

Recent sightings of Chinese Pond-Heron *Ardeola bacchus* in Assam

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The Chinese Pond-Heron *Ardeola bacchus* is a rare species in India. It has been recorded as an uncommon resident in Assam (Choudhury 2000). There are only a handful of records from the region, all from north-eastern India, and Bangladesh (Kazmierczak 2000). Ali & Ripley (1987) mentioned that it is a breeding resident in eastern Assam, and that it also occurs in Manipur, and the Andaman Islands. Grimmett *et al.* (1998) stated that it might partly be a winter visitor too. The species is almost impossible to identify in its non-breeding plumage, due to its resemblance with the commoner, and widespread Indian Pond-Heron *A. grayii*. Here I report two recent observations of the Chinese Pond-Heron from Assam.

The first observation was of a lone bird standing in a field near Tingrai (27°28'N 95°34'E) in Tinsukia district in extreme eastern Assam on 18 May 1993. The site was c.10 km from Tinsukia town. The elevation of the site was about 125 m a.s.l. It could be easily identified as it was in breeding plumage. The second observation was made in Cachar district of far southern Assam. While coming back from Hailakandi in southern Assam to Guwahati, I saw one in breeding plumage in a wet field by the side of NH44 between Hilara and Kalain (24°57'N 92°35'E) at about 1020 hrs on 1 May 2008. The elevation of the site was about 30 m a.s.l. The location

was about 15 km north-west of Badarpur town. From a distance of about 25–30 m, I could easily see its rich maroon-chestnut head and neck. I further observed it with the aid of a pair of 10x binoculars to have a closer look at its other plumage including slaty-black mantle and scapulars. I took a few photographs before it flew away to another location, about 30 m away. I passed through the same area again in June and July 2008, and looked around for the bird but could not find. This second observation was significant, being from southern Assam, as Ali & Ripley (1987) had mentioned of its occurrence in eastern Assam only.

References

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A Chinese Pond-Heron *Ardeola bacchus* in Cachar district, southern Assam.