# Indian BIRDS

Vol. 8 No. 4

Andaman & Nicobar Is.
Sabine's Gull
Red Phalarope

# Indian BIRDS

www.indianbirds.in Vol. 8 No. 4

Date of Publication: 26 July 2013

ISSN 0973-1407





## New Ornis Foundation

Registration No. 314/2004




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**Front Cover:** Red Phalarope *Phalaropus fulicaria*.
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**Back Cover:** Spot-bellied Eagle Owl *Bubo nipalensis*.
**Photographer:** S. Srinivasan.

# Tribal reserves, IBAs, and bird conservation: The unique case of the Andaman & Nicobar Islands

Pankaj Sekhsaria

Sekhsaria, P., 2013. Tribal reserves, IBAs, and bird conservation: The unique case of the Andaman & Nicobar Islands.[1,2] *Indian BIRDS* 8 (4): 85–90.
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*Manuscript received on 13 March 2013.*

## Introduction

The Andaman and Nicobar Islands (A&N Islands) are a small group of about 570 islands in the Bay of Bengal spread over an area of roughly 8,200 km (Jayaraj & Andrews 2005)[3]. They occupy only about 0.25% of the total landmass of India but are disproportionately rich in endemism and diversity. Pande *et al*. (2007) have noted, quoting Sankaran & Vijayan (1993), and Vijayan *et al*. (2000) that, "103–105 taxa (37–38.2%) out of 268–270 avian species and races recorded from these islands are endemic—illustrating a high degree of endemism." The islands have also been designated as two of the major 221 'Endemic Bird Areas' (EBAs) of the world—EBA 125 (Andaman Islands) and EBA 126 (Nicobar Islands) where the restricted range species reported from the Andamans and the Nicobars are 13 and nine respectively (Stattersfield *et al*. 1998). Jathar & Rahmani (2007), however, note that 28 endemic bird species (excluding races) are reported from these islands—20 are endemic to the Andamans, and eight to the Nicobars. The two data deficient bird species from India listed in the Red Data book of the IUCN are also found in these islands: the Andaman Crake *Rallina canningi* and the Nicobar Scops-Owl *Otus alius*. It is evident that the islands are important for bird conservation and this is reflected in the fact that they have 19 areas that have been identified as Important Bird Areas (IBAs) by Islam & Rahmani (2004).

## IBAs and Tribal Reserves

Of particular significance to the A&N Islands, in this context, are forest areas designated as tribal reserves under the Andaman & Nicobar Protection of Aboriginal Tribes Regulation (ANPATR), 1956 (ANPATR 2004 (1956)). This includes the entire group of the Nicobar Islands (about 1900 km$^2$) and four tribal reserves in the Andaman islands that cover nearly 1600 kms$^2$ (ANPATR 2004 (1956)) of some of the most pristine forests that still survive here [**87**]. In the Andamans these tribal reserves are named after the four aboriginal communities that have been living in these islands for at least 40,000 years: the Great Andamanese, the Jarawas, the Onge, and the Sentinelese.

Six of the 19 IBAs in the islands are areas designated as tribal reserves under the ANPATR. These include the islands of Car Nicobar, Great Nicobar [**88**], Little Nicobar, Tillangchong, Camorta, Katchal, Nancowry and Trinkat: all in the Nicobar Islands (they have been together classified into three different IBAs), and the Jarawa Reserve (IN-AN-07), Little Andaman (IN-AN-10), and North and South Sentinel (IN-AN-15) in the Andaman group of islands (Islam & Rahmani 2004), (Table 1).

**87.** Lush and rich mangrove forest of Constance Bay along the western and southern boundary of the Jarawa Tribal Reserve.

**88.** Tree ferns, Great Nicobar Biosphere Reserve, Campbell Bay.

Photos: P. Sekhsaria

[1] Paper presented at the International Conference on Indian Ornithology–2011, SACON, Coimbatore India.
[2] This article is an updated and substantially expanded and reworked version of Sekhsaria (2004a).
[3] It is important to bear in mind that these figures are pre-December 2004. Significant tectonic activity during the earthquake of 26 December 2004 that caused the gigantic South and South East Asian tsunami also led to significant submergence and uplift of land in different parts of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. The Megapode Island Wildlife Sanctuary (Kutty & Kothari 2001; Pande et al. 1991), for instance, does not exist anymore as it has been completely and permanently submerged. Latest official figures for area of the landmass in the islands are not currently available. For a broad overview of the landscape, seascape and ecological changes in A&N in the immediate aftermath of the earthquake and tsunami of 2004, see Sekhsaria (2009).

**Table 1:** List of IBAs in the Andaman & Nicobar Islands (Islam & Rahmani 2004)

| IBA site code | IBA site name |
|---|---|
| IN-AN-01 | Austin Strait |
| IN-AN-02 | Baratang-Rafters Creek |
| IN-AN-03 | Car Nicobar |
| IN-AN-04 | Chaipur and Hanspuri |
| IN-AN-05 | Great Nicobar, Little Nicobar |
| IN-AN-06 | Interview Island Wildlife Sanctuary |
| IN-AN-07 | Jarawa Reserve (Middle Andaman and South Andaman) |
| IN-AN-08 | Kadakachang |
| IN-AN-09 | Landfall Island Wildlife Sanctuary |
| IN-AN-10 | Little Andaman |
| IN-AN-11 | Mahatma Gandhi Marine National Park |
| IN-AN-12 | Mount Diavalo/Cuthbert Bay |
| IN-AN-13 | Mount Harriet National Park |
| IN-AN-14 | Narcondam Island Wildlife Sanctuary |
| IN-AN-15 | North and South Sentinel |
| IN-AN-16 | North Reef Island Wildlife Sanctuary |
| IN-AN-17 | Rani Jhansi Marine National Park |
| IN-AN-18 | Saddle Peak National Park |
| IN-AN-19 | Tillongchang, Camorta, Katchal, Nancowry and Trinkat |

## Tribal reserves in the Andaman Islands

The tribal reserves in the Andamans are the last remaining large and contiguous areas of the original giant evergreen, Andaman evergreen and the southern tropical evergreen rainforests that these islands are reputed for. The reserves are in fact, more significant and important for biodiversity conservation than wildlife sanctuaries and national parks, (the protected area (PA) network) of the islands (Table 2) (Pande *et al*., 1991; Kutty & Kothari 2001; WLPA 1972 (Amended 2006); Anonymous 2011b). While the terrestrial ecosystem under the PA network in the Andamans is only about 500 km$^2$, the total forest areas under the tribal reserve cover is more than three times the figure at 1600 km$^2$.

The Jarawa Tribal Reserve (JTR) alone is spread over an area of a little more than 1000 km$^2$ of tropical forests (Sekhsaria & Pandya 2010; ANPATR 2004 (1956)), whereas the Onge Tribal Reserve covers 520 km$^2$ of contiguous forests in Little Andaman Island (Sekhsaria 2004b; ANPATR 2004 (1956)). Studies and satellite imageries have shown that some of the best forests and biological diversity in these islands now survive mainly inside the boundaries of these tribal reserves (Figs. 1A & 1B).

## The forests outside

Large areas located outside these Andaman tribal reserves, even if within the present PA network, have experienced logging that has gone on for almost a century. These forests, with the small exception of the PA network, have either become deciduous because of timber extraction that has gone on for almost a century, or have been completely denuded to be converted to agricultural fields, horticultural plantations or settlements of large numbers of immigrants from mainland India (Saldanha 1989; Andrews 2002; Chandi 2002; Singh 2002; IIRS 2003; Sekhsaria 2003; Chandi & Andrews 2010; Sekhsaria & Pandya 2010) (Figs. 1A & 1B).

**Table 2:** Protection accorded to the forests in the Andaman Islands: Total area of the Andamans: 6,408 km$^2$

| Particulars | Sanctuaries and National Parks | Tribal Reserves |
|---|---|---|
| Total number | 99 (92 sanctuaries and seven national parks) | Four |
| Forest areas protected | *c.* 500 km$^2$ | *c.* 1600 km$^2$ |
| Percentage total forest area | 8% | 20% |
| Marine areas protected | *c.* 500 km$^2$ | *c.* 1000 km$^2$ |
| Largest forest area protected | Interview Island Sanctuary (133 km$^2$) | Jarawa Reserve (about 1000 km$^2$) |

The case of the Interview Island Wildlife Sanctuary, which is also an IBA, is an illustrative one. This is the largest contiguous forest stretch in the Andamans that is protected under the provisions of the Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972. The area, however, is only 133 km$^2$ ( Pande *et al*. 1991; Anonymous 2011b) as compared to the little over 1000 km$^2$ that constitutes the JTR (Table 2). Significantly, the forests of Interview Island were under commercial extraction from the 1950s till about mid-1960s (Pande *et al*. 1991) while a major area of the Jarawa Reserve forests have never seen logging operations.

## Conservation implications

The implications for conservation are evident in other ways as well. Not only is the total area protected under tribal reserves much larger, the individual area in a majority of the protected areas is extremely small: 58 of the PAs are less than one km$^2$ in area and only four have an area of more than 30 km$^2$ (Davidar *et al*. 1995). Davidar *et al*. (1995) also found a direct relationship between presence of butterfly and bird species and size of the forest area studied, particularly in the case of isolated islands. Many species of birds were not recorded at all on small islands and all forest bird species were only found on islands larger than 30 km$^2$.

Where avifauna in particular is concerned, it is striking that all but one of the species in the Andaman group islands that are endemic or listed as either data deficient or near threatened in the IBA directory (Islam & Rahmani 2004) can be found in these tribal reserves (Table 3). The only exception is the Narcondam Hornbill *Aceros narcondami* but that is an extraordinary situation in any case. Even other significant species like the Andaman Teal *Anas albogularis* and Beach Thick-knee *Esacus magnirostris* [89]have been reported from the tribal reserves (Vijayan *et al.* 2006; Rahmani 2012). The conservation significance with regard to the Nicobars is that the entire group is a tribal reserve!

A recent preliminary assessment also shows, for instance, that the resource basket of the Jarawas consists of more than a 100 species of plants and animals, a third of which are edible (Kumar *et al*. 2010). This is an important indicator of the knowledge the

**Table 3:** Red Data Book- and endemic- species (Source: Islam & Rahmani 2004)

VULNERABLE
Nicobar Sparrowhawk *Accipiter butleri*
Nicobar Megapode *Megapodius nicobariensis*
Narcondam Hornbill *Aceros narcondami*
Nicobar Bulbul *Hypsipetes nicobariensis*
DATA DEFICIENT
Andaman Crake *Rallina canningi*
NEAR THREATENED
Nicobar Serpent-Eagle *Spilornis minimus*
Andaman Serpent-Eagle *Spilornis elgini*
Andaman Wood-Pigeon *Columba palumboides*
Andaman Cuckoo-Dove *Macropygia rufipennis*
Nicobar Parakeet *Psittacula caniceps*
Andaman Scops-Owl *Otus balli*
Andaman Hawk-Owl *Ninox affinis*
Andaman Black Woodpecker *Dryocopus hodgei*
Andaman Drongo *Dicrurus andamanensis*
Andaman Treepie *Dendrocitta bayleyi*
OTHER ENDEMIC SPECIES
Andaman Coucal *Centropus andamanensis*
White-headed Starling *Sturnus erythropygius*


Fig. 1a. A&N Islands land usage (Source: Sekhsaria & Pandya 2010).


Fig. 1b. A&N Islands land cover classification (Source: Sekhsaria & Pandya 2010).

Jarawas have as also of the diversity of the Jarawa Reserve forests themselves. It is also extremely significant because this is bound to be a very important knowledge source in a forest landscape that has hardly been explored and studied in the context of modern science.

Photo: P. Sekhsaria

**89.** Beach Thick-knee *Esacus magnirostris* at South Cinque Island Wildlife Sanctuary.

## The historical context of the Andamans

Important also to understand are the changes that have occurred in the recent past in these islands in general, and in the Andamans in particular. The most important indicator of the changes is the population figure. While the estimated population of the four aboriginal communities in the Andamans was about 700 individuals in the census of 1961, it came down to a little more than 400 individuals in 2001. Of these, the Onges and Jarawas were reported to be 96, and 240 individuals respectively, and the Sentinelese population was estimated to be only 39[4].

At the same time, the total population in the Andaman group increased from a little less than 50,000 individuals in 1961 to over 350,000 in 2001 (Pandit 1990; Anonymous 2001). This increase in population was based almost entirely on an official policy of the Government of India to promote immigration from mainland India to 'colonise' these islands (Anonymous1965). Within a period of five decades the total number of non-indigenous persons in the Andamans had gone up from 70 per aboriginal individual to 751 per aboriginal individual (Sekhsaria & Pandya 2010). The demand for resources like land, forests, and water was bound to increase proportionately.

[4] It is important to note that the 1991 population figures for the Sentinelese and the Jarawa were only estimates. In 2001 the Jarawa numbers were based on a head count though there are suggestions that this may have been an underestimate as all the individuals were not counted (Chakraborty 2010). The most recent figure for the Jarawa population is 375 in the year 2010 (Anonymous 2010b).

## Denotification of the tribal reserves

Related directly to this influx of people into the islands was the process of the denotification of large areas from under the tribal reserve category, particularly in the 1970s. A series of amendments to the ANPATR in 1972, 1973, 1977, and 1979 resulted in the removal of Rutland Island (103 km$^2$) from the category of tribal reserve, nearly 200 km$^2$ from the Onge Tribal Reserve in Little Andaman, and 300 km$^2$ from the JTR in South Andaman (Anonymous 1976; ANPATR 2004 (1956)).

Large areas of these denotified tribal reserve forests were then clear-felled for the housing, agricultural, and horticultural needs of the settlers. Work was started on the construction of the Andaman Trunk Road (ATR) [**90**] that was to cut through the heart of the JTR as it sought to connect Port Blair in South Andaman Island to Diglipur in North Andaman Island. The denotification of the tribal reserves coupled with the construction of the ATR facilitated intensive logging in these forests as is evident from timber extraction statistics. The 1980s consistently saw an average of 14,000 cu m of timber extraction annually from the Andaman forests [**91**] (Saldanha 1989; Singh 2002; Anonymous 2005) (Table 4). This was at the cost of the rights and integrity of the aboriginal communities as well at the biological diversity of these islands.

Photos: P. Sekhsaria

**90.** Traffic on the Andaman Trunk Road (ATR).

The impact and implications of this can well be imagined, and this is reflected in the site accounts that we see in the IBA directory (Islam & Rahmani 2004) as well: population increase, habitat fragmentation, encroachments, and poaching have been identified as the main threats and problems in the context of IBAs and avifauna conservation in the islands.

**91.** Timber extraction.

## Supreme Court orders of 2002

**Table 4.** Timber extraction – Andaman Islands (Sekhsaria & Pandya 2010)

| Year | Annual average quantity (cu m.) |
|---|---|
| 1968–1983 | 118,800 |
| 1980–1981 | 165,726 |
| 1981–1982 | 162,241 |
| 1982–1983 | 147,308 |
| 1983–1984 | 147,309 |
| 1984–1985 | 132,579 |
| 1985–1986 | 145,305 |
| 1986–1987 | 131,888 |
| 1987–1988 | 115,801 |
| 1988–1989 | 123,678 |
| 1989–1990 | 117,746 |
| 1990–1991 | 103,660 |
| 1991–1992 | 105,319 |
| 1992–1993 | 125,670 |
| 1993–1994 | 130,136 |
| 1994–1995 | 135,523 |
| 1995–1996 | 126,579 |
| 1996–1997 | 107,443 |
| 1997–1998 | 77,097 |
| 1998–1999 | 62,623 |
| 1999–2000 | 47,617 |
| 2000–2001 | 40,053 |
| 2001–2002 | 4,711 |
| 2002–2003 | Nil |
| 2003–2004 | Nil |

Many of these issues were dealt with in orders passed by the Supreme Court of India in 2002 in response to a public interest litigation (IA-502 2002) filed by non-governmental organisations. The court had asked for the implementation of an inner line area system to prevent the influx of people from mainland India; had stopped commercial timber extraction, removal of encroachments, phasing out of sand mining from the island's beaches, use of appropriate construction materials, closure of the Andaman and Nicobar Forest Plantation and Development Corporation that had been logging the forests of Little and Middle Andaman since the 1970s, and closure of the ATR where it runs through and along the forests in the Jarawa Reserve (Sekhsaria 2003; Singh 2002; IA-502 2002).

More than a decade later, many of these orders are yet to be implemented. The Member of Parliament for the islands has even argued for the denotification of the JTR and to make the land and forests available for development (Anonymous 2010a). More recently, in a meeting held with the Prime Minister of India, Dr Manmohan Singh, members of the Andaman Chamber of Commerce and Industry were reported to have questioned the justification of setting aside the JTR as an area seven times the size of the city of Chennai for only about 300 Jarawas (Anonymous 2012).

## The case of Tillongchang Island in the Nicobars

The dilemmas and the challenges faced are starkly highlighted in other recent developments, related this time to the uninhabited Tillongchang Island spread over 17 km$^2$ in the Nicobars. The island is an important population repository of the Nicobar Megapode *Megapodius nicobariensis nicobariensis* [**92**], the race endemic to the Nancowry subgroup of islands (Sivakumar 2010); *M. n. abbotti* is endemic to the southern Great Nicobar group of islands. The island is a wildlife sanctuary (Pande *et al*. 1991; Kutty & Kothari 2001), a tribal reserve (ANAPTR 2004), an IBA (Islam & Rahmani 2004), and of great customary and ritual importance for the Nicobari tribal community (Chandi 2012). Yet, in November 2011, the Indian Navy thought it right to go ahead and seek permission to construct a temporary missile testing range on this small but culturally and ecologically important island (Chandi 2012; Anonymous 2011a).

It was only in late 2012, after a sustained campaign in the media, particularly by wildlife and environment NGOs, that the Ministry of Environment and Forests of the Government of India issued an order (Khanduri 2012) rejecting the proposal on grounds of the, "high conservation values," of the place. Not only

Photo: P. Sekhsaria

**92.** Nicobar Megapode *Megapodius n. nicobariensis*.

had the wildlife and biodiversity value of the place been given short shrift in the proposal, the laws and regulations related to tribal rights had also been ignored.

## Conclusion

We have, in the A&N Islands, an unique situation and opportunity where the protection of the indigenous peoples, the forests and the biodiversity including its rich avifauna are all intricately linked. Ensuring protection of the tribal reserves will, for instance, not only ensure the survival of the increasingly threatened indigenous communities of these islands like the Jarawas and the Onge but also bring significant other benefits. Protection in these areas can simply not be divorced from the future of the indigenous peoples. Safeguarding the rights, culture and society of the indigenous people might be the best and most effective method of protecting the forests and biodiversity and avifauna as well.

This, as we have seen, is far easier said than done and a number of steps are needed to achieve this:

a) Scientific research: The forests of the tribal reserves in these islands remain unstudied and unexplored from a scientific point of view. A larger and coordinated effort is needed to uncover the biological richness of these forests in an effort to strength the case for their conservation and protection.

b) Working with the settler communities: While the aboriginal communities have the primary right to the forests and the resources, it has to be borne in mind that a much larger number of outsiders now live along and around the forests of the tribal reserves. These comprise the first line of interaction with the forests and the aboriginal communities themselves. A concerted effort needs to be made to engage with and educate them on the rights of the aboriginals and on the richness and importance of these forests alongside benefits such as fresh water and other ecosystem services that they derive from these forests.

c) Implementation of Supreme Court orders: Supreme Court orders of 2002 (Singh 2002; Sekhsaria 2003) need to be implemented in letter and spirit as a step towards respecting the rights and territorial integrity of communities like the Jarawa, and in the larger interest of forest protection and biodiversity conservation in the islands.

d) Additional legal protection for Tribal Reserves: Measures to provide additional legal protection to these tribal reserves—for instance under the provisions of the 2006 law that seeks to correct historical wrongs and gives rights to scheduled tribes and forest dweller (FRA 2006)—need to be explored urgently.

It is only when all, or at least some of these steps, are initiated in these islands that the interests of indigenous communities and those of biodiversity conservation will be achieved.

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# Avifaunal diversity of Baisipalli Wildlife Sanctuary, Odisha, India

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Das, K. S., Sahoo, P. D., Dash, N., & Sahu, H. K., 2013. Avifaunal diversity of Baisipalli Wildlife Sanctuary, Odisha, India. *Indian BIRDS* 8 (4): 90–92.
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*Manuscript received on 10 November 2010.*

## Introduction

The Eastern Ghats is a major biodiversity area running parallel to the Bay of Bengal on India's east coast. Comprising a discontinuous range of mountains, they extend from West Bengal in the north to Tamil Nadu in the south, passing through the states of Odisha, Andhra Pradesh, and some parts of Karnataka. In Odisha (=Orissa), the range constitutes the principal mountain system extending over 1.5 lakh km$^2$, which is merely 4.25% of the total landmass of the state. Fourteen protected areas fall within this percentage, among which the Baisipalli Wildlife Sanctuary (20°31'–20°45'N, 84°43'E–85°05'E), considered the gateway of Eastern Ghats (Sahoo & Das 2010), is a major Protected Area. The sanctuary spreads over Nayagarh and Boudh districts with an area of 163 km$^2$. It is contiguous with the Satkosia Gorge Wildlife Sanctuary and forms the Satkosia Tiger Reserve. The vegetation here is characteristic of Mahanadian hilly sal forest and falls under the Mahanadian Biogeographic region of Orissa (Sahoo 2010). It largely comprises northern tropical moist deciduous, dry deciduous, and moist peninsular low-level sal forests. The dominant trees are 'sal' *Shorea robusta*, 'bija' *Pterocarpus marsupium*, teak *Tectona grandis*, 'kusum' *Schleichera trijuga*, 'saja' *Terminalia tomentosa*, 'bael' *Aegle marmelos*, 'tendu' *Diospyros melanoxylon*, and 'palas' *Butea monosperma*, with bamboo patches, a number of shrubs, herbs and climber species.

India harbors 1200 species of birds, which is 13% of the total bird species of the world (Ali & Ripley 1983). The avifauna of Odisha is diverse and 473 bird species belonging to 59 families have been recorded here (Mishra *et al.* 1996). The avifauna of the state has been mainly studied by Mukherjee (1952), Ripley (1979), Abdulali (1984), Sahu & Kar (1999), Sahu & Rout (2005), Gopi & Pandav (2007), and Das *et al.* (2010). But the avian diversity of the sanctuary is still unknown, as no scientific studies on birds have so far been conducted, except passing references to common birds, in the sanctuary's management plans. This study was carried out to prepare a checklist with basic information on the species of the sanctuary and frequency of their occurrence with residential status.

## Methodology

Observations on the avian diversity of Baisipalli WLS were carried out from January–July 2010. During the study, the presence of different species of birds was ascertained by direct sightings, their calls (for some species), and interviews with local forest staff, villagers and hunters belonging to local communities in and around the PA. Regular surveys were conducted by adopting the line-transect method (Burnham *et al.*1980) throughout the study area. Birds were mostly observed during the active hours of the day; from 0600 to 1000 hrs and from 1600 to 1800

hrs. Spot identification and information on their residential status, basic food habits *etc.,* is based on Grimmett *et al.* (1999), and Kazmierczak *et al.* (2000). The checklist was prepared using the standardised common and scientific names listed in Manakadan & Pittie (2001).

## Results & discussion

A list of avifauna recorded from Baisipalli WLS along with frequency and status is reported in Table1. The study reveals the occurrence of 157 species of birds in 56 families. According to the frequency of sightings, 69 (43.94%) species were common, 63 (40.12%) were uncommon and 25 (15.92%) species were rare. While 135 (85.98%) species were considered to be resident and 22 (14.01%) species were migratory. The Green Avadavat *Amandava formosa* is listed in 'Threatened Birds of the World' (BirdLife International 2001). It is a globally threatened species, listed as Vulnerable on the IUCN Red List and in Appendix II of CITES. On 12 February 2010, three individuals were sighted. Among raptors, a Greater Grey Headed Fish-Eagle *Ichthyophaga ichthyaetus*, a Near Threatened species according to the Red List, (BirdLife International 2001) was sighted on 27 March 2010 in the northern side of the sanctuary near the Mahanadi River. Inside the sanctuary, the raptor diversity stands at 17 (10.9%) species, indicating habitat richness of the area, as raptors are considered to be indicators of healthy forest ecosystems (Das *et al.* 2011). We recorded a pair of Black Storks *Ciconia nigra* on 23 May 2010 in the central part of the sanctuary near a seasonal stream. It is a rare species and published literature revealed that the species has only been recorded from Baisipalli in Odisha (Sahu & Palei 2012).

Local communities in the surrounding areas depend heavily on the sanctuary for various resources. During this survey various disturbances, including poaching of birds, were observed. Species like the Indian Peafowl *Pavo cristatus*, Red Junglefowl *Gallus gallus*, and Spotted Dove *Streptopelia chinensis* are trapped by locals as bushmeat. The Hill Myna *Gracula religiosa* and parakeets are trapped for the pet trade. Unsustainable methods of harvesting fish and other natural resources create additional threats to the sanctuary. Use of lethal materials for fishing was noticed in many parts around the sanctuary, which can adversely affect waterbirds and direct effect includes death due to lower quality of health of birds, reducing their ability to reproduce effectively or surviving rough conditions. Toxic materials have the ability to destroy microorganisms (phytoplankton and zooplankton) and directly affect the food chain. People start forest fires for collection of 'mahul' flower *Madhuca indica* and shifting cultivation, which degrades bird habitat rapidly. Such fires are a major threat, and should be checked and controlled by adopting strict fire protection measures. Alternative livelihood opportunities need to be created to reduce dependency of locals on forest resources.

Table: 1: Checklist of Avifauna of Baisipalli Wildlife Sanctuary, Odisha

| Species | Frequency of Occurrence | Status |
|---|---|---|
| Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis* | C | R |
| Little cormorant *Phalacrocorax niger* | C | R |
| Indian Shag *P. fuscicollis* | C | R |
| Little Egret *Egretta garzetta* | C | R |
| Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea* | UC | R |
| Large Egret *Casmerodius albus* | UC | R |
| Median Egret *Mesophoyx intermedia* | C | R |
| Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis* | C | R |
| Indian Pond Heron *Ardeola grayii* | C | R |
| Chestnut Bittern *Ixobrychus cinnamomeus* | UC | R |
| Asian Openbill-Stork *Anastomus oscitans* | UC | R |
| Black Stork *Ciconia nigra* | RA | M |
| Oriental Honey-Buzzard *Pernis ptilorhynchus* | UC | R |
| Black-shouldered Kite *Elanus caeruleus* | C | R |
| Black Kite *Milvus migrans* | C | R |
| Short-toed Snake Eagle *Circaetus gallicus* | RA | R |
| Greater Grey-headed Fish-Eagle *Ichthyophaga ichthyaetus* NT | RA | R |
| Crested Serpent Eagle *Spilornis cheela* | C | R |
| Pallid Harrier *Circus macrourus* | RA | M |
| Shikra *Accipiter badius* | C | R |
| White-eyed Buzzard *Butastur teesa* | UC | R |
| Osprey *Pandion haliaetus* | RA | M |
| Common Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus* | UC | M |
| Peregrine Falcon *F. peregrinus* | RA | R |
| Jungle Bush –Quail *Perdicula asiatica* | UC | R |
| Red Junglefowl *Gallus gallus* | C | R |
| Indian Peafowl *Pavo cristatus* | C | R |
| Small Buttonquail *Turnix sylvatica* | UC | R |
| White-breasted Waterhen *Amaurornis phoenicurus* | C | R |
| Purple Moorhen *Porphyrio porphyrio* | UC | R |
| Common Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus* | C | R |
| Common Coot *Fulica atra* | UC | M |
| Pheasant-tailed Jacana *Hydrophasianus chirurgus* | UC | R |
| Bronze-winged Jacana *Metopidus indicus* | RA | R |
| River Lapwing *Vanellus duvaucelii* | RA | M |
| Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius* | RA | R |
| Red-wattled Lapwing *Vanellus indicus* | C | R |
| Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos* | UC | M |
| Stone-Curlew *Burhinus oedicnemus* | UC | R |
| River Tern *Sterna aurantia* | UC | R |

Table: 1: Checklist of Avifauna of Baisipalli Wildlife Sanctuary, Odisha

| Species | Frequency of Occurrence | Status |
|---|---|---|
| Blue Rock Pigeon *Columba livia* | C | R |
| European Turtle-Dove *Streptopelia turtur* | C | R |
| Oriental Turtle-Dove *S. orientalis* | UC | R |
| Spotted Dove *S. chinensis* | C | R |
| Eurasian Collared-Dove *S. decaocto* | C | R |
| Emerald Dove *Chalcophaps indica* | UC | R |
| Yellow-legged Green-Pigeon *Treron phoenicoptera* | UC | R |
| Green Imperial-Pigeon *Ducula aenea* | RA | R |
| Alexandrine Parakeet *Psittacula eupatria* | C | R |
| Rose-ringed Parakeet *P. krameri* | C | R |
| Plum headed Parakeet *P. cyanocephala* | C | R |
| Pied Crested Cuckoo *Clamator jacobinus* | RA | M |
| Brainfever Bird *Hierococcyx varius* | UC | R |
| Indian Cuckoo *Cuculus micropterus* | UC | R |
| Asian Koel *Eudynamys scolopacea* | UC | R |
| Sirkeer Malkoha *Phaenicophaeus leschenaultii* | UC | R |
| Greater Coucal *Centropus sinensis* | C | R |
| Barn Owl *Tyto alba* | UC | R |
| Collared Scops-Owl *Otus bakkamoena* | RA | R |
| Brown Fish-Owl *Ketupa zeylonensis* | UC | R |
| Jungle Owlet *Glaucidium radiatum* | C | R |
| Spotted Owlet *Athene brama* | C | R |
| Indian Jungle Nightjar *Caprimulgus indicus* | C | R |
| Large-tailed Nightjar *C. macrurus* | RA | R |
| Common Indian Nightjar *C. asiaticus* | UC | R |
| Asian Palm Swift Cypsiurus balasiensis | C | R |
| House Swift *Apus affinis* | C | R |
| Crested Tree-Swift *Hemiprocne coronata* | RA | R |
| Malabar Trogon *Harpectes fasciatus* | UC | R |
| Small Blue Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis* | UC | R |
| White-breasted Kingfisher *Halcyon smyrnensis* | C | R |
| Small Green Bee-eater *Merops orientalis* | C | R |
| Blue-tailed Bee-eater *M. philippinus* | RA | M |
| Indian Roller *Coracias benghalensis* | C | R |
| Common Hoopoe *Upupa epops* | C | R |
| Indian Grey Hornbill *Ocyceros birostris* | UC | R |
| Brown-headed Barbet *Megalaima zeylanica* | C | R |
| Coppersmith Barbet *M. haemacephala* | C | R |
| Brown-capped Pygmy Woodpecker *Dendrocopos nanus* | RA | R |
| Lesser Golden-backed Woodpecker *Dinopium benghalense* | UC | R |

Table: 1: Checklist of Avifauna of Baisipalli Wildlife Sanctuary, Odisha

| Species | Frequency of Occurrence | Status |
|---|---|---|
| Greater Golden-backed Woodpecker *Chrysocolaptes lucidus* | UC | R |
| Heart-spotted Woodpecker *Hemicircus canente* | RA | R |
| Indian Pitta *Pitta brachyura* | RA | R |
| Ashy-crowned Sparrow-Lark *Eremopterix grisea* | UC | R |
| Eastern Skylark *Alauda gulgula* | UC | M |
| Forest Wagtail *Dendronanthus indicus* | UC | M |
| White Wagtail *Motacilla alba* | C | M |
| Large Pied Wagtail *M. maderaspatensis* | UC | R |
| Yellow Wagtail *M. flava* | UC | M |
| Grey Wagtail *M. cinerea* | UC | M |
| Paddyfield Pipit *Anthus rufulus* | C | R |
| Eurasian Tree Pipit *A. trivialis* | RA | M |
| Large Cuckoo-Shrike *Coracina macei* | UC | R |
| Black-headed Cuckoo-Shrike *C. melanoptera* | C | R |
| Rosy Minivet *Pericrocotus roseus* | C | R |
| Small Minivet *P. cinnamomeus* | C | R |
| Scarlet Minivet *P. flammeus* | C | R |
| Large Woodshrike *Tephrodornis gularis* | UC | R |
| Common Woodshrike *T. pondicerianus* | C | R |
| Red-whiskered Bulbul *Pycnonotus jocosus* | C | R |
| Red-vented Bulbul *P. cafer* | C | R |
| Common Iora *Aegithina tiphia* | UC | R |
| Gold-fronted Chloropsis *Chloropsis aurifrons* | RA | R |
| Brown Shrike *Lanius cristatus* | C | M |
| Bay-backed Shrike *L. vittatus* | UC | R |
| Rufous-backed Shrike *L. schach* | UC | M |
| Blue Rock-Thrush *Monticola solitarius* | UC | M |
| Orange-headed Thrush *Zoothera citrina* | UC | R |
| Oriental Magpie- Robin *Copsychus saularis* | C | R |
| White-rumped Shama *C. malabaricus* | UC | R |
| Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros* | UC | M |
| Indian Robin *Saxicoloides fulicata* | C | R |
| Pied Bushchat *Saxicola caprata* | C | R |
| Common Babbler *Turdoides caudatus* | C | R |
| Jungle Babbler *T. striatus* | C | R |
| Streaked Fantail-Warbler *Cisticola juncidis* | UC | R |
| Franklin's Prinia *Prinia hodgsonii* | UC | R |
| Ashy Prinia *P. socialis* | UC | R |
| Plain Prinia *P. inornata* | C | R |
| Common Tailorbird *Orthotomus sutorius* | C | R |
| Common Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita* | C | M |
| Red-throated Flycatcher *Ficedula albicilla* | UC | M |
| Tickell's Blue-Flycatcher *Cyornis tickelliae* | UC | R |
| Asian Brown Flycatcher *Muscicapa daurica* | UC | M |
| Black–naped Monarch-Flycatcher *Hypothymis azurea* | UC | R |
| White-Throated Fantail- Flycatcher *Rhipidura abicollis* | C | R |
| White-browed Fantail-Flycatcher *R. aureola* | C | R |
| Great tit *Parus major* | C | R |
| Black-lored Yellow Tit *P. xanthogenys* | RA | R |
| Chestnut-bellied Nuthatch *Sitta castanea* | UC | R |
| Thick-billed Flowerpecker *Dicaeum agile* | C | R |
| Purple-rumped Sunbird *Nectarinia zeylonica* | C | R |
| Purple Sunbird *N. asiatica* | C | R |
| Oriental White-eye *Zosterops palpebrosus* | UC | R |
| Red Munia *Amandava amandava* | UC | R |
| Green Munia *A. formosa* VU | RA | R |
| White-throated Munia *Lonchura malabarica* | UC | R |
| Spotted Munia *L. punctulata* | C | R |
| Black-headed Munia *L. malacca* | C | R |
| House Sparrow *Passer domesticus* | C | R |
| Baya Weaver *Ploceus philippinus* | UC | R |
| Grey-headed Starling *Sturnus malabaricus* | UC | R |
| Brahminy Starling *S. pagodarum* | C | R |
| Asian Pied Starling *S. contra* | C | R |
| Common Myna *Acridotheres tristis* | C | R |
| Bank Myna *A. ginginianus* | UC | R |
| Jungle Myna *A. fuscus* | RA | R |
| Hill Myna *Gracula religiosa* | RA | R |
| Indian Golden Oriole *Oriolus kundoo* | UC | R |
| Black–naped Oriole *O. chinensis* | C | R |
| Black-headed Oriole *O. xanthornus* | C | R |
| Black Drongo *Dicrurus macrocercus* | C | R |
| White-bellied Drongo *D. caerulescens* | UC | R |
| Greater Racket-tailed Drongo *D. paradiseus* | UC | R |
| Indian Treepie *Dendrocitta vagabunda* | C | R |
| House Crow *Corvus splendens* | C | R |
| Jungle Crow *C. macrorhynchos* | RA | R |

Frequency: C = Common, UC = Uncommon, RA= Rare; Residential Status: R= Resident, M= Migrant; NT= Near Threatened, VU= Vulnerable

**Acknowledgments**

We are grateful to Principal Chief Conservator Forests of Orissa, Divisional Forest Officer, Mahanadi Wildlife Division, L. A. K. Singh, Senior Scientist of the Forest Department Orissa, and the field staff for their support in conducting the study. We would also like to thank S. D. Rout, Reader, North Orissa University for his valuable suggestions during field study. The authors would like to express gratitude to S. K. Dutta, North Orissa University for his valuable advice in completing this paper.

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# Observations on the breeding of the Woolly-necked Stork *Ciconia episcopus* in Bhagalpur, Bihar, India

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Choudhary, D. N., Ghosh, T. K., Mandal, J. N., Rohitashwa, R., & Mandal S. K., 2013. Observations on the breeding of the Woolly-necked Stork *Ciconia episcopus* in Bhagalpur, Bihar, India. *Indian BIRDS* 8(4): 93–94.
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*Manuscript received on 31 January 2012.*

## Introduction

The Woolly-necked Stork *Ciconia episcopus* is a widespread tropical species, which breeds in Africa and in Asia from India to Indonesia (Ali & Ripley 1987). It can occupy almost any wetland habitat, generally preferring flood plains, rivers, ponds, swamps tidal mudflats, cultivated fields and even manmade tanks. It mainly feeds on insects, molluscs, crabs, fish, frogs, lizards and snakes while slowly foraging through water or vegetation (Ali 1996; Grimmett *et al*. 2001).

Woolly-necked Storks are not commonly seen in Bihar but their presence has been noted in the Jagatpur wetland and along the course of the Ganga River near the city of Sultanganj and Bhagalpur town in Bhagalpur district (Choudhary & Mishra 2006). Woolly-necked Storks are also seen occasionally in the wetlands and cultivated fields beside the Jamalpur–Kiul railway track between Abhaypur and Kajra in Munger district; we have been sighting 10–12 birds in the area since 2005. In late December 2011, one of us (DNC) recorded six Woolly-necked Storks feeding alongside egrets and herons in wetlands adjacent to the highway near Kursela (in Katihar district), and ten more storks with six Black Ibis *Pseudibis papillosa* and several egrets roosting in cultivated fields beside the railway track near Abhaypur. These storks were perhaps being recorded for the first time in Munger district. Though no written records have been maintained, there seems to be an anecdotal increase in the population of Woolly-necked Stork in this region of Bihar. It could also indicate that Woolly-necked Storks might be breeding in this area. We are alert and hope to trace their breeding sites in near future.

## Breeding site and data collection

On 24 October 2010 a member of Mandar Nature Club informed us of a pair of breeding Woolly-necked Stork at Raghopur, Bhagalpur district, Bihar. The village is located in the flood plains of the Ganga, roughly 5 km north-west of Bhagalpur town and 2 km north of Nathnagar–Sultanganj highway. We headed to Raghopur next day with our team members to study the breeding of Woolly-necked Stork.

## Results & discussion

The nesting site was in the middle of Raghopur village. The nest was atop a 'semul' *Salmalia malabarica* tree. There was one nest of a Black Ibis and one of a Woolly-necked Stork on the tree. The two nests were barely 2.5–3 m apart and both had fledglings at different stages of growth. We recorded two chicks of the Black Ibis and three of Woolly-necked Stork. According to the villagers, the ibis had occupied this tree first during this breeding season, and it has been regularly nesting here since two–three years. As the ibis fledglings were larger in size than those of the Woolly-necked Stork, we estimated they began building roughly around the third or fourth week of July. The Woolly-necked Stork had apparently occupied the tree for the first time and we estimated that nest building commenced around the third week of August. The nest was placed in a fork on the horizontal branches of the 'semul,' roughly 18–20 m off the ground. It was a spherical platform of twigs with a slight depression in the middle. The diameter of the nest was between 0.8 and1 m.

During a visit on 10 November the nestlings of the Woolly-necked Stork were silent for most part but indulged in bill-clattering when adults returned to the nest. An adult would always be

Photo: D. N. Choudhary

**93.** Woolly-necked Stork *Ciconia episcopus* juvenile exercising its wings.

Photo: D. N. Choudhary

**94.** Juvenile Woolly-necked Stork *C. episcopus* venturing away from the nest.

perched (guarding?) on or near the nest (Choudhary *et al*. 2010). The nestlings would bob their heads and were generally active. The Black Ibis offspring were now fully fledged and beginning to vigorously flap their wings, perhaps in preparation for flight.

On 16 December, we found the ibis nest empty. Villagers informed us that the birds had left roughly around the third week of November. The three Woolly-necked Stork chicks were fully-fledged juveniles now and were moving from branch to branch, venturing away from the tree flying short distances and returning [**94**]. An adult stork continued to perch around the nest even at this time. During our visits, we recorded both parents taking turns in feeding the chicks. Peak feeding activity was noticed to be around middle of the day. The main sources of food and water for the storks were the canals and wetlands surrounding the nesting site and the village. A tributary of the Ganga flows 1–1.5 km away from the nesting site.

During the entire nesting period, despite the close proximity of the two species' nests, we recorded no instance of inter-species conflict. Neither did the human presence around the site pose a threat. A talk with the villagers also saw them taking up the onus of protecting the birds.

According to Ali & Ripley (1987), the Woolly-necked Stork breeds from July–October in northern India. Vyas & Tomar (2007) recorded breeding in July–November in Chambal River valley near Kota, Rajasthan. Ishtiaq *et al*. (2004) mention the nesting season as beginning before June and lasting through September. In comparison, the Raghopur nesting period ranged from August–December. The height at which nests are built according to Ali & Ripley (1987) is around 20–30 m in northern India; while in Raghopur the nest was built 18–20 m off the ground. Ali & Ripley (1987) also report a clutch size of 3–4 eggs, rarely five.

There exists little documentation of successful breeding of stork species from Bihar like that of the Asian Open-billed, Black-necked *Ephippiorhynchus asiaticus*, Lesser Adjutant *Leptoptilos javanicus* and Greater Adjutant *L. dubius* (Choudhary *et al*. 2007, 2008, 2010, 2011; Mishra *et al*. 2005, 2010), and we felt this note would be an addition to such records from Bihar.

## Conclusion

The observations above conclude that the Woolly-necked Stork successfully bred at Raghopur, raising three chicks by late December 2010. The availability of flood, favorable ecological conditions, security provided by the villagers to the nesting birds and awareness created by the members of Mandar Nature Club of Bhagalpur among the local community were also major contributing factors. We hope these birds significantly increase in numbers in the future.


## Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the villagers of Raghopur for their cooperation during our field study. We convey our thanks to Amita Moitra, Sunil Agrawal, Arvind Mishra, T. K. Pan, and Nilesh Lal of Mandar Nature Club, Bhagalpur for their valuable suggestions.


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# Whooper Swan *Cygnus cygnus* in Pong Dam, Himachal Pradesh, India

Devinder Singh Dhadwal

**95.** Whooper Swan *Cygnus cygnus* in flight at Pong Dam, Himachal Pradesh.

Dhadwal, D. S., 2013. Whooper Swan *Cygnus cygnus* in Pong Dam, Himachal Pradesh, India. *Indian BIRDS* 8 (4): 95.
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*Manuscript received on 11 February 2013.*

Situated on the Beas River, Pong Dam Lake Sanctuary in Himachal Pradesh (31°58'N, 75°56'E) is the largest man-made wetland in northern India. The entire catchment area is 12,562 km$^2$. Within this, suitable habitat for migratory birds extends over 306 km$^2$, making Pong possibly the first significant stopover after a trans-Himalaya journey. It was designated a Ramsar Site in 2002 and extends into Kangra, Mandi, and Kullu districts.

Having spent ten years at Pong Dam Lake Sanctuary as Forest Range Officer from June 2003 to February 2012, I received tremendous opportunity to observe at close quarters the bio-diversity of the lake and understand various concerns surrounding its conservation. Following a promotion in February 2012, I spent a brief stint as the Deputy Director at the Great Himalayan National Park in Himachal Pradesh. Keeping in view the importance of Pong, I soon found myself transferred as Assistant Conservator of Forests at Dharamshala in June 2012 by the Government.

From the headquarters at Dharamshala, unable to visit Pong as frequently as earlier when I was posted in the area, I kept seeking all possible excuses to drop by. Because the vastness of Pong makes it impossible to cover it in totality, I frequented only important fragile areas on the look out for vagrant species or passage migrants. These important locations are Nagrota Surian, Dehar Khad, Sansarpur Terrace, Dehra Gopipur, and Guglara. On 29 January 2013, I found the perfect excuse to go there, as I was deputed to carry out a 'pre-census preparedness' survey at the sanctuary. Leaving early from Dharamshala, I found myself at Sansarpur Terrace swamps by 0800 hrs.

I spent the forenoon in these swamps and then decided to visit Dehar Khad via Guglara. Boarding a motorboat at 1430 hrs I set out for these areas that I knew well over the years, but with excitement still alive. Flocks of ducks, geese, and Great Cormorants *Phalacrocorax carbo* were seen on the way.

Photos: D.S. Dhadwal

**96.** Whooper Swan *Cygnus cygnus* pair photographed at Pong Dam, Himachal Pradesh.

I always make it a point to visit where Dehar Khad meets the main lake, as the area never fails to attract Common Shelducks *Tadorna tadorna* and Pied Avocets *Recurvirostra avosetta* along with other common waterfowl. I focused my binoculars on a patch of white moving in a distance to ascertain roughly 32 shelducks and 35 avocets. I was happy to still find them a year later at the same location.

I was about to ask the boatman Dilbag Singh and Deputy Ranger Joginder Singh to steer us towards Nagrota Surian for the evening when I spotted snowy white patches from a distance through my binoculars. I ask Dilbag to take the boat little closer to the mudflats to inspect the unusual movements. I was surprised to see two big birds sitting deep inside where it was impossible to get closer. I took a few photographs [**95, 96**] as evidence and signalled to the boatman to switch off the motor so as not to disturb the pair. We spent some time watching the birds and moved onwards.

I was thrilled at the unexpected sighting, but was yet to ascertain the identity of the species despite having been a birder for several years. I kept wondering on our way back if they were domestic ducks or crossbreeds of some species. I was also hoping it would be a new species, the 418$^{th}$ record for the lake. My field guide was not with me during the boat ride, but the moment we reached the forest guesthouse at Nagrota in the evening, I immediately reached for the guide. It turned out to be the Whooper Swan and a definite new sighting at the Ramsar Site.

While busy discussing with my fellow colleagues and staff that night, telephone calls began flooding in from birder friends who had come across photos I uploaded of the swans on the Oriental Bird Group and Delhi Bird Group (Delhibirdpix 2013) upon my return from the site. I was told that I was the first photographer to capture this rare species. Surfing the Internet reading up on the reports, I was thrilled about being able to spot the species in my dreamland of Pong.

The last known record of this elusive species, shot on the Beas River was by Aitken (1900). From January the same year, a record was also left by Gen. Osborne (Osborn 1909) at Talwara, near Pong. Notes by Hume (1878) have recorded the bird as well.

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# A photographic record of the White-winged Wood-duck *Asarcornis scutulata* from Pakke Tiger Reserve, Arunachal Pradesh, India

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Selvan, K. M., Lyngdoh, S., Habib, B., & Gopi, G. V., 2013. A photographic record of the White-winged Wood-duck *Asarcornis scutulata* from Pakke Tiger Reserve, Arunachal Pradesh, India. *Indian BIRDS* 8 (4): 96–97.

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*Manuscript received on 4 May 2012*

The White-winged Wood-duck *Asarcornis scutulata* is native to Asia and ranges across north-eastern India, Bhutan (Choudhury 2007), Myanmar (Yin & Tun 1977), Bangladesh, Vietnam, Thailand, Cambodia, and Indonesia (Green 1992; Choudhury 1996, 2000). Once widely distributed through South-east Asia to Java and Sumatra, it is now considered extinct in Java and Malaysia (BirdLife International 2012). In north-eastern India, species distribution centres mostly in Assam (Ali and Ripley 1987; Choudhury 2002; Choudhury 2006), Arunachal Pradesh (Talukdar 1992) and Manipur (Higgins 1913). It mainly inhabits swampy areas and remote rainforests at altitudes ranging from 200 m to 1400 m above msl. Globally, less than 800 individuals are estimated to be left in the wild, of which 450 individuals are known to be present in India (BirdLife International 2012). The species is considered Endangered according to the IUCN Red List and a Schedule I species under the Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972. The species has been sighted on few occasions (Datta *et al.* 1999) in Pakke Tiger Reserve (PTR), Arunachal Pradesh and in Nameri National Park (Das 1995; Das & Deori 2012) in Assam, adjacent to PTR. Here we report a recent sighting and photo record of the species from PTR. Previous reported sightings of the White-winged Wood-duck from said area are from January 1991 and April 1992 (Choudhury 1995; Singh 1991; Datta *et al.* 1999). A more recent record from Arunachal Pradesh was from Namdhapha Tiger Reserve, when two females and one male were sighted at an altitude of 1705 m asl (Umesh *et al.* 2010).

In June 2009, the Wildlife Institute of India and Department of Science and Technology under the Government of India initiated a project on the dhole *Cuon alpinus* in PTR. Since then we have been systematically recording and maintaining an avifaunal checklist. We first sighted a pair of White-winged Wood-ducks in February 2010 [**97**] in a small muddy pool (27°00'N, 92°53'E; 220 m above msl), about two kilometres away from the Dekorai anti-poaching camp in PTR. The forest type where the sighting occurred was tropical evergreen dominated by *Syzygium cumini, Dillenia indica,* and *Duabanga* sp. (Champion & Seth 1968). During the entire duration of our research from June 2009 to April 2011, we managed to sight the species only once.

64% of total geographical area in north-eastern India is under forest cover (Champion & Seth 1968). However, this is rapidly declining across the region. The already small and fragmented population of the White-winged Wood-duck, is threatened by extinction due to the rainforest habitat destruction; especially disturbances in riparian forests. In much of its range, hunting and egg collection are also possible reasons for their decline. The survival of the species mainly depends on the protection of dense and undisturbed primary rainforest. Many gaps exist in our knowledge of the species pertaining to its basic biology, behaviour, habitat preferences, and population status exist. Long-term studies are required to fill this void and especially to ensure the species' survival in this Himalayan biodiversity hotspot of north-eastern India.

## Acknowledgements

The authors are thankful to the Department of Science and Technology, Government of India for financial assistance to carry out the study on the dhole *Cuon alpinus*. Thanks are also due to P. R. Sinha, Director, and V. B. Mathur, Dean at the Wildlife Institute of India for their continued guidance and support. Manas and Juley are thanked for their assistance in the field. We thank the Dept., Environment & Forests, Govt., of Arunachal Pradesh, and Tana Tapi, DFO, Pakke Tiger Reserve, for permissions and field support.

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# Sabine's Gull *Xema sabini* from Puthankadapuram, Kerala, India: a first record for South Asia

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Sreenivasan, P. P., Praveen J., Prince, M., & Karuthedathu, D., 2013. Sabine's Gull *Xema sabini* from Puthankadapuram, Kerala, India: a first record for South Asia. *Indian BIRDS* 8 (4): 97–99.

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Sabine's Gull *Xema sabini* is a long distance migrant. Mainly pelagic, it breeds in the Arctic and has a circumpolar distribution through northernmost North America and Eurasia (Olsen & Larsson 2003). It migrates south during autumn, winters in the cold waters of the Humboldt Current off the coast of Peru and Ecuador, and off south-west Africa in the Benguela Current region (Burger & Gochfeld 1996). It is a small gull, which can only be potentially confused with a first-winter Black-legged Kittiwake *Rissa tridactyla*. However distinctive features discussed later in this note, separate this species from the Kittiwake. The gull has not been reported previously from South Asia (Rasmussen & Anderton 2012). In the Oriental Region, there is a breeding population in north-eastern Siberia and there exist records from Japan, Korea, and Sumatra (Olsen & Larsson 2003). It has also been seen in the equatorial and northern Indian Ocean from Mozambique and Somalia (Olsen & Larsson 2003).

This note describes the sighting of a single, possibly second-summer Sabine's Gull from Puthankadapuram beach, Thrissur district, Kerala (10°35'N, 75°59'E), which is *c.* 5 km from the nearest town of Chavakkad.

A solitary gull appearing similar to a Kittiwake, was photographed by PPS on 3 May 2013 at 0830 hrs along with a mixed flock of tern species. PPS posted two pictures [**98, 99**], on the Birdwatchers of Kerala Facebook discussion group showing the bird sitting on the beach; one picture showed a Common Tern *Sterna hirundo* for size comparison [**100**].

Since the Black-legged Kittiwake was recorded from the same site in February 2013 (Das *et al.* 2013), PJ and DK initially thought the gull to be that species. The black colouration on the nape matched with a first-winter Kittiwake, but the bi-coloured beak, prominent white tips to the flight feathers, lack of a dark carpal bar while the bird was at rest, and the absence of a dark patch behind the eyes made identification inconclusive. PPS saw the bird once again on the morning of 4 May but could not photograph it. PJ and PPS together analysed more photographs on the same evening—and one hazy photograph of the bird in flight [**101**] had the same upper wing plumage as a Sabine's Gull. Realising the rarity, PJ contacted MP and DK immediately and sent them the photograph for further analysis. Meanwhile, PJ & PPS could not find the bird amidst flocks of terns on 5 May despite an extensive search.

The direct size comparison with a visibly smaller Common Tern in the picture tilted the discussion heavily towards a Kittiwake. The bi-coloured beak, which is a distinctive feature of Sabine's, could be argued also for a Kittiwake, resembling the transition from the black beak of a first-winter to the yellow of an adult (a second calendar year bird). The absence of a dark carpal bar, a feature for Sabine's, could also stand for a Kittiwake that had moulted its dark "M" feathers to yield a more Sabine's-like upper wing pattern. The bill and head shape were a bit tricky to assess from photographs as they depended on the angle from which the picture was shot. The bird in the photos neither rendered a 'cute' small-billed appearance, nor the characteristic rounded head of a Sabine's. The shape of the bill, particularly the upper mandible, did definitely not fit the description of a Kittiwake either. The legs appeared clearly longer, much longer than of individuals in any Kittiwake photographs and were distinctly flesh-coloured, which favoured an immature Sabine's; although leg colouration can be variable in Kittiwakes. Though the Kittiwake certainly bears white tips on its primaries, the amount of

Photos: P.P. Sreenivasan

**98.** Sabine's Gull *Xema sabini*

**99.** Sabine's Gull *Xema sabini*

white on this bird was extensive and fit the Sabine's. The extent of black on the nape possessed by this bird seemed to fit well for a first-summer Sabine's. While a similar pattern is seen in first-winter Kittiwakes, the extensive black colouration did not seem characteristic even of a Kittiwake transitioning out of its first winter plumage. Having completely moulted its dark carpal "M" it would have been expected to show a whiter nape as well. In summary, while there were a few reasons to consider the Kittiwake, most features seemed more appropriate for a Sabine's Gull.

After concluding that there was no other species close enough to be considered, PJ circulated the pictures to Bill Harvey and Krys Kazmierczak who readily concurred that this was clearly a Sabine's Gull and suggested an adult in its winter plumage initially as the month of sighting was not communicated. When the images were posted on the Oriental Birding discussion group, Roy Hargreaves suggested a first-summer bird over an adult winter for reasons given below. However, discussions with Klaus Malling Olsen brought out the possibility that it could be a second-summer bird and the same is discussed below.

To eliminate the obvious plumages, adult-summer can be ruled out, as the bird does not have a completely dark head. It is clearly not a first-winter bird as it shows clean grey wing coverts, with no sign of brown or scaly upper-wing coverts. A first-winter bird should also show a dark tail-band, absent in this bird. An adult-winter Sabine's would be a fitting combination but for its known moulting pattern. Unlike all other gulls, Sabine's Gull undergoes a full moult in spring and should have a fully dark head by early April, with birds in May expected to bear near-adult plumage. The amount of black on the head of the specific individual under question was quite extensive for an adult–winter, whilst the bi-coloured beak was not as contrasting as a regular adult, hence a first-summer bird could be considered. However this bird shows an extensive pale bill-tip, a feature considered to be more typical of an adult-winter than a first-summer. Another probable feature of immaturity is that the legs appear a pale fleshy colour, atypical for a winter adult. In conclusion, the bird showed mostly adult features but with a few small signs of immaturity. Since it had not developed the full summer plumage but seemed to be in retarded winter plumage, the features overall fit better with a second-summer bird. It is considered not unusual for birds turning up away from their regular locations to show an atypical, or delayed moult (Olsen, pers. comm. May 2013)

The two closest sightings of Sabine's Gull, to Puthankadapuram, are nearly 3,000 km away on either side of the Indian Ocean. One was reported from Sumatra on 22 October 1984 (Andrews 1985) while another report exists of a first-summer bird from Somalia on 11 May 1981 (Ash 1983). The May sighting on the Somali coast was made amidst a flock of terns and the size was indicated as an intermediate between Greater Crested Tern *Thalasseus bergii* and Common Tern, and more similar to Lesser Crested Tern *T. benghalensis*. This matched with our observation too. Considering this species has occurred on the western coast of India, it is unlikely that the bird

**100.** Relative size of Sabine's Gull versus Common Tern *Sterna hirundo*.

**101.** Sabine's Gull in flight.

belongs to the Siberian breeding population, which winters on the western coast of South America. It is more likely that the bird strayed from the Atlantic wintering population that regularly occurs off South Africa on its northerly journey, and had flown north-east instead of north. This would take it across the Arabian Sea to first land on the south-western coast of India. A study of the weather reports in the northern Indian Ocean or Arabian Sea does not indicate any strong north-westerly winds or cyclonic activity during the last week of April or first week of May (http://www.wunderground.com). For this reason, it is considered likely that the bird was disoriented during navigation rather than forced off its route by harsh weather, a phenomenon more regularly observed in immature birds.

## Acknowledgements

We wish to thank Bill Harvey, Krys Kazmierczak, Klaus Malling Olsen, Roy Hargreaves, Ian Broadbent, Raf Drijvers and Andy Musgrove for the discussions on identification, range and ageing.

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# Red Phalarope *Phalaropus fulicaria* at Tal Chhapar, Churu district, Rajasthan: the fourth record for the Indian Subcontinent

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*Manuscript received on 9 March 2013.*

Small and graceful, the phalaropes are the most specialised swimmers among waders. They have lobed, partially webbed feet, laterally flattened tarsii that reduce underwater drag, and plumage like that of a duck on their underparts, which provides a layer of trapped air on which they float as light as a cork! (Perrins 2003). There are only three species of phalaropes in a single genus, all of which breed in the northern hemisphere: Wilson's Phalarope *Phalaropus tricolor*, Red-necked Phalarope *P. lobatus,* and Red Phalarope *P. fulicaria*. All are migratory and well known for their 'spinning' as they swim in shallow water. All three species have reversed sexual roles, with the more brightly coloured breeding females being both strongly territorial and polyandrous, laying clutches for more than one male (Paulson 2005).

In the Indian Subcontinent Red-necked Phalarope and Red Phalarope are recorded (Grimmett *et al.* 1998, 2011; Kazmierczak 2000; Rasmussen & Anderton 2012). Both these species are circumpolar, Arctic and High Arctic breeders that spend the non-breeding season at sea. Both species winter in the South Pacific, with the Red-necked Phalarope also breeding in the Arabian Sea, and the Red Phalarope in the Atlantic off Africa. Red-necked Phalaropes in Europe and Asia migrate overland, and are sometimes encountered in some numbers on inland wetlands, but Red Phalaropes occur only inland when storm-driven (Chandler 2009).

On the morning of 18 April 2012 SSP found a phalarope foraging in a small wetland near Tal Chhappar (28°27′N 73°47′E), Churu district, Rajasthan, and discussed with HSS and MS about its identity. He sent them images of the bird that same evening.

**102.** Red Phalarope *Phalaropus fulicaria* at Tal Chhappar. Photo: Gaurav Bhatnagar.

**Table 1.** Records of Red Pharalope *Phalaropus fulicaria* from the Indian Subcontinent

| Location | Date | Remarks | Reference |
|---|---|---|---|
| Kolkota environs, West Begnal | 11 May 1846 | A specimen 'in winter plumage' collected by Edward Blyth in Kolkata market | Hume 1879 |
| Rawalsar Lake, near Islamabad, Pakistan | 18-20 August 1987 | An adult moulting out of breeding plumage | Mallalieu 2003 |
| Jor Bir, Bikaner district, Rajasthan | 7 May 1995 | One bird photographed | Sangha & Soni 2003 |

The phalarope was identified as Red Phalarope on the basis of several images of the bird taken by SSP. In early morning on 20 April 2012 we all went to look for the rare bird. It was spotted preening vigorously on a small islet at 0615 hours. Later it flew towards us and started foraging actively in water.

## Description

The Tal Chhapar bird was a typical moulting adult, probably in transitional plumage from first winter to first summer, showing a patchy mixture of plumage (full breeding plumage usually attained by early May). The bill was black, thick and short, unlike the needle-like bill of Red-necked Phalarope. The rich yellow colour at the base of the bill was quite conspicuous. A small blackish spot ('phalarope mark') just behind the eye and a small black smudge in front of the eye was on white head. The upperparts were uniform grey except for some hint of rufous and black on some feathers [**102**]. The wing tips reached tail tips, and a broad white wing-bar was visible in flight. The underparts were pure white and legs black.

## Behaviour

During our one hour of observation from 0615–0655 hrs and 0710–0725 hrs it was swimming with amazing buoyancy, as if barely touching the water and, foraging by visually, picking prey from the water's surface, occasionally submerging its bill completely. It was spinning in water to create a vortex, drawing nutrients to the surface. It was more active in the early morning session from 0615–0645 hrs than the later session. Most of the time it preferred to forage the area with submerged vegetation, foraging on insects and worms. In one of the pictures shot by SS it was possible to clearly see larvae, a daphnia and a possible artemia in the phalarope's bill. Twice it flew away but returned again to the site, lured by the food available there. It flew low, and rapidly over the water.

The bird was present at Tal Chhapar at least up to the afternoon of 27 April 2012.

## Discussion

The Red Phalarope is a vagrant to the Indian Subcontinent with only a few records up to date (Table 1). They have the most marine migration of any species of wader and migrate almost exclusively via sea routes to their main wintering areas and have been observed migrating 80–160 km offshore. They occur inshore or inland only under stress of weather (Chandler 2009). The marine non-breeding areas should be situated in tropical Atlantic, Pacific, and Indian Oceans but this is still not known precisely (Tamm 2004). The known winter concentration lies on plankton-rich Humbolt Current upswellings off Peru and Chile and the Benguela Current off western Africa (O'Brien *et al.* 2006). Several claims of sight records from the Arabian Sea are disputed although it has been argued that the species reaches the Arabian Sea irregularly or in small numbers. Overland passage to reach Arabian Sea would be atypical, and birds are rare in south Russia (Caspian, Kazakhstan) and Iraq. However, rare passage records from eastern Saudi Arabia, February–April records from African lakes (Cramp *et al*. 1983), one record from Mongolia in autumn 2004, one record from Hong Kong in May 2008 (www.orientalbirdimages.org), along with the six records from Indian Subcontinent (see elsewhere in this issue for two more sighting record) hint irregular movement.

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# Long-billed Dowitcher *Limnodromus scolopaceus* at Sultanpur National Park, Haryana, India

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Sharma, M., Sangha, H.S., Sridhar, S., & Abhinav, C., Long-billed Dowitcher *Limnodromus scolopaceus* at Sultanpur National park, Haryana, India. *Indian BIRDS* 8 (4): 101–103.

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*Manuscript received on 6 March 2013.*

On 2 March 2013, Martin Birch, Sanjay Sharma, and Atul Jain spotted a wader at Sultanpur National Park, Haryana, India which was initially identified as an Asian Dowitcher *Limnodromus semipalmatus*. Birch, who photographed it, suspected it to be one of the American dowitchers, most possibly a Long-billed Dowitcher *L. scolopaceus*. On 3 March 2013, while searching for the bird at Sultanpur, we saw a flock of waders disturbed by a Western Marsh-harrier *Circus aeruginosus*. The waders settled about 100 m from us and we found two dowitchers in the flock of Common Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*, Spotted Redshank *T. erythropus* and Wood Sandpiper *T. glareola*[**104**]. Due to their distance from us, the dowitchers were scoped and the following list of main features noted:

**Softparts:** The long bills of both the birds had basal half dull yellow at the base, rest being black, darkening towards the tip. The legs were greenish-yellow, although they appeared lemon-yellow in the afternoon sun.

**Upperparts:** Generally grey-brown, individual feathers with dark brown shafts; wing coverts and tertials appearing browner.

**Underparts: W**hitish, neck and breast washed uniformly grey, merging into whitish belly; flanks with distinct broad bars and spots.

**Tail:** Had quite wide black tail bars. Undertails barred with black.

**Head:** The crown was slightly darker grey than the grey on its neck, broad white supercilium from bill arching over eye and extending past the eye (at least in one bird), dark brown lores (very thick in one bird), almost black post-ocular stripe slightly exceeding supercilium and white on chin.

**Upperwing:** In flight, the secondaries seen from above had broad white tips. The greater coverts showed thin white tips.

**Structure:** The bird was perhaps more 'front heavy' and rounded, with a long snipe-like bill. While feeding, it appeared round-bodied.

The Long-billed Dowitcher occurs from north-central Siberia east to north-eastern Siberia, western Alaska, northern Yukon, western and central USA to Panama and French Guiana (Dickinson 2003). Sonobe & Usui (1993) record the species as a rare visitor to East Asia. Chandler (2009), and Rasmussen & Anderton (2012) record it as an uncommon vagrant to India. There are only five previous records of the species from the Indian Subcontinent, two of them perhaps the same record.

Short-billed Dowitcher *L. griseus* is very similar to Long-billed Dowitcher. Great care is required in identifying Long-billed Dowitcher, especially in its non-breeding plumage (Chandler 2009) as individuals in this phase provide the observer with the greatest difficulty (Chandler 1998). The two American species are similar in appearance and behaviour (Paulson 2005). According to Message & Taylor (2005), 'a combination of characteristic features rather than any one, apart from call, needs to be noted to separate these extremely similar species, particularly in worn breeding and non-breeding plumage.' The two species are best distinguished by characteristic calls. However, during our observations, we never heard the birds call.

No *deus ex machina* is available to assist with dowitcher identification in its winter plumage (Wallace 1980). However, a combination of detailed observations and several photographs helped us in concluding that the dowitchers at Sultanpur were indeed Long-billed Dowitchers.

According to Chandler (2009), 'female dowitchers have longer bills than the males. Since the bill length of these species overlap considerably, only the shortest-billed male Short-billed, and the longest-billed female Long-billed, can be identified on this character alone.' Svensson *et al*. (2009) feel, 'bill length overlaps extensively and is useful for extremes: twice head length or more indicates Long-billed, about 1.5 times head length indicates Short-billed.' One of the birds photographed showed bill length being double the size of head length, indicating the birds to be Long-billed Dowitchers, possibly a non-breeding female [**103**]. According to Message & Taylor (2005), 'the distal third of the bill on Short-billed Dowitcher usually appears slightly drooped compared with the very straight bill of Long-billed Dowitcher.' The birds seen at Sultanpur had very straight bills, indicating these to be Long-billed rather than Short-billed Dowitchers [**103**].

Hayman *et al*. (1986) state that the legs of the Long-billed Dowitcher are on average longer than a Short-billed Dowitcher.

**Table 1.** Records of Long-billed Dowitcher *Limnodromus scolopaceus* from India

| Date | Location | Remarks | References |
|---|---|---|---|
| 13–23 February 1997 | Keoladeo NP, Bharatpur, Rajasthan | Recorded on multiple days. | Robson 1997, Holt 1999, Rasmussen & Anderton 2012 |
| 11 May1997 | Harike, Punjab | Seen by Per Undeland and probably the same bird from Bharatpur. | Kazmierczak & Singh 2001, Per Undeland pers. comm. |
| 22 January 2001 | Keoladeo NP, Bharatpur, Rajasthan | | Robson 2002, Rasmussen & Anderton 2012 |
| 13 January 2008 | Khijadiya Sanctuary, Jamnagar, Gujarat | Unpublished Photo record of a single bird along with Asian Dowitcher. | Forsten & Lindholm 2013 |
| 16 February 2012 | Jamnagar, Gujarat | Unpublished Photo record of a single bird by Laurens Steijn. | Praveen J. pers. comm. |

Photos: S. Sridhar & C. Abhinav

**103.** Long-billed Dowitcher *Limnodromus scolopaceus* showing very long straight bill.

Photo: Manoj Sharma

**105.** Long-billed Dowitcher showing its long legs & broader black bars in tail feathers.

The birds had longish legs with long tibia, indicating Long-billed Dowitcher [**105**].

The tail feathers of both the species are barred black and white with the Long-billed Dowitcher showing black bars wider than white and Short-billed Dowitcher showing white bars equal to or wider than the black bars (Chandler 2009). The birds seen in flight and from various angles while preening clearly showed broader black bars on the tail feathers [**105**].

Long-billed Dowitcher in non-breeding plumage shows unspeckled grey on throat and entire breast, whereas throat and upper breast of non-breeding Short-billed Dowitcher is light grey, finely speckled with lower edge of breast often spotted (Hayman *et al*. 1998). Svensson *et al*. (2009) find Long-billed Dowitcher in winter to have, 'whole breast grey with rather abrupt border against white belly.' The birds seen by us showed grey throat and breast that was unspeckled and had no spotting but an abrupt border against white belly [**106**].

Tertials and primary tips of Long-billed Dowitcher are equal in adults and normally fall short of tail-tips, and those of Short-billed Dowitcher extend beyond (Message & Taylor 2005). The birds seen from various angles showed tertials and primary tips to be equal and a little short of tail end [**106**].

Another useful, though by no means absolute, distinction between these two species is Short-billed's preference for brackish or saline coastal wetlands, and Long-billed's preference for freshwater habitats (Chandler 2009). On migration and in winter the Long-billed Dowitcher is mainly found at freshwater sites, such as marshes and drying lake shores (del Hoyo *et al*.1996). Although the birds at Sultanpur were in suitable habitat for a Long-billed Dowitcher, one would expect these to break down where vagrants are concerned.

Some of the feathers on the rear scapulars on one of the birds showed rufous fringes and dark brown centres, indicating these to be retained juvenile feathers, a combination indicating a first-winter Long-billed Dowitcher. The scapulars on the Short-billed Dowitcher juvenile show wavy internal markings. Holt (1999) based this feature to be a significant identification feature for the bird seen at Keoladeo National Park during February 1997.

Photos of the birds from Sultanpur were sent to Alvaro Jaramillo, who comes across the species commonly in the new world. In his email dated 24 June 2013 (pers. comm. Aasheesh Pittie) he confirms these to be Long-billed Dowitcher based on features including structure, long and straight beak with no kink at the end, shallow bill base and dark breast coloration.

Though a vagrant, the Long-billed Dowitcher is comparatively regular to the western Palearctic with many records from Asia whereas the Short-billed Dowitcher is a scarce visitor to parts of western Palearctic, restricted mostly to Europe.

Although this is the sixth record of Long-billed Dowitcher for the Indian Subcontinent, it was not altogether unexpected. The species breeds in Alaska andnorth-eastern Siberia and there have been several records from various parts of Asia: 'in excess of 30 records' in Japan (Brazil 1991), at least six from Hong Kong (Carey 1996), from Oman (Foster & Greaves 1986), and from Bali, Brunei, and Thailand (Hayman *et al*. 1986).

The Long-billed Dowitchers were last seen on 30 March 2013 at Sultanpur (Sanjay Sharma *pers. com., verbally*).

## Acknowledgements

We thank Martin Birch for finding the bird and showing it to others and Sanjay Sharma,

**104.** Long-billed Dowitcher pair with Greenshank.

Photos: S. Sridhar & C. Abhinav

**106.** Long-billed Dowitcher showing grey breast with abrupt border against white belly.

Atul Jain, and Soma Ateesh for all their help in the field. MS wants to thank Aasheesh Pittie, Praveen J. and Vivek Tiwari for their help with the unpublished Gujarat records, Laurens Steijn for sharing his unpublished photos from Gujarat coast and Alvaro Jaramillo for his valuable comments on the identification features. HSS also thanks Per Undeland for supplying unpublished information and Paul Holt for his help.

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# Red Phalarope *Phalaropus fulicaria:* An addition to the avifauna of Peninsular India

Tejinder Singh Rawal, Hemant Kumar & Kuldeep Shukla

Rawal, T.S., Kumar, H., & Shukla, K., 2013. Red Phalarope *Phalaropus fulicaria:* An addition to the avifauna of Peninsular India. *Indian BIRDS* 8 (4): 103–104.
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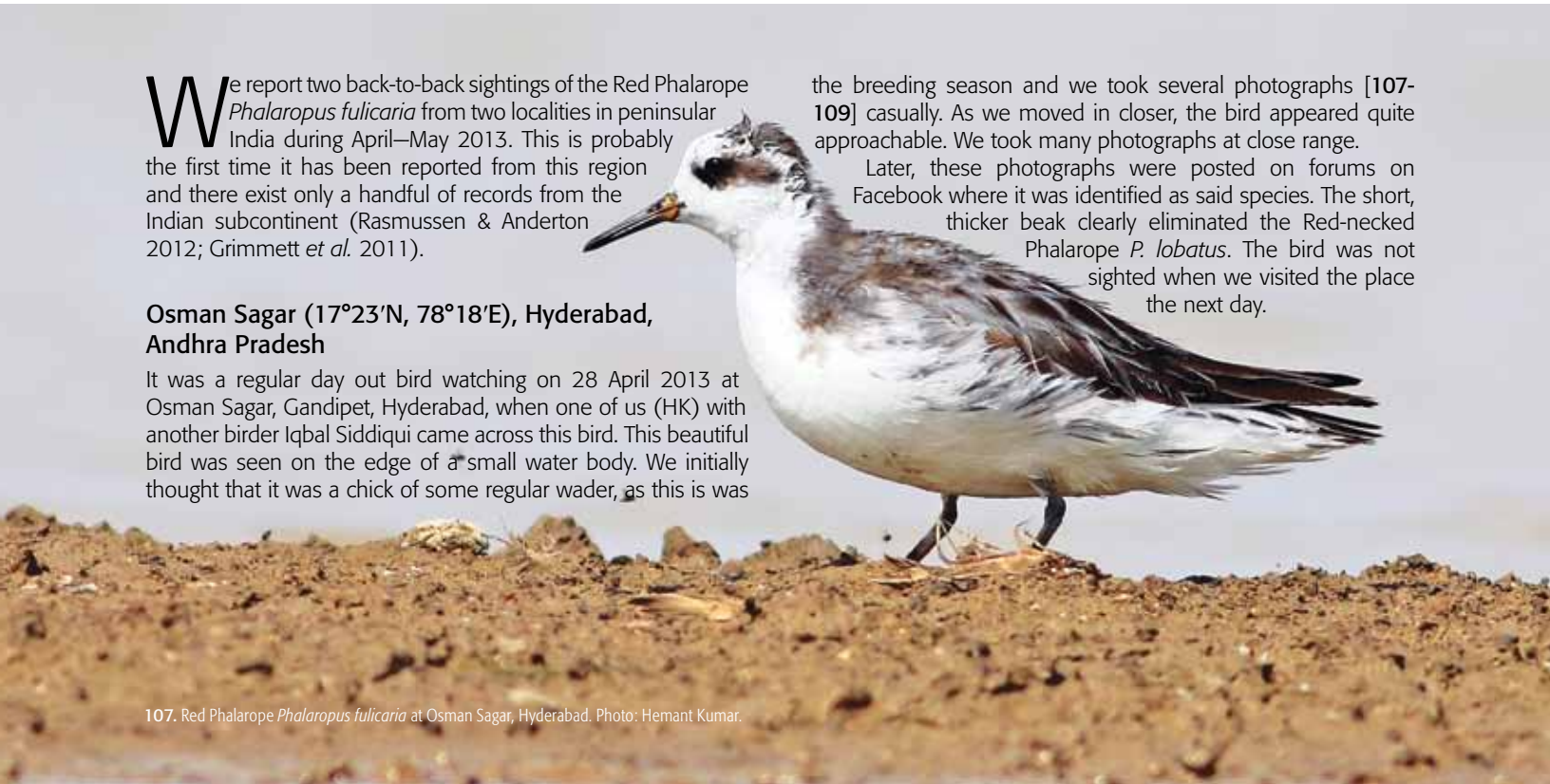
We report two back-to-back sightings of the Red Phalarope *Phalaropus fulicaria* from two localities in peninsular India during April—May 2013. This is probably the first time it has been reported from this region and there exist only a handful of records from the Indian subcontinent (Rasmussen & Anderton 2012; Grimmett *et al.* 2011).

### Osman Sagar (17°23′N, 78°18′E), Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh

It was a regular day out bird watching on 28 April 2013 at Osman Sagar, Gandipet, Hyderabad, when one of us (HK) with another birder Iqbal Siddiqui came across this bird. This beautiful bird was seen on the edge of a small water body. We initially thought that it was a chick of some regular wader, as this is was the breeding season and we took several photographs [**107-109**] casually. As we moved in closer, the bird appeared quite approachable. We took many photographs at close range.

Later, these photographs were posted on forums on Facebook where it was identified as said species. The short, thicker beak clearly eliminated the Red-necked Phalarope *P. lobatus*. The bird was not sighted when we visited the place the next day.



**107.** Red Phalarope *Phalaropus fulicaria* at Osman Sagar, Hyderabad. Photo: Hemant Kumar.

**108.** Red Phalarope at Osman Sagar, Hyderabad.

**109.** Red Phalarope at Osman Sagar, Hyderabad.

Photos: Hemant Kumar

## Wena Lake (21°09'N 78°52'E), Nagpur, Maharashtra

We (TSR & KS) could not have been in for better luck. We were birding at a lake around Nagpur (21°09'N 78°52'E) on 1 May 2013, and we noticed a bird dabbling like a duck, but looking more like a shore bird. KS suggested that it was certainly a sea bird. Using the method of elimination, we both knew that we had struck gold: none of the known species came in closer to its description. Later when we discovered that it was the Red Phalarope after sharing pictures [**110-112**] on Facebook forums, our joy knew no bounds.

It was swimming in the shallower part of the lake and would create a whirlpool around itself, feeding on insects and small fish disturbed in the pool. The bird allowed us to approach it as close as just a meter away from where we stood. We spend almost an hour taking pictures of the bird. Its forehead, throat, and under parts were white. A blackish-grey cap extended onto the hind neck, and a dark mark through and behind the eye also extended on to the hind neck. The upper parts and wings retained some dark juvenile feathers, and the bird seems to be a second-winter juvenile. The short, straight, stout bill was yellow at the base. The species is likely to be confused with Red-necked Phalarope, which has a slender needle-like, pointed, blackish bill, and is smaller than the latter.

## Discussion

The bird is a surprise vagrant not only to the sites where it was found, but for the Indian sub-continent as well. Though the birds were seen back-to-back within a span of three days; from the plumage characteristics, they appear to be different individuals. Our hypothesis is that these birds made a small stopover while traveling to the Arctic. We feel that even the path they had taken was not the routine migration route and they might have lost their way. However, what made the birds come so deep inland, far away from its natural habitat, remains a mystery for us.

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**110-112.** Red phalarope individual sighted at Nagpur, Maharashtra. Photos: Tejinder Singh Rawal

# First record of Rufous-throated Wren-babbler *Spelaeornis caudatus* from Buxa Tiger Reserve, West Bengal, India

Biswapriya Rahut

Rahut, B., 2013. First record of Rufous-throated Wren-babbler *Spelaeornis caudatus* from Buxa Tiger Reserve, West Bengal, India. *Indian BIRDS* 8 (4): 105–106.
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*Manuscript received on 30 January 2013.*

The Rufous-throated Wren-babbler *Spelaeornis caudatus* is a member of the Timaliidae. Owing to its restricted global range and an assumed moderately small population, which is likely to be in decline due to loss of habitat, the species has been categorised as 'Near Threatened' (BirdLife International 2013).

The Rufous-throated Wren-babbler has a known historic range from eastern Nepal, where it is a scarce resident (Inskipp & Inskipp 1991), into Sikkim and northern West Bengal (Darjeeling district), then across Bhutan to central Arunachal Pradesh—at least (Rasmussen & Anderton 2005). As it is a highly skulking species and easily overlooked, further research may reveal it to be more widespread and abundant than current records imply (BirdLife International 2013).

The global population of the species has not been quantified, but the species is described as very rare in Nepal, frequently recorded in Bhutan, and locally common in India (del Hoyo *et al*. 2007).

The Rufous-throated Wren-babbler occurs in dense damp undergrowth of broadleaved evergreen forest, often in steep gullies, especially where ferns, mossy rocks and fallen trees abound, from 1,500 m to 2,500 m, and perhaps occasionally to 3,100 m (BirdLife International 2013).

Though the species is frequently met with in the Sikkim Himalayas as well as the Darjeeling Himalayas, there is no record of this wren-babbler from Buxa Tiger Reserve, which lies in the far eastern corner of northern West Bengal (26°30–26°48'N, 89°25'–89°55'E). Based on available records this appears to be the first documented sighting of the species in northern West Bengal outside Darjeeling district.

Photo: B. Rahut

**113.** Rufous-throated Wren-Babbler *Spelaeornis caudatus*.

Neither Inglis (1952–1966), nor Stevens (1923–1925) reported the Rufous-throated Wren-babbler from Buxa Tiger Reserve. The species was further not reported by Allen *et al*. (1997), Sivakumar & Prakash (2003), and Sivakumar *et al*. (2006).

During one of my post-monsoon visits to the hills of the Buxa Tiger Reserve on 22 October 2012, at *c*. 1,800 m a.s.l., around 1600 hrs I heard the call of the Rufous-throated Wren-babbler. I was familiar with the call of the species, having seen, heard and photographed it on quite a few occasions in Sikkim and the Darjeeling area. It took me no time to identify the source of the call. It came from a narrow gully covered with moss and ferns. I played its pre-recorded song (originally recorded by Mathias Ritschard at Loleygaon on 19 January 2006) from my Mp3 player and the bird responded almost immediately. It came out of its cover and perched on a slender twig within close proximity, replying to the playback with its own call, which was noted as '*witchoo-witchoo-witchoo*.' From its plumage the bird appeared to be an immature, probably going into its first winter. The throat was more of a pale cinnamon colour than rufous, the cinnamon running down to the breast. The face and brow area were grey and a scale-like pattern was noticed spreading from the breast to the belly. Despite the very poor light conditions, I managed to take four photographs [**113**] before it again disappeared into the gully.

The next morning, on my way back from the overnight camp, I heard the Rufous-throated Wren-babbler calling again, from a place a little lower than the area where it was seen the previous day. I had not heard the bird during earlier field trips in July 2011 and November 2011, nor did I hear it on a later field trip in late December 2012. Further study is required to assess the status of the species in Buxa Tiger Reserve.

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# Spot-bellied Eagle Owl *Bubo nipalensis* in northern Eastern Ghats, Andhra Pradesh, India

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*Manuscript received on 6 August 2012.*

The Spot-bellied Eagle Owl *Bubo nipalensis* is a very large, chiefly nocturnal owl, native to Bangladesh, Bhutan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar, Nepal, Vietnam, Sri Lanka, Thailand, China, Cambodia and India (Grimmett *et al.* 1998). The species is considered 'Rare and Local' according to Rasmussen & Anderton (2012) in India. A resident, its range spans from the foothills of Uttaranchal to Arunachal (till Dafla hills at least), the hills of southern Assam (Khasi, Cachar and Lushai); Western Ghats south from Goa, the Shevaroy Hills (southern Eastern Ghats) and Sri Lanka; North of Eastern Ghats and Eastern Madhya Pradesh; Lowlands to 1200 m, occasionally 2100 m. It particularly favours heavy evergreen and moist deciduous tropical and subtropical broadleaved forests. The species is noted to be very bold, and has been recorded taking fairly large-sized mammals like hares, jackals, fawns, as well as giant squirrels, birds and reptiles. Though it hunts mainly in dense jungle, it has also been spotted at clearings near streams and scrub (Grimmett *et al.* 1998; Rasmussen & Anderton 2012).

There have been no records of the species from the northern and central Eastern Ghats previously. The earlier record from Shevaroy Hills (southern Eastern Ghats) dates from 25 May 1929 (Whistler & Kinnear 1935). This note documents possibly the first instance of the presence of the owl in the region, and a first record for the state of Andhra Pradesh. On 10 May 2011, P. Ram Rudra of Green Zone, a non-governmental organisation based in Hyderabad, brought to the attention of the Birdwatchers' Society of Andhra Pradesh (BSAP), an owl rescued from 'poachers' near the village of Maredumilli, in East Godavari district, Andhra Pradesh (Rudra 2011). The hilly region hosts rich tropical vegetation characteristic of the ghats; dense moist deciduous forests, with semi-evergreen and evergreen pockets along streams and valleys.

The owl was a large, pale-yellow bird with light spotting, and a pale yellow beak. Its breast was marked with thin 'v' shaped markings. Its primaries, secondaries and tail feathers were dark with heavy barring. The ear tufts were small. Its legs were a creamy

Photos: S. Srinivasan

**114.** The rescued juvenile Spot-bellied Eagle Owl *Bubo nipalensis* in an enclosure, Maredumilli.

**115.** The juvenile Spot-bellied Eagle Owl in the nocturnal enclosure at the Nehru Zoological Park in August 2011.

yellow. The bird was confirmed as a juvenile Spot-bellied Eagle Owl. It was housed in an enclosure at the state government's Vanavihari eco-tourism lodge at Maredumilli. There was, as we heard later, at least one adult around, which flew away at the time of capture. This indicates that the species is also perhaps breeding in the area.

On 14 May 2011, I visited the lodge along with P. Ram Rudra. The bird was kept in an open cage [**114**] and appeared to be agitated. It clacked its bill loudly when we approached the cage at close quarters. No other vocalisation was heard. By the time of our visit, the bird had already attempted to escape from the cage by getting out through a narrow gap, but did not fly very far. The bird showed no signs of any external injury, so we assumed that it had not yet begun to fly and was, hence, still dependent on its parent(s) for food. Given the circumstances it was brought in, immediate release in the area where it was captured was considered unsafe.

The bird was housed at and cared for by the staff at the lodge for two months. Stories began circulating around this time of large sums of money being offered for the bird. Given the prevalence of poaching, in the area, the very public knowledge of the status of the bird locally, and also that the bird was a juvenile still dependent on its parents, it was eventually deemed unviable to release the bird anywhere in the vicinity. The Forest Department eventually moved it to the nocturnal house at Nehru Zoological Park in Hyderabad [**115**] where it currently leads a lonely existence. As of July 2012, it has grown bigger [**116**], and looks much more like an adult.

The incident highlights the problem of hunting for bush-meat by local tribes and perhaps poaching that is rampant in the ghats. It also highlights an inadequacy on the part of various non-governmental and governmental agencies to effectively rehabilitate unfortunate birds such as these. Though this appears to be a new record for this species in Andhra Pradesh, what is sad is how this came to our notice.

**116.** The adult Spot-bellied Eagle Owl in July 2012.

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# The Himalayan Beautiful Rosefinch *Carpodacus pulcherrimus* in Sangla Valley, Kinnaur district, Himachal Pradesh

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Sangha, H. S., Singh, S., & Abhinav, C., 2013. The Himalayan Beautiful Rosefinch *Carpodacus pulcherrimus* in Sangla Valley, Kinnaur district, Himachal Pradesh. *Indian BIRDS* 8 (4): 108–109.

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*Manuscript received on 29 July 2012.*

The Himalayan Beautiful Rosefinch *Carpodacus pulcherrimus* belongs to large and highly diverse group of cardueline finches that occur in the high altitude Himalayan and trans-Himalayan areas, 'from Garhwal to Bhutan' (Ripley 1982), some never reaching down to the tree-line. All males of this group have predominantly pink, red, or vinous tones to their plumage, but are confusingly similar-looking. Indeed, female and juvenile rosefinches are among the most difficult groups to identify in the field.

Although four subspecies of *C. pulcherrimus* are recognised (del Hoyo *et al*. 2010), Rasmussen (2005) was 'struck' by the degree of morphological differences between several taxa long considered to be conspecific. Five rosefinch taxa formerly widely considered subspecies, including Himalayan Beautiful- *C. pulcherrimus*, and Chinese Beautiful- *C. davidianus* Rosefinches, are now considered distinct species due to morphological, and vocalisation differences. These two taxa were long treated as conspecific, and believed to intergrade in south-eastern Tibet.

*C. pulcherrimus* is morphologically a noticeably slimmer rosefinch, with a relatively longer, distinctly forked tail, and a smaller bill. Even the males appear relatively drab despite the large amount of pink below, since the under parts contrast little in tone with upper parts, and the flanks are heavily, crisply streaked. On the other hand male Chinese Beautiful are fairly bright pink with contracting plumage (Rasmussen 2005). Chinese Beautiful is a hypothetical species for the Indian Subcontinent due to uncorroborated or insufficiently diagnostic reports and lack of specimens (Rasmussen & Anderton 2005).

While birding at Chhitkul (31°21'N, 78°26'E), the last inhabited village near the Indo-Tibet border in Kinnaur district (Himachal Pradesh), during 8–11 May 2012 HSS and SS frequently saw Pink-browed Rosefinch *C. rodochroa*. Usually, about 20–25 individuals were seen every day. We also noticed some rosefinches that looked different from Pink-browed Rosefinch. Fortunately, SS was able to shoot some pictures of males of these birds, which looked different [**117-119**]. We easily identified them as Himalayan Beautiful Rosefinches. There were at least eight to nine wary birds in the open area with scattered montane scrub and bare crop fields (some farmers had just started sowing) along the Bapsa River that were observed day after day. They seemed inconspicuous and shy and were mostly observed foraging on the ground or in bushes. Evidently they had just arrived in the area from lower altitudes.

**117.** Male Himalayan Beautiful Rosefinch *Carpodacus pulcherrinus*.

**118.** Himalayan Beautiful Rosefinch *Carpodacus pulcherrinus*.

Photos: S. Singh

After our birding trip Puja Sharma (http://orientalbirdingimages.org/birdimages) and Gunjan Arora (*in litt*.) also saw and photographed Himalayan Beautiful Rosefinch at Chhitkul on 24–25 May 2012.

Presumably the species is resident in the area and likely to breed in the higher reaches as CA also recorded them on 5–7 May 2011 near Sangla, HP (31°25'N, 78°15'E). About six to eight birds were seen foraging with a Pink-browed Rosefinch flock in a recently ploughed field near the town (3,200 m).

The Himalayan Beautiful Rosefinch is a common resident, subject to vertical movements in the Himalayas from Garhwal east to Bhutan between *c*. 3,600 and 4,500 m., affecting rhododendron and other bushes on steep hillsides and above the tree-line in fairly dry biotope, and in northern and eastern Nepal, terraced cultivation and neighbouring bushes in high valleys (Ali & Ripley 1999). Spierenburg (2005) includes western Arunachal Pradesh in its distribution. While in northern Nepal it is a common resident, subject to altitudinal movements (Fleming *et al*. 1979; Inskipp & Inskipp 1985) its status is locally frequent in Arunachal Pradesh, uncertain elsewhere, with vey few recent published records (Grimmett *et al*. 1998). While the distribution map in Clement *et al*. (1999) does not include Kashmir (p. 66) it is wrongly mentioned in the text (p. 276). It probably occurs marginally in southern Tibet (S Xinjiang) (de Schauensee 1984; MacKinnon & Phillips 2000). In Bhutan it is an uncommon altitudinal migrant (Inskipp *et al*. 1999) and primarily a winter visitor. It therefore appears to be, primarily, a breeding bird of the Tibetan plateau, with no confirmed records in Bhutan (Spierenburg 2005).

Both Kazmierczak (2000) and Grimmett et al. (1998) have shown one isolated record on the distribution map but they have indicated the exact location as uncertain and are unspecific about the season. Rasmussen & Anderton (2005) presumed that the species is resident in Himachal Pradesh on the basis of collection made by Walter Koelz during winter months in 1930 and 1931. We are not aware of any authentic sighting of Himalayan Beautiful Rosefinch after Koelz's visit. Thus our sightings of the species from Sangla Valley are the first photographic record from Himachal Pradesh.

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Photos: S. Singh

**119.** Himalayan Beautiful Rosefinch *Carpodacus pulcherrinus*.

# Snapshot Sightings

## Eye-browed Thrush from Kolkata, West Bengal

Sumit Sengupta


An Eyebrowed Thrush *Turdus obscura* was photographed on 17 February 2013 from Rabindra Sarobar (22°30'N, 88°21'E), an artificial lake in the middle of Kolkata. Considered a winter visitor to Bhutan, Arunachal Pradesh and hills of S. Assam, it is a straggler elsewhere in the country (Rasmussen & Anderton 2005). The only record from the plains of West Bengal was in April 2009 from Chintamoni Kar WLS, near Kolkata city (www.orientalbirdimages.org) – presumably both records are of birds on passage.

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## Blue-eared Kingfisher from Kolhapur, Maharashtra

Amol S. Lokhande & Ningappa C. Hiragond


A Blue-eared Kingfisher *Alcedo meninting* was photographed on 3 December 2011 and on 2 January 2012 from Kalamba (16°42'N, 74°13'E), Kolhapur, Maharashtra. Prior reports of this species from Maharashtra are from the districts of Pune (Shivaprakash 2005), Sindhudurg (Santharam 1996) and Ratnagiri (Prasad 2004, Palkar 2009). It is probably a sporadic visitor to W. Maharashtra from more southerly regions.

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## Caspian Plover from Koonthakulam, Tamil Nadu

Suresh Elamon


About 5-6 Caspian Plovers *Charadrius asiaticus* were seen at Koonthakulam (8°29'N, 77°45'E), S. Tamil Nadu on 24th January 2013. Bal Pandy, who first reported these birds, thought they were White-tailed Lapwing *Vanellus leucurus*. Though considered a vagrant to India (Rasmussen & Anderton 2005), it has been reported from the wetlands of SE. coast of India in 1990 (Kazmierczak et al. 1993, Balachandran 1994) apart from W. Maharashtra, Delhi, Gujarat, Rajasthan, and Sri Lanka (Sangha et al. 2010).

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## Blue-cheeked Bee-eater from Kole Wetlands, Kerala

PP Sreenivasan


A single Blue-cheeked Bee-eater *Merops persicus* was photographed on 29 April 2013 from Uppungal (10°43'N, 75°58'E), Kole Wetlands in Central Kerala. There is only prior report of this species from S. India was from Goa (Holt 2009) and hence is a first record for Kerala. However, it is known to migrate across the Arabian sea during spring (Rasmussen & Anderton 2005) and hence should be expected from the W. coast of India.

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# Letters to the Editor

## Opportunistic feeding adaptation of Brown Crake *Amauronis akool*


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On the morning of 20 February 2012, while passing a culvert over the Nyari River—downstream of Nyari-1 dam at Rajkot, Gujarat—I saw five Brown Crakes *Amaurornis akool* moving vigorously in shallow water. Deepak Rindani, a fellow birder and friend was with me and we stopped to observe the birds better. Nearby, an Asian Open-billed Stork *Anastomus oscitans* was feeding on river oysters.

We observed the crakes collecting and bringing ashore oysters opened by the stork, and consuming what remained of the meat in the shells. There were many opened oyster shells lying around on the shore.

The dietary of the Brown Crake consists of "insects and their larva, mollusks, worms and seeds of marsh plants (Ali & Ripley 2007), but they do not mention the interesting behaviour we had observed. We found this opportunistic feeding adaptation by the crakes worth reporting.

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## Small Green Bee-eater *Merops orientalis* gritting

Small Green Bee-eater *Merops orientalis* is one of the most commonly seen bee-eater species in the country. Widely distributed through-out the subcontinent, it mainly inhabits open area near cultivation, forest clearings, fallow land and gardens. Its diet consists entirely of flying insects such as dragonflies, bees and wasps (Ali 2002).

I was birding in the campus of Salim Ali Centre for Ornithology and Natural History, Anaikatty Hills, Tamil Nadu (11$^0$05'N, 76$^0$47'E) on 25 March 2012. At roughly 1715 hrs I saw a solitary Small Green Bee-eater perched on an electric wire, frequently swooping down to the ground and returning to its post. After sometime, it sat on the gravel road and upon close observation, was seen consuming grit. The bird would take some grit in its beak; toss it in air several times — sometimes knocking the pieces of grit on ground repeatedly, reminiscent of its usual feeding behaviour— and swallow it. Perhaps the bird was trying to break the grit up into manageable pieces. Twice, it was seen trying to consume large-sized pieces of grit and abandoning them after tossing them a few times into the air and failing to catch them in its beak. While consuming grit it swallowed a small bit of paper as well.

Gritting has been widely studied in poultry, wild galliformes and waterfowl (Gionfriddo & Best 1999). Granivorous birds have been noted to consume grit more than frugivores or omnivores (Gionfriddo & Best 1996). Studies and reports on insectivorous species displaying the behaviour also abound (Barlow *et al.* 1963; Peterson & Ellarson 1977). In a study on Barn Swallows *Hirundo rustica*, adults were found offering particularly light-coloured grit to nestlings; half the particles were calcareous (Barrentine 1980). Jenkinson and Mengel (1970) reported the practice of eating stones as widespread in Caprimulgidae.

Small Green Bee-eaters almost exclusively feed on flying insects of the order Diptera and Hymenoptera (Ali 2002). Gritting may help them in facilitating breakdown of heavy chitinous bodies of beetles (Jenkinson & Mengel 1970; Barrentine 1980). It may also act as a mineral supplement to the diet of birds especially for calcium (Barrentine 1980; Gionfriddo & Best 1996). The grit consumed by a bird can have a number of functions, which may further vary between seasons. Intraspecific variations in the frequency of gritting by birds are also believed to vary with an individual's food preference, age, grit type and time of year and day (Verbeek 1994).

Grit consumption in bee-eaters has been well recorded in African and European bee-eaters (Fry 2010) but not reported from India.


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Gritting Small Green Bee-eater *Merops orientalis* Photo: Madhumita Panigrahi

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## Some comments on *Indian BIRDS* 8.1

I made a few observations on some of the articles published in *Indian BIRDS* 8.1, which I wish to share for the benefit of readers.

On the article about the nesting of Black Ibis *Pseudibis papillosa* on electric pylons by Sangha (2013), I would like to add a personal observation I made on the outskirts of Bangalore, near Krishnarajapuram. For a few years till quite recently, several Great Cormorants *Phalacrocorax carbo* used to regularly nest on pylons here. Several pylons were in use and each had several nests. Since I used to observe them from a moving vehicle, I never got to make closer observations on this. Perhaps Dr Subramanya may be able to give us more information on this unique heronry.

My second comment is on the "new" records of two species in the Western Ghats by Mehta & Kulkarni (2013). Regarding the Grey-headed Fish-eagle *Ichthyophaga ichthyaetus*, their statement "In Maharashtra, this species has been recorded from Tadoba Tiger Reserve (Naoroji 2006) but there is no earlier published record of its occurrence from western Maharashtra" is not true. Two specific records are quoted and another reference is made to its status around Bombay based on Humayun Abdulali's paper by Prasad (2004). The Flame-throated Bulbul *Pycnonotus gularis* too has already been recorded from the Thalket garden, Savantwadi, Sindhudurg district in 1995 by me (Prasad 2003).

I would consider it mandatory that authors of future papers on bird records in Maharashtra turn to the comprehensive compilation for western Maharashtra bird records by Anand Prasad. It remains one of the best works for any region in India in recent times, and is also available online freely at http://www.bnhsenvis.nic.in/writereaddata/BUCEROS_11.pdf. I also wish authors generally take time to look up the excellent online bibliography on birds of South Asia http://www.southasiaornith.in/, painstakingly compiled by Aasheesh Pittie before rushing to publish records.

Regarding Kurhade's (2013) observations on ringed Bar-headed Geese *Anser indicus*, there have been reports of Bar-headed geese, collared and/or ringed in Mongolia seen further south in Karnataka near Mysore, and Koonthakulam in Tamil Nadu. A simple search of the posts in Tamilbirds (http://in.groups.yahoo.com/group/Tamilbirds/) and Bngbirds (http://groups.yahoo.com/group/bngbirds/) yahoo groups reveals these instances.


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## On the importance of basic science…

I was pleased to find a note addressing commensalism between Greater Racket-tailed Drongo and Phayre's Langur in Tripura, India (*Indian BIRDS* 8 [3]: 68-69). Such notes concerning ecology and behaviour of birds, and the complex interactions between birds and other organisms, are a welcome change from the monotony of papers concerning bird records and range extensions that predominate Indian ornithology.

However, my pleasure on seeing this article was short-lived. I was struck by the lack of basic science in this study. The authors report commensalism and simply failed to demonstrate it. Rather, they merely presented prey capture rate data of drongos when they were associated with langurs. At the very least, to show commensalism, the basic principles of scientific inquiry dictate that they should have compared prey capture rates of drongos with and without langurs in the vicinity, and then made a simple statistical test for significance for any differences observed.

It would have been better if the authors had qualitatively described potential commensalism. Instead they attempted in vain to demonstrate the phenomenon by erroneous quantification and methodology.

The authors twice referred to insects (which actually should have been referred to generally as arthropods) 'falling' in reaction to the langurs. They were obviously referring to arthropods getting flushed by activity. A careful word choice and proof reading could have helped.

I have always admired *Indian BIRDS* for encouraging notes from amateurs. The editor and his team put in enormous efforts to polish and spruce up articles from amateurs prior to publication. What is disappointing in this case is that both the authors are apparently professionals, one affiliated with an institution of higher learning (offering advanced degrees in wildlife biology) and the other seated in a top wildlife-related government position. Papers like these do not inspire amateurs and professionals to pursue excellence in science. I urge *Indian BIRDS* to improve quality control by more rigorous peer-review, especially when the authors are professionals to be held to a higher standard. I also appeal to authors to follow the basic principles of scientific inquiry when embarking on a study and while writing up the manuscript for publication.


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## WORLD WETLANDS DAY CELEBRATION AT KOLLERU WILDLIFE SANCTUARY, ATTAPAKA ON FEBRUARY 2, 2013

With an apt theme of 'Wetlands and Water Management' the World Wetland's Day -2013 was celebrated at Kolleru Wildlife Sanctuary on 2nd February, 2013 by WWF in association with the Eluru WLM. The key objective of World Wetlands Day-2013 is to raise people's awareness of the interdependence between water and wetlands, to highlight ways to ensure the equitable sharing of water between different stakeholder groups and to understand that without wetlands there will be no water. A total of 326 participants which includes students, teachers different schools of Eluru, Kaikalur & Bhimavaram and Forest Department staff from Eluru WLM division were participated in the celebration. Mrs. Farida Tampal, State Director WWF-India, AP State Office has welcomed the chief guest, the guests of honour, students, teachers and other participants for the celebration. Mr. Deepak.R, Field Research cum Education Officer, WWF-India, AP State Office introduced the World Wetland Day -2013 theme and with the activities planned for the day. Mr. P. Gracious (Retd. ACF, Wildlife Management Division, Eluru) and Mr. Shashi Preetam (Music Director) were invited as guest of honour. Speaking on the occasion, Mr. Gracious shared his own experience with the Kolleru Lake and changes seen in the pelican population. He explained the nesting pattern of the Spot-billed Pelican *Pelecanus philippensis* on the artificial perches provided by the Forest Dept. Mr. Shashi Preetam said that wetlands form a unique abode for a variety of flora and fauna. He enlightened the crowd about various issues like carbon sequestration and Ramsar Convention which aims at protecting wetlands across the world. Mr. Rathnakumar, Forest Range Officer, Kaikalur Range was the chief guest. He spoke to the students on the importance of protecting the Kolleru Wildlife Sanctuary. He said that wetlands form a unique abode for a variety of flora and fauna. He said that AP has three major wetlands viz., Kolleru, Coringa and Krishna Wildlife Sanctuary and stressed on the importance of protecting these sites. Activities like bird watching, poster designing, wetland quiz, water race and migration headache games were conducted. Mrs. Farida Tampal congratulated the school students and the teachers for extending their support to the programme and to the speakers for their igniting the young budding minds and to Forest Range Officer, Kaikalur Range, Wildlife Management Division, Eluru for providing financial support. She also thanked Mr. P. Gracious and Mr. Shashi Preetam for their presence and enlightening speech during the celebration. The programme was extensively covered by the print and electronic media like Tv9, Eenadu newspaper, and Andhra Jyoti.

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