

occurred within a span of four to five minutes. After grabbing the wriggling squirrel, the Greater Coucal flew laboriously towards the greener area of the park. Later, we observed the Greater Coucal feeding on the squirrel by puncturing the cervical vertebrae on the dorsal side of the body.

The Greater Coucal is known to feed on small mammals (mice, hedgehog), lizards, snakes, frogs, insects, centipedes, scorpions, spiders, crabs, snails, slugs, eggs and nestlings of small birds, fruits, and seeds (Payne 2020). Specifically, it has been reported to kill a Saw-scaled Viper *Echis carinatus* (Venugopal 1982), Common Myna *Acridotheres tristis* (Narayan et al. 2013), and a young Indian Hare *Lepus nigricollis* (Simmonds 1981). However, there have been no previous records of the Greater Coucal preying on the Five-striped Palm Squirrel, an addition to the record of its varied diet, and hunting behaviour.

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– Aditya Singh Chauhan & Durga Prasad Srivastava

Aditya Singh Chauhan, H. No. 125, Village Jasola, Chauhan Mohalla, Galli No. 3., P.O. Jamia Nagar, New Delhi 110025, India. E-mail: aditya.chauhan999@gmail.com
Durga Prasad Srivastava, 1A, Anshul Vihar Extension, Bairagarh-Chichali, Kolar Road, Bhopal 462042, Madhya Pradesh, India. E-mail: dpsrivastava1992@gmail.com

Asian Glossy Starling *Aplonis panayensis affinis* in India: Recent records, and a note on its likely status in India and Bangladesh

During an afternoon birding session on 02 October 2019, RDP was drawn to some unfamiliar high-pitched metallic calls from semi-evergreen forest (~20 m asl) near his home in Agartala, West Tripura (23.86°N, 91.30°E). On investigation with his telephoto lens, he saw and photographed three blackish-green birds with striking red eyes [166]; they were actively foraging high up in the canopy. All three birds were readily identified as male Asian Glossy Starlings *Aplonis panayensis* due to their distinctive plumage (Purkayastha 2019). A single male was also seen during April 2016 (Biswajit Saha, *pers. comm.*) in West Tripura. Although two subspecies of the Asian Glossy Starling are resident in India (*tytleri* and *albiris* in the Andaman & Nicobar Islands) (Ali & Ripley 1972; Craig & Feare 2020), these observations constitute the first documented records of the subspecies *affinis* within Indian limits since March/April 1991 (Choudhury 1991), and the first photographs. Our birds were identified as subspecies *affinis*, rather than *tytleri* or *albiris* from the greenish gloss (more bluish and less glossy in the other two) and the bright red iris (brownish in *tytleri*, and white in *albiris*) (Craig & Feare 2020).



166. Asian Glossy Starling in Tripura.

R. D. Purkayastha

The subspecies *affinis* is perhaps the least known of the many Asian Glossy Starling forms, and is restricted to India, Bangladesh, and Myanmar (Craig & Feare 2010); although a straggler (presumably of this subspecies) has reached eastern Nepal (Choudhary 2004). Ali & Ripley (1972) stated that its status within the Indian Subcontinent is 'equivocal.' In India, earlier literature has considered the subspecies to be a summer/breeding visitor to the Garo, Khasi, and northern Cachar Hills (Ali & Ripley 1972; Craig & Feare 2010). In Bangladesh, it is largely restricted to the Chittagong Hill tracts (eBird 2020) where Ali & Ripley (1972) stated that it is locally common. In Myanmar, the subspecies is present only within a narrow belt in the Arakan (Rakhine) region (Smythies 1953; Ali & Ripley 1972; Feare & Craig 2020); but it has also occurred in Ayeyarwady (Murray-Jones et al. 2017) and that the subspecies *strigata* occurs in the Tenasserim region of southern Myanmar (Smythies 1953; Feare & Craig 2020). One individual, found near Chennai in southern India on 09 October 1880, is of unknown subspecies (Dique 1880; Ali & Ripley 1972).

We suggest that subspecies *affinis* may currently be an extremely rare vagrant to north-eastern India, rather than a regular summer/breeding visitor as stated in Ali & Ripley (1972) (albeit with some doubt). Several dated records (Inglis 1878; Baker 1893; Inglis 1893; Anonymous 1897) perhaps indicate that the species was once regular, but there is little recent evidence to suggest that this is still the case. In the past decades, the Asian Glossy Starling has been documented only thrice in north-eastern India, and once in eastern Nepal, and the dates (March/April/May and October) suggest vagrancy during spring/autumn migration. Similarly, in adjacent north-eastern Bangladesh, the species appears to be very rare, with just one historical record (Primrose 1900) and none after the year 2005. One possible reason for the lack of recent records from the Cachar Hills and north-eastern Bangladesh may be a lack of surveying in states like Tripura and southern Mizoram. But there is some indication that it may not be the only reason because sources like eBird (eBird 2020), iNaturalist (iNaturalist 2020b), and other relevant literature has some locations from the region that are well-monitored, e.g., Makunda Christian Leprosy and General Hospital, Karimganj in Assam, India (iNaturalist 2020a), and Satchari and Lawachara National Park in Sylhet, Bangladesh (Khan & Aziz 2012; Bangladesh Forest Department 2015).

The Asian Glossy Starling (currently) occurs regularly in south-eastern Bangladesh (southern Chittagong Hill Tracts), except during winter from November/December to February/March (Ahsan & Haidar 2016; eBird 2020). Reporting dates from this region range from 23 April in Kaptai National Park, where a flock of up to nine birds was seen feeding on *Ilex umbellata* (Sourav 2016), to 14 October (eBird 2020). Ali & Ripley (1972) stated that the species is locally common in Bangladesh, but recent studies indicate that the species is uncommon (as stated by the authors) even at Teknaf Wildlife Sanctuary situated in the southern Hill Tracts (Khan & Aziz 2012; Ahsan & Al Haidar 2017). The species may just be a regular summer/breeding visitor to the Chittagong Hill Tracts, migrating to and from adjacent Myanmar where it may be spending the winter.

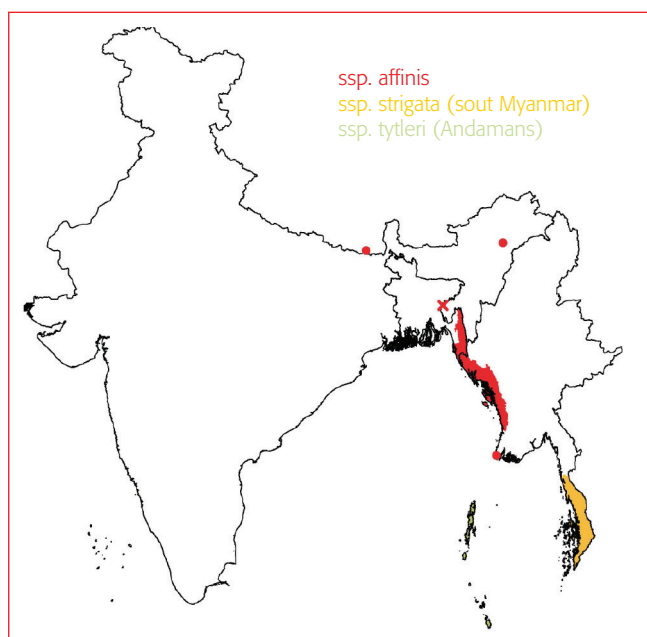


Fig. 1. Regular range of subspecies *affinis* (in red) includes three broad regions in Bangladesh (Cox's Bazar, Bandarban, and Rangamati Districts), and one in Myanmar (Arakan Division). The cross (X) indicates the location of the current sighting (and the one in 2016) near Agartala, Tripura. The points show other recent sightings (last 30 years) of *affinis* outside the regular range (west to east) – 1) Koshi Tappu Wildlife Reserve, Nepal; 2) Mawdin Coast, Ayeyarwady, Myanmar; 3) Sibsagar, Assam. Other colour regions indicate the ranges of subspecies *tyleri* and *strigata*.

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– **Rajdeep Deb Purkayastha & Ashwin Viswanathan**

Rajdeep Deb Purkayastha, Agartala, West Tripura, Kunjaban 799006, India.

[Corresponding author.] E-mail: rajdeep.nita@gmail.com [RDP]

Ashwin Viswanathan, Nature Conservation Foundation, 3076/5 Gokulam Park, Mysore 570002, Karnataka, India. [AV]

