



Fig. 3. A possible meta-population of the Forest Owlet is circled.

form a meta-population. This is probably the largest and best-connected meta-population (circled area in Fig. 3) of the Forest Owlet in the Satpura Hills. Protection of Forest Owlet habitat in the Khandwa–Burhanpur–Betul–Melghat landscape would be crucial in conserving the Forest Owlet. An inter-state action plan needs to be drawn up for conservation of this meta-population of the Forest Owlet.

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A record of Oriental Dwarf Kingfisher *Ceyx erithaca* from Vansda National Park, Gujarat

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My friends, Mitul, Akshay Desai, and I visited Vansda National Park of Navsari District, Gujarat (20.83°–21.35°N, 73.33°–73.52°E; 23.99 sq km), for birding on 14 June 2014. The hilly terrain of the park is an extension of the Sahyadri range, and represents the northern zone of the Western Ghats in Gujarat.

While we were photographing an Orange-headed Thrush *Zoothera citrina*, a small reddish bird flew by and disappeared into the bushes. But soon afterwards it came back, and perched about 10 m from us. It was unmistakably an Oriental Dwarf Kingfisher *Ceyx erithaca*. I took some photographs of the bird and confirmed its identification [154]. Information of this sighting was shared with several birdwatchers and photographer friends.

The Oriental Dwarf Kingfisher is a summer visitor to the eastern Himalayan foothills, and is resident in south-western India (Grimmett *et al.* 2011). So far the species has not been recorded from Gujarat (Kazmierczak 2000; Parasharya *et al.*



154. Oriental Dwarf Kingfisher *Ceyx erithaca*.

Photo: M. U. Jat.

2004; Grimmett *et al.* 2011; Rasmussen & Anderton 2012). However, an Internet search about its occurrence in Gujarat provided a pleasant surprise. The Ahmadabad edition of the *Times of India* epaper, dated 30 June 2013, reported, with photographs, the rescue of an adult Oriental Dwarf Kingfisher by Dinesh Parmar near Navrangpura, Ahmadabad (23.03°N, 72.55°E). That was, probably, the first record of the species from Gujarat. Interestingly, both the records are from June, which is its breeding season according to Ali & Ripley (1983), who state that it disperses widely during the rainy season with the advent of suitable breeding conditions, and thus it is a regular breeding visitor to many areas during the south-west monsoon (June–September). It is possible that the species moves through Gujarat in June, as it disperses northward during its breeding season, beyond its regular distribution range in the Western Ghats. An Oriental Dwarf Kingfisher was recorded at Panarwa village, of Phoolwari ki Naal Wildlife Sanctuary, Rajasthan, in April 1997 (Tehsin 1999). The distance between the current record from Vansda National Park and Panarwa village is c. 400 km. It is likely that the species occurs in between these points, at suitable sites.

Black-throated Munia *Lonchura kelaarti* in Pune District, Maharashtra

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The Black-throated Munia *Lonchura kelaarti* is a small passerine, which is a resident in the hills of south-western India, the Eastern Ghats, and Sri Lanka (Grimmett *et al.* 2011; Rasmussen & Anderton 2012).

On 20 August 2015, on a birding trip to Mulshi (18.50°N, 73.51°E), Pune District, I saw three munias on a tree. Initially, I thought they were White-rumped Munias *L. malacca*, but upon a closer look they seemed different. I managed to photograph them [155] before they took off, which later helped me identify them as Black-throated Munias. They moved away silently, so I couldn't trace any further activity. Black face and throat, streaked mantle



Photo: Shruti A. Dudhane

155. Black-throated Munia *Lonchura kelaarti*.

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and crown, and the lack of a clear white rump were the factors that pointed me towards this species. From the photographs, the identification of the subspecies is difficult, but referring to the descriptions and field guides, and on the basis of distributional range, these might be the Western Ghats race *jerdoni*.

A further search for previous sightings and records of this bird, on websites (www.orientalbirdimages.org; www.indianaturewatch.net; www.facebook.com), and field guides (Grimmett *et al.* 2011; Rasmussen & Anderton 2012) mainly pointed out the records from south-western-, and eastern India. Its status in the state of Maharashtra is unclear. Abdulali (1981) includes it as an uncommon resident in his state checklist without giving any actual records. His notes, “from Mahabaleshwar and / or Ratnagiri at the southern extremity of the state”, are interpreted by Prasad (2006) as, ‘presumably from Sindhudurg district’. Unnithan (2001) lists only a specimen from Bombay Market [=Crawford Market] for Maharashtra, but the provenance of such birds is unknown. The nearest definite records of this species from Pune are from Goa (filming nature IBC21267), while there are many photographs on most websites, which were taken in Dandeli Wildlife Sanctuary, Karnataka. Subsequent to this record, a bird was photographed in Mahabaleshwar in 2015, and Shinde (2015) posted a hazy photograph of this bird online. Hence, these records constitute the first definite reports of the Black-throated Munia from Maharashtra, and the northern most records from the Western Ghats.