

# Black-legged Kittiwake *Rissa tridactyla* from Puthankadapuram, Kerala, India

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Black-legged Kittiwake *Rissa tridactyla* is a small gull (Laridae) that breeds in north Holarctic coasts and winters at sea in the northern hemisphere. Though pelagic, they are sometimes observed as a rare vagrant during the migratory season sometimes far inland. Such birds usually are driven in by storms or ill (Rasmussen & Anderton 2012).

This article describes the sighting of a Black-legged Kittiwake from Puthankadapuram beach in Thrissur district, Kerala (10°35'24"N, 75°59'24"E), which is c. 5 km from the nearest town of Chavakkad.



57. Close-up of a Black-legged Kittiwake *Rissa tridactyla*.



58. A Pair of Black-legged Kittiwake *Rissa tridactyla*.

On 25 December 2012, a lone Black-legged Kittiwake was observed at a distance, along with a flock of several other gull species including Black-headed Gull *Larus ridibundus* and Brown-headed Gull *L. brunnicephalus*. The identity could not be confirmed since there was no photograph. Later on 18 January 2013 one of the authors (PPS) again sighted and photographed a bird from the same site. On 24 January two birds were sighted and photographed from Puthankadapuram beach, close to a flock of Heuglin's Gull *L. heuglini*, Black-headed Gull and Brown-headed Gulls. The birds seemed very weak and did not fly when approached. Both birds had a dark region behind their eyes. One bird had a yellow beak with a greyish tip while the other had a pale yellow bill with a greyish tinge towards the mouth [57, 58]. The birds had a greyish-black nape and white towards the breast. When perched, the wings were greyish white with black tips. Since we have not come across the species before, we managed to get as many photographs as possible. Later the images were forwarded to several birdwatchers including Praveen J., Dipu K., and Mike Prince, and the bird was identified as first winter Black-legged Kittiwake by them.

Previous records of species from India include sightings from Goa, Alibag (Maharashtra), and Majuli Island (Assam) (Table 1). None of these have been published independently, however, good photographs are available for reference in [www.orientalbirdimages.org](http://www.orientalbirdimages.org). This shall be an addition to the bird list of Kerala (Sashikumar *et al.* 2011).

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Table 1: Records of Black-legged Kittiwake *Rissa tridactyla* from mainland India

Location	Date	Reference
Goa	16 January 2005	Newsome 2005
Alibag (Maharashtra)	24 November 2012	Rahane & Bramhankar 2013 (elsewhere in this issue)
Majuli Island (Assam)	30 November 2012	Chatterjee 2012