

## Correspondence

### Mandarin Duck *Aix galericulata* in Little Andaman, Andaman Islands

While on a birding trip with Nature India, led by Adesh Shivkar, Mandar Khadilkar, and Vivek Shill (local guide), a male Mandarin Duck *Aix galericulata* was seen and photographed [64] at a pond near Hutbay (10.59°N, 92.53°E) in Little Andaman, Andaman Islands, at 1540 h on 25 December 2018. It was first sighted perched on a wooden fence in the pond. It then flew into the pond, was seen bathing, after which it returned to the fence, where it was seen preening. It was a male, in its ornate, very colourful plumage. We observed, and photographed it for approximately an hour, and subsequently, at 0720 h on 26 December 2018. This bird became popular and many birders saw it in subsequent weeks, at least till 27 January 2019 (eBird 2019).



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64. Mandarin Duck.

There are very few reports of the Mandarin Duck from India; mostly from Assam and Manipur (Praveen *et al.* 2014), and only one twenty-first century sighting from Loktak Lake in Manipur, in December 2013 (Kasambe & Singh 2014). Though migratory, origins of the Mandarin Duck in India have always been open to question (Praveen *et al.* 2014; Carboneras & Kirwan 2019); the nearest records are from Manipur (*ibid.*), Bangladesh (Thompson *et al.* 1993), and northern Thailand (Carboneras & Kirwan 2019). We had local people from South- and Little Andaman Islands with us, and they had not seen this bird earlier at Hutbay. We do not know any aviaries in the Andaman Islands that house the Mandarin Duck, but I welcome any thoughts on the same. Another possibility is that it was an escapee from overseas, but there are no known cases of escaped Mandarin Ducks crossing the seas.

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### Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella naevia* in Andhra Pradesh

On 27 January 2019, I visited a lake near IISER Tirupati temporary campus (13.65°N, 79.47°E) near Mangalam, Tirupati, Chittoor District in southern Andhra Pradesh, along with 10–15 students. The lake is c.7 km away from Tirupati and is one of the many lakes along the foothills of Tirumala. While walking on the path along the borders of the lake, at about 0730 h, we spotted a few birds, including some warblers, in the paddy fields abutting the lake. While photographing and identifying the warblers, I realised that one of the birds in a photograph was difficult to identify [65]. I observed it for some more time and got additional details for its identification, but could not get more photographs since the bird hid inside the grass.



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65. Grasshopper Warbler.

The bird had a slim body and was smaller than a sparrow, with a brown and greyish body and a whitish belly. Whitish supercilium, a dark brown tail, and pinkish-orange legs were observed in the field. By looking at the patterns like the streaking on the body, body-shape, and colour, it appeared to be a *Locustella* species. It wasn't a Lanceolated Warbler *L. lanceolata* since the tail was longer and the bird did not have heavily streaked underbelly. Also, less prominent supercilium (observed in person, although

not clearly visible in photo), and the hazy tail without white tips clarify it was not a Rusty-rumped Warbler *L. certhiola*. The bird was later confirmed as Grasshopper Warbler *L. naevia*.

The Grasshopper Warbler winters in India around lakes and marsh edges, in thick grass, rice paddies, and also in the Western Ghats, where it is found up to an elevation of 1800m. Rasmussen & Anderton (2012) include the entire eastern peninsula under its migration path, without citing any records. Grimmett *et al.* (2011) map three records from the northern part of erstwhile Andhra Pradesh.

The first time the bird was recorded from erstwhile Andhra Pradesh was by Sálím Ali and Richard Meinertzhagen in February 1927, when they collected specimens in Warangal District, Telangana (Ali 1938). Subsequently, four birds were trapped during a ringing study at Lambasingi [=Lammasinghi], Vishakapatnam District in 1976–1977 (Price 1980); which would constitute the first record of the species from the present-day Andhra Pradesh. The third record, from somewhere near Hyderabad, could not be traced. In recent years, it has been observed multiple times around the Hyderabad area (eBird 2019) in Telangana. Further northwards, Chattisgarh has only one report (eBird 2019), while there are no confirmed records from Odisha (Inskipp 2015; eBird 2019).

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## Fulvous Whistling Duck *Dendrocygna bicolor* in Gujarat, with a note on its historical status

The Fulvous Whistling Duck *Dendrocygna bicolor* is a resident of north-eastern and eastern India, Pakistan, Nepal, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka (Ali & Ripley 1978; Grimmett *et al.* 2011; Rasmussen & Anderton 2012), and is has a large geographic range extending across both the hemispheres. In Gujarat it is a vagrant, and historical records exist from Kachchh (Parasharya *et al.* 2004; Ganpule 2016); but there are no recent reports. We report a sighting of the species in the Timbi Irrigation Reservoir (22.31°N, 73.29°E) on the outskirts of Vadodara, Gujarat.

On 23 April 2019, when the weather was partly sunny, we were birding at Timbi Irrigation Reservoir (22.31°N, 73.29°E) near Vadodara City, Gujarat. At 0747 h we observed some waders and waterfowl and a good number of Lesser Whistling Duck *D. javanica* foraging in the open area of the reservoir. At 0814

h, a pair of ducks grabbed our attention; they were similar to Lesser Whistling Ducks, but were slightly larger in size. They had prominent white tails, which separated them from the flock of Lesser Whistling Ducks. We could take their photographs easily, which helped us in identifying the pair as Fulvous Whistling Ducks [66] with the help of Grimmett *et al.* (2011), and Rasmussen & Anderton (2012), who list the basic distinguishing features: tawny-coloured, dark cinnamon crown, dark rear neck-stripe, and prominent white flanks. We observed the pair for an hour until they flew away when disturbed by a villager; when the white patch on the tail was clearly visible [67].



66. Fulvous Whistling Duck in its habitat.



67. Fulvous Whistling Duck and Lesser Whistling Duck (centre) in flight.

While foraging, the pair stayed together. They foraged in association with other birds such as Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus*, Purple Swampphen *Porphyrio porphyrio*, Garganey *Spatula querquedula*, Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus*, and the flock of Lesser Whistling Ducks. Later, the pair came to the periphery of the reservoir. All the identifying characters could be easily noted during preening. Like other ducks, during preening, they cleaned their abdomen feathers and wings. After that they drank some water and swam towards the open waters to forage.

Though it has been reported as a rare monsoon visitor from Sindh, Pakistan (Butler 1879; Hume & Marshall 1881; Blanford 1898; Ticehurst 1923), its presence in Gujarat has not been properly documented. Hugh Palin was the only person to have provided some information about this species in Kachchh, 'says it occurs, but is not common' quoted Hume & Marshall (1881);