

Correspondence

Painted Spurfowl from the Chota Nagpur Plateau area of West Bengal

The Painted Spurfowl *Galloperdix lunulata* inhabits rocky slopes and scrub habitats of dry forests, from central to southern India, including the Aravalli Range of Rajasthan up to the Ayodhya Range of West Bengal (Ball 1874). Historically, it was recorded at Rajmahal Hill, Manbhum, Lohardaga, Sirguja, Jashpur, Udaipur, Sambalpur, northwards of Mahanadi, Raipur, Nowagarh, Karial, and along the Godavari Valley (Ball 1874, 1878) on the Chotanagpur Plateau. But there is no record of the species (Chakraborty 2011) from a large portion of this important ecogeographic region (Kumar & Rawat 2008). We report the presence of this species in the Chotanagpur region on the basis of several sight records supported by photographs taken on three occasions [163].



163. Male Painted Spurfowl.

Ayan Mondal and Anirban Patra first saw the bird in the Matha forest, Purulia District on 16 April 2013. AP and Anirban Patra photographed a bird on 15 November 2015 in the Jhilimili forest (22.84°N, 86.71°E). Subsequently, SS and Kirty Kumar photographed a cock on 05 February 2019 on Ajodhya Hill (23.20°N, 86.07°E). DS and SM saw a pair on 28 April 2019 on the outskirts of Bishnupur town (23.03°E, 87.29°N). This was typical plateau habitat (Fig. 1), with its characteristic red soil and mounds of granite rock, with scarce vegetation like date palm, sal, palas, eucalyptus, etc. We did not see a waterbody.

According to Grimm et al. (2011), although this bird is found on the Chotanagpur Plateau, there have not been any reports from its portion that extends into West Bengal. Hence, our reports probably constitute the eastern most population of this species.

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Fig. 1. Location of the sighting of Painted Spurfowl.

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A leucistic Brown Crake *Zapornia akool* in Karnataka

On the morning of 11 July 2019, while birding with Shyam Hirurkar, we spotted a pair of Brown Crake *Zapornia akool* [164] in Somapur Village (15.444°N, 75.0824°E), Dharwad District, Karnataka. The road we were driving along had a little water channel running parallel to it. We saw a blob of white along the edge of the channel, and initially thought it was domesticated rock pigeon. But as we got closer, it was clear that it was something else. The brown bird followed the partially white one, and we instantly recognised it as a Brown Crake, given its characteristic olive-brown upperparts and greyish face, breast, and belly (Grimmett et al. 2011). The other bird, which accompanied it, was a colour aberrant Brown Crake as parts of its body were white and the rest of it retained the inherent brown colour [165].

A closer examination of the bird in the photographs revealed that it was a partially leucistic individual, as the pattern of white plumage on the bird is bilaterally symmetric and patchy, ruling out any other form of colour aberrations (van Grouw 2013). This is the first record of a leucistic Brown Crake in South Asia (Mahabal et al. 2016).



164. Aberrant plumaged Brown Crane.



165. Leucistic Brown Crane.

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Alloparental care by Red-vented Bulbul *Pycnonotus cafer* in central India

Alloparental care, also known as foster parental care, cross species feeding, or interspecific feeding is the least documented phenomenon of animal behaviour in South Asian ornithology. We could locate just two instances of this behaviour in published literature: that of an Indian White-eye *Zosterops palpebrosus* feeding Indian Paradise Flycatcher *Terpsiphone paradisi* nestlings (Tehsin & Tehsin 1998), and a Red-vented Bulbul *Pycnonotus cafer* feeding Black Drongo *Dicrurus macrocercus* chicks (Gruisen 2004).

On 06 May 2018, during our stay at Bhedaghat, Jabalpur, Madhya Pradesh, we observed an active nest of an Indian Robin *Copsychus fulicatus* with two altricial nestlings. The nest was constructed in KA's grandma's garage (23.13°N, 79.79°E). It was built in a gap between two bricks, was 2.43m above ground, [166], and was lined with grass, twigs, jute rope, and pieces of synthetic fiber.



166. Nest of Indian Robin.

We observed that both parents were engaged in feeding nestlings from the early hours of the day [167]. However, a Red-vented Bulbul was also been spotted feeding chicks repeatedly [168]. The bulbul fed the chicks more frequently than the biological parents, who seemed unconcerned with this interspecific feeding. The alloparent not only fed the chicks, but also cleaned fecal matter from the nest. Some of the morsels the bulbul fed the chicks were identified as Lynx spider *Oxypes* sp., and various other arthropoda *Coptotermes kishori*, *Peromyia indica*, and *Polypedilum (Pentapedilum) robusticeps*. The present observation is noteworthy because alloparenting is much confused with brood parasitism, but is more likely the rarer phenomena wherein young ones are parented by heterospecific species in the presence, or absence, of biological parents.



167. Female Indian Robin feeding chicks.