

A Great Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos major* in Nagaland

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In April–May 2014, our team spent about a week in Nagaland on a birding-cum-photography expedition. The intention was to explore and identify good habitats for lesser known birds, whose distribution is restricted to the hills south of the Brahmaputra River. On 01 May 2014, around 0830 hrs, we came across a female Great Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos major*, at a location that was about 30 kms from the village of Pungro (25.8°N, 94.833°E), Eastern Nagaland. This sighting was immediately after we saw a cacophonous mixed hunting flock comprising Yellow-throated Laughinthrushes *Dryonastes galbanus*, Spot-breasted Scimitar Babblers *Promatorhinus erythrocnemis*, and Spot-breasted Parrotbills *Paradoxornis guttaticollis*.

Photo: J. Kuriakose



23. Great Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos major*.

The habitat was recorded as dry hill slopes with pine trees *Pinus sp.* and tall grass. The woodpecker uttered a short, hard and loud, 'CHyek' call, while it flew into one of the pine trees, on which it scaled up a few meters, feeding, before it flew about 20 m across the road to another pine tree. This species is differentiated from the similar Himalayan Woodpecker *D. himalayensis* by its white shoulder patch and by the distinct separation of cheek and neck patches [23]. Its underparts are darker, and dirty buffish-brown with a black bar extending down the sides of its breast. A dark border to ear-coverts joins the nape. The bold red patch that is present in a male, was lacking, and hence the bird was thought to be a female.

Though not unexpected, this appears to be the first photographic record of this species from Nagaland. Ali & Ripley (1987) include Nagaland in its distribution range. Choudhury (2001, 2003) also lists it from the state, but does not mention a specific record. Earlier records of this species from India are

from Manipur (Rasmussen & Anderton 2012), where Walter N. Koelz collected ten specimens (UMMZ 144649–58) from Karong, Manipur, between 28 September 1950 and 07 December 1950 (<http://portal.vertnet.org/search?q=%22Dendrocopos+major%22+country:%22India%22>). It was recently sighted further north, in Namdapha National Park, Arunachal Pradesh (Srinivasan *et al.* 2010). The bird is believed to have a stable population in Europe, South-east Asia, including northern Myanmar (BirdLife International 2012). This sighting is not only the first photographic record of the species, but it also another jigsaw piece that fits into its distribution range.

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In Memoriam

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(1938–2013)