to a tree, with the snake in its bill, and started to swallow it. Soon
the bird got disturbed and flew away into the denser areas of the
forest, continuing to hold the snake in its mouth.

Members of the Muscicapidae feed predominantly on insects
and other arthropods, and also a very wide range of other prey
such as woodlice (Isopoda), snails (Gastropoda), earthworms
(Olbiochaeta), and some seeds and small fruit, principally
berries. Instances of muscicapids preying on snakes have been
rare. In Africa, the Chat-flycatcher *Agricola infuscatus* is known to
take blind-snakes (*Typhlops* sp.), and Fraser’s (African) Forest-
flycatcher *Fraseria ocreata* was once observed to catch a newly
hatched small snake (Taylor 2017).

The current observation is an interesting addition to the rare
records of snake-eating among muscicapids.

The Malabar Whistling Thrush varies in length between 240
mm and 250 mm (Rasmussen & Anderton 2012). Given that
the snake was bigger than the bird, this could probably be one of
the largest prey items recorded for the Muscicapidae. Ali & Ripley
(1998) recorded the food of Malabar Whistling Thrush as chiefly
insects, snails, worms, crabs, small frogs, etc., as well as drupes,
and wind-fallen figs and berries. Recently, Munnar & Kallettumkara
(2017) recorded an instance of a Malabar Whistling Thrush
feeding on a shieldtail snake (family Uropeltidae). The present
record adds to the food sources in the diet of the bird, and the
deftness with which the bird captured the snake indicates that
snakes might be a part of its regular diet.

References

with those of Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan and Sri Lanka*. Robins to wagtails. 2nd
(Hardback) ed. Delhi: (Sponsored by Bombay Natural History Society.) Oxford

Collar, N., 2017. Malabar Whistling-thrush (*Myophonus horsfieldii*). In *Handbook of
Christie, & J. de Juana. (eds.) https://www.hbw.com/species/malabar-whistling-

Munnar, K., & Kallettumkara, R., 2017. Website URL: https://ebird.org/ebird/india/view/
checklist/S35365375. [Accessed on 27 November 2017]

Praveen, J., Jayapal, R., & Pittie, A., 2016. A Checklist of the birds of India. *Indian Birds

ed. Washington, D.C. and Barcelona: Smithsonian Institution and Lynx Edicions. 2

Taylor, B., 2017. Old World Flycatchers and Chats (Muscicapidae). In: *Handbook of
Christie, & J. de Juana. (eds.) https://www.hbw.com/species/old-world-flycatchers-
I ruled out Western Reef Egret *Egretta gularis* after referring to Grimmett *et al.* (2011), as its dark morph has a whitish throat, and besides, it looks more like a Little Egret *E. garzetta*. An earlier record exists of a grey Cattle Egret, from Dona Paula, Goa, India, on 19 November 1995 (Willoughby 2001). Singh (2013) spotted a melanistic bird at Ailinganagar village, in Jharkhand. There seem to be no more cases of colour aberration in this species from India (Mahabal *et al.* 2016), though these have been noted in other countries (Siegfried 1971; Willoughby 2001; Scheres 2002; Carr 2015). It still has not been established whether a dark morph of Cattle Egret exists, like it does for Little Egret, in spite of the reports of birds, in various shades of grey, from all over the world.

I retrieved relevant literature from the online ‘Bibliography of South Asian Ornithology’ (Pitte 2017).

### References


### A Falcated Duck *Mareca falcata* x Gadwall *M. strepera* hybrid at Kaziranga National Park, Assam, India

A male hybrid between a Falcated Duck *Mareca falcata* and Gadwall *M. strepera* was spotted at 1647 hours, on 25 March 2016 in Kaziranga National Park (henceforth, KNP), Assam, India. The bird was spotted [38] in an open wetland (26.61°N, 93.34°E) belonging to the central range (Kohora) of KNP. At the time of observation, the bird was feeding in a shallow portion of the wetland, near a mud bank amongst a group of Gadwalls, Eurasian Wigeons *M. penelope*, and a few Indian Spot-billed Ducks *Anas poecilorhyncha*.

Both, Falcated Ducks, and Gadwalls are winter migrants to the north-eastern Indian Subcontinent (Grimmett *et al.* 2011; eBird 2018a; eBird 2018b) including KNP, where we have recorded them in previous seasons. Falcated Duck x Gadwall is one of the most common waterfowl hybrids found in the wild because they are sister species (Johnson & Sorenson 1999). There are a number of instances, since 1918, wherein Falcated Duck x Gadwall hybrids, or presumed hybrids, have been reported from the country, indicating that they are regular in our region too (Table 1).

![38. Male Falcated Duck X Gadwall Hybrid.](image)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Reference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Patilshala, Assam</td>
<td>April 1917</td>
<td>Robinson (1918)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fulbari, West Bengal</td>
<td>January 2009</td>
<td>Tharkuta (2009)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maguri Beel, Assam</td>
<td>December 2015</td>
<td>Phukan (2015)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bobitora, Assam</td>
<td>February 2016</td>
<td>Das (2016)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kaziranga, Assam</td>
<td>March 2016</td>
<td>This paper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dighal, Haryana</td>
<td>December 2016</td>
<td>Ghosh (2016)*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Hybrid combination putative*

### Pollards

We would like to express our gratitude to Bubul Borah, for providing us transport into KNP and helping with the requisite permits, and Dave Appleton, for confirming the identification of the bird.

### References


