



Kunal Bamby

113. Whimbrel in flight over Sutlej River near Ludhiana, Punjab.

A sight record of the species was reported on 09 September 2020 at Rababsar near Harike on the Sutlej River by Harkirat Singh Sangha. However, this record from the Sutlej river area is not reflected in his latest work (Sangha 2021). We tried to contact the author, but did not receive a response on the matter. Therefore, we are unable to assess and verify this record. Also, we were unable to find any other observations from Punjab on eBird or social media groups.

Whimbrel is a winter migrant to coastal areas of India and other neighbouring countries but can be seen occasionally at inland waters when in passage (Kumar et al. 2005). Thus, the current observation, with photographic evidence, corroborates its presence in Punjab during migration.

## References

- Grimmett, R., Inskipp, C., & Inskipp, T., 2011. *Birds of the Indian Subcontinent*. 2nd ed. London: Oxford University Press & Christopher Helm. Pp. 1–528.
- Kumar, A., Sati, J. P., Tak, P. C., & Alfred, J. R. B., 2005. *Handbook on Indian Wetland Birds and their Conservation*. Kolkata: Zoological Survey of India. Pp. i–xxvi; 1–468.
- Sangha, H. S., 2021. *Waders of the Indian Subcontinent*. Jaipur, India: Published by the author; with support from WWF-India. Pp. i–xvi, 1–520.
- Gurpartap Singh & Kunal Bamby  
Gurpartap Singh, 1969, Sector 64, Mohali - 160062, District Sahibzada Ajit Singh Nagar, Punjab, India. E-mail: [prof.gurpartap.singh@gmail.com](mailto:prof.gurpartap.singh@gmail.com) [GPS]  
Kunal Bamby, House no. 33- C, Shaheed Udham Singh Nagar, Ludhiana - 141001, Punjab, India. E-mail: [kunalbamby@icloud.com](mailto:kunalbamby@icloud.com) [KB]

## The Sea Buckthorn *Hippophae rhamnoides* in the diet of Ibisbill *Ibidorhyncha struthersii*

The Ibisbill *Ibidorhyncha struthersii* is a charismatic wader with a down-curved, crimson beak that is a monotypic species of the family *Ibidorhynchidae* (Knystautas & Kirwan 2020). It is known to be distributed from southern Kazakhstan to the Himalayan and the Tibetan plateau eastward to northeast China, mainly between the altitudes of 1,700 m – 4,400 m asl. Due to its distribution in remote landscapes it remains largely understudied (Knystautas & Kirwan 2020). Although the phylogenetic placement of the Ibisbill is not fully understood, it is believed to be closely related to Oystercatchers (*Haematopodidae*), Avocets and Stilts



Debabrita Das

114. An adult Ibisbill *Ibidorhyncha struthersii* eating Sea Buckthorn *Hippophae rhamnoides* fruit at Sindhu Ghat, Ladakh on 26 September 2022.

(*Recurvirostridae*), and *Pluvialis* plovers (*Charadriinae*) (Baker et al. 2007).

The Ibisbill is generally a solitary feeder on riverbanks but sometimes feeds in pairs or very rarely in groups (Barua & Sharma 2005; Spierenburg 2005). Like most waders, it is known to feed primarily on small arthropods, in addition to small fish and rarely seeds (Pierce & Kirwan 2020; Knystautas & Kirwan 2020). The main prey include caddisfly (*Trichoptera*) and stonefly larvae (*Plecoptera*) and crustaceans, in addition to mayfly larvae (*Ephemeroptera*) and beetles (*Carabidae*) caught from underneath stones/rocks submerged in glacier fed streams (Hingston 1927; Pierce 2008; Knystautas & Kirwan 2020). In western Sichuan province in China, winter prey reported mainly caddisfly and stonefly larvae and crustaceans, in addition to a leech (*Annelida*), mayfly larvae, unidentified fish, and an unidentified amphibian (Ye et al. 2012). A recent study from Kashmir also reported beetles (*Corydallidae*, *Hydrophilidae*, and *Heteroceridae*), a leech, an ant (*Hymenoptera*) and voles (Order: *Rodentia*) in its diet (Haq et al. 2021).

On 26 September 2022, while bird watching at Sindhu Ghat (34.09°N, 77.61°E) along the Indus river, in Leh Union Territory, India, we spotted a single adult Ibisbill and documented its foraging behaviour for about an hour between 0800 h and 0900 h. We observed it plucking and eating Sea Buckthorn *Hippophae rhamnoides* berries, a total of none times, every time it walked to the riverbank by a fallen branch. Besides eating berries, it was seen probing the mud, presumably foraging for arthropods [114].

The fruiting season for this plant can be as early as July extending till late October in China (Orwa et al. 2009) and it is harvested by locals in the Trans-Himalayas in the month of September (Stobdan et al. 2017). Fruits of the sea buckthorn have been observed to be consumed by a variety of birds across the families *Turdidae* (thrushes), *Paridae* tits, and *Muscicapidae* (Old World flycatchers), in addition to pikas (*Ochotona nubrica*) in the Trans-Himalayas of Ladakh (*Pers. Obsv.*).

Studies have shown waders such as the Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus* and the Pied Stilt *H. leucocephalus* occasionally consume seeds (Pierce & Kirwan 2020) in addition

to crustaceans, molluscs, fish and other aquatic fauna (Haq et al. 2021; Baker 1922; Pierce 1986; Ueng et al. 2009; Sanders 1999; Enners et al. 2019; Adret 2012; van de Kam et al. 2004; Del Hoyo et al. 1992). This is a significant observation as it is the first report of the Ibisbill or any of its close relatives including fruit in their diet. Targeted natural history observations of the Ibisbill and other poorly studied birds in remote landscapes has the potential to uncover new aspects of their ecology.

## References

- Adret, P. 2012. Call development in captive-reared Pied Avocets, *Recurvirostra avosetta*. *Journal of Ornithology* 153 (2): 535–546.
- Baker, A. J., Pereira, S. L., & Paton, T. A. 2007. Phylogenetic relationships and divergence times of Charadriiformes genera: multigene evidence for the Cretaceous origin of at least 14 clades of shorebirds. *Biology Letters* 3 (2): 205–209.
- Baker, E. C. S. 1922. *The fauna of British India, including Ceylon and Burma: birds* (Vol. 2). Taylor & Francis.
- Barua, M., & Sharma, P. 2005. The birds of Nameri National Park, Assam, India. *Forktail* 21: 15–26.
- Del Hoyo, J., Del Hoyo, J., Elliott, A., & Sargatal, J. 1992. *Handbook of the birds of the world* (Vol. 1). Lynx edicions Barcelona.
- Enners, L., Chagas, A. L. J., Ismar-Rebitz, S. M. H., Schwemmer, P., & Garthe, S. 2019. Foraging patterns and diet composition of breeding Pied avocets (*Recurvirostra avosetta*) in the German Wadden Sea. *Estuarine and Coastal Shelf Science* 229: 106399.
- Hingston, R. W. G. 1927. Bird notes from the Mount Everest Expedition of 1924. *The Journal of Bombay Natural History Society* 32 (2): 320–329.
- Knystautas, A. J. & G. M. Kirwan 202. Ibisbill (*Ibidorhyncha struthersii*), version 1.0. In *Birds of the World* (J. Del Hoyo, A. Elliott, J. Sargatal, D. A. Christie, and E. De Juana, Editors). Cornell Lab of Ornithology, Ithaca, NY, USA
- Haq, I. U., Bhat A. B. & Ahmad K., 2021. Feeding behavior in Ibisbill (*Ibidorhyncha struthersii*). *Advances in Zoology and Botany* 9 (2): 60–64.
- Orwa, C., Mutua, A., Kindt, R., Jamnadass, R., Simons, A., & Others 2009. Agroforestry Database: a tree reference and selection guide. Version 4.
- Pierce, R. J. & G. M. Kirwan 2020. Black-winged Stilt (*Himantopus himantopus*), version 1.0. In *Birds of the World*, Billerman, S.M., Keeney, B. K., Rodewald, P. G., and Schulenberg, T. S., (eds). Cornell Lab of Ornithology, Ithaca, NY, USA.
- Pierce, R. J. 1986. Foraging responses of stilts (*Himantopus spp.*: Aves) to changes in behaviour and abundance of their riverbed prey. *N. Z. J. Marine and Freshwater Resources* 20 (1): 17–28.
- Pierce, R. J. 2008. Observations on behaviour and foraging of the Ibisbill *Ibidorhyncha struthersii* in Nepal. *Ibis* 128 (1): 37–47.
- Sanders, M. D. 1999. Effect of changes in water level on numbers of black stilts (*Himantopus novaezelandiae*) using deltas of Lake Benmore. *New Zealand Journal of Zoology* 26 (2): 155–163.
- Spierenburg, P. 2005. *Birds in Bhutan: Status and Distribution*. Oriental Bird Club. ISBN: 9780952954514, 0952954516.
- Stobdan, T., Dolkar, P., Chaurasia, O. P., & Kumar, B. 2017. Seabuckthorn (*Hippophae rhamnoides* L.) in trans-Himalayan Ladakh, India. *Defence Life Sciences Journal* 2 (1): 46.
- Ueng, Y.T., Wang, J.P., Hou, P.C. L., & Perng, J.J. 2009. Diet of Black-winged Stilt chicks in coastal wetlands of southwestern Taiwan. *Waterbirds* 32 (4): 514–522.
- Van de Kam, J., Ens, B., Piersma, T., & Zwarts, L. 2004. *Shorebirds. An Illustrated Behavioural Ecology*. Utrecht, The Netherlands. KNNV Publishers.
- Ye, Y., Wang, N. & Ding, C. 2012. Winter feeding site selection and food resource of Ibisbill in western Sichuan province, China. *Chinese Journal of Zoology* 47 (2): 46–51.

– Debarpita Das\* and Harsha Kumar

Debarpita Das, Indian Institute of Science Education and Research (IISER) Tirupati, Tirupati, Andhra Pradesh 517507, India. \*Email: [debarpita2000@gmail.com](mailto:debarpita2000@gmail.com) [Corresponding author]  
Harsha Kumar, Indian Institute of Science Education and Research (IISER) Tirupati, Tirupati, Andhra Pradesh 517507, India

