



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 Sudhanyakali 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.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank Jayanta Manna for pointing out the location of the bird to us. We would also like to thank Nityananda Chowkidar, the forest guide of Sundarbans who accompanied us during all these trips.

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

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Prasanth Narayanan, S., Kumar, V. P., Al Badush, A., Jayamohan, S., Jinesh, P. S., Sreekumar, B., & Thomas, A. P., 2016. First record of Spotted Crake *Porzana porzana* from Kerala, India. *Indian BIRDS* 11 (2): 48–49.

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Manuscript received on 05 December 2015.

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



Photo: V. Prashobh Kumar

53. Spotted Crake *Porzana porzana* recorded from Ottappana, near Thottapally.

& Ripley 2001; Rasmussen & Anderton 2012). It is normally found in India in shallow freshwater wetlands, such as seepages, marshes, reservoirs, and canals, with areas of dense reeds and grasses (Ali & Ripley 2001; Rasmussen & Anderton 2012). As in the case of most crake it is a skulker, and easily overlooked. It is crepuscular, and occurs singly, or in pairs (Kumar *et al.* 2005; Rasmussen & Anderton 2012). This species has not been reported from the state of Kerala (Ali 1984; Ali & Ripley 2001; Sashikumar *et al.* 2010, 2011; Praveen 2015).

On 03 October 2015, around 0730 hrs, VPK was watching coastal birds from his home at Ottappana (9.32°N, 76.37°E), which is around 100 m away from the Arabian Sea. It is in Thottapally in Alappuzha district of Kerala. A noisy group of House Crows *Corvus splendens*, mobbing a rail-like bird, attracted his attention. The victim flew towards his house, and entered it, obviously to escape the attacking crows. VPK took a few photographs of the bird with his mobile camera [53]. After ten minutes the bird flew out of the same door it had used to fly in, and flew east.

Pale spotted anterior regions (breast, sides of breast, and mantle), white forewing, red bill, and brown eye were obvious in this specimen. Adult Spotted Crakes will show grey in the supercilium, and sides of the neck, but in this individual it was mainly brownish. Subsequently we checked the images with the help of various references (Ali & Ripley 2001; Bruun *et al.* 2010; Rasmussen & Anderton 2012), and concluded that it was a juvenile Spotted Crake, a new record for the state.

Spotted Crakes are a widespread migratory species. Apart from the Indian Subcontinent, they mainly winters in Africa (BirdLife International 2015). According to Ali & Ripley (2001), they arrive in the northern regions of India during September–October. The only published report from southern peninsular

India is by E. A. Butler who obtained specimens in Belgaum (Butler 1881). In the Indian Subcontinent they are winter visitors and passage migrants. Hence, this specimen could have either straggled to Kerala from its regular wintering grounds in the north, or it could have been on autumn migration to Africa across the Arabian Sea, and had got blown onshore into Kerala by strong winds.

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