

on thermals, and then returning to the lake. It did this a couple of times.



Rajmikanth Kasturi

121. Great Crested Grebe at Koltheri Lake, Coimbatore.

Though the species is regular to northern India (eBird 2018), apart from a sporadic sight record from Goa (Lainer & Alvares 2013; Baidya & Bhagat 2018), there are no other records from most of southern India. But it is now a fairly regular bird in north-eastern Andhra Pradesh, with several recent records (Taher 2016).

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Horned Grebe *Podiceps auritus* at Dighal, Haryana, India

On the evening of 14 December 2017, while checking upon the arrival of flamingos (Phoenicopteridae) in Dighal (28.75°N, 76.63°E), Haryana, I spotted six small grebes that looked different from the commonly seen Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis*. These birds had a black cap that came to just below their eye, pale lores, grey sides of neck, dark-grey upperparts, white chin, throat, and sides of upper neck, with the white area on the face being well demarcated from the dark cap; and a dark-grey beak. From a distance I managed to click a few pictures with my point-and-shoot zoom camera, in fading light. I thought they were the rare Black-necked Grebe *Podiceps nigricollis*; happy that I had bagged a lifer.

Later, I shared the images on social media, and with help from other birders, concluded that the birds were the vagrant Horned Grebe *P. auritus*, in non-breeding plumage [122]. A closer look at the images showed that in their non-breeding plumage, the birds differed from the similar looking Black-necked Grebe in having almost all-white ear-coverts, heavier, and straighter bill, and flat crown. Next day I managed to show the birds to Abhinav Chaudhary, and Manoj Sharma, who took conclusive images of the birds.



Chetna Sharma

122. Horned Grebe at Dighal, Haryana 2017.

The birds were bold, mainly feeding with Little Grebe, but preferred to stay near banks, and catch single, small fish by diving. Each dive lasted c. 15–20 sec., with the birds surfacing five to eight meters away from their diving point. Upon emerging, the birds would swallow their prey. Only three birds, of the six seen originally, remained at the pond; while the remaining three were not seen after the first day. From 31 December 2017, only a single bird was sighted until 06 January 2018. Two birds were discovered on 07 January 2018 in Ballab Village, Rohtak District, c. 15 km from Dighal on. These were last seen on 27 January 2018. The movement of the birds seemed to be related to the water levels in the village ponds.

The Horned Grebe is listed as Vulnerable under the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species (BirdLife International 2016), and is a winter vagrant to India (Rasmussen & Anderton 2012). This is only the third record of this species from India and the first for the state of Haryana. Past records are from the Kosi River near Ramnagar (29.38°N, 79.13°E), Uttarakhand, on 28 December 1993, and from Harike (31.15°N, 74.97°E), Punjab, during 01–04 February 2001 (Praveen *et al.*, 2014). A more recent record from the Indian Subcontinent is of two individuals sighted on 14 December 2016 by Imran Shah at Borit Lake, Gilgit-Baltistan, Pakistan-administered Kashmir (Shah 2016).

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