

Tracing the untraced sites in *Threatened Birds of Asia*, mostly from north-eastern India

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The two-volume work, *Threatened Birds of Asia* (BirdLife International 2001a,b), published two decades ago, was an outstanding, unique, and comprehensive status summary of threatened Asian birds. Since then a lot of information in those volumes has been updated, and is available in dispersed places, as a revised edition of the volumes was never published. However, many contemporary articles, papers, and regional books still cite this important work, which is available freely online.

I try and rectify an important issue that has not been addressed in the two decades since its publication, by presenting an updated gazetteer, which includes some places wrongly mentioned, incorrectly spelt, or that could not be located and were listed as 'untraced'. This is important as this work has become, over the years, one of the key reference materials for the continent, and hence, tracing out the untraced locations should be done as it relates to a set of highly threatened birds. The select species, with their traced out locations, or wrong locations, are listed below, with corrections and approximate coordinates. Unless otherwise stated, all locations are within Assam.

Greater Adjutant *Leptoptilos dubius*

Original site details	Revised/corrected site details	Coordinates (approx.)	Remarks
Sonapur, Nagaon District	In Kamrup (Metropolitan) District	26.11°N, 91.98°E	Saikia (1995)
Hojai (Nilbagan), Karbi Anglong District	In Hojai District (erstwhile undivided Nagaon District)	Hojai (26.00°N, 92.83°E), Nilbagan (26.06°N, 92.90°E)	Hojai and Nilbagan are different sites but was never part of Karbi Anglong District
Keotkuchi	In Barpeta District	26.53°N, 91.01°E	
Senga	Chenga, Barpeta District	26.27°N, 91.17°E	
Mongoldoi	Mangaldoi, Darrang District	26.45°N, 92.01°E	
Amulapatty, Noiapara, Japara, Kutuha, Phulbagan	In Dibrugarh District	27.47°N, 94.91°E	All these sites are in and around Dibrugarh town
Bhugdoi River	Bhogdoi River, Jorhat District	26.75°N, 94.20°E	Coordinates of probable site
Gormur	In Majuli District	26.95°N, 94.17°E	Formerly part of undivided Jorhat District
Janjimukh	In Jorhat District	26.92°N, 94.38°E	
Alikask	Alikash, Kamrup District	26.12°N, 91.28°E	
Dadara and Singimari	In Kamrup District	26.20°N, 91.63°E	
Adabari	In Kamrup District	26.30°N, 91.42°E	
Daulasala	Daulasal, Nalbari District	26.25°N, 91.22°E	
Ghograpara	Ghograpar, Nalbari District	26.45°N, 91.45°E	
Bota (Lowkhowa road), Chinapatty, Haibargaon (North Hoibargaon), Kharampatty, Daurabeel, Sialmari, Khutikatia	In Nagaon District	26.35°N, 91.68°E	These sites are in or adjacent to Nagaon town
Chapormukh	In Nagaon District	26.20°N, 91.50°E	
Dhuliapar, Kuwarpur, Mothadang–Nadipar, Mothadang, Ranghar Chariali, near Sat Sang Bihar, Bagharchuk	In Sivasagar or Sibsagar District	26.98°N, 91.60°E	All these sites are in or around Sivasagar or Sibsagar town
Na-Pukhuri	In Sivasagar or Sibsagar District	26.97°N, 91.75°E	
Dumnichoki	In Darrang District	26.35°N, 91.82°E	
Gohain <i>beel</i> and Singia	Dhakuakhana subdivision, Lakhimpur District	27.28°N, 94.40°E	Choudhury (2000). Nearby places
Koling <i>beel</i>	In Lakhimpur District	27.10°N, 94.20°E	
Between Balipara and Jamuguri	In Sonitpur District	26.83°N, 92.80°E	
Koliabor	In Nagaon District	26.52°N, 93.10°E	
Jagi Road	Jagiroad, Morigaon District	26.12°N, 92.20°E	Rahmani et al. (1990)
Manaha	In Morigaon District	26.27°N, 92.17°E	
Barpujia (Bhorbugia)	Barapujia, Nagaon District	26.25°N, 92.50°E	Changkakati & Das (1991)
Bamanigaon	Bamunigaon, Kamrup District	26.00°N, 92.28°E	

BirdLife International (2001a) erroneously quoted (Choudhury 1993), stating that two nesting trees existed in Islampur in 1990 and subsequent years, when, in fact, Choudhury (1993) had no mention of Islampur. I think it was a mix up of Islampur graveyard in Guwahati city and this article on Nagaon and Sivasagar. Islampur is not a nesting site, but a roost.

White-rumped Vulture *Gyps bengalensis*

Original site details	Revised/corrected site details	Coordinates (approx.)	Remarks
Bhurtpur	Bharatpur, Rajasthan	25.20°N, 77.50°E	
Jaldapar National Park, Assam	Jaldapara National Park, West Bengal	26.67°N, 89.25°E	
Krishnai and Paikan, Kamrup District	Krishnai and Paikan, Goalpara District	26.02°N, 90.65°E	Nearby places

Manipur Bush Quail *Perdica manipurensis*

The map in BirdLife International (2001a: 827) shows a site south of the Brahmaputra, but this Mornai or Mornoi is actually on its north (see below, under Slender-billed Babbler).

Chestnut-breasted Partridge *Arborophila mandelli*

Assam. Bhutan Duars, collected in April (Hume 1874), this referred to specimens of *A. mandelli*. The Bhutan Duars is no longer in Bhutan, but partly in northern West Bengal (around one-third), and partly in western Assam (slightly more than two-third).

Blyth's Tragopan *Tragopan blythii*

Original site details	Revised/corrected site details	Coordinates (approx.)	Remarks
Samagooting, SimaGooding, Nagaland	Chumukedima, Dimapur District, Nagaland	25.75°N, 93.80°E	Godwin-Austen (1872a): The collection sites were apparently in the Barail range, as such heights, as mentioned, are only found in that range, which is at least 15–20 km away.
Noklak	Noklak, Tuensang District, Nagaland	26.20°N, 95.00°E	A mounted specimen, apparently of local origin, found in 1996 (Choudhury 1997)

Sarus Crane *Grus antigone*

The only records for Meghalaya are from: Shillong, East Khasi Hills District, June 1999 (Choudhury et al. 1999), and elsewhere in the district at Lady Hydari Park, June 1999 (Choudhury et al. 1999). These localities refer to the same site, and had only captive birds, and should not be considered. Lady Hydari Park is located within the heart of Shillong city (1,500 m asl) and houses the Shillong Zoo and Forest Museum, which held the birds in June 1999 when I visited.

Bengal Florican *Houbaropsis bengalensis*

Original site details	Revised/corrected site details	Coordinates (approx.)	Remarks
Mornai, Goalpara			See under Slender-billed Babbler
Demoo Nuddie	Between Tamulpur and Darrangamela in Baksa District	26.67–75°N, 91.50–53°E	In Pollok (1879) South of the eastern buffer of Manas Tiger Reserve
Hazoo	Hajo, Kamrup District	26.25°N, 91.52°E	In Pollok (1879) A pilgrim site for muslims, buddhists and hindus
Jargoan	Jargaon or Jhargaon, South-east of Tamulpur town, Baksa District	26.60°N, 91.62°E	In Pollok (1879)
Maji Koochie	Maji Kuchi, Udalguri District (formerly part of undivided Darrang District)	26.60–63°N, 91.75–80°E	In Pollok (1879) This is a region (locally called <i>mouza</i>) comprising several villages. It is c.20 km south of Bornadi Wildlife Sanctuary
Kharjan	30 km east/north-east of Dibrugarh town	27.53°N, 95.12°E	In Dibrugarh District (Stevens 1914, 1915a,b)
Mina Muttee	Mainamati in Bajali area, Barpeta District	26.55°N, 91.12°E	In Pollok (1879) c.3 km north-west of Pathsala town
Nokhroy	06 km north-west of Tinsukia town in Tinsukia District	27.55°N, 95.30°E	Till 1989, Tinsukia was part of Dibrugarh District. During Stevens's time (Stevens 1914, 1915a,b) it was part of undivided Lakhimpur District
Paka Marah	Pakhamara, near Borbori, Baksa District	26.63°N, 91.35°E	In Pollok (1879) c.3.5 km east of Musalpur. Till 2003, it was part of Nalbari District
Kumblepur	Tamulpur, Baksa District	26.33°N, 91.58°E	In Pollok (1879) Tamulpur is north of Rangiya

Marsh Babbler *Pellorneum palustre*

BirdLife International (2001b: 2086), quoting Hume (1888), mentions a place called 'Dibung', April–May 1877, Sadiya (Sadia), Assam, but in parentheses states, 'possibly Dibang River, and therefore possibly in Arunachal Pradesh'. The Dibang River is not entirely in Arunachal Pradesh. Before its confluence with Lohit River, it passes through the Sadiya subdivision of Assam for at least 16 km (c.27.83–97°N, 95.58–60°E).

BirdLife International (2001b) confirms Bangladesh records from 'wetlands at Bholaganj (Bologunj), Sylhet, at the base of the Khasia Hills, c.1869–1870 (Godwin-Austen 1872b, specimens in the British Museum of Natural History [now Natural History Museum]; Hume 1888)'. This site is right on the Meghalaya–Bangladesh border (c.25.17°N, 91.75°E) and the grassland/marshy areas exist on both sides, and the birds could be from either side. Even inside Khasi Hills, the area is a flat plain and there was no clear-cut boundary demarcation as it is now fenced. I visited Bholaganj, in Meghalaya, in 2013 to see the current situation. A few stands of elephant grass stood near small pools, but owing to paddy cultivation, there was no chance of extension of grassland. On the Bangladesh side, visible from near the fence, the condition was similar.

Tawny-breasted Wren Babbler *Spelaornis longicaudatus*

Original site details	Revised/corrected site details	Coordinates (approx.)	Remarks
Mahadeo	Mahadeo Peak or Mahadev Tilla, east of Haflong, North Cachar Hills (Dima Hasao) District, Assam	25.13°N, 93.17°E	Specimens in the American Museum of Natural History (AMNH #573699) and in the Natural History Museum, London

Rasmussen & Anderton (2012) did not include North Cachar in its range, stating these specimens to be untraced. This location clarification resolves this issue and extends its range to the North Cachar Hills, assuming both the specimens were correctly identified. The AMNH specimen is still incorrectly listed from the West Khasi Hills, which may be corrected.

Black-breasted Parrotbill *Paradoxornis flavirostris*

For Bholaganj (=Bologunj), Sylhet, see observations under Marsh Babbler, and for Mornai Tea Estate, see observations under Slender-billed Babbler.

Slender-billed Babbler *Argya longirostris*

The site 'near Mornai tea estate', Goalpara District, has been shown south of the Brahmaputra River on the map in BirdLife International (2001b: 2121). There are two tea estates with the same name: one is located near Goalpara town, south of the Brahmaputra, and the other in the *duars*, north of the river. None of the antedated articles and reports mentions the location in relation to the river, or in *duars*, or away from the *duars*. In the description of the Manipur Bush Quail *Perdica manipurensis inglisi*, the collector had stayed with A. M. Primrose at Mornai, or Mornoi (Ogilvi-Grant & Inglis 1909). Primrose's place of stay at that time as per his own articles (Primrose 1905a,b) was Mornai or Mornoi Tea Estate (c.26.33°N, 89.88°E), with Tamarhat as the Post Office. Hence, this tea estate, which was source of many crucial specimen records must have been located north of the Brahmaputra and is now in present day Kokrajhar District.

Bristled Grassbird *Schoenicola striatus*

"A specimen was possibly taken at the Garo Hills, Meghalaya, 1869–1870 (Godwin-Austen 1870). However, as Godwin-Austen included many species shot nearby in Sylhet or Mymensingh (at the base of the Garo or Khasia Hills, an area perhaps more likely to hold populations of this species), this record is probably from Bangladesh rather than Meghalaya" (BirdLife International 2001b).

It is very much possible that it was actually taken from the Garo Hills as there were large plain areas with tall grass in the wide valleys across Garo Hills where even the wild water buffalo *Bubalus arnee* (Choudhury 2010) and the great Indian one-horned rhinoceros *Rhinoceros unicornis* (Pollok 1879) used to occur.

Beautiful Nuthatch *Sitta formosa*

Original site details	Revised/corrected site details	Coordinates (approx.)	Remarks
Asalu, Khasia Hills (in Meghalaya)	Asalu, North Cachar Hills (Dima Hasao) District, Assam	25.18°N, 93.22°E	On the slopes of Barail range

Finn's Weaver *Ploceus megarhynchos*

Original site details	Revised/corrected site details	Coordinates (approx.)	Remarks
Ronikata Camp, Goalpara	Runikhata, north of the Brahmaputra River, Chirang District	26.63°N, 90.40°E	The map shows a site south of the Brahmaputra River because of the location of Goalpara town. Chirang was part of undivided Goalpara District

Discussion and Conclusions

Many of the untraced north-eastern Indian sites mentioned in BirdLife International (2001a,b) are listed and rectified in this note, in an effort to standardise our common knowledge base. BirdLife International (2001a,b) covered species that were threatened with extinction owing to various reasons, and was compiled so that effective conservation measures could be taken. Correct locations are extremely important in such matters.

In a recent review, Hortal et al. (2015) stated that despite recent efforts to gather two centuries of biodiversity inventories into comprehensive databases, many crucial research questions remain unanswered. They presented seven key shortfalls of current biodiversity data, which included knowledge gaps for species distribution as one of them. They further said that shortfalls on species and distribution data have the farthest-reaching influence because data on the identity and distribution of species are vital for identifying broad-scale patterns in biodiversity and the processes that modify biodiversity (e.g., extinction). The distribution data shortfall (they call it 'Wallacean shortfall') can also have profound impacts on estimates of conservation threat status. Range size is frequently used in conservation planning, including IUCN red-listing, in which species with small ranges are given higher extinction risk status and conservation priority.

It is therefore recommended that future authors should use this work in conjunction with *Threatened Birds of Asia* to correctly plot these locations. Also, the locations mentioned in the catalogues of the natural history museums should also be updated to reflect the changes proposed in this work.

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