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Nesting of Asian Brown Flycatcher *Muscicapa dauurica* in Goa, India and a review of breeding records from peninsular India

The Asian Brown Flycatcher *Muscicapa dauurica* is known to winter in peninsular India, south of the Vindhya Range. It is a summer visitor to the Himalayan foothills, and in the hills of central India, breeding at 1,200–2,600 m asl. In the Western Ghats and its associated ranges, and probably the Satpura Hills and the Eastern Ghats, a resident (or summer visitor) population breeds (Rasmussen & Anderton 2012). However, due to paucity of reports the breeding range is poorly known.

On 29 April, 2018, at 1700 h, a nesting pair of the Asian Brown Flycatcher was observed in Bhagwan Mahaveer Wildlife Sanctuary, Goa, at c.100 m asl at roughly two kilometers from location 15.38°N, 74.23°E. While both birds were actively hunting insects, by making short aerial sorties, one of the birds sat intermittently in a cup-shaped nest on a completely leafless (unidentified) tree that was about 17–18 m tall [105–107]. The tree stood next to the motorable dirt road that passes through the sanctuary. We observed and photographed the nest from this dirt road, standing a considerable distance away from the site. The nest was situated 11–12 m above the ground, wedged between the main trunk and a branch, like that reported by Sangha *et al.* (2009). We measured the heights with a Hypsometer, and by applying trigonometry. The nest seemed to be made of some unidentified hardened material. Both the birds were singing from time to time and moving around in a radius of about eight to ten meters from the nest site. During our 30 min of observation, substantial activity was observed in the vicinity of the nest. Other birds that were observed, actively feeding, in a 10–15 m vicinity of the nest included three Common Woodshrikes *Tephrodornis pondicerianus*, two Drongos *Dicrurus sp.*, two Purple Sunbirds *Cinnyris asiaticus*, a Black-hooded Oriole *Oriolus xanthornus*, and two Lesser Golden-backed Woodpeckers *Dinopium benghalense*.



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105–107. Asian Brown Flycatcher *Muscicapa dauurica* sitting and probing its nest, Goa, April 2018.

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108–110. Asian Brown Flycatcher calling very close to a nest, Goa, April 2019.

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One year later, on 17 and 18 April 2019, we revisited the above mentioned nesting site. At 1130 h on 17 April, we reached the site and found the nest at exactly the same spot. There was almost no bird activity in its vicinity, apart from calls of a Greater Racket-tailed Drongo *Dicrurus paradiseus*. Upon comparing the picture of the 2018 nest with the 2019 nest, we saw that the shape and structure of the nest had changed [108–110]. The 2019 nest contained a greenish lichen that was seen growing elsewhere on the tree. The material of the 2018 nest could not be identified, but it seemed more rigid and overall very brown. It is difficult to say whether the nest was rebuilt. No Asian Brown Flycatcher was seen in the 30 min of observation time. We revisited the same site next morning at around 0900 h. This time we observed two Asian Brown Flycatchers. These birds did not sit on the nest, nor did they approach it. They were observed feeding at some distance (10–15 m), and then they moved away gradually, out of sight, and did not return during the 30 min we were there. The other birds that were observed in a 10–15 m vicinity from the location from which the nest was being inspected included a Bronzed Drongo *D. aeneus*, a Common Iora *Aegithina tiphia*, and two Greater Golden-backed Woodpeckers *Chrysocolaptes guttacristatus*. At 0800 h the same morning, about one kilometre away from the previously mentioned nesting site, we sighted two Asian Brown Flycatchers, one of which was constantly calling. One of the birds was perched on top of an almost leafless tree, and calling, and the other was feeding on a nearby tree [111–113]. On inspecting

the site further, we found a nest that was six to seven meters up on the same tree, right above the path. The height of the tree was about nine to ten meters tall. This nest was quite different from the previous one, and was positioned in the middle of an almost horizontal branch. It comprised greenish lichen and small twigs and was much larger and flatter than the first nest. One of the birds was perching on branches that were about two to three meters from the nest, and was calling. It is highly probable that this pair was building the nest. The other birds that were observed from the location from which the nest was being inspected included two Thick-billed Flowerpeckers *Dicaeum agile*, two Yellow-throated Sparrows *Gymnoris xanthocollis*, three Chestnut-tailed Starlings *Sturnia malabarica*, two Red-rumped Swallows *Cecropis daurica*, and two Bronzed Drongos.



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111–113. Nest of Asian Brown Flycatcher; view from opposite sides, Goa, April 2019.

According to Cramp & Perrins (1993), the Asian Brown Flycatcher breeds between 900 m and 1,800–1,900 m asl in hill forests. An account of previous breeding/nesting reports from India can be found in Sangha et al. (2009). Here, to put our observations in perspective we have tabulated a summary of the

observations from all available literature on the breeding of this bird in India, and classified them into two kinds, namely, nesting/mating observations, and juvenile/immature bird observations. The nesting during April, reported here, falls within the period of previous nesting/mating observations and seems consistent with reports of juvenile birds. The altitude of the nesting reported here is 100 m asl, which is on the lower side compared to previous breeding reports. However, considering that juvenile birds have been reported from as low as sea level, one must look out for breeding in such locations as well.

Ours is the first record from the state of Goa and it is important, considering the dearth of breeding/nesting reports and the lack of clarity in the breeding range of this flycatcher in India.

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Table 1. Nesting observations					
Year	Month	Place	Altitude (m asl)	Reference	Observation, Nest Height
1894	May, June	Vindhya Range, Madhya Pradesh	-	Shelley (1894) (observers: Shelley, Kemp) Baker (1933)	Many nests collected (average height 5.5 m)
1893, 1895	early May	Birchi, North Kanara	-	Davidson, J. A. G. 1898.	4.5 m
1909	June, July	Vindhya Range, Madhya Pradesh	-	Baker (1933). (observer: Betham)	Several nests taken (average height 9 m)
1971	March, April, May	Vandiperiyar-Peermade, Kerala	900	Jackson (1971)	Multiple nests observed "high up in the trees"
1976	April	Periyar Tiger Reserve, Kerala	-	Sashikumar et al. (2011); Observer: Neelakantan	A nest
1991	February	Peechi-Vazani Wildlife Sanctuary, Kerala	-	Sashikumar et al. (2011);	A nest
1992	March	Chimmony Wildlife Sanctuary	-	Observers: Nameer & Raveendran	A nest
1993	March	Peechi-Vazani Wildlife Sanctuary, Kerala	100	Santharam (2003)	17 m
1993, 1994, 1995	April	Wayanad, Kerala	900	Sashikumar et al. (2011); Observer: Uthaman	Same nest reused for three years
2007	March	Aralam Wildlife Sanctuary and Kottiyoor Reserve Forest, Kerala	100 & 200	Sashikumar et al. (2011); Observer: Sashikumar & Palot	Nest-building observed
2007	May	Kurchiyat Range, Kerala	-	Sashikumar et al. (2011); Observer: Sashikumar	Nest with three chicks being fed
2009	June, July	Sitamata Wildlife Sanctuary, Rajasthan	600	Sangha et al. (2009)	5–5.5 m
2017	May	Salem, Tamil Nadu	800	Natarajan et al. (2017)	-
2017	April	Biligiri Rangan Hills, Karnataka	1100	Jacob (2017); Observer: A. Jacob	Mating observation

Table 2. Juvenile bird observations					
Year	Month	Place	Altitude (m asl)	Reference/Observer	Observation
1971	June	Kerala	—	Jackson (1971)	Adult feeding young
1984, 1990	July	Chennai, Tamil Nadu	0		Juvenile birds with spotted plumage
1991	August	Mannuthy, Kerala	20		Juvenile with spots
1999, 2000	June, July, August	Chittoor, Andhra Pradesh	700	Santharam (2003); Rau & Santharam (2016)	Juvenile birds
2016	August				One immature
1983, 1984	June, August	Hyderabad, Telangana	515		
1986	July	Narsapur, Medak District, Telangana	560	Pittie (2003)	One immature
1988	May	Gir, Gujarat	0	Mundkur (1990)	Adult feeding young
1993	July	Hyderabad, Telangana	515	Pittie (2000)	An immature
2000	June, July	Hyderabad, Telangana	515	Pittie (2000)	An immature
1997	May	Nelliampathy, Kerala	1,000	Praveen (1997); Sashikumar <i>et al.</i> (2011); Observer: Raveendran	One pair and recently fledged young
2007	May	Tholpetty Range, Kerala	900	Sashikumar <i>et al.</i> (2011); Observer: Sashikumar	Two juveniles being fed
2008	July	Chittoor, Andhra Pradesh	700	Champhekar (2008)	One juvenile
2011	July	Thane, Maharashtra	0	Mane (2011)	One immature
2015	July	Top-slip, Tamil Nadu	750	Natarajan <i>et al.</i> (2015)	One juvenile
2015	July	Thrisur, Kerala	0	Polpakkara <i>et al.</i> (2015)	One juvenile
2015	July	Bangalore, Karnataka	800	Sinha <i>et al.</i> (2015)	One juvenile
2015	July	Faridabad, Haryana	200	Gupta (2015); Khanna (2015); Sethi (2016); Kirola (2016); Nanda (2016)	One immature
2016	June	Valparai, Tamil Nadu	1,100	Jeganathan (2016)	One adult feeding two juveniles
2016	June	Pench, Madhya Pradesh	500	Phadke (2016)	One adult, one juvenile
2016	May	Top-slip, Tamil Nadu	750	Amritharaj (2016)	One juvenile
2016	July	Sirumugai, Tamil Nadu	300	Vijayaraghavan (2016)	One juvenile
2016	June	Wayanad, Kerala	950	George <i>et al.</i> (2016)	Two juveniles, one adult
2016	August	Bidar, Karnataka	600	Praveen (2016)	One juvenile
2016	August	Okhla, Delhi	200	Parashar (2016)	One immature
2017	May	Palakkad, Kerala	200	Kallaettumkara <i>et al.</i> (2017)	Two adults, one juvenile
2017	June, July	Bangalore, Karnataka	900	Jacob <i>et al.</i> (2017)	One juvenile
2017	June	Nagpur, Maharashtra	300	Bhattacharjee (2017)	One immature
2017	June	Vikarabad, Telangana	700	Supekar <i>et al.</i> (2017)	One immature
2017	August	Faridabad, Haryana	200	Panjeta (2017)	One immature
2018	July	Palakkad, Kerala	100	Venu (2018)	One juvenile
2018	May	Anaikatti, Tamil Nadu	700	Ignatius (2018)	Two juveniles
2018	July	Dapoli, Maharashtra	100	Khopkar (2018)	Two juveniles

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Cinereous Vulture *Aegypius monachus* in Mudumalai Tiger Reserve, Western Ghats, and its status in southern India

The Cinereous Vulture *Aegypius monachus* is classified as Near Threatened under the IUCN Red List of threatened species (BirdLife International 2019). The species is a partial migrant, and a nomad (Bildstein 2006). Cinereous Vultures adults are mostly sedentary while the juvenile birds disperse over larger areas (Del Moral & De la Puente 2005). In South Asia the Cinereous Vulture is resident in arid to semi-arid mountains of Pakistan, and at lower altitudes in the Himalayas. It is only a winter visitor in the north-western parts of India and a straggler to peninsular India up to Dhulia, Khandesh, Maharashtra (Ali & Ripley 2007). In this note we record the occurrence of the Cinereous Vulture in Mudumalai Tiger Reserve, Western Ghats, and reviews its status in southern India.

Mudumalai Tiger Reserve (*henceforth*, MTR) (11.53°–11.71°N, 76.37°–76.75°E) lies on the northern flank of the Nilgiri Mountain Range in the Western Ghats and is contiguous with Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary (*henceforth*, WWS) on its western side, Bandipur Tiger Reserve (*henceforth*, BTR) on its northern side, and Nilgiri North Forest Division (*henceforth*, NNFD) on its southern side. MTR also forms part of the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve (*henceforth*, NBR).

On 18 March 2019, at 1030 h, we are monitoring the vultures at the constructed waterhole of Sigur range in MTR (11.53°N, 76.72°E; 952m asl). Among the thirty to fifty vultures were White-rumped Vultures *Gyps bengalensis*, Indian Vultures *G. indicus*, and Red-headed Vultures *Sarcogyps calvus*. Along with this flock, a completely dark, black vulture was observed circling above the water hole and suddenly it disappeared from that place. Our camera trap showed a huge, dark-bodied bird, with a uniformly dark blackish plumage, paler on the head and neck, with dark irises, and a bluish-grey cere; confirming that the bird was a juvenile Cinereous Vulture [114]. This bird utilized the waterhole multiple times, for bathing and drinking, till 27 April 2019.



114. Cinereous Vulture near the water hole of Mudumalai Tiger Reserve.

To view our record in perspective, we assessed the status of Cinereous Vultures in southern India (Table 1), and marked the sighting points on a map (Fig. 1).

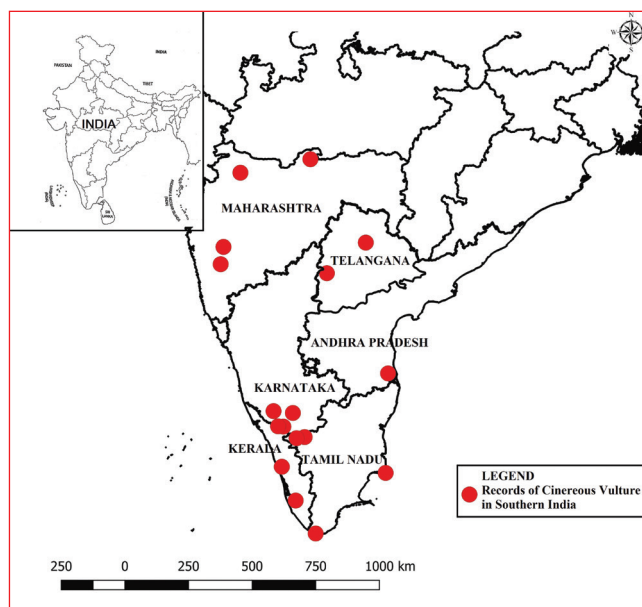


Fig. 1. Sighting records of Cinereous Vulture in Southern Indian Region.

Table 1. Consolidated details of Cinereous Vulture records in southern India (Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, and Tamil Nadu)

Date	Place	State	Reported by	Status of bird	Reference
12 February 1986	Karimnagar	Telangana	B. C. Choudhury	E	Choudhury (1990)
01 December 1988	Kanjirappara, Mallapuzhasry, Pathanamthitta	Kerala	R. S. Shree Kumar	E	Kumar (1991)
11 January 1988	Nelapattu Wildlife Sanctuary, Nellore District	Andhra Pradesh	C. Perennou & V. Santharam	S	Perennou & Santharam (1990)
Last week of December 1992	Khandobachi Pali, Satara District	Maharashtra	Rahul Purandare, Sajeev Nalavade	E	Prasad (2006), Naoroji (2006)
20 December 1994	Kole Wetlands, Enamavu, Thrissur	Kerala	Nameer P. O.	S	Nameer (1994)
21 December 1998	Harangi Dam, Kodagu	Karnataka	S. Subramanya	S	Subramanya (2001)
20 January 2001	Rangareddi	Telangana	Pranay Rao	S	Rao (2006)
20 January 2002	Krishnarajasagar Reservoir, Mysore	Karnataka	T. Shivanand	S	Shivanand (2004)
21 December 2008	Point Calimere Wildlife Sanctuary, Nagappattinam	Tamil Nadu	Gnanskandan K.	P	Gnanskandan (2008)
11 February 2012	Melghat Tiger Reserve, Amravathi	Maharashtra	Nandkishore Dudhe	P	Dudhe (2012)
01 January 2013	Jejuri Rural, Pune	Maharashtra	Yash Deshpande	P	Deshpande (2013)
December 2016–January 2017	Kabini, Naharhole Tiger Reserve	Karnataka	Biddappa	P	Biddappa (2017)
17 February 2017	Thalamalai Reserve Forest, Sathiyamangalam Tiger Reserve	Tamil Nadu	S. Bharathidhasan	P	Bharathidhasan (2017)
21 December 2017	Tholpetty Forest Range, Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary	Kerala	Vishnu Omanakuttan	P	Rajeev (2017)
28 December 2017	Aasaripallam, Kanyakumari	Tamil Nadu	Raja Lingam & Prasanth	P, E	Tamilbirds (2017)
18 March 2019	Mudumalai Tiger Reserve	Tamil Nadu	Samson A.	P	Present record

Note: E=Exhausted or dead individual; P=Photographed; S=Sighting with description