

A comment on the status of *Pica (pica) bottanensis* in Sikkim

Prŷs-Jones & Rasmussen (elsewhere in this issue) put forward a strong case for the existence of the *Pica (pica) bottanensis* in Sikkim based on the assessment of a controversial specimen. Their work should discount all claims that Meinertzhagen has put on that particular Mandelli's specimen and cast doubts on the reliability of his subsequent comments. However, as rightly pointed out by the authors, no individual or team have actually found the *bottanensis* in Sikkim since then; and that needs further pondering.

The habitat within the Himalayas where this species is known to occur, namely, the Bumthang Valley of Bhutan, does not resemble the habitats found in northern Sikkim. It is very likely that Ludlow, Ripley and Ali have exclaimed about the possibilities of this species occurring in Arunachal especially in the extreme eastern part like Upper Dibang Valley and Anjaw which have a habitat similar to the Bumthang Valley. During my trips to Bhutan till date, I rarely found it occurring far away from human habitation and it was not a shy bird. If we consider that the species occurred in Native Sikkim during a period in history, we must also try to dig out what may have brought about its local extinction within some decades. In very recent years a few of the birdwatchers from Sikkim and even myself have ventured into the interior valleys of North Sikkim viz. Lhonak, Muguthang, etc., which can only be accessed on foot. Though most of the Tibetan Plateau species have been found to occur, no habitat having resemblance with the ones in Bhutan were observed.

Mandelli was stationed in the Darjeeling District and was in charge of quite a few tea gardens, and had no other way than appointing people for making the collections – as also pointed by the authors. During those days, only traders and Yak herders used to ply across North Sikkim to Tibet apart from a few expeditions. It is very much likely that the specimens of Mandelli's collection may have changed multiple hands, and that the origin of the collection was in Tibet. It is quite unlikely that Mandelli's local collectors ventured to extreme North Sikkim or Tibet keeping in mind the time involved in such travel during those days. The local collectors must have had to involve further recruiters or may have passed the message to the regular travellers for collection of specimens. Another major aspect in misrepresenting the place of collection was the language. Most of Mandelli's direct collectors were supposed to be Gurkhas or Nepalese because of his place of work and association with tea gardens. Whereas the traders or Yak herders were mainly Bhotias (not Bhutanese; Bhot = Tibet) who did not know the local language (Nepalese) well enough or not at all. So there is every possibility that the location names got muddled and the actual specimens were collected somewhere in Tibet.

Hence, it is highly unlikely *Pica bottanensis* have ever occurred in Sikkim and the species should still be kept out of the list of Indian birds until unassailable evidence is gathered.

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Ethno-ornithology of Karen and Ranchi inhabitants of the Andaman Islands: An annotated checklist of local names and etymology

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Mohanty, N. P., & Chakravarty, R., 2018. Ethno-ornithology of Karen and Ranchi inhabitants of the Andaman Islands: An annotated checklist of local names and etymology. *Indian BIRDS* 14 (3): 73–78.

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Manuscript received on 28 November 2017.

The importance of community knowledge has long been recognised in ecological research and has also been adopted into systematic analytical frameworks (e.g., Pillay *et al.* 2014). Ethno-ornithology provides insights into the interactions of the local community with the avifauna of the region, including its utilitarian and cultural values. For example, Agnihotri & Si (2012) examined the ethno-ornithology of the

Solega community in Karnataka to discern dynamic processes underlying folk taxonomy and the importance of birds in folklore. Ethno-ornithological knowledge can also form the basis of community-based conservation (see Gosler 2010).

The avifauna of the Andaman & Nicobar Islands has been well documented and is subject to regular ecological research (see references in Pittie 2007; Sundaramoorthy 2010; Koparde &

Table 1. Annotated checklist of Karen and Ranchi names of birds of the Andaman Islands. Under 'Etymology/Remarks', 'K' and 'R' refer to the etymology of Karen, and Ranchi names respectively

English name	Scientific name	Karen name	Ranchi name	Etymology/Remarks
Indian Peafowl	<i>Pavo cristatus</i>	Tho pua	Mor	Tho: bird; Pua: web (tail)
Ducks	Family Anatidae	Tho de thi	Jungli batak	K: Tho=bird; Thi=water; hence 'waterbird' R: Jungli= wild; batak=duck (as in Hindi)
Bitterns	<i>Ixobrychus</i> spp.	Tho lé wawh	Dhika/Lamba taang dhika	K: Tho=bird; Wawh= red R: Lamba taang: Long-legged (as in Hindi)
Black bittern?	<i>Ixobrychus flavicollis</i>	Lé weh	-	-
Indian Pond Heron	<i>Ardeola grayii</i>	Tho lé wawh/Tho lé khwa	Bakula	K: Tho=bird; Wawh=red; Khwa=grey/ashy
Purple Heron	<i>Ardea purpurea</i>	Tho lé wawh	Bakula	K: Tho=bird; Wawh=red
Egrets	<i>Bubulcus/Egretta/Ardea</i> spp.	Tho lé wah	Bakula	K: Tho=bird; Wah: white
Pacific Reef Heron	<i>Egretta sacra</i>	Tho lé khwa	Samundar Bakula	K: Tho=bird; Khwa=grey/ashy R: Samundar=sea (as in Hindi)
Sparrowhawks and Falcons	<i>Accipiter/Falco</i> spp.	Li lé	Baaz	
Besra	<i>Accipiter virgatus</i>	Li lé	Shikra	
Brahminy Kite	<i>Haliastur indus</i>	Li lé/Tho bokho	Baaz	K: Tho=bird; Bokho=turban
Black Baza	<i>Aviceda leuphotes</i>	Baw see chaw	Dugnacha	R: Dugnacha: double-crested
Serpent Eagles	<i>Spilornis</i> spp.	Li khwa	Dhopia	K: Khwa=grey/ashy
White-bellied Sea Eagle	<i>Haliaeetus leucogaster</i>	Kro kra	Samundar cheel	K: name applies to all big eagles R: Samundar=sea (as in Hindi)
Andaman Crake	<i>Rallina canningi</i>	Janglinge	Laal dhika	K: name implies 'forest bird' R: Laal=red; Dhika=name for long-legged water birds
Slaty-breasted Rail	<i>Gallirallus striatus</i>	Tho ti ti	Kabra dhika/Kharhi dhika	R: Kabra=spotted; kharhi=mangrove
White-breasted Waterhen	<i>Amouromis phoenicurus</i>	Kor kwa	kala dhika	K: name onomatopoeic R: kaala=black (as in Hindi)
Watercock	<i>Gallicrex cinerea</i>	Tau	Jungli murga	K: name onomatopoeic R: translates to 'wild fowl' (as in Hindi)
Grey-headed Swamphen	<i>Porphyrio polycephalus</i>	Tau phala	-	K: Tau=name for moorhen-like birds; Phala=purple/blue/green. This is a derived name.
Eurasian Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>	Tau phatu	Jungli batak	K: Tau=name for moorhen-like birds; Phatu=black
Beach Thick-knee	<i>Esacus magnirostris</i>	Kring gring	-	K: name onomatopoeic
Waders	Order Charadriiformes	Bozangé/Bozangé phatu	Samundar chidiya	R: Samundar=sea; Chidiya=bird (as in Hindi)
Whimbrel	<i>Numenius phaeopus</i>	Kwe nau/thaw nau/bozangé phadu	Samundar chidiya	K: Kwe nau=bent-billed; thaw nau=long-billed; phadu=large R: same as above
Eurasian Curlew	<i>Numenius arquatus</i>	Kwe nau/thaw nau/bozangé phadu	Samundar chidiya	K: same as above R: same as above
Terns	Family Laridae	Bli blo wah	Samundar chidiya	K: Bli blo primarily applies to swiftlets; wah=white
Blue Rock Pigeon (feral)	<i>Columba livia</i>	Kho/Pwabi tho du klu	Bazaarwala kabutar	K: Pwabi=Domestic; R: Bazaar: Market (as in Urdu)
Green Imperial Pigeon	<i>Ducula aenea</i>	Tho du klu	Kabutar	K: Tho=bird R: Kabutar=pigeon (as in Hindi)
Andaman Wood Pigeon	<i>Columba palumboides</i>	Tho du klu	Kabutar	Same as above
Pied Imperial-Pigeon	<i>Ducula bicolor</i>	Tho du klu wah	Safed kabutar	K: Tho du klu=same as for other Imperial Pigeons; wah=white R: Safed=white (as in Hindi)
Andaman Cuckoo Dove	<i>Macropygia rufipennis</i>	Tho thaw mé	Laal padki	R: Laal=red (as in Hindi)
Red Collared Dove	<i>Streptopelia tranquebarica</i>	Thor kaw chhi	Kheti padki	K: Kaw= marked/collared; Chhi=rump; R: Kheti=agricultural field (as in Hindi)

Table 1. Annotated checklist of Karen and Ranchi names of birds of the Andaman Islands. Under 'Etymology/Remarks', 'K' and 'R' refer to the etymology of Karen, and Ranchi names respectively

English name	Scientific name	Karen name	Ranchi name	Etymology/Remarks
Andaman Green Pigeon	<i>Treron chloropterus</i>	Kwa khlé	Hariyal	-
Asian Emerald Dove	<i>Chalcophaps indica</i>	Thor kha	Hara padki	R: <i>Hara</i> =green (as in Hindi)
Nicobar Pigeon	<i>Caloenas nicobarica</i>	Swé da nyo	Bada kabutar/ Nicobari kabutar	R: <i>Bada</i> =large; <i>Kabutar</i> =pigeon (as in Hindi)
Vernal Hanging Parrot	<i>Loriculus vernalis</i>	Jorogan/Jon-thogon/Jonoga	Latkan tota	R: <i>Latkan</i> =hanging; <i>Tota</i> =parakeet (as in Hindi)
Alexandrine Parakeet	<i>Psittacula eupatria</i>	Tho lo	Pahadi tota	K: <i>Lo</i> =simple; R: Females and male parakeets have a prefix of 'kala thor' and 'lal thor' describing bill colour. These may actually refer to the bill colour of juveniles and adults.
Red-breasted Parakeet	<i>Psittacula alexandri</i>	Tho chi	Tota	-
Long-tailed Parakeet	<i>Psittacula longicauda</i>	Tho chi/Doya	Tota	-
Indian Cuckoo	<i>Cuculus micropterus</i>	Yopha khwé khaw	Dhotopako	K: name based on the call, involves a story where a person pleads to his brother-in-law (Yopha) to call (khaw) the dogs (khwé) to save him from being attacked by a tiger. R: name based on call
Violet Cuckoo	<i>Chrysococcyx xanthorhynchus</i>	Tho oppaw	Baaz ka bacha	K: <i>Tho</i> =bird; <i>oppaw</i> =stupid. Karens claim that it rarely flies off when approached, hence stupid. R: name translates to 'chick of eagle'
Asian Koel	<i>Eudynamys scolopacea</i>	Tho mou	Koyal	K: name onomatopoeic; based on a story where a child separated from his mother (mou) calls out to her
Andaman Coucal	<i>Centropus andamanensis</i>	Kaw ku	Kana kawwa/Hagra genda	K: ' <i>ku</i> ' possibly, onomatopoeic. R: <i>Kana</i> =cross-eyed; <i>kawwa</i> =crow; <i>Hagra genda</i> =dung-roller
Andaman Masked Owl	<i>Tyto deroepstorffi</i>	Tho tana	Ulu	K: <i>Tana</i> =witch (either due to the eerie nature of call or a myth). Karens don't consider it as an owl. R: <i>Ulu</i> =owl (as in Hindi)
Oriental Scops Owl (Walden's Scops Owl)	<i>Otus sunia modestus</i>	Somu sokro	Ulu	K: name onomatopoeic
Hawk-Owls	<i>Ninox</i> spp.	Do ko phadu/ Zi gwé	Ulu	K: <i>Zi gwé</i> denotes the distinct brows of the birds
Nightjars	<i>Caprimulgus</i> spp.	Tho tba	Khapu	K: name implies the raddish-like shape of the bird; R: name denotes the sitting position of the bird
Plume-toed Swiftlet (Andaman Glossy Swiftlet)	<i>Collocalia affinis</i>	Bli blo phatu	Chhota hawabil	K: <i>Bli blo</i> =swiftlet; <i>phatu</i> =small R: <i>Chhota</i> =small; <i>hawabil</i> =swiftlet
Brown-backed Needletail	<i>Hirundapus giganteus</i>	Bli blo phado/ Kaboyu	Bada hawabil	K: <i>phado</i> =large; <i>Kaboyu</i> =Airplane (due to the swishing noise the bird makes in flight)
White-nest Swiftlet (Edible-nest Swiftlet)	<i>Aerodramus fuciphugus</i>	Bli blo wah/Tho thwee wah	Chhota hawabil	K: <i>Wah</i> =white (probably refers to the white nest, as the bird itself is not white); <i>Thwee</i> =nest; R: Although Ranchis have the same name for both species of swiftlets, they are aware of the utilitarian differences. Ranchi names are accompanied by further descriptions to distinguish Edible-nest from Glossy
Oriental Dollarbird	<i>Eurystomus orientalis</i>	Nan chikwa	Tewan	R: Probably onomatopoeic
Kingfishers	Family Alcedinidae	Tho tadakhwé	Kilkila	-
White-throated Kingfisher	<i>Halcyon smyrnensis</i>	Tho tadakhwé phala	Neela kilkila/Kheti kilkila	K: <i>Tho</i> =bird; <i>Tadakhwé</i> =dry shrimp; R: <i>Kheti</i> =agricultural field (as in Hindi); <i>kilkila</i> onomatopoeic
Collared Kingfisher	<i>Todiramphus chloris</i>	Tho tadakhwé phala	Chhota kharhi kilkila	K: <i>phala</i> =deep-blue/blue-green colour R: <i>Chhota</i> =small; <i>kharhi</i> =mangrove (as in Hindi)
Ruddy Kingfisher	<i>Halcyon coromanda</i>	Tho tadakhwé phawo	-	K: <i>Phawo</i> =red

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Stork-billed Kingfisher	<i>Pelargopsis capensis</i>	Tho tadakhwé phado/Polé tho tadakhwé	Bada khadi kilkila	K: <i>Polé</i> =oceanic/salt water R: <i>Bada</i> =large; <i>kharhi</i> =mangrove
Small kingfishers	<i>Alcedo</i> spp.	Tho tadakhwé pho	Khari kilkila	K: <i>Pho</i> =small R: <i>kharhi</i> =mangrove
Bee-eaters	<i>Merops</i> spp.	Bazendo	Tirongo	-
Blue-tailed Bee-eater	<i>Merops philippinus</i>	Bazendo thaw naw	-	K: <i>Thaw naw</i> =long-billed
Andaman Woodpecker	<i>Dryocopus hodgעי</i>	Tho talé/ Tho tlé wakho	Bada Khatkhutli/ Lal mundi Khatkhutli/Kathphodwa	K: <i>Wakho</i> =red head; R: <i>kathkhutli</i> onomatopoeic; also called <i>Police chidiya</i> locally
Spot-breasted Pied Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos analis</i>	Te taw ma/ Tho te phi	Chhota Khatkhutli	K: <i>Te phi</i> =tree bark R: <i>Chhota</i> =small
White-breasted Woodswallow	<i>Artamus leucorhynchus</i>	Bli blo wah/ Bli blo takha	Safed hawabil	K: <i>Bli blo</i> =swiftlet; <i>wah</i> =white; <i>Takha</i> =insects R: <i>Safed</i> =white; <i>hawabil</i> =swiftlet
Large Cuckooshrike	<i>Coracina macei</i>	Tho kwala/ Tho poala	Kamaiya	K: <i>Kwala</i> =moon-gazing; <i>poala</i> =mature/old and wise
Andaman Cuckooshrike	<i>Coracina dobsoni</i>	Tho kwala pach-haa/ Taphokla tho kwala	Kamaiya	K: <i>Pachhaa</i> =barred; <i>Taphokla</i> =forest
Scarlet Minivet	<i>Pericrocotus speciosus</i>	Bli blé phado	Lal-peela chidiya/ Lal chidiya	K: <i>Phawo</i> and <i>Phabo</i> are used as suffixes to describe red males and yellow females respectively R: name denotes this sexual dimorphism too; <i>laal</i> =red; <i>peela</i> =yellow
Small Minivet	<i>Pericrocotus cinnamomeus</i>	Bli blé pho	Lal-peela chidiya/ Lal chidiya	K: <i>pho</i> =small
Brown Shrike	<i>Lanius cristatus</i>	Tho si kwé/ Tho ta pwemé	Kirkatta	K: Karens consider the bird's call to be a sign of summer/time of harvest
Greater Racket-tailed Drongo	<i>Dicurus paradiseus</i>	Tho khlu thaw mé	Bhengraj/Dhechua/Barabhaswa	K: <i>Thaw mé</i> =long-tailed R: <i>Barabhaswa</i> =twelve calls
Andaman Drongo	<i>Dicurus andamensis</i>	Tho khlu/ Tho khlu phade mé/ Tho khlu khwa mé	Bhengraj/Dhechua/Barabhaswa	-
Orioles	<i>Oriolus</i> spp.	Tho takwee mibo	Piyo	K: <i>Takwee mibo</i> =ripe banana R: name onomatopoeic
Mangrove Whistler	<i>Pachycephala cinerea</i>	Kharhi saw si pho	-	K: <i>Saw si pho</i> =sunbird; <i>kharhi</i> =Hindi/Ranchi word for mangrove
Black-naped Monarch	<i>Hypothymis azurea</i>	Tho gwis gwis/ Tho phala bokho	Jin chidiya/ Dayan chidiya	K: <i>Gwis gwis</i> based on call R: name implies the ability of the bird to appear and disappear at will, like a genie (<i>Jin/Dayan</i>)
Blyth's Paradise-Flycatcher	<i>Terpsiphone affinis</i>	Boglon wah	-	K: <i>Boglon</i> =bulbul; <i>wah</i> =white
Andaman Treepie	<i>Dendrocitta bayleii</i>	Tho see khwé	Bhorlenga	-
Large-billed Crow	<i>Corvus macrorhynchos</i>	Sawkhwa	Jungle kawwa	R: <i>kawwa</i> =crow (as in Hindi)
House Crow	<i>Corvus splendens</i>	Myujon sawkhwa/ not named	Bazaar kawa	K: <i>Myujon</i> : name of a city/town
Oriental White-eye	<i>Zosterops palpebrosus</i>	Tho té té/Saw si pho	-	K: <i>té té</i> =from call; <i>Saw si pho</i> =sunbird (possibly confused because of size and colour)
Swallows	<i>Hirundo/Cecropis</i> spp.	Bli blo	-	K: <i>Bli blo</i> =swiftlet
Red-whiskered Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus jocosus</i>	Boglon	Bulbul	-
Andaman Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus fuscoflavescens</i>	Tho phabo/Tho ro bipho/Tho pwi pho	Peela chidiya/Jin chidiya	R: <i>Peela</i> =yellow; <i>Jin chidiya</i> =name implies the ability of the bird to appear and disappear at will, like a genie (<i>Jin/Dayan</i>)
Warblers	Family Sylviidae	Tho té té	-	K: <i>té té</i> =from call
Asian Glossy Starling	<i>Aplonis panayensis</i>	Tho phatu	Kaala chidiya	K: <i>Phatu</i> =black R: <i>kaala</i> =black (as in Hindi)

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Common Hill Myna	<i>Gracula religiosa</i>	Ta li ga	Salo myna	-
Common Myna	<i>Acridotheres tristis</i>	Ta li ga/ Panaa ta li ga/ Shaa ra	Kheti myna/Bail myna	K: <i>Panaa</i> =buffalo; <i>Shaa ra</i> =clever R: <i>Bail</i> =cattle (as in Hindi)
White-headed Starling	<i>Sturnus erythropgia</i>	Sara wah	Safed myna/Gobarliya myna	K: <i>wah</i> =white R: <i>Safed</i> =white
Orange-headed Thrush	<i>Geokichla citrine</i>	Tho bo cho/Tho panaaeytu phawo	-	K: <i>Panaaeytu</i> =like cow dung
Oriental Magpie-Robin	<i>Copsychus saularis</i>	Tho panaaeytu	Bagsuyan	K: <i>Panaaeytu</i> =like cow dung
Andman Shama	<i>Copsychus albiventris</i>	Tho panaaeytu	Bagsuyan	K: same as above
Asian Brown Flycatcher	<i>Muscicapa dauurica</i>	Tho tik tik	-	K: <i>tik tik</i> : name onomatopoeic
Asian Fairy-bluebird	<i>Irena puella</i>	Tho phala	Phik phik	K: <i>phala</i> =deep-blue/blue-green colour R: name onomatopoeic
Plain Flowerpecker (Andaman Flowerpecker)	<i>Dicaeum minullum virescens</i>	Tho té té/Saw si pho	Phoolchusni	K: <i>té té</i> =from call; <i>Saw si pho</i> =sunbird R: <i>phool</i> =flower; <i>chusni</i> =to suck (hence 'nectar-sucker')
Olive-backed Sunbird	<i>Cinnyris jugularis</i>	Saw si pho	Phoolchusni	R: same as above
White-rumped Munia	<i>Lonchura striata</i>	Tho pwee pho	Khuddra	K: <i>Pwee pho</i> =small intestine/filters small things; Karens compare undisciplined children to the bird due to its disregard for humans
House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	Tho pwee pho/Zé Tho pwee pho	Chaawal chidiya	R: <i>Chaawal</i> =Rice
Wagtails	<i>Dendronanthus/Motacilla</i> spp.	Tho taklé chhi/Tho poau chhi	Poonch-hilane-wala chidiya	Names translate to 'a tail wagging bird' in both languages.

Manchi 2013). However, the ethno-ornithology of these culturally diverse islands remains under-explored with the notable exception of Great Andamanese ethno-ornithology by Pande *et al.* (2011). For our study we aimed to document the local bird names used by two resident communities of the Andaman Islands: the Karens (originally from southern Myanmar), and Ranchis (originally from the Chhota Nagpur Plateau, central India). These communities are traditionally forest-dependent and are often employed as research assistants as they are familiar with the forest of the archipelago. Whenever possible, we also collated etymological and cultural information associated with birds.

We conducted the survey from February to April 2017 in Middle Andaman and South Andaman Islands. We interviewed four Karen respondents, and six of the Ranchi community. The selected respondents on the Andaman Islands were research assistants by profession and were considered to be informative sources. We conducted individual interviews for five respondents (four Karen respondents, and one Ranchi), and one group discussion consisting of three people (only Ranchi respondents). The respondents were presented with Grimmett *et al.* (2011) and asked to identify birds recorded in the Andaman archipelago. Apart from local names, we recorded etymological and cultural aspects of birds and bird names, when the information was voluntarily shared by survey respondents. During the course of the interviews, different or additional names suggested by respondents were simply added to the existing names for each species obtained from previous interviews. The obviously

erroneous and highly uncertain names were not incorporated.

We recorded the local names of 96 bird taxa (species level or higher) for Karens, and 84 for Ranchis (Table 1). Distinct species names were reported for 62 birds by Karens, and 47 by Ranchis. Local names were not reported by Karens or Ranchis, at the species level, for warblers, quails, wagtails, orioles, small raptors, terns, ducks, and waders. In addition to these taxa, Ranchi respondents did not distinguish between owls. For some of the birds, which are also present on the Indian mainland, Ranchi names appeared to be derived from their traditional mainland names (Table 1). In comparison to the Karens and the Ranchis, the Great Andamanese recognise 107 bird taxa, of which they have distinct names for 62 species (Pande *et al.* 2011). Similar to Karens, the Great Andamanese have phonetic names for warblers, flycatchers, and flowerpeckers, and generic names for waders. Although there are potentially interesting insights in comparing the names of Karens, Ranchis, and the Great Andamanese, this is not possible at the moment due to the absence of a well-resolved etymology for the latter.

We visualise the checklist to benefit scholars and conservationists aiming to carry out detailed ethno-ornithological studies on the archipelago, eco-tourism, and community-based monitoring and conservation programmes. It has been demonstrated that local knowledge is an important source of complementary information for scientists (Gilchrist *et al.* 2005), particularly when surveying rare species. However, in order to tap this knowledge accurately, scientists must know the names of their study species in the

local languages. Therefore, the checklist presented here can help researchers and birders in conducting field bird surveys with local Karen and Ranchi assistants. It can also be used for interview-based surveys to detect presence/absence of rare species of birds using local knowledge. The list may also allow researchers to understand the perception and awareness of recent avian invasions in the islands, which is important from epidemiological and managerial points of view, e.g., Common Myna *Acridotheres tristis* (Mohanty *et al.* 2018). Apart from wildlife research, the checklist may also help anthropologists and ethnographers. Future research can focus on understanding the influence of experience (e.g., residence time in the Islands) and demography on the knowledge and perception of birds in the local communities. We believe the information provided in this note can also aid eco-tourism initiatives of the Department of Environment and Forests, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, as it will allow for effective training of Karen and Ranchi youth as bird guides.

Acknowledgements

We thank the respondents for their valuable contributions to the study. We also thank the Andaman and Nicobar Environment Team (ANET) for logistical support; Ashwin Warudkar and Naman Goyal are thanked for their valuable comments on the manuscript. NPM was funded by the Department of Botany and Zoology, Stellenbosch University. RC acknowledges funding from the Department of Science and Technology (Government of India) to undertake field work in the Andaman Islands.

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Rusty-rumped Warbler *Locustella certhiola* at Pong Lake, Himachal Pradesh: An addition to northern Indian avifauna

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Abhinav, C., 2018. Rusty-rumped Warbler *Locustella certhiola* at Pong Lake, Himachal Pradesh: An addition to northern Indian avifauna. *Indian BIRDS* 14 (3): 78–79.

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Manuscript received on 25 August 2017.

The Rusty-rumped Warbler *Locustella certhiola*, also known as Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler, is a scarce winter visitor to India. It is mainly found in the north-eastern part of the Indian Subcontinent, from central Nepal to the Kolkata area, Bangladesh, the western Assam Valley, and Meghalaya. It is also said to sporadically winter in Sri Lanka, peninsular India, and rarely in the Andaman & Nicobar Islands (Rasmussen & Anderton 2012). There are a number of records of this species from peninsular India (eBird 2018). This note describes the sighting of a Rusty-rumped Warbler at Pong Lake, Himachal Pradesh.

On 03–04 October 2014 I was birding at Sthana village near Talwara town in Himachal Pradesh (31.96°N, 75.90°E; 325 m asl). Sthana is situated on the northern side of the lake, which is formed behind the Shah Nehar Barrage, in the outflow area of Pong Dam. There are many small ponds near the lake with an ample growth of *Typha* sp., and *Ipomea* sp. *Saccharum munja*, and *Lantana* sp., were other predominant plants around these ponds. On 04 October 2014, at 0830 hrs, when I was walking

near one of the ponds, a small, sparrow-sized brownish bird flew from a nearby bush and settled in the lantana, a few meters away from me. I clicked some photographs and within few seconds the bird disappeared in the reeds. I couldn't observe the bird properly, and did not hear any call either, but by its jizz, the bird seemed to be a *Locustella* warbler. Later, the pictures were carefully studied, and the following observations made.

The bird was a medium-sized warbler, brownish in colour with a rufous tinge, and streaked upperparts [55]. The crown and nape were rusty brown and seemed almost un-streaked in the photograph. It had a well-defined whitish supercilium, running till the posterior part of the ear covert, bordered above by dark brown. It had an ill-defined, dark brown eye stripe and pale lores. The stout, all dark bill had a pale area near its cutting edge. The mantle was boldly streaked, while no streaking was seen on the underparts. The upper wing coverts were black with broad buffish borders. The black primaries were narrowly bordered with buff. The rump was not visible in the pictures. The throat and upper