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## White-browed Scimitar Babbler *Pomatorhinus schisticeps* in the Indian Sundarbans

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The White-browed Scimitar Babbler *Pomatorhinus schisticeps* is a resident of the Himalayan foothills, the hills of north-eastern India, and eastern Bangladesh (Rasmussen & Anderton 2012). It has been recently discovered in the mangrove forests in the Sundarbans of Bangladesh (Halder 2008). This note describes more sightings from mangrove habitats, but from the Indian side of Sundarbans.

On 25 June 2015, at 0750 hrs, we observed four birds at the Sudhanyakhali Compartment (22.10°N, 88.80°E) of Sundarban Tiger Reserve, South 24-Parganas District, West Bengal, and photographed one of them [51, 52]. It was identified as a White-browed Scimitar Babbler by its pale eyes, white throat, breast, and under parts, chestnut flanks and collar, black lores and ear-coverts with long white supercilium, and down-curved yellow bill. Subsequently, we recorded the species thrice from the same area (see Table). It must be mentioned that Jayanta Manna reported sightings of this species from this area in October 2012, and

twice in December 2014. On all occasions, the bird responded to artificial callback (Jayanta Manna, *verbally* in November 2015).

Though the White-browed Scimitar Babbler is not known to occur in mangrove forests, Halder (2008) reported it as 'common' in the Sundarbans of Bangladesh. Grimmett *et al.* (2011) accepted this record. This is a rather surprising record, as the Sundarbans is isolated from its main distribution, in the eastern Bangladesh, and north-eastern India, by the deltas of the Ganges, and the Brahmaputra rivers. This area is separated from its population in northern Bengal by about 500 km. Infact, the distribution of Indian Scimitar Babbler *P. horsfieldii* reaches as far as central Odisha, and would only be 500 km from the Indian Sundarbans. Interestingly, Chatterjee (2004) lists the Indian Scimitar Babbler [=Slaty-headed Scimitar Babbler] from the Sunderbans Tiger Reserve. However, details about that bird are lacking, to comment on its identity. Considering the fact that these two species are completely allopatric in the rest of their



51. White-browed Scimitar Babbler in 25 June 2015.



52. White-browed Scimitar Babbler in 12 July 2015.

**Table.** White-browed Scimitar Babbler *Pomatorhinus schisticeps* records from the Sudhanyakhalai Compartment of the Sundarban Tiger Reserve

Date	Time	No. of birds	Remarks
25 June 2015	0750 hrs	4	Photographed. [51]
12 July 2015	1701 hrs	2	Photographed. [52]
21 July 2015	1420 hrs	3	Seen. Birds were responding to calls
22 July 2015	1642 hrs	2	Seen. Birds were responding to calls

range, there is a high probability that the bird listed by Chatterjee (2004) was also the White-browed Scimitar Babbler.

Rasmussen & Anderton (2012) list five subspecies from South Asia. While nominate race occurs in northern Bengal, race *cryptanthus* occurs in Meghalaya and southern Assam while race *mearsi* occurs in Mizo [=Lushai] hills and possibly Chittagong hills tracts of Bangladesh, from our photographs we cannot judge the subspecies of the bird. Since the range is disjunct from all known races of the species, a fresh study should be carried out to collect morphometric and plumage details of a few individuals to assess the racial status of this population.

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## First record of Spotted Crake *Porzana porzana* from Kerala, India

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The Spotted Crake *Porzana porzana* is a small, skulking bird, belonging to the family Rallidae (Order: Ralliformes). It is rare, and elusive, but is a widespread passage migrant and winter visitor to South Asia, mainly to the north-western, and

north-central plains, from Sind to Assam, with scattered records from the Indian peninsula, up to Belgaum, in northern Karnataka (Ali & Ripley 2001; Rasmussen & Anderton 2012). It usually breeds in the West, the Central Palearctic, and in West Asia (Ali