org/, Accesssed on 17 February 2016) contains four photo records (five images) from Nandi Hills since December 2004. It has been reported once from Melkote, Mandya District (Koulagi 2012), which is *c.*100km south-west of Bengaluru. Five reports from Horsley Hills, and Rishi Valley (Andhra Pradesh) (eBird 2016), one from Sandur (Karnataka) (Ghorpade 1974), and two from Dharwad (Karnataka) (eBird 2016) further substantiate its regular wintering status, in appropriate habitats, in the intervening areas of the Deccan. Records also exist from further north, from Telangana, and north-eastern Andhra Pradesh, but are not being listed here. However, there are no reports south of a Bengaluru–Melkote axis in Karnataka, or in Tamil Nadu. For Kerala, Sashikumar *et al.* (2011) include this species only in the secondary list, citing a single record from Silent Valley National Park (Ajaykumar & Nayar 1999); this is not included in the checklist of birds of Kerala (Praveen 2015). Apart from the single records from Goa, and Silent Valley National Park, there are no reports from the intervening Western Ghats. In this context, the maps in Grimmett *et al.* (2011), and Rasmussen & Anderton (2012a) that show the entire south-western India, northern Kerala, and north-western Tamil Nadu as its wintering range seem an oversimplification. The map in *HBWAlive* (Clement & Juana 2016) is more accurate with regard to this southern wintering range, excluding most of south-western India. It remains to be seen if more Ultramarine Flycatchers get reported from other parts of the Western Ghats.

Acknowledgements

Sincere thanks to both, Dipu Karuthedathu, and Praveen J., for species identification and support.

References

Abdulali, H., 1985. A catalogue of the birds in the collection of the Bombay Natural History Society-29.Muscicapidae (Muscicapinae, Pachycephalinae). *Journal of the Bombay Natural History Society* 82 (1): 87–113.

Ajaykumar, B., &Nayar, T. S., 1999. Sighting of Whitebrowed Blue Flycatcher Muscicapa superciliaris in Silent Valley, Kerala. *Journal of the Bombay Natural History Society* 96 (1): 145.

Ali, S., & Whistler, H., 1942.The birds of Mysore. Part II. *Journal of the Bombay Natural History Society* 43 (3): 318–341.

Bhatia, G. 2009. Ultramarine Flycatcher (*Ficedula superciliaris*), Valley School, Karnataka. Website URL: http://www.migrantwatch.in/sighting.php?id=5284. [Accessed on 17 February 2016.]

Clement, P., & de Juana, E., 2016. Ultramarine Flycatcher (*Ficedula superciliaris*). In: del Hoyo, J., Elliott, A., Sargatal, J., Christie, D.A. & de Juana, E. (eds.). *Handbook of the Birds of the World Alive*. Lynx Edicions, Barcelona. Website URL: http://www.hbw.com/node/59072 [Accessed on 13 February 2016.]

George, P. J., 2015. Website URL: http://ebird.org/ebird/view/checklist?subID=S25872990. [Accessed on 17 February 2016.]

Ghorpade, K. D., 1974. Preliminary notes on the ornithology of Sandur, Karnataka. *Journal of the Bombay Natural History Society* 70 (3): 499–531.

Grimmett, R., Inskipp, C., & Inskipp, T., 1999. *Pocket guide to the birds of the Indian Subcontinent.* New Delhi: Oxford University Press.Pp. 1–384.

Grimmett, R., Inskipp, C., & Inskipp, T., 2011. *Birds of the Indian Subcontinent.* 2nd ed. London: Oxford University Press & Christopher Helm.Pp. 1–528.

Hemanth, J., 1988. Whitebrowed Blue Flycatcher. *Newsletter for Birdwatchers* 28 (5-6): 17–18.

Karthikeyan, S., & Prasad, J. N., 1993.Recent sighting of Whitebrowed Blue Flycatcher in Bangalore. *Newsletter for Birdwatchers* 33 (1): 8.

Koulagi, S., 2012. Melkote Temple Wildlife Sanctuary. *Hornbill* 2012 (April–June): 34–37.

Lainer, H., &Alvares, R., 2013. *Birds of Goa.* Goa, India: The Goa Foundation & Department of Forests, Goa.Pp. i–x, 1–240.

Lethaby, N., 2006.A visit to Nandi Hills, Karnataka, India. *Indian Birds* 2 (5): 141–142.

Mohan, D., 2009. Website URL: http://ebird.org/ebird/view/checklist?subID=S21489616. [Accessed on 17 February 2016.]

Praveen J., 2015. A checklist of birds of Kerala, India. *Journal of Threatened Taxa*. 7: (13) 7983–8009.

Rasmussen, P. C., & Anderton, J. C., 2012a. *Birds of South Asia: the Ripley guide: field guide.* 2nd ed. Washington, D.C. and Barcelona: Smithsonian Institution and Lynx Edicions. Vol. 1 of 2 vols. Pp. 1–378.

Rasmussen, P. C., & Anderton, J. C., 2012b. *Birds of South Asia: the Ripley guide: attributes and status.* 2nd ed. Washington, D.C. and Barcelona: Smithsonian Institution and Lynx Edicions. Vol. 2 of 2 vols. Pp. 1–683.

Sashikumar, C., Praveen J., Palot, M. J., &Nameer, P. O., 2011. *Birds of Kerala: status and distribution.* 1st ed. Kottayam, Kerala: DC Books.Pp. 1–835.

Shenoy, M., 2016. Website URL: http://ebird.org/ebird/view/checklist?subID=S27438963. [Accessed on 17 February 2016.]

Letters to the Editor

Comments on total albinism in Red-vented Bulbul in Sri Lanka

This is with reference to the case of total albinism reported for a Red-vented Bulbul *Pycnonotus cafer*, in Sri Lanka, by Gabadage *et al.* (2015).

A recent paper on colour aberration in birds proposes a uniform system of nomenclature for colour aberrations in birds, and discusses the difficulties in correctly identifying colour aberrant birds in the wild. It states that the most commonly misapplied names are, 'albino', and 'partial albino', with the term 'albino' being the most widely used but, correctly identified only in very few cases (van Grouw 2013). An identification key is given in Table 1 in this reference to identify the most common colour aberrations in birds.

In this case, the juvenile Red-vented Bulbul is not an albino. Also the terms 'total albinism' and 'partial albinism' are misnomers. Readers may refer to van Grouw (2013) for details. Correct identification of colour aberrant birds is extremely difficult, and trying to name the mutation correctly, a challenge.

References

Gabadage, D. E., Botejue, W. M. S., Dias, A. S., Surasinghe, T. D., & Karunarathna, D. M. S. S., 2015. A case of total albinism in a Red-vented Bulbul *Pycnonotus cafer*. *Indian BIRDS* 10 (6): 162–163.

van Grouw, H., 2013. What colour is that bird? The causes and recognition of common colour aberrations in birds. *British Birds* 106: 17–29.

– Prasad Ganpule
C/o The Parshuram Pottery Works
Nazarbaug, Morbi 363642, Gujarat, India
E-mail: *prasadganpule@gmail.com*

Editor's note: Hein Van Grow has checked the original photos, and confirms the mutation involved is 'Ino' (see details in van Grow 2013). The plumage is not bright white and clearly shows a minimal amount of melanin pigmentation left, giving the plumage a pale, cream colour. The eyes are reddish, but not as bright red as they would have been in an albino. Readers should bear in mind that the low-resolution online versions of the paper might not reproduce the true colours in the photograph to be of use in identification of the mutation.

A Western Reef Egret *Egretta gularis* from Hooghly, West Bengal

The Western Reef Egret *Egretta gularis* is a resident bird on both, the western, and the south-eastern coasts of India (Grimmett *et al.* 2011; Rasmussen & Anderton 2012). Two recent notes in *Indian BIRDS* have reported it from inland Rajasthan (Sharma *et al.* 2015; Chhangani *et al.* 2015). In fact, the eastern-most record of this bird is also from inland Bihar, from the early twentieth-century (Inglis 1903). Here we elaborate an instance where this species was photographed further east, again inland, in West Bengal, a possible first for the state.

At 1330 hrs, on the gloomy 19 December 2013, an egret in non-breeding plumage, and dark morph was observed in a post-harvest paddy stubble beside state highway number 15 of village Sheyakhala, block Chanditala, District Hooghly, West Bengal, India (22.77ºN, 88.15ºE) **[105]**. This spot is *c.* 100 km linearly from the coast of the Bay of Bengal. The bird was solitary, and paused on the stubble field. The first photograph was taken from a distance of 25 m. After 15 mins of observations the bird took flight.

Photo: Supratim Mukherjee

105. Western Reef Egret *Egretta gularis*.

Little Egret *E. garzetta* is known to occur in a rare dark morph, very similar to that of the Western Reef Egret (Dubois & Yesou 1995). Moreover, the habitat where the bird was found is more likely to be a habitat where a Little Egret would be found. But morphological characteristics like thicker, slightly down-curved, and paler bill; white patch on chin, which extend up to the throat and lower ear coverts; a white spot on primary coverts (seen when the bird flew); dull brown-coloured legs; and typical slate-grey plumage, all point towards it being a Western Reef Egret **[105]** (Kazmierczak 2000; Dubois & Yesou 1995).

We sincerely thank Sumit Sen for the valuable discussions regarding the identification of the said species.

References

Chhangani, A. K., Bithoo, K. S., Singh, M., Charan, P. D., & Saxena, M. M., 2015. A Western Reef Egret *Egretta gularis* record from Jalore District, Rajasthan. *Indian BIRDS* 10 (6): 165.

Dubois, P. J., & Yésou, P., 1995. Identification of Western Reef Egrets and dark Little Egrets. *British Birds* 88: 307–319.

Grimmett, R., Inskipp, C., & Inskipp, T., 2011. *Birds of the Indian Subcontinent.* 2nd ed. London: Oxford University Press & Christopher Helm. Pp. 1–528.

Inglis, C. M., 1903. The birds of the Madhubani sub-division of the Darbhanga district, Tirhut, with notes on speices noticed elsewhere in the district. Part VI. *Journal of the Bombay Natural History Society* 15 (1): 70–77.

Kazmierczak, K., 2000. *A field guide to the birds of India, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh and the Maldives.* 1st ed. New Delhi: Om Book Service. Pp. 1–352.

Rasmussen, P. C., & Anderton, J. C., 2012. *Birds of South Asia: the Ripley guide.* 1st ed. Washington, D.C. and Barcelona: Smithsonian Institution and Lynx Edicions. 2 vols. Pp. 1–378; 1–683.

Sharma, V., Kumawat, R. K., Meena, D., Yadav, D., Kumar, A., Kumawat, N. K., & Sharma, K. K., 2015. Sighting of Western Reef Egret *Egretta gularis* in Sirohi District, Rajasthan. *Indian BIRDS* 10 (5): 125.

– Souvik Chattopadhyay, Uddalok Bandyopadhyay & Supratim Mukherjee
Souvik Chattopadhyay, Uddalok Bandhopadhyay
Khamarchandi, Haripal, Hooghly 712405
West Bengal, India

– Supratim Mukherjee
Department of Zoology, Raja Rammohun Roy Mahavidyalaya
Radhanagar, P. O. Nangulpara, Hooghly 712406
West Bengal, India
E-mail: *supratimm7@gmail.com* [Corresponding author]

Sighting of Curlew Sandpipers near Hyderabad, Telangana, India

On the evening of 02 October 2014 I went to Ameenpur Lake, Hyderabad, Telangana (78.52°N, 78°.33E) to see if the waders had arrived, and to click some photographs. The reeds, which dotted the edge of the main lake, were a good place to spot water birds like coots, and rails (Rallidae), grebes (Podicipedidae), and, occasionally, the Yellow Bittern *Ixobrychus sinensis*. But to my dismay the reeds had been cut.

Fearing that the birds would fly off at the slightest disturbance, I crawled closer to get a better look at the winter guests along the edges of the lake. I spotted Common Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*, Common Redshank *T. totanus*, Wood Sandpiper *T. glareola*, Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos*, Little Ringed *Plover Charadrius dubius*, and Little Stint *Calidris minuta*. There were also the resident Great *Egret Ardea alba*, and Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*, and at a distance, a pair of Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus*.

In a mixed flock of Little Stints, Common Sandpipers, and egrets I saw four waders that resembled Curlew Sandpipers *Calidris ferruginea* **[106]**. All the birds in that mixed flock were busy feeding in the shallows when I snapped a photograph for the record.

Back home, I referred to my field guide for their distribution, and not finding them in and around Hyderabad I posted the picture on the 'Indian Birds Facebook group', where they were confirmed as Curlew Sandpiper. The birds were not sighted the next day, nor the week thereafter. Though they are known from coastal Andhra Pradesh (Kannan *et al.* 2009; Guptha *et al.* 2012; Rao *et al.* 2014), this is the first inland record of the species from the newly minted state of Telangana, which was earlier a part of a larger Andhra Pradesh state.

Photo: Nishant Shah

106. Two Curlew Sandpipers feeding amidst other waders at Ameenpur Lake.

References

Guptha, M. B., Rao, P. V. C., Rao, P. M., Ramalingam, G., Prasad, P. N., Kannan, V., Kishore, S., & Rajashekar, M., 2012. Water birds of Kudiri wetland (near Pulicat), Andhra Pradesh, India. *Newsletter for Birdwatchers* 51 (5): 71–74 (2011).

Kannan, V., Manakadan, R., Rao, P., Mohapatra, K. K., Sivakumar, S., & Santharam, V., 2009. The waterbirds of Pulicat Lake, Andhra Pradesh–Tamil Nadu, India, including those of the adjoining wetlands and heronries. *Journal of the Bombay Natural History Society* 105 (2): 162–180 (2008).

R., S. K., Rao, V. V., Sasikala, C., & Nagulu, V., 2014. Wetland birds of Srikakulam District, Andhra Pradesh, India. *International Journal of Fauna and Biological Studies* 1 (6): 42–49.

– Nishant Shah
1-5-63/2, Phanigiri Colony
Chaitanyapuri, Hyderabad 500060
Telangana, India.
E-mail: nish.skywalker@gmail.com

02 October 2014

Spotted Owlet *Athene brama* with a cataract in its left eye?

On 06 December 2015, Devrat Mori, Ankit Shah, Meet Agrawal, and I were searching for a resident pair of Barn Owls *Tyto alba* near a concrete overhead water-tank in a temple premises near Wadhwan, Surendranagar, Gujarat.

We searched for a while, but couldn't locate them. On our way back we observed a movement in a neem tree *Azadirachta indica*. When we flashed a torch towards that movement, we saw two Spotted Owlets *Athene brama* perched on different branches of the tree. A closer look showed that one of the owlets seemed to have a cataract in its left eye. We clicked a series of photographs that showed up this anomaly **[107-108]**.

107. A cataract afflicted Spotted Owlet *Athene brama*.

Photos: Vickey Chauhan

108. A cataract afflicted Spotted Owlet *Athene brama*.

In humans, a cataract is a clouding of the lens, leading to a decrease in vision. Often it develops slowly, and gradually covers the whole eye. If it is not attended to well in time, vision in the eye might be lost forever. Perhaps, this Spotted Owlet may also find it difficult to hunt, given its eye condition. The bird also seems to have an injured right claw, and beak, or perhaps it is holding some prey in that claw, and has a morsel in its beak. However, we did not observe this bird flying, or even hunting. Is this indeed a cataract? How common is cataract amongst wild birds?

– Vickey Chauhan
3/A, Kartik Swami Society
O/s, Shahpur Gate
Ahmedabad 380004
Gujarat, India
E-mail: vkeychauhan@gmail.com

Note: A response from an ophthalmologist, who is also a birder

Cataract is a cloudiness or opaqueness of the eye lens, which is behind the pupil and iris and therefore will appear as a grey, or white area within the pupil, and will appear slightly behind the front of the eye. Having looked at all the photographs, the following points can be deduced.

- A greyish cloudiness of the cornea (front surface of the eye) of the left eye; the reflection of light from the cornea (catch light is practically absent) is imperfect.
- The light reflection from the retina (back of the eye), when a flash is used, will be absent if cataract is total, or will be imperfect if the cataract is mild. Here there seems to be an imperfect light reflection from the retina, but is definitely present.
- Pupil is extremely dilated.
- The light reflex from the retina of the uninvolved right eye is different from the reflex of the left eye, indicating that the difference is mainly due to corneal opacity, and also because of a slight cataract.
- In the second photo **[108]**, there is an opacity in the lower part of the lens, indicating a cataract.
- The feather tracts surrounding the left eye do not seem to be different from that of the right eye. One could presume that an injury of the eye would also cause some damage to the adjoining structures; which is actually not visible here.

In summary, there is a combination of findings: (1) corneal cloudiness/opacity, (2) cataract in the lower part of the lens, and (3) fixed dilated pupil not constricting with the flashlight. This could denote an increased eye pressure with corneal cloudiness, optic nerve damage, and fixed dilated pupil, or could imply a traumatic corneal opacity with traumatic dilated pupil caused by blunt trauma. The most likely possibility is an old injury which has caused all the above, with or without glaucoma.

– T. Badrinarayanan
262, Second Main Road
Gomathipuram
Sivagangai Road
Madurai 625020
Tamil Nadu, India.
E-mail: badrinarayanant@gmail.com