breakwater extending 250 m perpendicular to the shore: 14.81°N, 74.11°E. The photographs that form a vital part of this note were made using DSLR cameras with telephoto lenses. Field-scopes were used for close visual observations in field.

Both species were first spotted perched on the floats of a

fish culture cage, leeward of the breakwater, which shelters the entrance to Karwar Port. They were associating with a mixed-species flock of terns, comprising Greater Crested- *Thalasseus bergii*, Lesser Crested- *T. bengalensis*, Sandwich- *T. sandvicensis*, a few pale- *Sterna* sp., including at least two Common Terns *S. hirundo*, and one immature Bridled- Tern *Onychoprion anaethetus*, all perched on fish culture cages near the mouth of the harbour.

The gull was seen in flight, at very close quarters, on the first day, when it flew repeatedly along either side of the breakwater, occasionally descending to the water's surface suggesting the typical foraging behaviour of gulls (although feeding was categorically not observed). Each sortie was no more than a few minutes before the bird returned to its perch on/near the fish cages. It also briefly followed a fishing canoe, leaving harbour, on the first day, but quickly returned to its perch, and did not display any further association with fishing activity during following observations. On subsequent visits we saw that the bird was comfortable in the presence of the attendants tending the fish cages. On the fourth day, a Black Kite *Milvus migrans* was seen harassing the perched gull on multiple occasions.

The tern, on the first day, was perched at very close quarters on a Styrofoam float attached to a fishing net, but was observable only from a distance on subsequent visits. It seemed to make longer flights that covered a larger area than the other observable birds, often flying seawards and altogether disappearing from view before returning, several minutes later, to perch on a fish cage, or a float. It often flew for long periods, very close to the water's surface, but no foraging behaviour was observed. No direct interactions of this bird, with other birds or human activities, were observed.

My observations were concluded after the fourth day. Both species were reported absent from the area on 18 July (Jainy Kuriakose, *verbally* on 19 July 2016) and 03 August (Gaurav Patil & Vivian Rane, *verbally* on 03 August); but the gull was sighted and reliably photographed earlier by another party on 24 July (Mangirish Dharwadkar, *in litt.*, e-mail dated 24 July 2016).

Identification

The White-eyed Gull could be confused with the Sooty Gull, which occurs on the Indian coasts (Praveen *et al.* 2014), including those of Karnataka (Doraiswamy 2015), and Goa (Lainer & Alvares 2013). The key characters used to identify the White-eyed Gull were the long, slender, dark bill (as compared to the shorter,

Shashank Dalvi



14. White-eyed Gull in flight.

Omkar Dharwadkar



15. White-eyed Gull perched on fish cage, showing the long slender bill.

Omkar Dharwadkar



16. White-eyed Gull in flight, showing tail pattern, and long slender bill.

heavier, and distinctly two-toned bill of the Sooty Gull), and the distinctive plumage on the head, neck, and rump [14–16].

The Black Tern was easily picked amongst the other terns, as it was considerably smaller, and much darker than the other birds. In the breeding plumage, which it was in, this species may be confused with its close congener, the White-winged Tern *C. leucopterus*—which it was suspected to be, after the first sighting. Subsequent photographs [17–19] helped identify it as a Black Tern on account of the following characters: the prominent, relatively deep tail fork (shallower in a White-winged Tern), and grey rump, upper tail coverts, and tail (versus white in the breeding White-winged Tern). Additionally, the simultaneous occurrence of two features—white under wing coverts, and an extensively black breast—in this bird pointed to the correct identity in the first set of observations, because a White-winged Tern when transitioning out of breeding plumage, “moults out the black breast first, then

the extensive black under wing coverts, rather than the reverse” (Neil Cheshire, *in litt.*, e-mail dated 14 July 2016). This clearly meant that a bird with the plumage observed here could not be a White-winged Tern. Owing to the frequent confusion that arises in the identification of the Black Tern, with its potential look-alike species (Praveen *et al.* 2014), multiple opinions were sought, about this bird, before concluding its identity.

Discussion

As with the White-eyed Gulls from the Maldives, the provenance of this Karwar bird, and its mode of arrival at this locality, remain unknown; particularly as the observations were made near a port. However, since its identification is unequivocal, this record serves as the first documentation of this species for the country.

Bhatt *et al.* (2014) reported sightings of the Black Tern, in non-breeding plumage, from Nal Sarovar Bird Sanctuary, Gujarat in May and June 2014; as aforementioned, Praveen *et al.* (2014) treated that as the first, and hitherto, the only confirmed report from India. The present sighting then, is the second: confirmed, photographed, conclusively identified, and verifiable. It is also the first record, from within Indian limits, of one in breeding



Shashank Dalvi

17. Black Tern showing the forked tail, white underwing coverts, and black front.



Abhishek Jamalabad

18. Black Tern perched on fish cage.



Abhishek Jamalabad

19. Black Tern showing grey rump and upper tail coverts.

plumage, though it has occurred in this plumage in the Chagos Islands (Praveen *et al.* 2014).

Acknowledgements

I thank Dipu Karuthedathu, Praveen J., Shashank Dalvi, Ramit Singal, Abhinand Chandran, Prasad Ganpule, Bill Harvey, Neil Cheshire, Oscar Campbell and Tommy Pedersen for their help and participation in the discussions about the identity and known records of the sighted birds. Shashank Dalvi, Amit Bandekar, Mandar Bhagat, Omkar Dharwadkar, Vishnupriya Sankararaman, Jainy Kuriakose, Mangirish Dharwadkar, Viola Rodrigues, Ruth Pinto, Thomas Pienkowski, Gaurav Patil, and Vivian Rane also helped me with on-field observations, photography of the birds, and monitoring their presence. My field research in Karwar is supported by the Rufford Foundation, the Inlaks Foundation (via the Ravi Sankaran Fellowship Program), and Terra Marine Research Institute (India).

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Editor's note: Pelagic birds are known to follow ships, and as such, they sometimes ride along seafaring vessels to areas where they normally do not occur. While ship-assisted records of land birds are generally disregarded, and classified separately by bird records committees, those involving coastal or pelagic birds are admitted as wild vagrants or stragglers since these birds are free to fly off (unlike land birds). In that respect, we do not consider ship-assisted arrival records an issue for accepting coastal species like the White-eyed Gull - contrary to Rasmussen & Anderton's (2012) treatment of the records from the Maldives. Hence, the species is included in the India checklist, based on this report.

Sighting of Lesser Adjutant *Leptoptilos javanicus* in Telineelapuram Community Reserve, Srikakulam District, Andhra Pradesh

B. Laxmi Narayana, V. Vasudeva Rao, V. Nagulu & A. Baleeshwar Reddy

- Narayana, B. L., Rao, V. V., Nagulu, V., & Reddy, A. B., 2016. Sighting of Lesser Adjutant *Leptoptilos javanicus* in Telineelapuram Community Reserve, Srikakulam District, Andhra Pradesh. *Indian BIRDS* 12 (1): 14–15.
- B. Laxmi Narayana, All India Network Project on Vertebrate Pest Management, PJTS Agricultural University, Rajendranagar, Hyderabad 500030, Telangana, India. E-mail: narayana.laxmi8@gmail.com [Corresponding author]
- V. Vasudeva Rao, All India Network Project on Vertebrate Pest Management, PJTS Agricultural University, Rajendranagar, Hyderabad 500030, Telangana, India.
- V. Nagulu (Rtd. Prof.), Department of Zoology, Osmania University, Hyderabad, 500007, Telangana, India.
- A. Baleeshwar Reddy, All India Network Project on Vertebrate Pest Management, PJTS Agricultural University, Rajendranagar, Hyderabad 500030, Telangana, India.
- Manuscript received on 10 November 2015.

In this note we wish to report a new site record of the Lesser Adjutant *Leptoptilos javanicus* from Telineelapuram (18.57°N, 84.26°E), an Important Bird Area (hereinafter, IBA) in Srikakulam District, Andhra Pradesh, India. The Lesser Adjutant is a Vulnerable species (Birdlife International 2015), and a rare visitor to Andhra Pradesh (Ali 1934b; Luthin 1987). The previous records of this species in erstwhile (undivided) Andhra Pradesh are listed in Table 1, and mapped below (Fig. 1).

We first observed the bird on 25 January 2015 while it was perching on a fig tree (*Ficus sp.*) along with Painted Storks *Mycteria leucocephala*. Its identification was confirmed with the help of Ali & Ripley (1978), and Grimmett *et al.* (1999). We further monitored the activity of the bird over a period of one

month (25 January–27 February 2015). Every morning (0545 hrs) it flew from its roosting site (a fig tree) to its feeding grounds, mostly in paddy fields, a distance of two kilometers, where it was mostly observed in the afternoons (1200–1600 hrs). The bird was later seen roosting along with Painted Storks late in the evening at around 1800 hrs.

Our sighting adds the Lesser Adjutant to the threatened birds of Telineelapuram IBA. Further information collected from an active, local birder from Telineelapuram village informed us that the bird was seen up to 20 March 2015 (P. Vishweshwara Rao, verbally on 11 April 2015). In general the stork was present at the site over a period of 54 days, from 25 January to 20 March 2015. The present record is after a gap of 34 years from the

Table 1. Occurrence sites of Lesser Adjutant from undivided Andhra Pradesh

Date/Period	Site	Location/District	Coordinates	Reference
1981	Visakhapatnam	Visakhapatnam	17.69°N, 83.22°E	Kumar 1981
1981	Vizayanagaram	Vizayanagaram	18.10°N, 83.39°E	Kumar 1981
1996	ICRISAT	Medak	17.52°N, 78.28°E	Hash <i>et al.</i> 1996; Hash & Peacock 1996
1999	Pulicat lagoon	Nellore	13.55°N, 80.15°E	Taher 1999
2002	ICRISAT	Medak	17.52°N, 78.28°E	Pittie 2002
2007	Kolleru lake	West Godavari	16.64°N, 81.22°E	Rao <i>et al.</i> 2015
28 July 2007	Kawal Wildlife Sanctuary	Adilabad	19.12°N, 78.99°E	Sreekar <i>et al.</i> 2010
2008	Manjeera Dam	Medak	17.66°N, 78.06°E	Islam & Rahmani 2008
06 November 2008	Eturnagaram Wildlife Sanctuary	Warangal	18.34°N, 80.43°E	Sreekar <i>et al.</i> 2010
29 June–01 July 2008	Uppalapadu	Guntur	16.50°N, 80.23°E	Sheeba & Vijayan 2011
25 January–20 March 2015	Telineelapuram	Srikakulam	18.57°N, 84.26°E	Present record

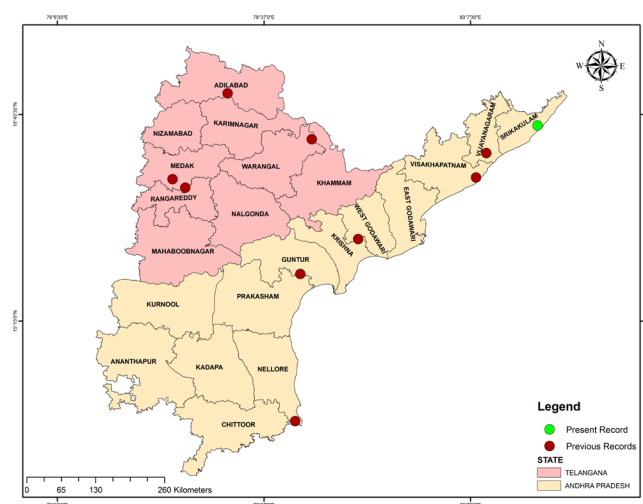


Figure 1. Map showing the sighting locations of Lesser Adjutant is known in undivided Andhra Pradesh.

earlier record at Vizayanagaram (Kumar 1981), which is closest neighbouring record and is around 120 kms away from the Telineelapuram.

Ali & Whistler (1934b), while they conducting ornithological surveys at Hyderabad State did not come across this bird, but they had mentioned its presence by quoting from Davidson & Wenden (1878). "Wenden is sure that he has seen this bird on more than one occasion about the marshy tanks on the outskirts of the Nulwar jungles, Gulbarga, Karnataka" (Davidson 1898); "It is however a very rare visitant, and seen in the rainy season only" (Ali & Whistler 1934a). From the above records, it can be assumed that a few Lesser Adjutant travel southwards, from their breeding grounds, to parts of northern (undivided) Andhra Pradesh (above Krishna River), mainly during the rains, when there are a good number of seasonal waterholes. Earlier sightings of this bird were mostly during the monsoon, in June–July (Sreekar *et al.* 2010; Sheeba & Vijayan 2011), or post monsoon in November (Sreekar *et al.* 2010). Rao *et al.* (2015) reported three species of storks, namely Painted Stork, Asian Openbill *Anastomus oscitans*, and Lesser Adjutant from Kolleru lake between October and May and is similar to our winter observation. Sheeba & Vijayan (2011) also reported a Lesser Adjutant with Painted Storks at Uppalapadu.

The habitat of the Telineelapuram surroundings mostly comprise paddy fields, water pools, and huge trees with dense canopy like *Tamarindus indica*, *Bamboosa* sp., *Ficus bengalensis*, *Ficus* sp., *Morinda pubescens*, *Pongamia pinnata*, *Prosopis chilensis*, *Samanea saman*, *Sapindus emarginatus*, *Zizipus mauritiana*, and *Azadirachta indica*. This kind of habitat attracts

winter visitors like Spot-billed Pelicans *Pelecanus philippensis*, and Painted Storks (Kannan & Pandiyan 2012). The current record of Lesser Adjutant is new to Telineelapuram IBA and additional site record to Andhra Pradesh State.

Acknowledgements

We thank the Indian Council of Agricultural Research for providing necessary facilities; AINPVM, PITSAU, Telangana; East Coast Energy Pvt. Ltd., Hyderabad; AP Forest Department for field support. Finally we thank A. V. L. N. Rao for providing distribution map, an anonymous reviewer, and Praveen J, for valuable comments on the manuscript.

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Tristram's Bunting *Schoeniclus tristrami* in Mishmi Hills, Arunachal Pradesh: A second record for India

Harish Thangaraj & Aruna Mani

Thangaraj, H., & Mani, A., 2016. Tristram's Bunting *Schoeniclus tristrami* in Mishmi Hills, Arunachal Pradesh: A second record for India.

Indian BIRDS 12 (1): 16–17.

Harish Thangaraj, Reckitt Benckiser, Plot 48, Sector 32, Gurgaon 122001, Haryana, India. E-mail: hthangaraj@gmail.com [HT] [Corresponding author.]

Aruna Mani, Reckitt Benckiser, Plot 48, Sector 32, Gurgaon 122001, Haryana, India. E-mail: aru.gmani@gmail.com [AM]

Manuscript received on 30 April 2016.

Tristram's Bunting *Schoeniclus tristrami* is a distinctive bunting with a striped black head. It breeds in north-eastern Asia, and winters in southern China and the northern part of South-east Asia, while it is considered a vagrant to northern Myanmar (Rasmussen & Anderton 2012). Tristram's Bunting has been recorded only once in India. In 2011, a single bird was sighted and photographed at Namdapha Tiger Reserve, Arunachal Pradesh (Naniwadekar *et al.* 2013). Here we report a second occurrence in India; this time the bird stayed for a longer period, and was reported by several birdwatchers.

04 March 2016 was the fifth day of our Mishmi Hills birding expedition. We were searching for Hill (Black-throated) Prinias *Prinia atrogularis* behind the huts at Tiwarigaon (28.21°N, 95.83°E; c. 1500 m asl). Ravi Mekola, our guide, was following the calls of the prinia at 1410 hrs. While Ravi and HT returned to the main road after an unsuccessful attempt, AM noticed two little birds that were perched at eye-level, but were partially hidden in the dry branches of a three to four metre tall shrub. One of these birds was a Little Bunting *S. pusillus* while the other had a prominent black head with a broad white crown-stripe, and a white supercilium. The bird did not show a peaked crown. With a point-and-shoot camera, eight photos of the birds were taken by AM for later identification [20, 21]. Ravi and HT could not identify the bird from the photos. Adesh Shivkar, and Mandar Khadilkar, who coincidentally happened to be around, checked



21. Tristram's Bunting showing broad white median stripe, and rufous-chestnut colouring on the lower back, rump, and tail.

the photos and instantly pointed out this was possibly an unusual 'catch'. As we all rushed back to the last-known location, AM and HT got a glimpse of the bird on the shrub for a few seconds before it flew into dense bushes. The Little Bunting continued to perch on the original branch for a couple of minutes more before joining the other bird.

The next few days at Mayodia Coffee House were spent without being able to identify the mystery bunting. Grimmett *et al.* (2011) did not list such a bunting. The closest match, based on the distinct head pattern, was either a Eurasian Reed Bunting *S. schoeniclus* in breeding plumage, or a Rock Bunting *Emberiza cia*. However, the male Eurasian Reed Bunting was eliminated as it has a prominent black head, and a black throat, which were missing in this bird. A sub-adult male Eurasian Reed Bunting does not have a prominent supercilium, while the female lacks any black on the crown, which this bird had. The Rock Bunting has a grey head and breast, and a strong pattern of a black crown-stripe, and a black surround to ear coverts, which were missing in this bunting. We had to wait for four more days until we reached the connectivity comforts of Maguri Bheel, Tinsukia to clinch identification. Two birders, Mathias Ritschard and Gaurav Kataria, whom we met at Kohuwa Eco Camp at Tinsukia, confirmed that we had recorded the second Tristram's Bunting for India. The only confusion in identification was with the extralimital Yellow-



20. Adult non-breeding male Tristram's Bunting showing heavily striped head, and greyish-brown, with black, streaking on mantle.

browed Bunting *S. chrysophrys*, but noting that the yellow supercilium, the white throat, and the heavily streaked breasts and flanks of the Yellow-browed Bunting were absent in this bird, its identification was established as Tristram's Bunting.

It is interesting to note that the Tristram's Bunting was accompanied by a single Little Bunting. Subsequently, Rofikul Islam photographed a Tristram's Bunting at the same site on 16 March 2016 (images posted on Oriental Bird Images online database); it was foraging with a mixed flock of Little Buntings, and Rufous-breasted Accentors *Prunella strophias*. At the same location, Ravi Mekola saw a male Tristram's Bunting on 28 March. Though several birders, and photographers, visited the spot since then, no more sightings have been reported. Hence, the bird seems to have stayed for nearly a month after our first sighting, and was probably a part of the Little Bunting flock that stayed back on its northward migration.

Acknowledgements

We wish to thank Adesh Shivkar, Mandar Khadilkar, Shashank Dalvi, Gaurav Kataria, and Mathias Ritschard for helping with the identification. Our thanks are also due to Ravi Mekola, our guide for the Mishmi Hills expedition, and to Amit Rane, the tour leader from DCP Expeditions.

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Little Bunting *Schoeniclus pusillus* in Munnar Hills, Kerala

James A. Eaton & Jijo Mathew

Eaton, J. A., & Mathew, J., 2016. Little Bunting *Schoeniclus pusillus* in Munnar Hills, Kerala. *Indian BIRDS* 12 (1): 17–18.

James A. Eaton, Casa Indah 1, A-3A-5, Persiaran Surian, Kota Damansara, Selangor, Malaysia. E-mail: jameseaton@birdtourasia.com [JAE]

Jijo Mathew, Pappalil House, Pazhangara, Malippara P.O., Kothamangalam, Ernakulam, Kerala, India. [JM]

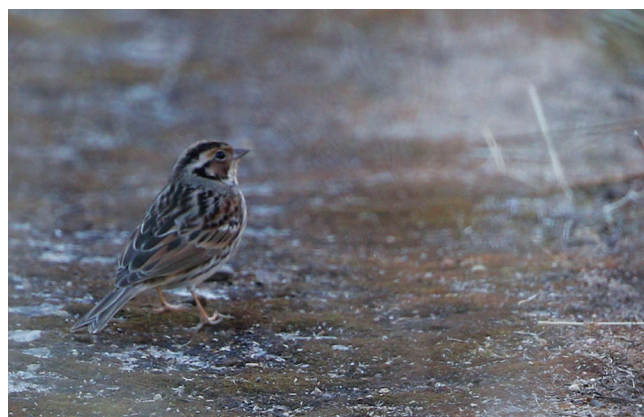
Manuscript received on 27 May 2016.

On 26 February 2016, at 0830 hrs, we were birding along the main road, from Munnar to Thekkady in Kerala, along with seven other birders who formed part of a Birdtour Asia tour group. At a spot (10.04°N, 77.12°E) past Lockhart Gap, JAE heard a 'tik' call overhead and instinctively called out, 'Little Bunting', being familiar with the species' distinctive call from its wintering grounds in South-east- and eastern Asia, not realising the significance of the record! Fortunately, the bird, which was flying at least 30 m overhead, turned around and flew down to land just 20 m from some of us, allowing us to confirm his hunch, as the bird displayed a combination of chestnut ear-coverts that were bordered black with a pale spot, chestnut lores, black lateral crown stripes, and grey nape, thus ruling out all possible confusion species and confirming it



Both: James A. Eaton

22. Little Bunting clearly showing chestnut ear-coverts.



23. Little Bunting showing chestnut lores, black lateral crown stripes, and grey nape.

as a Little Bunting *Schoeniclus pusillus*. Realising this might be significant, JAE quickly took a couple of record shots [22], before the bird flew off downhill. At 0840 hrs, while birding 100 m downslope the 'tik' was heard once more, and the Little Bunting was relocated feeding by the side of the track, allowing views for a further two minutes [23].

A subsequent literature survey revealed that there were no prior records from Kerala (Praveen 2015), nor from peninsular India. There is one specimen record of a male, obtained by an anonymous collector in Darbhanga, Bihar on 11 February 1909 (Inglis 1909). Ara (1976) reported it as a winter visitor, without mentioning about its regularity, from Kechki, Jharkhand. Shivraj Kumar Khacher and Lavkumar Khacher identified a pair of buntings in Jasdan near Rajkot, Gujarat, as this species, without providing further details (Khacher 1996). It has been

photographed in the Indian Sundarbans on 20 October 2013 (Patra 2013).

The Little Bunting breeds across northern Eurasia, from northern Sweden right across to the eastern-most parts of Russia, and winters south to north-eastern India, Myanmar, Thailand, Laos and Vietnam (Copete 2016). Vagrancy of the species has been well documented, with records from most western European countries, the Canary Islands, Morocco, Turkey, the Middle-East, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Malaysian Borneo, the Philippines, western USA (Alaska and California), and, even, north-western Mexico (Ramírez 2013; Copete 2016). Vagrant birds have often been recorded over-wintering (Copete 2016). Given its tendency towards such wide-ranging vagrancy, and the very limited numbers of the species recorded in the Asian bird trade (JAE *pers obs*), there can be little doubt that the bird in question was a wild individual.

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Pied Wheatear *Oenanthe pleschanka* at Bekal Fort, Kasaragod, Kerala

Premchand Reghuvaran

Reghuvaran, P., 2016. Pied Wheatear *Oenanthe pleschanka* at Bekal Fort, Kasaragod, Kerala. *Indian BIRDS* 12 (1): 18–19.

Premchand Niradeepam, Ample Nallukettu Villa, Elookara Ferry Junction, Muppathadam, Aluva 683110, Kerala, India. E-mail: premchandalpy@yahoo.co.in. Manuscript received on 23 January 2016.

On 20 December 2015, I visited Bekal Fort (12.38°N, 75.00°E), Kasaragod during a family outing. Here I noticed a bird perched at the bottom of a brick tower. Initially I thought it was a Common Stonechat *Saxicola torquatus* and I took some pictures [24] before it flew into the thick grass. Despite searching for it I could not locate the bird again. Later a confiding Grey-necked Bunting *Emberiza buchanani* took up all my attention, as it was a lifer for me.

After reaching the guesthouse where we were staying, I checked the photos of the presumed stonechat and felt they differed from the illustrations of stonechats, and wheatears, in my field guide (Arlott 2014). I could not find any bird that matched, and hence assumed it might have been a strange plumage of a stonechat.



Premchand Reghuvaran

24. Pied Wheatear.

When I posted my bird list on eBird (www.ebird.org; Premchand 2015), Dipu Karuthedathu pinged me through whatsapp and suggested that it might be a wheatear (*Oenanthe*). I posted the pictures on the Facebook group, *Birdwatchers of Kerala*, for identification. Praveen J. consulted Oscar Campbell, and Peter Clement about the photos. Both readily identified the bird in the pictures as a first winter male Pied Wheatear *Oenanthe pleschanka*. Below I explain, with pointers, as to why it is a Pied Wheatear.

The dark-grey and dull-white combination is indicative of a wheatear species, which is purely black and white in its adult plumage, eliminating all sandy-brown wheatears. The paler coloration of the crown and mantle indicate that these would not turn black in adult breeding plumage, eliminating all black-crowned species. The *capistrata* race of a Variable Wheatear *O. picata* can be eliminated based on the extent of white on the throat, and the pattern on the face and head. A Hooded Wheatear *O. monacha* is eliminated based on the bill length, which leaves only Pied Wheatear amongst the Indian wheatears. An adult male Pied Wheatear is similar in fresh plumage but more likely to have more black on the upper parts, especially on the greater coverts, which would be more uniformly black or blackish (Peter Clement, *in litt*, e-mail dated 18 January 2016), hence this has to be a first-winter bird.

On this bird, the overall tone of the back is very greyish, there appears to be some blackish coming through on the mantle, the primary projection is very long, and the black wash on the face extends well down the breast, and appears to almost meet the point where the wing bends. These are pro-Pied Wheatear features

vis-à-vis an extralimital Black-eared Wheatear *O. hispanica* (Oscar Campbell *in litt.*, e-mail dated 26 December 2015). Most of the greater coverts appear to be grey-black and both these, and the primary coverts, are clearly fringed pale or whitish-buff, and both have been retained from juvenile plumage and contrast (although not greatly) with the newer and more black-centered median coverts. In late winter, an adult is likely to show a whiter crown or white appearing on the nape instead of being restricted to a pale supercilium but both are very similar in fresh/autumn plumage (Clement, *ibid.*). Hence, a record in late December additionally supports a first-winter bird. Here, the mantle, back, and scapulars appear to be dull grey-brown with little sign of any paler fringes forming a slightly scaled pattern (broader in first-winter plumages than in adult; but their lack also indicates a late autumn or early winter date as they have worn down), and both areas are too dark or grey-brown for either Black-eared-, or Finsch's- *O. finschii* Wheatear. A first winter Finsch's would be more like an adult of the same species with fairly extensive white or whitish on the back. The only other concern might be an extremely out of range Cyprus Wheatear *O. cypriaca*—but the long primary projection, and the whitish (not yellowish-orange to warm-cinnamon) under parts clearly rule this out (Clement, *ibid.*).

Pied Wheatears breed from Central Asia up to the north-western Himalayas, and they migrate to western Africa. The species is very rare from late November to late February in the UAE (Campbell, *ibid.*), and it is assumed that they would have already migrated to its wintering grounds by then. Hence, a late December record in southern India is indeed exceptional.

On 21 October 1964, Margaret E. Wilkinson identified a bird in Kanyakumari (Tamil Nadu) as a Pied Wheatear *O. picata* [=Variable Wheatear] (Wilkinson 1966) by referring to Whistler (1935: pp. 79–81). However, she substantiated her sighting by referring to Henry (1955: pp. 25–26) who described a bird seen

in Colombo on 16 November 1943, and concluded was a Pied Wheatear *O. leucomela* [= *O. pleschanka*]: a completely different species! Hence, the confusion in English names, with insufficient supporting descriptions, diminishes Wilkinson's Kanyakumari record in its ornithological value. It is surprising how the editors of the *Journal of the Bombay Natural History Society* allowed this lapse to slip through. Apart from the single accepted record from Sri Lanka, mentioned above, the Pied Wheatear has been recorded four times from Addu Atoll, Maldives (Strickland & Jenner 1978). Hence, this is probably the first record of a Pied Wheatear from southern India; possibly the sixth for the southern part of the Indian subcontinent including the islands of Sri Lanka and Maldives.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Dipu Karuthedathu for all his help. I am grateful to Praveen J. who took initiative to consult Oscar and Peter, and helping with documentation. And I would like to thank both, Oscar Campbell, and Peter Clement for their valuable comments.

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We would like to take this opportunity to thank the editorial board of *Indian BIRDS*, and all our external referees who helped us with manuscripts that were published in volume 11: Pronoy Baidya, Peroth Balakrishnan, Andrew Birch, Oscar Campbell, Abhinand Chandran, Edward Dickinson, Ginu George, Bikram Grewal, Hein Van Grow, Tim Inskipp, Krys Kazmeirczak, Cin-Ty Lee, Abhijit Menon-Sen, S. Prasanth Naryanan, Frank Oatman, Anand Prasad, Mike Prince, Asad R. Rahmani, David Raju, T. R. Shankar Raman, Pamela Rasmussen, Tarique Sani, Sumit K. Sen, Puja Sharma, Adesh Shivkar, Abi Tamim, Panchami Manoo Ukil, Edward Vercruysse, Robin Vijayan.

– Aasheesh Pitte & Praveen J.

Chestnut-eared Bunting *Emberiza fucata* in Bandhavgarh Tiger Reserve, Madhya Pradesh, India

Shiladitya Mukhopadhyay, Upasana Chattopadhyay, Anirban Chakraborty,
Suman Mondal, Moumita Rakshit & Deb Shankha Goswami

Mukhopadhyay, S., Chattopadhyay, U., Chakraborty, A., Mondal, S., Rakshit, M., & Goswami, D. S., 2016. Chestnut-eared Bunting *Emberiza fucata* in Bandhavgarh Tiger Reserve, Madhya Pradesh, India. *Indian BIRDS* 12 (1): 20–21.

Shiladitya Mukhopadhyay, Post Graduate Department of Zoology, Barasat Government College, Barasat (North 24 Parganas), Kolkata 700124, West Bengal, India. E-mail: s21mukherjee@gmail.com.

Upasana Chattopadhyay, Post Graduate Department of Zoology, Barasat Government College, Barasat (North 24 Parganas), Kolkata 700124, West Bengal, India. E-mail: upasana.chatterjee27@gmail.com.

Anirban Chakraborty, Post Graduate Department of Zoology, Barasat Government College, Barasat (North 24 Parganas), Kolkata 700124, West Bengal, India. E-mail: anirban.16oct@gmail.com.

Suman Mondal, Post Graduate Department of Zoology, Barasat Government College, Barasat (North 24 Parganas), Kolkata 700124, West Bengal, India. E-mail: msuman822@gmail.com.

Moumita Rakshit, Post Graduate Department of Zoology, Barasat Government College, Barasat (North 24 Parganas), Kolkata 700124, West Bengal, India. E-mail: moumitar29@gmail.com.

Deb Shankha Goswami, Post Graduate Department of Zoology, Barasat Government College, Barasat (North 24 Parganas), Kolkata 700124, West Bengal, India. E-mail: debshankha92@gmail.com.

Manuscript received on 20 April 2016.

Bandhavgarh Tiger Reserve (23.50°N–23.76°N, 80.20°E–80.78°E; 410–811 m asl; hereinafter BTR), spread over the two administrative districts of Umaria, and Katni, lies on the extreme north-eastern border of Madhya Pradesh, and the northern flanks of the eastern Satpura Mountains. BTR comprises two conservation units, the National Park (448.842 sq. km.), and the Panpatha Wildlife Sanctuary (245.84 sq. km.). The terrain inside BTR is made up of rocky hills rising sharply from the lowland swamps, and densely forested valleys. The vegetation of BTR falls under five categories (Champion & Seth 1968): moist peninsular low level Sal *Shorea robusta* forest, northern dry mixed deciduous forest, dry deciduous scrub, dry grassland, and west Gangetic moist mixed deciduous forest.

During our educational field trip to BTR, we sighted a Chestnut-eared Bunting *Emberiza fucata* on 04 March 2016, at 0859 hrs, while on the morning safari to Khitauli zone (Gate-3). It was perched on a dry bamboo branch. We first spotted it from

our moving jeep. The bird flew away immediately, and went out of our sight, before the driver stopped the vehicle. The bird had a conical bill, an overall brown plumage, dark streaked breast, chestnut-coloured flanks and auriculars. We could manage to take only a record photograph [25], and these quick notes, for confirming it later on. However, our guide tentatively identified it as a species of bunting (*Emberiza*).

The bird was later identified as a Chestnut-eared Bunting based upon the following characteristics: chestnut ear-coverts, streaked breast, and chestnut on either side of breast (Grimmett *et al.* 2011; Rasmussen & Anderton 2012). However, our image was not sufficient to assign an age, or sex, to the photographed bird.

Sangha *et al.* (2016) reported a regular wintering site of the species in Jaipur (Rajasthan), which state is adjacent to Madhya Pradesh. Hence, it is possible that the bird sporadically winters in similar habitats in central India too, though a perusal of published literature does not reveal any earlier record from Madhya Pradesh (Chandra & Singh 2004; Jayapal *et al.* 2005; Ghosh *et al.* 2008; Chandra & Gupta 2009). It has however been reported once from the much further southern state of Kerala, even though the origins of that bird remained unknown (George 2015). The Chestnut-eared Bunting is not listed in the all years eBird Field Checklist of BTR (eBird 2016). So this sighting could be the first from BTR, and Madhya Pradesh.

Acknowledgements

We thank Debjani Sarkar for reviewing an earlier draft of this note. We are grateful to Tuhin Saha, and Tanaya De for their encouragement and support. Thanks are also due to Shantanu Bhattacharya, Kanad Baidya, and Sourav Mondal for helping.

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Sighting of Common Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita* [*fulvescens/abietinus*] in Greater Rann of Kachchh, Gujarat, India

Prasad Ganpule

Ganpule, P., 2016. Sighting of Common Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita* [*fulvescens/abietinus*] in the Greater Rann of Kachchh, Gujarat, India. *Indian BIRDS* 12 (1): 21–22.

Prasad Ganpule, C/o Parshuram Pottery Works, Opp. Nazarbaug, Morbi 363642, Gujarat, India. E-mail: prasadganpule@gmail.com.

Manuscript received on 26 February 2016.

The Common Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita* is a common winter migrant to Gujarat (Grimmett *et al.* 2011). The taxonomy of Common Chiffchaff is complex and not well understood (Dean *et al.* 2010). It is a polytypic species, with the subspecies *tristis*, also known as Siberian Chiffchaff, known to winter in India (Rasmussen & Anderton 2012).

On a bird-watching trip on 14 December 2014 to Nada Bet (21.22°N, 72.20°E), near Suigam, in the Greater Rann of Kachchh, Gujarat, I saw a Common Chiffchaff [26] with yellowish streaks on its mantle, a yellowish supercilium (in front of the eye), and most notably, a prominent yellowish base to its lower mandible (almost half the lower mandible was yellowish), which is typical of the *fulvescens* or *abietinus* races of the Common Chiffchaff. The subspecies *tristis* is typically known to have an all-black bill, with no yellow on mantle, in the supercilium, or on

the lower mandible. Though it is difficult to judge the colour of the upper parts, and plumage details, in Common Chiffchaffs from photographs, I could observe this individual for more than two minutes, in good light, and the above features were properly noted, and can be seen in the accompanying photograph.

This sighting was surprising since *fulvescens* has not been recorded in India till date, but has occurred in Seistan, south-western Afghanistan (Rasmussen & Anderton 2012). To confirm the identification of the bird in the photograph, I sent the images to Alan Dean (*in litt.*, e-mail dated 09 May 2015), and Arend Wassink (*in litt.*, e-mail dated 26 August 2015); both opined that the bird in question was *fulvescens*, or even, a probable *abietinus* race of the Common Chiffchaff. The latter is not known to occur in India; 'not genuinely known for the region, but possible in NW in migration' (Rasmussen & Anderton 2012).

The taxonomic status of *fulvescens* is still unclear. It is believed to be a form of *tristis*, and comprises birds with 'additional' yellow and olive in their plumage (Dean & Svensson 2005; Dean *et al.* 2010). However, *abietinus* is a distinct subspecies, breeding in eastern Europe and wintering in the Balkans, north-east, and eastern Africa, and Arabia (Clement 2016). Birds with mixed characters of *tristis* (*fulvescens*), and *abietinus* are regarded as *riphaeus*—a trinomial used for hybrids between *abietinus* and *fulvescens* from the 'zone of overlap' (see Fig. 1 in Dean *et al.* 2010: 321).

Vocalisations are important in the identification of various subspecies of Common Chiffchaff. Unfortunately, no call was heard while I was observing this bird. Thus, without analysis of the call, it is difficult to conclusively identify this individual. But based purely on a geographic premise, it is likely that this bird was *fulvescens*. As *abietinus* is deemed to reach northern Iran



26. Common Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita fulvescens*.

in winter (Rasmussen & Anderton 2012), it seems likely that *fulvescens*, whose breeding range is east of *abietinus*, between the Urals and Yenisey (Russia), will reach north-western India (Alan Dean, pers. comm., email dated 09 May 2015). However, it is well known that the Common Chiffchaff has a tendency to vagrancy, with many reports of occurrence outside its known range (Clement 2016).

Hence, it is not possible to completely rule out *abietinus*. Identification, and separation, of *fulvescens* from *abietinus* is difficult. The various races of Common Chiffchaff display a considerable overlap in plumage, and it can be very difficult, if not impossible, to assign an individual to a particular race (Dean & Svensson 2005). It would be prudent to be cautious in the identification of this Chiffchaff. Thus, this individual is best treated as *fulvescens* / *abietinus*, since the call was not noted and no measurements were taken.

The occurrence of Common Chiffchaff, race *fulvescens* / *abietinus*, in India is interesting and has not been noted earlier. It is possible that it is overlooked. Bird-watchers should search

for such Common Chiffchaffs in north-western India, where they could occur.

Acknowledgements

I thank Alan Dean and Arend Wassink for all their help.

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Chinese White-browed Rosefinch *Carpodacus dubius* in Mishmi Hills: A confirmation record for India

Praveen J., Sachin Shurpali, Vijay Ramachandran, Mike Prince, Chris Bowden, Vinay Das, & Shashank Dalvi

Praveen, J., Shurpali, S., Ramachandran, V., Prince, M., Bowden, C. G. R., Das, V., & Dalvi, S., 2016. Chinese White-browed Rosefinch *Carpodacus dubius* in Mishmi Hills:

A confirmation record for India. *Indian BIRDS* 12 (1): 22–23.

Praveen J., B303, Shriram Spurthi, ITPL Main Road, Brookefields, Bengaluru 560037, Karnataka, India. E-mail: paintedstork@gmail.com [PJ]

Sachin Shurpali, 203, Prakruthi Paradise, Kempamma Devi Road, New Thippasandra, Bengaluru 560075, Karnataka, India. Email: shurpali@gmail.com [SS]

Vijay Ramachandran, 80, Adarsh Vista, Basavanagar Main Road, Bengaluru 560037, Karnataka, India. Email: vijay750@gmail.com.

Mike Prince, GA Regency Alandon, 2 Ware Road, Frazer Town, Bengaluru 560005 Karnataka, India. E-mail: mike@bubo.org.

Christopher G. R. Bowden, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL, U.K. E-mail: chris.bowden@rspb.org.uk.

Vinay Das, B-8, Kudremukh Colony, Koramangala 2nd Block, Bengaluru 560034, Karnataka, India. Email: vndas@yahoo.com.

Shashank Dalvi, Alumnus of WCS-NCBS Master's Programme, F-21, NCBS, GKVK, Bellary Road, Bengaluru, Karnataka, India. E-mail: shashank.da@gmail.com [SD]

Manuscript received on 22 May 2016.

The Himalayan White-browed Rosefinch *Carpodacus thura* is a polytypic species with a distribution range that extends from north-eastern Afghanistan, through the main range of the Himalayas, till central- and western China (Clement 2016). Rasmussen (2005) proposed a major update of the Asian Rosefinches, treating the two western Himalayan races—*blythii*, and *thura*—of the White-browed Rosefinch as a separate species from the Chinese races—*dubius*, and *femininus*: the former being called the Himalayan White-browed Rosefinch *C. thura sensu stricto*, and the latter, Chinese White-browed Rosefinch *C. dubius*. This was also supported by subsequent phylogenetic studies (Tietze *et al.* 2013). This split also resulted in the latter species being treated as hypothetical for South Asia, for want of verifiable reports. Baker (1926) listed the nominate race of the Chinese White-browed Rosefinch as, "a not uncommon Winter [sic] visitor to Eastern Assam", which area included present-day Arunachal Pradesh, during Baker's time. Ali & Ripley (1987) listed the *femininus* race of the Chinese White-browed Rosefinch from northern Arunachal Pradesh. However, both references do not provide an irrefutable provenance of record, or reference, from

South Asia, and hence it is listed as hypothetical (Rasmussen & Anderton 2012), and not included in the India Checklist (Praveen *et al.* 2016). Through this note, we would like to establish the presence of the Chinese White-browed Rosefinch in northern-eastern Arunachal Pradesh, by presenting photographic evidence.

On 05 May 2016, while on a birding trip to Mishmi Hills (Mehao Wildlife Sanctuary), SS summoned everyone, at 0852hrs, when he spotted a bird that had a bill like that of a bunting. It was hiding in the hedges adjoining a grassy slope (28.26°N, 95.91°E; c. 2550 m asl), not far from Mayodiya Pass. The bird flushed and sat in the open, for half a minute, when everyone got good views. SS took several photographs [27, 28] at this moment. It was clearly a rosefinch, bigger than a Common Rosefinch *C. erythrinus*, mostly grey above, white below, with streaked under parts. A white supercilium was prominent, as were the white streaks on the cheeks. The bird was tentatively recorded as a female Himalayan White-browed Rosefinch using field guides (Grimmett *et al.* 2011; Rasmussen & Anderton 2012) based on its larger size (vis-à-vis Common Rosefinch *Erythrina erythrina*), pale eyebrow, and heavily streaked under parts; we discounting



27. Chinese White-browed Rosefinch showing pale, bold supercilium curving down, streaked upper parts, white streaks on the cheek and yellowish brown rump-sides.



28. Chinese White-browed Rosefinch showing wide dark brown streaks on breast with no rufous on throat or upper breast and yellowish brown rump sides.

Both: Sachin Shurpali

several rosefinches that are not known to occur in the Eastern Himalayas. However, we did discuss at the time that the Chinese White-browed also needed to be checked, as the same is not illustrated in the field guides we were carrying.

When we returned from the trip, and after referring to the descriptions, illustrations, and images in Rasmussen (2005), Clement (2016), and Oriental Bird Images website (OBI; www.orientalbirdimages.org), we quickly discounted most females of rosefinches on a number of incompatible features. Though females of rosefinches like Common, Blyth's- *C. grandis*, Himalayan Beautiful- *C. pulcherrimus*, the hypothetical Chinese Beautiful- *C. davidianus*, and the, regionally possible, Pink-rumped Rosefinches *C. waltoni* show a faint supercilium, which is never as prominent as the one in bird was—boldly curving down to the sides of the nape. Females of rosefinches like Blandford's- *Agraphospiza rubescens*, Vinaceous- *C. vinaceus*, Streaked- *C. rubicilloides*, Three-banded- *C. trifasciatus*, Great- *C. rubicilla*, and Red-fronted *C. puniceus* are plain-faced; the first two being much richer toned, and not as grey as this bird. The Dark-rumped Rosefinch *C. edwardsii* has a weak, and pale supercilium, but is a richer dark-brown. The Long-tailed Rosefinch *C. sibiricus*, whose presence is considered possible in Arunachal Pradesh, is eliminated based on shorter tail, and the lack of broad white outer rectrices. Its boldly streaked, grey body eliminates the Dark-breasted Rosefinch *Procarduelis nipalensis*, which was the only other rosefinch seen during the trip. Though females of Pink-browed- *C. rodochroa*, Spot-winged- *C. rodopeplus*, and the hypothetical Sharpe's Rosefinch *C. verreauxii* have white eye-brows, none of them show yellowish-brown rump-sides, as

is visible in this bird. This leaves out only the Himalayan- and Chinese White-browed Rosefinches. However, it also became clear that females of the Himalayan White-browed Rosefinch always show rufous on throat and upper breast. This was completely absent in 'our bird'; all photographs consistently showed white ground colour to under parts, with wide, dark brown streaks, as expected on a female Chinese White-browed Rosefinch. The tail is moulting, but the longest rectrices, and the wings seem to show a rather more streamlined bird, than one with a chunky 'feel', as most pictures of the Himalayan White-browed Rosefinch seem to indicate. The sizes of bill, and tarsi are not discernable in these photographs to be of use to separate the bird from the Himalayan White-browed Rosefinch. Though the pictures depict a bird with a pale eyebrow, the eyebrow appears to be less prominent behind the eye when compared to most images of female Chinese White-browed Rosefinches on OBI. It is possible that the dark feathers on the sides of the crown are obscuring some of the pale feathers, and hence masking the width of the white supercilium.

SD showed the pictures to Pamela Rasmussen, who confirmed that the photographed bird was a Chinese White-browed Rosefinch (Pam Rasmussen, *verbally*, dated 09 May 2016). Pictures were transmitted to Per Alström, who also concurred with the identification (Per Alström, *in litt.*, e-mail dated 01 June 2016). Subspecific identification is difficult from these pictures; suffice to say that this area falls within the distributional range of *femininus*. The known range of the Himalayan White-browed Rosefinch extends up to Sela Pass in north-western Arunachal Pradesh, as evident from multiple images on OBI—from the Sela Pass area. It would be interesting to note how close the ranges, of these allopatric species, are. Birders, and photographers, visiting Mishmi Hills should now specifically look out for, and photograph rosefinches in appropriate habitats.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank Pamela Rasmussen, Per Alström, and another anonymous referee for confirming the species from the photographs.

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Editor's note: Based on this record, this species is accepted for the India Checklist.

Lapland Longspur *Calcarius lapponicus* in Bhutan: A first record for the Indian Subcontinent

Tshering Chophel & Sherub

29. Lapland Longspur *Calcarius lapponicus* photographed in Bhutan.

Chopel, T., & Sherub. 2016. Lapland Longspur *Calcarius lapponicus* in Bhutan: A first record for the Indian Subcontinent. *Indian BIRDS* 12 (1): 24.
Tshering Chophel, Bumdeling Wildlife Sanctuary, Department of Forests and Park Services, Trashy Yangtse. The original observer of the bird.
Sherub, Ugyen Wangchuck Institute for Conservation and Environment, Lamai Goempa, Bumthang, Bhutan. Email ID: sherub@uwice.gov.bt.

The Lapland Longspur *Calcarius lapponicus* (aka Lapland Bunting) is a widely distributed migratory passerine. It breeds in moist open grassy and lowland tundra, above the tree line, in the Arctic region of northern Eurasia, Greenland, and northern North America. In winter, it moves southward to southern Canada, and northern, and central USA, sparingly in north-western Europe, and more frequently eastwards from Ukraine, through southern Kazakhstan, Mongolia, and China, where it winters up to the Yangtse River, till c. 30°S (Byers 1995).

On 21 February 2014, a Lapland Longspur was sighted at Dawaling Ju (27.66°N, 91.43°E, c.1960 asl), in Bumdeling Wildlife Sanctuary, at 1100 hrs (local time). Dawaling Ju is located in Ngalmang village, Bumdeling, at Trashy Yangtse in eastern Bhutan. The bird was observed on a drift log on the riverbed, which is also the roosting area of the wintering Black-necked Crane *Grus nigricollis* of Kholongchu. On the ventral side of the log was a resting colony of the migrant Indian Rock Bee *Apis dorsata*. The bird remained for a week at this location.

The bird was initially thought to be a Russet Sparrow *Passer rutilans*. However, the presence of a rich rufous nape, and a prominent whitish supercilium indicated otherwise, and so the bird was examined more carefully. On the first day of sighting, we could not photograph the bird, as it flew away. On 22 February a photograph was shot [29]. The photo was shared with Piet Van Der Poel, who later shared with John D. Farrington: both felt

this could be a Lapland Longspur. Several photographs that were captured later, were unfortunately lost.

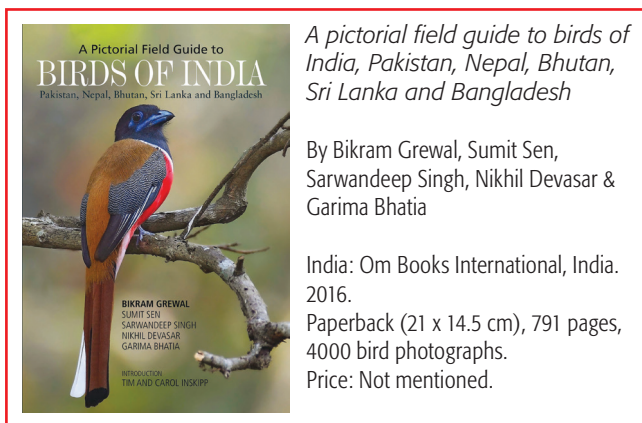
In non-breeding plumage the species can be confused with several *Emberiza* buntings, but from the features visible in the photo, it appears bulkier in appearance than others, has whitish wing-bars, and chestnut greater wing-coverts—all pointing towards the Lapland Longspur. It is probably not possible to determine the age, or sex, of this bird from this photograph, however, the richness of the nape colour, and the well-marked face indicate this could be a male.

The closest record of this bird, to Bhutan, is a record from Chengdu, Sichuan (30.66°N, 104.00°E) [Cheng 1987]. There is no previous record of it from the Indian Subcontinent (Grimmett *et al.* 2011; Rasmussen & Anderton 2012).

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Review



A pictorial field guide to birds of India, Pakistan, Nepal, Bhutan, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh

By Bikram Grewal, Sumit Sen, Sarwandeep Singh, Nikhil Devasar & Garima Bhatia

India: Om Books International, India. 2016.

Paperback (21 x 14.5 cm), 791 pages, 4000 bird photographs.

Price: Not mentioned.

Contents: Introduction (Birds of Indian subcontinent) by Carol & Tim Inskipp (pp: 4–13), Descriptive text (pp: 14–711), Vagrants & Doubtful Species (pp: 713–722), Acknowledgements (pp:

724–726), Bibliography (pp: 727–731), Descriptive Parts of a bird (pp: 732), A glossary of ornithological terms (pp: 733–735), Checklist: Birds of the Indian subcontinent following Rasmussen & Anderton (2012) (pp: 736–748), Checklist: Birds of the Indian subcontinent with status (pp: 749–772), Index (pp: 773–788), Maps (pp: 789–791).

My first impression of this book, which I am sure, would be that of any other user, is, *excellent photographs!* This is definitely ‘one book’ which has the largest collection of photographs of birds from the subcontinent. The artistic layout, including well-clipped flight photographs embedded neatly over a larger base photograph of the species in its habitat—visible for several different species—feels as if all the birds in the panorama were a part of the same scene. This style mimics, to some extent, the pathbreaking design of the *Crossley guide* (Crossley 2011). The book has used space liberally, to showcase the photographs, without compromising on aesthetics. Some species like the

Indian Paradise Flycatcher *Terpsiphone paradisi*, and the Great Slaty Woodpecker *Mulleripicus pulverulentus* take up two full pages, while most species are restricted to a half page. It is however unclear where a particular photograph was taken, or who was behind the lens, but a long list of photographers, at the back of the book, acknowledged their contribution. In fact, four of the authors are well-known ace photographers from the country. However, credits against photos would have highlighted each photographer's work, and given them great satisfaction. Perhaps in a 2nd edition, at least page numbers on which each person's photos appear, could be added against their names in the acknowledgements list. It is heartening to note the number of distinct subspecies that have been illustrated; though some of the pictures are too small to discern critical features, such cases are rare.

The book starts with a short treatise on the birds of the Indian Subcontinent by Carol Inskipp, and Tim Inskipp. For a student of Indian ornithology it is a must read, as it provides a brief summary of birds found in all biogeographic regions and habitats, touching lightly, but deftly, upon every aspect of the subcontinent's avifauna. I would like to see it made available online, or even be recommended to serve as a chapter for an undergraduate course. It is reasonably up to date, though I was pleasantly surprised to read here about the very few recent reports of the Chestnut-breasted Hill Partridge *Arborophila mandellii*. Though the number of its photographs from the field have been a trickle, there are several audio reports from north-eastern India on the websites, www.ebird.org, and www.xeno-canto.org.

One of the banes of a photographic guide is the chance of misidentifying birds. With more than 4000 colour photographs, I think this book has remarkably few instances of debatable identification. The Pomarine Jaeger *Stercorarius pomarinus* photograph (p. 211) is of a famous bleached specimen that stumped most experts, and is believed to be either a Parasitic-S. *parasiticus*, or a Long-tailed Jaeger *S. longicaudus*; it is not a Pomarine (see Karuthedathu 2014). The picture of the Kerala Laughingthrush *Trochalopteron fairbanki meridionale* (p. 509) is that of the nominate race, and was taken by the photographer in Munnar, where only the nominate race is found (see Praveen & Nameer 2013 for photographs of both subspecies, including this picture). The picture of Hume's Leaf Warbler *Abrornis humei* (p. 452) showing a pale lower mandible and single wing bar is probably a Greenish Leaf Warbler *Seicercus trochiloides*. One of the Yellow-browed Warbler *Abrornis inornatus* pictures (p. 453: bottom) that shows a yellow *Phylloscopus* with no wing bars (instead of two) is most likely a Tickell's Leaf Warbler *P. affinis*. One of the flight images of the Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos* (p. 177: bird on left), the one that shows an upturned bill, and lack of white wing bars, is a Common Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*. However, barring these isolated cases, the degree of accuracy achieved in correct identification of species, is commendable.

The book is tagged as a field guide, but it is bulky. It does not contain field identification tips, pointers/arrows on photographs, or notes that help differentiate similar species; the descriptions do not highlight what to look for in these photographs, to identify a species, nor do they talk about any unillustrated, alternate plumages. It would have been useful if the authors had inserted a section on 'How to use this book'; many of the travails of a potential reader would have surfaced in its writing.

It is unclear to me what taxonomy the book follows, as I could see traits of both Rasmussen & Anderton (2005), and Grimmett

et al. (1998). However, it is clear that the authors faced a stiff challenge with recent taxonomic changes. For example, under the account of White-throated Fantail *Rhipidura albicollis* (p. 358), we find a mention of race *albogularis* as "...found in Peninsular India..." and this follows the taxonomy of Grimmett *et al.* (1998). However, on the facing page (p. 359), *albogularis* race is given a full species status and a separate account, following Rasmussen & Anderton (2005). Now the map of White-throated Fantail (p. 358) shades the entire Peninsular India including the entire range of White-spotted giving an incorrect impression that both taxa are sympatric in Peninsular India. Both, Plain- *Dicaeum minullum*, and Nilgiri Flowerpecker *D. concolor* (pp. 642, 644) are included, while the Andaman Flowerpecker *D. virescens*, which one would normally expect to be split in such a case, does not find mention. It's the same with the Andaman Green Pigeon *Treron chloropterus*, which is not depicted, while the Grey-fronted- *T. affinis*, Ashy-headed- *T. phayrei*, and Sri Lanka Green Pigeon *T. pompadora* are (pp. 227–228). Indian- *Bubo bengalensis*, and Eurasian Eagle Owl *B. bubo* (pp. 260–261) are both said to be found 'throughout the region', while the latter is a Palearctic species, restricted to the Himalayas and associated mountains. Both, Lesser- *Curruca curruca*, and Desert Whitethroat *C. minula* (p. 465) share the same distribution text, that they cover most of the southern part of the Indian Subcontinent, while the latter should have been restricted to north-western India. Allopatric Vigor's- *Aethopyga vigorsii*, and Crimson Sunbird *A. siparaja* (p. 651) have both been shown to occur in the Western Ghats, and central-, and north-eastern India. The voice of Collared Scops Owl *Otus bakkamoena lettia* described (p. 258) is the typical song of the nominate 'Indian Scops Owl' (p. 257).

The maps do not show up well. One would expect the map of restricted range species to be zoomed in—a norm followed in all contemporary field guides—here one cannot see the details in the maps of several East Himalayan, Sri Lanka, and Western Ghats species. Some of the maps are inaccurate, e.g., the widely distributed Indian Spotted Eagle *Aquila hastata* (p. 126) is shown only in the northern subcontinent.

The subject editing is disappointing. Under vagrants and doubtful species, three raptors have the same description statement (p. 715)—a case of a 'copy-paste mistake'. One also wonders what the Legge's Hawk-eagle, a species restricted to Sri Lanka and the Western Ghats, is doing in the vagrant/doubtful list. The White-headed Starling *Sturnia erythropygia* (p. 564), an Andaman endemic, has a distribution all over India; I suspect it is an error brought about by copying the distribution of Purple-backed Starling *Agropsar sturninus*—a species that should have made it to the book. The distribution of the Western Ghats narrow-endemic White-bellied Shortwing [=White-bellied Blue Robin] *Brachypteryx major albiventris* (p. 587) extends till Uttar Pradesh. The Sri Lanka endemic Green-billed Coucal *Centropus chlororhynchos* (p. 252) is said to be seen in the northern foothills, north-eastern India, and the Eastern Ghats; an error evidently arising from the descriptive 'Green-billed'—the distribution is a direct copy from Green-billed Malkoha *Phaenicophaeus tristis* (p. 249).

I wish the authors correct these errors in the next edition, as this could turn into one of the finest works on Indian ornithology, in terms of both illustrations, and authenticity.

There are two checklists for the Indian Subcontinent, at the end of the book. Reader would prefer a combined single checklist, updated with the latest taxonomic and IUCN status, thus removing several discrepancies that now exist.

In summary the quality of photographs that illustrate this book, and the breadth and depth of its coverage of the Indian Subcontinent's bird species, makes it the best buy in its genre of photographic bird guides. It would enhance any birder's library.

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– Praveen J.

Praveen J., B303, Shriram Spurthi, ITPL Main Road, Brookefields, Bengaluru 560037, Karnataka, India. E-mail: paintedstork@gmail.com

Letters to the Editor

Carcass feeding by Black-headed Ibis *Threskiornis melanocephalus*

On 24 February 2016, while birding at Ekling or Kailashpuri Lake (24.73°N, 73.70°E; c. 660 m asl), Udaipur District (Rajasthan, India), we came upon a carcass of a domestic cow with three Cattle Egrets *Bubulcus ibis*, and two juvenile Black-headed Ibis *Threskiornis melanocephalus* near it. We stopped to observe the birds' behaviour, 10 m from the carcass. We seem to have initially disturbed the birds by our presence, but soon the egrets came back and started feeding around the carcass. After ten minutes, the juvenile ibises also returned, and started feeding on the carcass [30]. They walked slowly around the carcass, probing, and pecking at the carrion as they fed. One ibis appeared to dominate over the other, forcing the other away from the carcass, at least twenty times during the one hour of our observation. Egrets were not seen feeding on carrion, but focused on catching insects attracted to it. After one hour, both ibis flew away.



31. Black-headed Ibis feeding on carcass at Udaisar Lake.

Of the 29 ibis species worldwide (Threskiornithidae: Threskiornithinae; Matheu & Hoya 2016), only two, Sacred Ibis *T. aethiopicus* (Hancock *et al.* 2001), and Indian Black Ibis *Pseudibis papillosa* (Ali & Ripley 2007), have been reported to feed upon carcasses. The Black-headed Ibis normally feeds upon fishes, frogs, mollusks, insects, worms, and sometimes, on vegetable matter (Ali & Ripley 2007; Matheu *et al.* 2016); carrion is an addition to the food items consumed by this species.

We thank the Head, Department of Zoology, Mohanlal Sukhadia University Udaipur (Raj.), for providing necessary facilities during the study.

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– Sunil Chaudhury & Vijay Kumar Koli

Wildlife Research Laboratory, Department of Zoology, University College of Science, Mohanlal Sukhadia University, Udaipur 313001, Rajasthan, India. E-mail: vijaykoli87@yahoo.in



Both Sunil Chaudhury

30. Black-headed Ibis *Threskiornis melanocephalus* feeding on a carcass at Ekling or Kailashpuri Lake.

In another instance, we observed three Black-headed Ibis feeding on a carcass of cow on 11 March 2016 at Udaisar Lake, Udaipur (24.55°N, 73.80°N; c. 540 m asl), along with Cattle Egrets with similar insect catching activities [31].

Chestnut Thrush *Turdus rubrocanus*

With reference to Hore & Goswami's (2016) record of the Chestnut Thrush *Turdus rubrocanus* in Buxa Tiger Reserve, I would like to correct their statement: 'There are no records in published literature from northern Bengal.'

Oates (1890), Baker (1924), and Ali & Ripley (1997) do not mention its occurrence in the area; however, the reference in Ali & Ripley (1997), to a Stevens record from Sikkim, actually refers to a locality now in West Bengal (see below). Reference to Pittie (2016) brings up Edwards (1945, 1947)—but there are at least 11 relevant published references. The species is rare in the area and some of the references are difficult to access, even in good libraries, and so full details are given below chronologically.

Blyth (1852): 'A Male, B Female, Darjiling. Mr Webb (1845).'

Horsfield & Moore (1854): '♀ Darjeeling. From Pearson's Collection.'

Jerdon (1862): 'I procured a few specimens of this Ouzel at Darjeeling, in winter only; and it is not very common there.'

Kazmierczak & Singh (1998): Recorded from Lava.

Seeböhm (1881): '♀ ad. sk. Darjiling (Pearson). Indian Museum.'

Stevens (1925): '♀ Kalopokhari, Singilela Ridge, 10000' 03/05/12'.

Edwards (1944): ♂ 4 April 1943, Darjeeling. 'Messrs Curry and Taylor saw a flock of these birds in March while shooting on the Balusan.'

Matthews & Edwards (1944): 'Rare winter visitor. Recently recorded: below Kurseong, 2900 ft, March 1943; Darjeeling, 7200 ft, 4/4/43 and 11/12/44.'

Edwards (1945): ♂ Observatory Hill, Darjeeling, 11 December 1944.

Edwards (1947): Sonada, 6500 ft, February 1946.

Ali & Ripley (1998): 'Two records from Sikkim, January and May (Biswas, Stevens).'

More recently it has been recorded from the Lava area, e.g., Chatterjee (2005); Darjeeling, e.g., Pradhan (2014); Rishyap, e.g., Chaudhuri (2009); Buxa Tiger Reserve, e.g., Hore (2014); and Gorumara National Park, e.g., Basu (2016).

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– Tim Inskipp

1 Herneside, Welney, Wisbech, Cambridgeshire PE14 9SB, U.K.

The Indian Checklist in *Indian BIRDS* vol. 11 no. 5&6

When I pulled the latest copy of Indian Birds out of its cover yesterday afternoon, I got one of the most pleasant shocks of my life.

Those birds – on both covers – are an absolute marvel. I peered at them through the most powerful magnifying glass I possess, and then I thought, 'What the hell do you think you are doing. What difference will identification make? This issue of the magazine has become a collector's item in itself. Keep it with all the other IBs on your shelf, or lock it up with your precious books.'

For the time being, I think I shall keep it on the table beside my rocking chair in the library, gloat and chuckle.

I don't know how to thank Rohan Chakravarty, but do let him know how much I am impressed and delighted.

– Dr Aminuddin Khan

6-3-249/9, Road No. 1, Banjara Hills, Hyderabad 500034, Telangana, India.

This is the one, which I was looking for... Especially when you travel to places like Ladakh, North East, Greater Himalayas and others. We really don't know which name to be referred for the Bird, the names in Grimmett or Kazmierczak or OBC or others vary, each has its own name. a huge amount of time has to be spent for the correct English and scientific name.

This Book is very informative and useful for reference, the details are clear.

I received this book last week, soon after my one month trip to Ladakh and Himachal in June-July/2016 and I also visited Om Parvat in Kumaon in May/2016, this was very useful for my reference. Thank You.

My special Thanks to Editors and to the Publication of Indian Birds.

— Venkatraman T.

E-mail: forestvenkat@gmail.com

IBP has now integrated the names from the India Checklist publication as its "Clean list" for birds in India. You can view the integrated names [here](#). Going ahead, we would like to keep abreast of changes and reflect them on the portal. For now, editing is limited to admin so if there are changes, please let me know and we will make edits. In future, we hope to enable participatory updating of lists by editors or a taxon curator. We hope such participation can aggregate synonyms under an accepted name, delete/merge spelling mistakes and duplications etc.

— Thomas Vattakaven

E-mail: thomas.vee@gmail.com

I just managed to take a look at the paper. It is really wonderful. Congratulations!

I personally think this is really a very significant event for Indian Ornithology. There are so many wonderful aspects of this assessment - clear criteria for inclusion, clear rules for English names (lots for me to learn!), peer reviewed publication. Most of all, I am overjoyed, and must congratulate you again, for bringing back "golden-backed" woodpeckers!

I am also glad to read that you will continue to keep updating this checklist, hopefully with the same rigour and critical review!

— Robin Vijayan

E-mail: robinvijayan@gmail.com

Epic work!

—G. V. Gopi

E-mail: gopigv@gmail.com

It's a great compilation and would be the de-facto reference for me from now onwards.

—M. V. Shreeram

E-mail: mvshreeram@gmail.com

A major effort and work.

—Paul Thompson

E-mail: paul@agni.com

It will be a seminal paper and will be referred for a long time.

—Asad R. Rahmani

E-mail: rahmani.asad@gmail.com

Great work.

—Paul R. Sweet

E-mail: sweet@amnh.org

Congratulations on completing the new Indian checklist!

—Per Alstrom

E-mail: per.alstrom@slu.se

It is a highly informative and well-researched piece of work, which I shall doubtless turn to on many occasions for reference.

—Philip D. Round

E-mail: philip.rou@mahidol.ac.th

Monumental piece of work. I eagerly look forward to the *Indian Birds* issue that will undoubtedly be a collector's item and invaluable reference into the future. Now, if I may propose a follow-up project...an updated *Handbook of the Birds of India* by the three of you.

—T. R. Shankar Raman

E-mail: trsr@ncf-india.org

Appreciate that you have put a lot of work into this.

—Krys

E-mail: krys@krys.net

Looks impressive.

—Arun Pratap Singh

E-mail: ranoteaps@gmail.com

I am so happy to know about this!!! Congratulations that ultimately the effort has brought the result. It was so badly needed because my students were confused to see different scientific names of the same species in different books! In Pamela's book, they have even made different family! Now we could at least refer that we have followed this nomenclature.

—Hillojyoti Singha

E-mail: hillojyoti.singha@gmail.com

It's a fabulous document.

—Paul Holt

E-mail: piholt@hotmail.com

Wonderful and congratulations!

—Pamela Rasmussen

E-mail: rasmus39@gmail.com

Exhaustive, authentic, updated and of course one which was sorely needed. This checklist has put to rest many a dubious record and I'm sure it will be followed very widely.

—Manoj V Nair

E-mail: manojnair74@gmail.com

It is nicely done and the layout is also good. Heartiest congratulations to the entire team of editors. It is a commendable job indeed.

—H. S. A. Yahya

E-mail: hsa.yahya@gmail.com

Brilliant work as always.

—Shashank Dalvi

E-mail: shashank.da@gmail.com

The HM [Howard & Moore Team] and I look forward to working closely with you well into the future. Our aim is to work closely with regional ornithological experts such as yourselves so that the HM list is truly reflective of the broader knowledge base on avian taxonomy.

—Les Christidis

E-mail: les.christidis@gmail.com

Congratulaions! It is great news! It's fine to know that [the] first authentic Indian bird checklist has been published by IB. You have achieved the goal you have been working towards for some time.

—Harkirat Singh Sangha

E-mail: harkirat.sangha@gmail.com

Excellent work!

—Ding Li Yong

E-mail: zoothera@yahoo.com

Snapshot sightings

'White-headed' Black Bulbul from Aizawal, Mizoram

K. Lalmuansanga



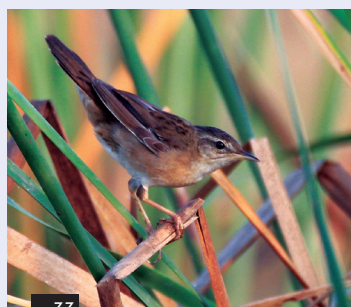
From 18–30 January 2016, three 'white-headed' Black Bultuls *Hypsipetes leucocephalus* were photographed by several birders at Aizawal Zoological Gardens (23.79°N, 92.67°E), Aizawal, Mizoram. The race of the birds could not be definitely stated, but they may belong either to *leucothorax*, or *stresemanni* as they were entirely blackish-grey, with pure white heads. This plumage has

been reported once from Namdapha National Park, which birds were tentatively assigned to *stresemanni* (Srinivasan *et al.* 2009).

Mission Vengthlang, Aizawl, Mizoram E-mail: klalmuansanga@gmail.com

Rusty-rumped Warbler from Pallikaranai, Tamil Nadu

Aravind Amirtharaj U.



While birding in the Pallikaranai marshlands (12.93°N, 80.22°E) of Kancheepuram District, Tamil Nadu, I photographed a single *Locustella* warbler that was later identified as a Rusty-rumped Warbler *Locustella certhiola* based on white tips to retrices, and prominent white

supercilium. This is an unusual record for southern India, after that of George & Issac (1965), and a first record for Tamil Nadu.

N.NO.2/O.NO. 9/1, VOC Street, Jaganatha Nagar First Main Road, Arumbakkam, Chennai-600106. E-mail: amirtharaj.u@gmail.com

White-tailed Tropicbird from Ross Island, South Andaman

Deepansh Mishra

A single White-tailed Tropicbird *Phaethon lepturus* was seen from Ross Island (11.68°N, 92.76°E) on 03 March 2016 and photographed from the Port Blair jetty (11.67°N, 92.74°E) on the next day. Though listed as a rarity for India (Praveen *et al.* 2013), a specimen was taken at exactly the same locality in the nineteenth century (Hume 1874), and this appears to be a record from the Andaman Islands after 140 years. Based on the golden-tinged tail, this could belong to subspecies *fulvus* that breeds on Christmas Island.

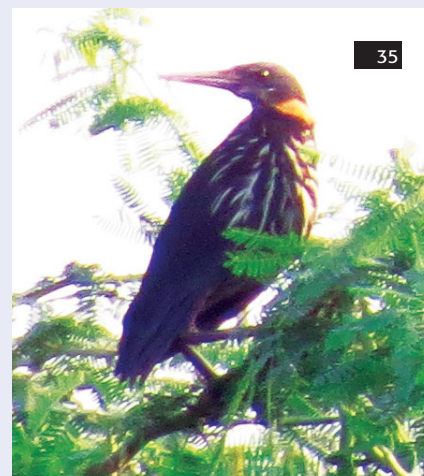
A/08, Sneh Nagar extension, Sneh Nagar Jabalpur (M.P) (482002)
Email: deepanshmishra11@gmail.com



Black Bittern from Solapur, Maharashtra

Rahul Vanjari & Raghvendra Vanjari

During one of our frequent visits to the wetlands in Solapur District, Maharashtra, we had an opportunistic sighting of a Black Bittern *Ixobrychus flavicollis* on 31 March 2016 at Degaon (17.67°N, 75.87°E), Mangawedha road. Prasad (2006) lists just two records, one from Mumbai, and another from Pune, from western Maharashtra. There are no records in the wide Deccan tract between Mumbai, Goa, Hyderabad and Amaravati areas (eBird 2016) and this could be the first record of this species for central Maharashtra.



Rahul Vanjari, Nature Conservation Circle, Solapur Raghvendra Vanjari 2 D B F Dayanand College of Arts & Science, Solapur. E-mail: rvanjari@yahoo.co.in

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