The Sarus Crane is a globally Vulnerable crane, and is distributed within a cluster in Nepal (BirdLife International 2016a; Insikpp et al. 2016). The present record is from the Kapilvastu District, which, combined with the Rupandehi District harbours more than 85% of the total population of Sarus Crane in Nepal (Katuwal 2016). Previous studies (Kumar & Kanaujia 2015; Prakash & Verma 2016) found congregations during pre-breeding (pre-monsoon) and post-breeding (winter) periods. The behaviour during the present observation also supports the argument that the congregation might help with the pairing of unmated cranes (Kumar & Kanaujia 2015; Prakash & Verma 2016); however, a structured study on this aspect is required. Hence, efforts should be made to conserve such congregation sites to aid with species’ sexual selection and reproduction.

**Painted Stork Mycteria leucocephala**

At 1800 h on 25 April 2018, we recorded 102 Painted Storks, including three immature birds, at Badhaiya Lake (28.20° N, 81.52°E), Bardia District, Nepal [36]. On the same lake, the flock was clustered in two groups of 48 and 54 storks respectively.

The Painted Stork is globally Near Threatened (BirdLife International 2016b) and a nationally endangered stork with an estimated population of 50 (Insikpp et al. 2016). The largest flock of the Painted Storks, before the above, was recorded in December 1979, when 57 birds were counted at Gaidahawa Lake, Rupandehi District (Underwood 1980) 185 km east of the present record. Southwards of Badhaiya Lake, in Uttar Pradesh, India, there are 12 colonies of Painted Stork (Tiwary et al. 2014) that could be the source population for this congregation in Nepal. The present record spreads optimism as Nepal was earlier known to harbour very few populations of the Painted Stork.

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**Brood parasitism by Banded Bay Cuckoo Cacomantis sonneratii on Black-naped Monarch Hypothymis azurea in Kerala**

The Banded Bay Cuckoo Cacomantis sonneratii is a known brood parasitic of six different species in South Asia, namely, Small Minivet *Pericrocotus cinnamomeus*, Orange Minivet *Pericrocotus flammeus*, Black-headed Cuckoo-shrike *Lalage melanoptera*, Red-whiskered Bulbul *Pycnonotus jocosus*, Common Iora *Aegithina tiphia*, and Common Woodshrike *Tephrodornis pendicenius*. Of these, its most observed host is the Common Iora (Payne 2005; Erritzee et al. 2012; Krishna & Rodrigues 2020; Praveen & Lowther 2020). Here we report a new host for this cuckoo, the...
Black-naped Monarch *Hypothymis azurea*.

A pair of Black-naped Monarchs was observed in the first week of August in Beejadhakatte (12.60°N, 75.14°E; 120 m asl) of Bellur gram panchayath in north-eastern Kasaragod District (Kerala). RCM found the nest on 12 August 2020, very close to a residential building. It was 270 cm from the ground in Cashew tree *Anacardium occidentale* in an area bounded by a rubber plantation. Our observations were opportunistic and unplanned, and hence, we had no scope to follow the guidelines in Barve et al. (2020). RCM observed this Black-naped Monarch pair’s nesting, as it was close to where he lived, and had no other interest in it, other than plain curiosity. RCM observed the nest, almost daily, from around 0800 to 1000 h, and occasionally at other times of the day. He used a selfie stick to click photos since there was no other device available to record. The entire observations here are noted by RCM. Both the species belong to Sch. IV of the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972 (Praveen et al. 2020)

On 25 August 2020, RCM’s photos showed one nestling with a fleshy body, without feathers, and an egg. The Monarchs fed this juvenile multiple times a day. By 01 September 2020, more feathers had sprouted on the young bird which was initially thought to be the nesting of the Monarchs, but by 11 September 2020 the juvenile had become larger than the Monarchs, with a puffy white black throat, reddish-brown upperparts, and a cuckoo-like appearance. We began to suspect that it was a young Banded Bay Cuckoo [37, 38]. On 11 September 2020, when perched in the nest, the young cuckoo seemed to be incubating the nest’s contents; the Black-naped Monarchs continued feeding it.

By 1130 h on 11 September 2020, the hosts were feeding the cuckoo about two to three meters away from the nest. RCM shared these observations with RS on 08 September, and with MR on 11 September 2020. MR and RS visited the site on 11 September 2020. Though the Black-naped Monarchs were present in the vicinity, the cuckoo had left the nest that day! On the morning of 12 September 2020, RCM saw a Monarch visit the nest, but later both the birds were not observed at or near the nest.

On 15 September 2020, at 0915 h, RCM observed one Yellow-browed Bulbul *Acritillas indica* and a Jungle Babbler *Argya striata* approach the abandoned monarch nest. The Jungle Babbler pecked at the egg, which was later noted to be damaged. On 21 September 2020, the egg seemed whole, but RCM could see the damage when he re-checked on 22 September 2020.

On 29 September 2020, at 1420 h, RCM observed an Oriental Magpie Robin *Copsychus saularis* perch on the nest and throw out the remaining eggshells, cleaning the nest, initially thinking it might want to use this abandoned nest, but it wasn’t seen later.

Cuckoos are known to parasitize five Monarchidae genera: *Trochocercus*, *Terpsiphone*, *Monarcha*, *Grallina*, and *Myiagra*. However, the genus *Hypothymis* has four species in the world and none of them had ever been recorded as hosts. Our observation is important because it documents a new genus and species as the host for cuckoos (Payne 2005; Clements et al. 2019). Additionally, this is the first active nest reported from India that had a Banded Bay Cuckoo chick, and its growth stages were
observed (Praveen & Lowther 2020). Years ago, in a village called Pattanur in Kannur, northern Kerala, a pair of Monarchs was seen to chase away a Banded Bay Cuckoo in what was suspected to be a defensive behaviour against brood parasitism (C. Sashikumar, verbally, dated 11 September 2020).

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References


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Cheer Pheasant Catreus wallichii in Rudraprayag Forest Division, Garhwal Himalaya

The Cheer Pheasant Catreus wallichii inhabits Chir Pine Pinus roxburghii and mixed pine forests that have craggy, grassy tracts located on steep hill slopes. The species ranges across northern Pakistan and north-western India to west-central Nepal (Ali & Ripley 1983). It occurs in the states of Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, and the Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir. In Uttarakhand, it has been reported from parts of Nanda Devi Biosphere Reserve,Govind National Park, Nandhaur Wildlife Sanctuary, Uttarkashi Forest Divisions, and Pangot in Nainital District (Sinha et al. 2019; Hushangabadkar & Anwar 2019). It is found between 1,400 and 3,500 m asl in Western and Central Himalaya (Rahmani & Dhananjai 2013). The historical records of the Cheer Pheasant in the region has been indicated in Vishu Ganga, Bheling Valley, and Tehri pre-1950 period, and from 1980 to present in Pauni, Kedarnath Sanctuary; Dehradun, Chamoli, Benog Sanctuary, Nainital (BirdLife International 2001; Rahmani & Dhananjai 2013) In this note, we report the status of the Cheer Pheasant in Rudraprayag Forest Division in Central Himalaya.

The Rudraprayag Forest Division (30.19°–30.61°N, 78.84°–79.15°E; 565–3,758 m asl., 1,081.58 km²) in the Garhwal Himalaya was established in 2005 by amalgamating some forest ranges of the Kedamath, Pauni, and Tehri Forest Divisions by the Uttarakhand State Government. Earlier, it was a part of the Upper Ganga Soil Conservation Division. The terrain of the division is hilly, rugged, and undulating, and the catchments of the Alaknanda and Mandakini rivers.

A preliminary base-line Cheer survey was conducted for six months (September 2019 to February 2020) in all the forest ranges. From the five ranges and one unit, 12 individuals of Cheer Pheasants were recorded from only three ranges (Rudraprayag, Agasthyamuni, and South Jakholi) [39]. All the sightings were in the mixed forests, consisting mainly of Chir Pine forest. In December 2019, Rudraprayag Forest Division had organized the Chirbatiya Winter Bird Festival, during which, further sightings of Cheer were made in the area. It appears that a very small population exists across the Rudraprayag Forest Division; more such pockets may exist in its entire range need to be identified and earmarked for conservation (Table 1).

Table 1. Cheer Pheasant reports from Rudraprayag Forest Division

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Observers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>01 March 2017</td>
<td>Kedarnath Wildlife Sanctuary</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Surajit Dutta (2017)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 March 2018</td>
<td>Tungnath Rudraprayag</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Saikat Das (2018)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 September 2019</td>
<td>Rudraprayag, Dhanpur block</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>This study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27 December 2019</td>
<td>South Jakholi, Longa block</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>This study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02 February 2020</td>
<td>Agasthyamuni, Makku Van Panchayat block</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>This study</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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