

Recent sightings of Lesser Adjutant *Leptoptilos javanicus* in Barak Valley, Assam

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Listed as 'Vulnerable' (BirdLife International 2015), the Lesser Adjutant *Leptoptilos javanicus* is a large bird seen to soar frequently in the sky of Barak Valley, Assam. This southern part of Assam comprises three districts, namely, Cachar, Hailakandi, and Karimganj, through which the Barak River flows. The Lesser Adjutant is widely distributed throughout the Brahmaputra-, and Barak Valleys. It is relatively less abundant in the latter area (Choudhury 2000). There were sporadic breeding records of the bird from this valley (Choudhury 2000). Here I report some recent sightings of the Lesser Adjutant from these three districts during the years 2011–2015, to update the current status of this species.

My first sighting of this species was during an Asian Waterbird Census (AWC) survey on 06 February 2011 when I saw three birds at Bauwwa Beel (24.64°N, 92.58°E), an Important Bird Area (IBA) in Hailakandi District. Then I saw a lone bird on 09 March 2011. Again, during the census in the subsequent two

years, in the same area, I saw only single individuals; however, in the censuses of 2014, and 2015 none were seen. On the other hand, on 02 February 2014, during AWC at Son Beel (24.70°N, 92.46°E), Karimganj District, which is another IBA in Barak Valley, I saw 12 individuals. In addition, Lesser Adjutant was also seen in some other areas of Hailakandi District, apart from several sightings from Cachar-, and Karimganj Districts (Table 1).

The number of sightings from Barak Valley is encouraging, as this area seems to be supporting a viable population of this threatened species. Regular monitoring, apart from AWC, should be done to assess future trends of its population.

References

BirdLife International. 2015. Species factsheet: *Leptoptilos javanicus*. Downloaded from <http://www.birdlife.org> on 02/10/2015.

Choudhury, A., 2000. *The birds of Assam*. 1st ed. Guwahati: Gibbon Books & World Wide Fund for Nature-India. Pp. 1–240.

Table 1. List of sighting of Lesser Adjutant in Barak Valley (District-wise) from 2011–2015

District	Sites	Date	No. of Individual	Remarks
Hailakandi	Bauwwa Beel (IBA) (24.64°N, 92.58°E)	06 February 2011	3	Feeding/Foraging in Paddy field
		09 March 2011	1	Flying
		10 February 2012	1	Feeding/Foraging in Paddy field
		15 February 2013	1	Flying
	Near Hailakandi town (24.68°N, 92.56°E)	10 August 2012	1	Flying
		22 September 2012	1	Flying
		08 October 2012	1	Flying
		28 October 2012	3	Flying
		27 December 2012	1	Flying
		26 December 2013	1	Flying
		27 December 2013	1	Flying fast from west to east
		27 June 2014	1	Flying
	15 September 2015	3	Flying	
Aashiali Beel (24.69°N, 92.53°E)	28 August 2013	1	Feeding/foraging in paddy field; however during flood 3 to 4 were seen as told by locals	
Mirargram (24.71°N, 92.54°E)	01 September 2013	1		
Ujankupa (24.71°N, 92.54°E)	21 September 2015	2	Feeding/foraging in paddy field	
Aenakhal (24.59°N, 92.56°E)	24 May 2015	1	Flying above tea estate	
Cachar	Kalinagar (24.87°N, 92.60°E)	12 August 2015	1	Flying
	Chotto Jalenga (24.67°N, 92.72°E)	29 August 2013	1	Feeding/foraging in paddy field
		09 September 2014	1	
	Irongmara (24.69°N, 92.74°E)	06 November 2013	1	Flying at low heights (approximately 150 m)
		16 December 2013	1	Flying
	Assam University Campus (24.69°N, 92.75°E)	11 February 2014	1	Flying
Salchapra (24.83°N, 92.68°E)	02 September 2015	1	Flying	
Karimganj	Son Beel (IBA) (24.70°N, 92.46°E)	02 February 2014	12	Soaring, flying from west to east
	Satirsagan (24.65°N, 92.47°E)	19 May 2015	3	Feeding/foraging in paddy field