

# Javan Pond Heron *Ardeola speciosa* from South Andaman Island: An addition to the birds of South Asia

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Shaktivel G., 2019. Javan Pond Heron *Ardeola speciosa* from South Andaman Island: An addition to the birds of South Asia. *Indian BIRDS*. 15 (1): 10.  
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Manuscript received on 05 January 2019.

On 01 April 2017, at 1015 hrs, while birding near a marshland at Garacharma (11.62°N, 92.70°E) in South Andaman Island, I observed and photographed a pond heron *Ardeola* sp., in breeding plumage. I identified it, in the field, as a Chinese Pond Heron *A. bacchus* and left it unreported. Recently, while studying the differences between an Indian Pond Heron *A. grayii* and a Chinese Pond Heron in photographs taken at South Andaman Island, I accidentally came across a photograph of a pond heron that had a different coloured mantle, and neck, than both those species. The bird was later identified, from photographs, as a Javan Pond Heron *A. speciosa*, a species that had never been reported from South Asia [3].



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3. Javan Pond Heron in South Andaman Island.

A single bird was seen standing in the marshland along with another pond heron, which was in non-breeding plumage, feeding nearby. The Javan Pond Heron had a pale yellow head and neck, dark slaty mantle and scapulars, yellow bill with black tip, greenish lores, and cinnamon on breast and lower neck, with white underparts and yellow legs.

The Javan Pond Heron is known to be common in South-east Asia, with the race *continentalis* breeding in southern parts of

Thailand, Cambodia, and Vietnam, and wintering in the southern Malay Peninsula; the nominate form ranges further eastwards to central Indonesia and southern Philippines. The species is largely sedentary, with some poorly understood winter movements recorded within the Indochinese Peninsula (Helbig 1987). There are some recent reports of its vagrancy outside its primary range, particularly in northern Australia (Martínez-Vilalta *et al.* 2019), and South China (Liu *et al.* 2013).

There is no previous record of the Javan Pond Heron from South Asia (Ali & Ripley 1987; Grimmett *et al.* 2011; Rasmussen & Anderton 2012) and it is not included in the checklists for India (Praveen *et al.* 2018a), or the Indian Subcontinent (Praveen *et al.* 2018b). Though the bird was in breeding plumage, it is likely to be a vagrant, as similar vagrants, in breeding plumage, have also been observed from the Malay Peninsula (Helbig 1987).

## Acknowledgements

I thank Craig Robson for reconfirming the identity of the species from the photograph. I would also thank Praveen J for his support and suggestions for the manuscript.

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**Editor's note:** This bird has been subsequently reported from the Andamans by G. Gokulkrishnan *et al.* (2018). *BirdingASIA* 30:106–108.