

A Cream-colored Courser *Cursorius cursor* in western Maharashtra, India

At 1300 h on 28 September 2020, an unknown man rescued a bird from the mudflats of Thane Creek, Maharashtra (19.12°N, 72.98°E) and brought it to the office of the Range Forest Officer, Thane Creek Flamingo Sanctuary (Mangrove Cell, Maharashtra Forest Department), Airoli, Navi Mumbai, Maharashtra. NGK called SSS and MP to the office to have a look at 'a never seen before wading bird'. After reaching the office, they immediately identified the bird as a Cream-colored Courser *Cursorius cursor* [49] (Surve 2020) owing to its shape, long legs, and sandy-coloured appearance, contrasting with the Indian Courser *C. coromandelicus*. The rescued bird was then placed in a basket, covered with a cloth and timely offered insects. However, the bird refused to feed, and died the following day. The specimen was then sent for taxidermy, which on completion would be placed on display at the Coastal and Marine Biodiversity Centre, Airoli—a nature information centre under the management of the Mangrove Cell, Forest Department, Government of Maharashtra—along with other specimens displayed there.



Shaheed Bhamre

49. A vagrant Cream-coloured Courser captured from the mudflats of the Thane Creek, Maharashtra.

The Cream-colored Courser is a winter visitor to Pakistan and north-western India. A majority of its population winters in the arid and semi-arid regions of Rajasthan and Gujarat. The occurrence of this species in Navi Mumbai is unusual as that is neither its habitat, nor its range as described in Grimmett et al. (2011), and Rasmussen & Anderton (2012). Similarly, Prasad (2004) did not mention any records from western Maharashtra. Also, while toggling between the 'Months category' under the species maps on eBird (2022a,b), it was observed that the birds tends to reach India between August and September; and that this bird could be a vagrant, hence, making it the first record of this species from Maharashtra.

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Frog in the diet of Dark-sided Thrush *Zoothera marginata*

At 1600 h on 17 December 2021, we were watching birds in a woodland situated in the Kamalabari area of Majuli Island (26.946°N, 94.161°E), near the Tuni River (a small tributary of River Brahmaputra that flows through Majuli). The area is not more than 0.2 sq. km. Inside the woodland there is a small, dried pond with damp soil, covered by leaf litter and some undergrowth, where we saw a Dark-sided Thrush *Zoothera marginata*. It was beautifully camouflaged amongst the rotting leaves, and quietly foraged just few meters away from us, in the open area, not bothered by our presence at all. We noticed that the bird fed on insects and other invertebrates in the leaf litter on the wet soil. It was hopping and foraging in the dark by placing its bill gently between the leaves on the ground. Sometimes it scratched and cleared the soil surface using its bill and removed debris to catch hidden insects.

On 4 January 2022 we revisited the area and observed something unique. At 0700 h, we heard soft crackling sounds from the leaf litter. Upon scrutiny, we saw the Dark-sided Thrush holding a small frog (probably belonging to Dicroglossidae family) in its bill [50]. It swallowed the entire frog in five to ten seconds and continued its search for food in the dry leaf litter. Compared to the earlier observations in the damp area, it was now seen foraging in the drier part of the woodland, near human habitation, and was quite conscious about our presence. We observed it for a few minutes and took photographs of the behaviour. After a few more minutes we observed the bird feeding on several invertebrates hidden under the dry leaves.

We found this behaviour to be unique, after comparing the diet of all 22 members of the *Zoothera* genus, which mostly comprises invertebrates and fruits (Collar 2020; Winkler et al. 2020). Typically, Dark-sided Thrushes forage in damp areas, but we found this bird feeding on a frog in a comparatively drier area. Only the New Britain Thrush *Zoothera talaseae* is known to feed on small animals (del Hoyo et al. 2020), which may, or may not, include frogs.

We would like to thank Ashwin Viswanathan for helping with the bird ID. We would also like to thank Pranav Kulkarni for assisting in the identification of the frog. Shyamal Saikia would like to thank Rejaul Karim for his company on the second visit to the woodland and Shyama Prasad Biswas for his constant support and guidance.



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50. Dark-sided thrush *Zoothera marginata* feeding on a frog (belonging to Dicroglossidae family).

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Reports of melanistic Indian Paradise-flycatcher *Terpsiphone paradisi* from India

On 30 June 2017, while birding in Pawalgarh Conservation Reserve, Nainital, Uttarakhand (29.46°N, 79.20°E), PK spotted a bird that we thought was a Black-naped Monarch *Hypothymis azurea*, moving very quickly inside the bushes. However, after closer inspection, the bird's appearance seemed rather unusual for a Monarch. When we got a better view, we saw a black bird with white underparts and iridescent purplish black upperparts. Like an Indian Paradise-flycatcher *Terpsiphone paradisi*, it also had blue eyes.

PK took a few photographs [51], which were later used to identify the bird. While searching the Internet, the initial hypothesis was that it was a Japanese Paradise Flycatcher *T. atrocaudata* because it closely resembled the bird in the photograph. However, during later discussions over several social media groups (Ask ID of Indian Birds, Indian Birds), we realised that it was a melanistic Indian Paradise Flycatcher.



Prashant Kumar

51. Aberrant coloured Indian Paradise-flycatcher in Nainital, Uttarakhand.

NB reported seeing a melanistic Indian Paradise-flycatcher on 6 March 2022, in the Union Territory of Puducherry (11.95°N, 79.64°E). This bird shared many traits with the bird seen by PK in 2017. NB was able to capture some images of the bird [52] and gave them to PK for additional identification. We deduced that it was also a melanistic Indian Paradise-flycatcher because all of the ID pointers coincided with the bird that PK photographed.



N. Balamurugan

52. Aberrant coloured Indian Paradise-flycatcher in Puducherry.

Mahabal et al. (2016) did not report any kind of colour aberrations for the Indian Paradise-flycatcher. Hence, this is the first report of colour-aberrant Indian Paradise-flycatchers for the country.

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The Common Shelduck *Tadorna tadorna* in Patna, Bihar

The Common Shelduck *Tadorna tadorna* breeds in parts of Europe, the Mediterranean, Central Asia, through eastern Siberia, Mongolia, and Tibet (Ali & Ripley 1987). During winter, it is seen in northern Africa, Iran, the Indian Subcontinent, coastal China, south-western Korea, Japan, and Taiwan (Ali & Ripley 1987). In India, it is an uncommon visitor to the northern parts of peninsular India (Rahmani & Islam 2008).

We conducted a survey during November 2021–January 2022, to document the avian diversity along the 40 km stretch of the banks of the Ganges, from Danapur (25.64°N, 85.04°E) to Fatuha (25.51°N, 85.30°E) in Patna. This survey included 33 ghats between Danapur and Fatuha. We covered the study area on foot and by boat along the banks of the Ganges.

On 20 and 21 January 2021 we documented three Common Shelducks *Tadorna tadorna* near Bans Ghat (25.64°N, 85.14°E), Patna, (Bihar, India) [53]. The birds were identified with the help of Ali & Ripley (1983) and Grimmett et al. (2011). On 17 January 2022, Arvind Mishra sighted Common Shelduck at Vikramshila Dolphin Sanctuary (25.17° N, 86.55° E) (Arvind Mishra pers.