

more common Tree Pipit *A. trivialis*. Striations on its back clearly ruled out Olive-backed Pipit *A. hodgsoni*. Two Rosy Pipits were recorded again at the same site five days later, on 02 February, indicating that there were more birds and seem to be staying around (Dhadnekar 2019).



Both: Archit Hardikar

212a,b. Rosy Pipit in Nandur Madhmeshwar Bird Sanctuary.

The Rosy Pipit generally winters in the plains and foothills in the northern part of the Indian Subcontinent (Grimmett et al. 2011; Rasmussen & Anderton 2012; eBird 2019). The nearest records are of three specimens collected by K. S. Dharmakumarsinhji, in Bhavnagar, Gujarat, on 03 April 1951 from a flock that had more individuals. Salim Ali identified the specimens at the Bombay Natural History Society (Dharmakumarsinhji 1951; Ali 1955). Hence, this appears to be an addition to the avifauna of Maharashtra, as well as peninsular India.

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Status of the Oriental Bay Owl *Phodilus badius* from regions west of Bhutan, with new records from northern West Bengal

The Oriental Bay Owl *Phodilus badius* is scarce throughout the north-eastern hill states of India, the eastern Himalaya, and Nepal. It is known to occur in several Southeast Asian countries (Blanford 1895; King et al. 1975; Ali & Ripley 1983; Lekagul & Round 1991). It has been documented in the states of north-eastern India, where records exist from Assam (Baker 1897; Stevens 1915; Barman 2005), Arunachal Pradesh (Datta 2004), Manipur (Choudhury 2009), Nagaland (Ali & Ripley 1983; Choudhury 2001), and Meghalaya (Jerdon 1871). Most recent records have been from the states of Tripura, Nagaland, Assam, and Arunachal Pradesh (eBird 2019). Here we summarize the records and status of this species from regions lying west of Bhutan, and using our records from northern West Bengal to provide a wider perspective.

Uttarakhand: No definite records (Mohan & Sondhi 2017). There is an old verbal record of this species from Dehradun (Mr R. Thomson, verbally, to Mr Hume) mentioned by (Blanford 1895), which indicates the possibility of this bird's presence farther westwards than Nepal.

Nepal: Doubtful. The only collected material (skin) from Nepal was procured by Hodgson from a shop near Kathmandu, which leaves open the possibility of that bird having originated from elsewhere (Inskipp & Inskipp 1985).

Bhutan: Inskipp & Inskipp (1985) marked its status in Bhutan as questionable, but Grimmett et al. (2019) have shown its occurrence there—which, probably, refers to a photograph from 2012 by Rigdhen, in the Zhemgang Forest Division (Dhendup 2012). [See elsewhere in this issue for details.]

Bangladesh: At least one definite record. Hume & Inglis (1880) mentioned of a specimen killed at 'Dilkhushah' (currently in Dhaka, Bangladesh).

Sikkim: Hume (1870) summarized this bird's presence in his writing (collector, date of collection unknown). Later, Robinson (1927) mentioned that Louise Mandelli himself collected the type female of *Phodilus badius saturatus* (January, 1874B.M. Reg. No. 1886.2.1.1123) in Sikkim. But Robinson is unclear about the total number of specimens collected only from Sikkim. Ali (1989) mentioned that G. E. Shaw (20 November 1915) recorded it at an altitude of c.609 m in the region of the Teesta Valley, and Stevens (1925) stated that this species is restricted to heavy foothill forests of the Sikkim Himalayas. Later, works by several authors (Ali & Ripley 1983; Inskipp & Inskipp 1985; Grimmett et al. 2011; Grimmett et al. 2019) have recorded its presence in Sikkim.



213. The Injured Oriental bay owl being diagnosed



Both: SPOAR

214. Image showing characteristic facial disc of the species

West Bengal: Jerdon's (1871) record from the Darjeeling Hills may have been the first record for West Bengal and most probably the specimen in the Museum of Comparative Zoology, Harvard University (Occurrence ID—MCZ: Orn: 33646, Catalogue Number—33646, details available online at VertNet, <http://portal.vertnet.org/oc/mcz/orn?id=mcz-orn-33646>) was obtained by him, as the location, and the time range match perfectly. However, Jerdon (1871) did not mention anything about the number of specimens he collected in Darjeeling. On the other hand, Robinson (1927) stated that seven specimens of this species were obtained from Sikkim and Darjeeling, but the name of collector was not mentioned, and it is also unclear whether Mandelli collected specimens of this bird in the Darjeeling Hills, or not. Notably,

Robinson (1927) mentioned another location: the Buxa Duars (now in Alipurduar District, West Bengal) from where only one specimen was collected, but the name of collector, and date of collection were not mentioned.

In the twenty-first century, there are three records from West Bengal, which we now discuss. On 28 September 2006 Bimal Debnath, Range Officer, rescued an injured specimen from the southern range of Gorumara National Park, Jalpaiguri District. On 24 April 2015, at 1139 h, Biswajit Dutta Chowdhury rescued a strange-looking owl from a residence near Sonaullah Higher Secondary School, Jalpaiguri (26.53°N, 88.72°E; c.89 m). Initially it was misidentified as a Barn Owl *Tyto alba*, but later, its brown speckled dorsum, facial disk were observed and identified with the help of Grimmett et al. (2011) as an Oriental Bay Owl [213, 214]. The bird was severely injured and was taken to the Veterinary Polyclinic, Siliguri, for treatment under the supervision of Dr Avijit Dutta. An X-ray revealed that the bird had a broken wing, and it died of its wounds two days later, and was buried. Both these records can now be found on eBird at <https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S60123868>, and <https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S60123726>, respectively.

Late in 2017 a bird was sighted in a forest village near Majua, Singalila National Park, West Bengal (c.1,676 m) by Sourav Mandal and Mridulkanti Kar. They spotted a pair of Oriental Bay Owls perched on a tree at 1939 h in secondary forest near the village. The birds flew away within three minutes. This area was slightly higher than the birds' earlier elevation of 1,500 m, as given in Ali (2002).

We thank personnel of the local Forest Department for their assistance throughout the rescue and treatment procedure. Special thanks to Dr Avijit Dutta, Veterinary Polyclinic, Siliguri, who was in charge of the treatment of the

bird. We also express our gratitude to Kanad Baidya, North Bengal Medical College, Siliguri, who helped in identifying the bird.

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The Oriental Bay Owl *Phodilus badius* in Bhutan

The Oriental Bay Owl *Phodilus badius* is widely, but sparsely, distributed across South and South-east Asia (König et al. 2008; Bruce et al. 2019). The subspecies *P. badius saturatus* ranges in India from the foothills of Sikkim and then seemingly not again until south-eastern Arunachal Pradesh and the southern Assam Hills (Khasi Hills, eastern Meghalaya, and southwards to Lushai Hills) (Rasmussen & Anderton 2012). Several authors have disputed the presence of this species in Bhutan (Ali & Ripley 1983; König et al. 2009; Grimmett et al. 2019). Ripley (1982) and Ali et al. (1996) also stated that they were in doubt when they included Bhutan in its distributional range, for there did not seem to be any authenticated record of its occurrence there. They also remarked that from the distributional pattern alone, it would not be surprising if this species would occur in Bhutan. We have been unable to trace any specimens for Bhutan, nor published records or submissions to eBird. Furthermore, despite KDB undertaking 22 previous three to four weeklong birding trips across Bhutan, during spring, he too had not previously encountered this species anywhere in the kingdom.

The following account documents two independent records of the Oriental Bay Owl in Bhutan. These independent records were made only five months apart, and within approximately five kilometers of each other.

On 19 April 2012 at 2025 h whilst camped in a partially overgrown orchard just below the Zhemgang–Tingtibi road (27.19°N, 90.72°E), KDB heard (and very briefly saw) an Oriental Bay Owl that was calling nearby (<50 m away). The bird called persistently from a perch within the midstory and at the edge of Warm Broadleaf Forest, at 1,265 m asl. The owl was recorded on the south-eastward-facing slope of the inner range of the Bhutan Himalaya, along the steep sided valley of the Dakpai Chu (Chu=River).

The vocalisations were recorded with a Sony TCM 5000-EV cassette tape-recorder (Saul Mineroff modified version) and a Sennheiser ME 66 microphone. The cassette recording was digitized (using Audacity software) and Macaulay Library generated a sonogram (Fig. 1).

The recording comprises around 90 sec, consisting of several series of three to four musical, high-pitched, and rising and falling whistled notes with a distinctive bleating, whimsical quality, with each note tapering off and descending towards the end. Each phrase was repeated at intervals of approximately ten seconds. The beautiful, mellifluous song is very distinctive and similar to songs of Oriental Bay Owl that KDB had also heard and recorded in Sabah, Borneo (Malaysia), and Thailand and resembled songs recorded in Java and Sumatra (Indonesia).

On 11 September 2012 at 1215 h TD (a senior forest ranger in the Royal Bhutan Department of Forests and Park Services), was carrying out a cable-line survey for timber extraction in the Kikhar village (27.21°E, 90.76°N) area of Zhemgang Dzongkhag). Always alert to the presence of birds, he was amazed to locate an Oriental Bay Owl perched midway up a large broad-leaved tree. The bird was sleeping and permitted TD to obtain three images, one of which is included here [215]. The location was at c. 1700 m asl in Cool Broadleaved Woodland.



215. Oriental Bay Owl near Kikhar village, Zhemgang Dzongkhag 11 September 2012.

Tashi Dhendup

These records appear to be the first documented records of Oriental Bay Owl for Bhutan, although the species has been recorded in adjacent regions, further southwards and eastwards in India (Fig. 2) where it is regarded as a rare resident of the Duars and foothills, locally up to 1,500 m (Ali 1977), neighboring Arunachal Pradesh, and West Bengal (see elsewhere in this issue) (Datta 2004).