

Brown Wood Owl *Strix leptogrammica* predating on a parakeet *Psittacula* sp., roost

It was at end of May 2021, during the summer's sweltering heat, in Dehradun, Uttarakhand, that we suddenly heard the commotion of parakeets (*Psittacula* sp.) in at 2130 h. Since parakeets are abundantly present in the locality, we ignored the calls. But the same commotion was repeated the next night as well, and this time, on inspection, a surprise was in store. It was overwhelming to see a rarely-sighted Brown Wood Owl *Strix leptogrammica* perched on top of a Shisham *Dalbergia sissoo* tree, with a parakeet held firmly in its talons [37]. The parakeet, having already breathed its last, was now being consumed by the owl who carefully clearing off the feathers and tore at the meat. This owl, after consuming its first parakeet for the night, flew away to come back immediately with another parakeet to the same spot. This process was repeated, and we counted the Brown Wood Owl preying on at least four parakeets that the night. For the next three days, this drama was repeated between 2030 and 2330 h, and every night the predator consumed at least four–five parakeets in the same spot. The roosting parakeets were caught totally unaware of presence of this silent predator in their surroundings and seemed to easily fall prey to it. Though it's not unusual for a Brown Wood Owl to prey upon birds as they form part of their diet along with other mammals like rats, mice, bats, lizards, frog, etc., but preying upon so many parakeets one after another in a short duration of time was interesting to watch. This nocturnal routine of the Brown Wood Owl, of preying upon a half dozen parakeets at the same place, within a time span of 45 minutes to one hour, and flying off into the unknown, went on for four days, and then suddenly stopped. We tried our luck every evening for about a week, trying to locate it, but couldn't sight it again even after intense searching. This interesting behaviour of the Brown Wood Owl has been observed in late summer from three consecutive years in June 2019, and May 2020 and 2021. Colony residents claimed sighting of the Brown Wood Owl before 2019 as well, however there is no supporting documentary evidence of this.



Adarsh Kulkarni

37. Brown Wood Owl with a parakeet in its talons.

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A Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus* from Middle Andaman

We report a Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus* from Yeratta Jetty, Rangat (12.52°N, 92.90°E), Middle Andaman. This individual was photographed [38–42] on 28 October 2020, during the north-east monsoon season. The bird was observed for ten minutes at the same location. The individual was in the shrub areas of the open forests adjoining agricultural fields and grasslands. The area has a close proximity with the mangrove forests (c.120 m). It looked similar to a Mangrove Whistler *Pachycephala cinerea* in size, but on a closer look through binoculars, it could be made out that it was some other bird. The surrounding area also has a small wetland and small streams.



38. Willow Warbler.



39. Willow Warbler.



40. Willow Warbler.

All: Anit Adhikari



41. Willow Warbler.



Both: Amit Adhikari

42. Willow Warbler photographed in Middle Andaman.

From the photographs, the bird was greenish brown on the back and off-white to yellowish below; the wings were plain greenish-brown with no wing bars, and it had a yellow supercilium. It differed from a Chiffchaff *P. collybita* in different ways: it had dull olive-green upperparts, off-white underparts, a primary projection that reached only half the length of the tertials, and it constantly flicked its tail. Further, the colour of its legs was not as dark as a Chiffchaff's. The only regular wintering leaf warbler in the wetland habitats of the Andaman Islands is the Dusky Warbler *P. fuscatus* but that species lacks yellow tones as seen in our bird. The lack of a wing bar eliminated other *Phylloscopus* warblers found in the Andaman & Nicobar Islands, including Yellow-browed Warbler *P. inornatus*, Arctic Leaf Warbler *P. borealis*, Greenish Warbler *P. trochiloides*, and Large-billed Leaf-Warbler *P. magnirostris*. Both, Pale-legged Leaf Warbler *P. tenellipes*, and Sakhalin Leaf Warbler *P. borealoides* have very pale legs unlike this species. More subtle features like emarginations on the primaries, or ratio of primary projection, cannot be made out from these photographs. However, the combination of a yellowish hue, a somewhat longer primary projection, and olive brown (vs olive green) upperparts eliminate all other possibilities.

The Willow Warbler is a recent addition to the India Checklist, with two individuals being reported from the Punchakkari Wetlands of Vellayani Lake, Kerala, southern India during November 2020 (George et al. 2021), and later from Alappuzha (see footnote in George et al. 2021). While Willow Warblers are rare in South-east Asia, they have been reported

from Borneo on 23 October 2015 (Bakewell 2015). Our record, five days after the Borneo date, and 16 days ahead of the Kerala record, matches with the general timing of migration of Willow Warblers through South and South-east Asia. Retrospectively, this would be the first record for South Asia as it predates all the Kerala birds. With this, we have four records of Willow Warbler from the country in October–November 2020. Care must be taken by visitors to the Andaman & Nicobar Islands to check out every *Phylloscopus* in wetland habitats, particularly during autumn migration.

References

- Bakewell, D., 2015. Webpage URL: <https://digdeep1962.wordpress.com/2015/11/13/pulau-mantanani-23-october-2015/>.
 George, N., Das, P., Jayakrishnan S., Johnson, J., Arun C. G., & Praveen J., 2021. The Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus* in Punchakkari, southern Kerala: A definitive record for the Indian Subcontinent. *Indian Birds* 17 (1): 10–13.

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Oriental Pied Hornbill *Anthracoceros albirostris* in Sariska Tiger Reserve: a new species for Rajasthan

The Oriental Pied Hornbill *Anthracoceros albirostris* is a widespread resident hornbill ranging from northern India (from Haryana) till South-east Asia. The species occurs in forest edges, open, moist deciduous and evergreen forests, riverine forests, and secondary, logged forests, and even in gardens and agricultural fields, usually below 700 m. The species shows a preference for secondary growth and river-margin forests (Datta 1998) and may be temporarily observed in urban India with large tracts of green cover, like Chandigarh and Delhi (A. Datta *in litt.*, 2020).

An Oriental Pied Hornbill was opportunistically sighted by GSB in Pandupol Temple's premises, Sariska Tiger Reserve, a part of the Aravalli Range, on 02 March 2021. Around 0800 h while watching pilgrims feeding *chuga* (grain) to troops of monkeys *Macaca mulatta*, Hanuman langur *Semnopithecus entellus*, wild pig *Sus scrofa*, and Indian Peafowl *Pavo cristatus* in the temple premises (0.58 ha; 27.32°N, 76.43°E), he noticed two House Crows *Corvus splendens* chasing a large-sized bird. The bird moved continuously from tree to tree to avoid the crows. From Kazmierczak (2000) and Grimmett et al. (1999) it was identified



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