

Taxonomic updates to the checklists of birds of India, and the South Asian region—2021

Praveen J, Rajah Jayapal & Aasheesh Pittie

Praveen, J., & Jayapal, R., & Pittie, A., 2021. Updates to the checklists of birds of India, and the South Asian region—2021. *Indian BIRDS* 17 (1): 1–3.

Praveen J., Villa #5, Embassy Homes, Mudavanmugal, Poojappura P.O., Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala 695012, India. E-mail: painteddork@gmail.com

Rajah Jayapal, Sálím Ali Centre for Ornithology and Natural History, Anaikatty (Post), Coimbatore 641108, Tamil Nadu, India. E-mail: rajah.jp@gmail.com

Aasheesh Pittie, 2nd Floor, BBR Forum, Road No. 2, Banjara Hills, Hyderabad 500034, Telangana, India. E-mail: aasheesh.pittie@gmail.com

Manuscript received on 17 February 2021.

Introduction

The first definitive checklists of the birds of India (Praveen et al. 2016), now in its 14th version (Praveen et al. 2020a), the Indian Subcontinent, now in its tenth version (Praveen et al. 2020d), and South Asia (Praveen et al. 2020c), were all drawn from a master database built upon a putative list of birds of the South Asian region (Praveen et al. 2019). All these checklists, and their online updates, periodically incorporating additions to the region's avifauna (available at www.indianbirds.in), initially followed the taxonomy of the 'Howard & Moore World Checklist 4th edition' (henceforth, H&M4) (Dickinson & Remsen 2013; Dickinson & Christidis 2014). In 2018 (Praveen et al. 2018), we took a decision to deviate from H&M4 and adopted a consensus-based approach for incorporating taxonomic changes that were unanimously accepted by the other three extant global authorities, namely, 'Handbook of Birds of the World & BirdLife International' (2019; henceforth, HBW/BLI), eBird/Clements (Clements et al. 2019), and the International Ornithological Congress (henceforth, IOC; Gill et al. 2021). In 2020, we further deviated from HBW/BLI and our consensus model incorporated only eBird/Clements and IOC (Praveen et al. 2020b); during this update, we also embarked on independent reviews of emerging literature in bird systematics so that our Checklists remain taxonomically updated.

Since the last update, we had two revisions of IOC taxonomy while there were no revisions in 2020 in the eBird/Clements list. Hence, the number of taxonomic changes for this update is minimal. However, we wish to rationalize the English names of a few birds in this update in response to feedback from the user community, and the popularity of alternative names in the region—mainly driven by the field guides (Grimmett et al. 2011; Rasmussen & Anderton 2012), and eBird (www.ebird.org).

Methodology

As there was no update to the eBird/Clements list during this cycle, there are no new species splits that need to be incorporated here. We, nonetheless, make a limited update, involving changes to species epithets and generic limits; these are based on our independent review of published literature, but also, specifically, after consultations with the lead authors of both taxonomies so as to ensure maximum stability and convergence vis-à-vis global authorities. While we continue to follow the same framework of rules and guidelines governing English names as elucidated in Praveen et al. (2016), we recalibrate our English names to align

more with contemporary usage, marking an end to the legacy of names in Manakadan & Pittie (2001), or Ali & Ripley (2001).

Results & discussion

There are no changes to the total number of species, or any other higher order rank in this taxonomic update (Table 1, Table 2). Eleven taxonomic changes are related to movement of genus, and two to species epithets. In addition, primary English names of 14 species are also changed.

Conclusion

We continue to believe that our 'consensus model' of this taxonomic update is driven, primarily, by pragmatism and utility. Though eBird/Clements was not updated in 2020, our continuous engagement with their team has enabled us to move forward with South Asian taxonomy without having to wait for those updates. We are closely watching all global alignments and regional adoptions, in this space, to offer the best long-term strategy for South Asian ornithology.

Table 2. Taxonomic summary

Region	South Asia	Indian Subcontinent	India
Order	26	25	26
Family	116	115	114
Genus	503	499	495
Species	1,426	1,376	1,333

Acknowledgements

Acknowledgements: Our thanks to David Donsker, Pam Rasmussen and Tom Schulenberg for helping us take the right forward looking decisions on taxonomies.

References

- Ali, S., & Ripley, S. D., 2001. *Handbook of the birds of India and Pakistan together with those of Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan and Sri Lanka*. 2nd ed. Delhi: (Sponsored by Bombay Natural History Society.) Oxford University Press [Oxford India Paperbacks]. 10 vols.
- Cai, T., Cibois, A., Alström, P., Moyle, R. G., Kennedy, J. D., Shao, S., Zhang, R., Irestedt, M., Ericson, P. G. P., Gelang, M., Qu, Y., Lei, F., & Fjeldså, J., 2019. Near-complete phylogeny and taxonomic revision of the world's babblers (Aves: Passeriformes). *Molecular Phylogenetics and Evolution* 130: 346–356. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ympev.2018.10.010>.
- Clements, J. F., Schulenberg, T. S., Iliff, M. J., Billerman, S. M., Fredericks, T. A., Sullivan, B. L., & Wood, C. L., 2019. The eBird/Clements Checklist of Birds of the World:

Table 1. Annotated list of taxonomic updates and nomenclatural changes to the checklist of the birds of India, and the South Asian region

S. No.	English name	Scientific name	Notes on taxonomy / nomenclature	Type of change
1	Cotton Pygmy Goose	<i>Nettapus coromandelianus</i> (J.F. Gmelin, 1789)	English name changed from Cotton Teal.	English name-Independent change
2	Hodgson's Hawk Cuckoo	<i>Hierococcyx nasicolor</i> (Blyth, 1843)	English name changed from Whistling Hawk Cuckoo.	English name-Independent change
3	Water Rail	<i>Rallus aquaticus</i> Linnaeus, 1758	English name changed from Western Water Rail.	English name-Independent change
4	Brown-cheeked Rail	<i>Rallus indicus</i> Blyth, 1849	English name changed from Eastern Water Rail.	English name-Independent change
5	Eurasian Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i> Linnaeus, 1758	English name changed from Common Coot.	English name-Independent change
6	White Stork	<i>Ciconia ciconia</i> (Linnaeus, 1758)	English name changed from European White Stork.	English name-Independent change
7	White-browed Crake	<i>Poliolimnas cinereus</i> (Vieillot, 1819)	Assigned by H&M4 to the genus <i>Amauornis</i> . Placed in <i>Poliolimnas</i> here, following IOC based on the recommendations of Garcia-R et al. (2020).	Genus change
8	Collared Owlet	<i>Taeniopteryx brodiei</i> (Burton, 1836)	Assigned by H&M4 to the genus <i>Glaucidium</i> . Placed in <i>Taeniopteryx</i> here, following IOC, based on the recommendations of Salter et al. (2019).	Genus change (with corresponding change in sequence)
9	Yellow-crowned Woodpecker	<i>Leiopicus mahrattensis</i> (Latham, 1801)	English name changed from Yellow-fronted Woodpecker.	English name-Independent change
10	Freckle-breasted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos analis</i> (Bonaparte, 1850)	English name changed from Spot-breasted Woodpecker.	English name-Independent change
11	Eurasian Reed Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus scirpaceus</i> (Hermann, 1804)	English name changed from Common Reed Warbler.	English name-Independent change
12	Black-headed Bulbul	<i>Brachypodius melanocephalus</i> (Gmelin, 1788)	Species epithet <i>atriceps</i> , as adopted in H&M4, is emended to <i>melanocephalus</i> here, following IOC.	Species epithet change
13	Black-capped Bulbul	<i>Rubigula melanicterus</i> (J.F. Gmelin, 1789)	Species epithet <i>melanictora</i> , corrected for gender to <i>melanicterus</i> following IOC.	Species epithet change
14	Asian Desert Warbler	<i>Curruca nana</i> Hemprich & Ehrenberg, 1833	Assigned by H&M4 to the genus <i>Curruca</i> . Moved to <i>Sylvia</i> based on consensus model in Praveen et al. (2018). Placed back in <i>Curruca</i> here, following IOC, based on the recommendations of Cai et al. (2019).	Genus change
15	Barred Warbler	<i>Curruca nisoria</i> (Bechstein, 1792)	Assigned by H&M4 to the genus <i>Curruca</i> . Moved to <i>Sylvia</i> based on consensus model in Praveen et al. (2018). Placed back in <i>Curruca</i> here, following IOC, based on the recommendations of Cai et al. (2019).	Genus change
16	Lesser Whitethroat	<i>Curruca curruca</i> (Linnaeus, 1758)	Assigned by H&M4 to the genus <i>Curruca</i> . Moved to <i>Sylvia</i> based on consensus model in Praveen et al. (2018). Placed back in <i>Curruca</i> here, following IOC, based on the recommendations of Cai et al. (2019).	Genus change
17	Eastern Orphean Warbler	<i>Curruca crassirostris</i> (Cretzschmar, 1830)	Assigned by H&M4 to the genus <i>Curruca</i> . Moved to <i>Sylvia</i> based on consensus model in Praveen et al. (2018). Placed back in <i>Curruca</i> here, following IOC, based on the recommendations of Cai et al. (2019).	Genus change
18	Ménétries's Warbler	<i>Curruca mystacea</i> (Ménétries, 1832)	Assigned by H&M4 to the genus <i>Curruca</i> . Moved to <i>Sylvia</i> based on consensus model in Praveen et al. (2018). Placed back in <i>Curruca</i> here, following IOC, based on the recommendations of Cai et al. (2019).	Genus change
19	Common Whitethroat	<i>Curruca communis</i> (Latham, 1787)	Assigned by H&M4 to the genus <i>Curruca</i> . Moved to <i>Sylvia</i> based on consensus model in Praveen et al. (2018). Placed back in <i>Curruca</i> here, following IOC, based on the recommendations of Cai et al. (2019).	Genus change
20	Striated Yuhina	<i>Staphida castaniceps</i> (F. Moore, 1854)	Assigned by H&M4 to the genus <i>Yuhina</i> . Placed in <i>Staphida</i> here, following IOC, based on the recommendations of Cai et al. (2019).	Genus change
21	Dark-fronted Babbler	<i>Dumetia atriceps</i> (Jerdon, 1839)	Assigned by H&M4 to the genus <i>Rhopocichla</i> . Placed in <i>Dumetia</i> here, following IOC, based on the recommendations of Cai et al. (2019).	Genus change

Table 1. Annotated list of taxonomic updates and nomenclatural changes to the checklist of the birds of India, and the South Asian region

S. No.	English name	Scientific name	Notes on taxonomy / nomenclature	Type of change
22	Long-billed Wren Babbler	<i>Napothera malacoptila</i> (Blyth, 1847)	Assigned by H&M4 to the genus <i>Rimator</i> . Placed in <i>Napothera</i> here, following IOC, based on the recommendations of Cai et al. (2019).	Genus change
23	Indian Grassbird	<i>Graminicola bengalensis</i> Jerdon, 1863	English name changed from Indian Grass Babbler.	English name-Independent change
24	Hume's Treecreeper	<i>Certhia manipurensis</i> Hume, 1881	English name changed from Manipur Treecreeper	English name-Independent change
25	White-capped Redstart	<i>Phoenicurus leucocephalus</i> (Vigors, 1831)	English name changed with the dropping of qualifier 'Water'.	English name-Independent change
26	Rock Sparrow	<i>Petronia petronia</i> (Linnaeus, 1766)	English name changed from Eurasian Rock Sparrow.	English name-Independent change
27	Pale Rockfinch	<i>Carpospiza brachydactyla</i> (Bonaparte, 1850)	English name changed from Pale Rock Sparrow.	English name-Independent change

v2019. Website URL: <https://www.birds.cornell.edu/clementschecklist/download/>. [Accessed on 25 January 2020.]

Dickinson, E. C., & Christidis, L., (eds.) 2014. *The Howard and Moore complete checklist of the birds of the world: Vol. 2. Passerines*. 4th ed. Eastbourne, U.K.: Aves Press. Vol. 2 of 2 vols. Pp. i–lii, 1–752, plus CD-ROM.

Dickinson, E. C., & Remsen, J. V. J., (eds.) 2013. *The Howard and Moore complete checklist of the birds of the world: Vol. 1. Non-passerines*. 4th ed. Eastbourne, U.K.: Aves Press. Vol. 1 of 2 vols. Pp. i–l, 1–461.

García-R, J. C., Lemmon, E. M., Lemmon, A. R., & French, N., 2020. Phylogenomic reconstruction sheds light on new relationships and timescale of rails (Aves: Rallidae) evolution. *Diversity* 12 (2): 1–10. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.3390/d12020070>.

Gill, F., Donsker, D., & Rasmussen, P., (Eds). 2021. IOC World Bird List (v11.1). Doi: <https://doi.org/10.14344/IOC.ML.10.1>.

Grimmett, R., Inskipp, C., & Inskipp, T., 2011. *Birds of the Indian Subcontinent*. 2nd ed. London: Oxford University Press & Christopher Helm. Pp. 1–528.

HBW & BirdLife International 2020. *Handbook of the Birds of the World and BirdLife International digital checklist of the birds of the world*. Version 5. Website URL: http://datazone.birdlife.org/userfiles/file/Species/Taxonomy/HBW-BirdLife_Checklist_v5_Dec19.zip [xls zipped 1 MB]. [Accessed on 25 January 2021.]

Manakadan, R., & Pittie, A., 2001. Standardised common and scientific names of the birds of the Indian Subcontinent. *Buceros* 6 (1): i–ix, 1–37.

Praveen J., Jayapal, R., & Pittie, A., 2016. A checklist of the birds of India. *Indian BIRDS* 11 (5&6): 113–172A.

Praveen J., Jayapal, R., & Pittie, A., 2018. Taxonomic updates to the checklist of birds of India and the South Asian region—2018. *Indian BIRDS* 14 (2): 37–42.

Praveen J., Jayapal, R., & Pittie, A., 2019. Checklist of the birds of South Asia (v4.0). Website URL: <http://www.indianbirds.in/south-asia/>. [Date of publication: 05 May 2019.]

Praveen J., Jayapal, R., & Pittie, A., 2020a. Checklist of the birds of India (v4.1). Website URL: <http://www.indianbirds.in/india/>. [Date of publication: 25 July 2020.]

Praveen J., Jayapal, R., & Pittie, A., 2020b. Taxonomic updates to the checklists of birds of India, and the South Asian region—2020. *Indian BIRDS* 16 (1): 12–19.

Praveen J., Jayapal, R., Inskipp, T., Warakagoda, D., Thompson, P.M., Anderson, R.C., Carr, P., Rasmussen, P.C. & Pittie, A., 2020c. Checklist of the birds of South Asia (v6.1). Website URL: <http://www.indianbirds.in/south-asia/>. [Date of publication: 25 July 2020.]

Praveen J., Jayapal, R., Inskipp, T., Warakagoda, D., Thompson, P.M., Anderson, R.C. & Pittie, A., 2020d. Checklist of the birds of the Indian Subcontinent (v4.1). Website URL: <http://www.indianbirds.in/indian-subcontinent/>. [Date of publication: 25 July 2020.]

Rasmussen, P. C., & Anderton, J. C., 2012. *Birds of South Asia: the Ripley guide*. 2nd ed. Washington, D.C. and Barcelona: Smithsonian Institution and Lynx Edicions. 2 vols. Pp. 1–378; 1–683.

With the compliments of

G.B.K. CHARITABLE TRUST

Unit No. T-6C, Phoenix House, S. B. Marg, Lower Parel,
Mumbai 400013, India.

In Memoriam

STORRS L. OLSON

(1944 – 2021)