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Reports of White-eared Bulbul *Pycnonotus leucotis* from Palamau Tiger Reserve, Jharkhand, India

We present the details of two reports of White-eared Bulbul [203] *Pycnonotus leucotis* in Palamau Tiger Reserve, Jharkhand, India, much further east than its present known range.

On 05 May 2023, during a survey for Asiatic Elephant *Elephas maximus*, a White-eared Bulbul was observed by SI and AS, perched on a Toothbrush tree *Salvadora persica* within the Betla range of the reserve (23.86°N, 84.18°E, c.310m asl). Observations were made on a clear, sunny day with a temperature of nearly 37°C. Subsequently, another White-eared Bulbul or likely the very same individual was again seen on 11 May 2023, c.6 km away from previous sighting, perched briefly on a Jamun tree *Syzygium cumini*, before it descended into dense thickets of *Lantana camara*. We were spending on an average of 6 hours/day in the field between 26 April and 29 May and on no other occasion we saw any more White-eared Bulebuls. The White-eared Bulbul can be easily distinguished from those of other commonly found bulbul species in the region, such as the Red-vented Bulbul *P. cafer* by its pure white-cheek. Additionally, the Red-vented Bulbul has a white rump and red (vs yellow) vent (Grimmett et al. 2011).

The White-eared Bulbul is distributed across south-east Afghanistan and southern Iran, Iraq and Saudi Arabia to Pakistan and north-western India (Ali & Ripley 1987). Within India, the species is restricted to the north-western regions (Grimmett et al. 2011; Fishpool & Tobias 2020) but was previously undocumented in the eastern India (Grimmett et al. 2011). A resident species, it is found in a variety of habitats — thorny scrubs, dry deciduous forests, open cultivation adorned with thickets, gardens, and orchards. The closest known record of the species is from Jhansi, Madhya Pradesh (Mourya 2019), c.760 km west of Palamau Tiger Reserve.

Though Palamau Tiger Reserve, spread over 1,129 sq. km, has not been ornithologically well-explored (Rawat 2013), it is highly unlikely that a previously unrecorded natural population of the species existed in the region. Bulbuls are commonly kept as pets (Jacek & Dulisz 2019), and the chances of birds escaping from pet trade and getting reported from sites far away from natural range is high (Shieh et al. 2006). Escaping from captivity, particularly in the context of zoos, is a well-documented means by which alien bird species can spread (Fàbregas et al. 2010; Cassey & Hogg 2015).

The sighting of a lone individual suggests it could be an escapee though the nearest human habitation or urban center is 40 km away.



203. White-eared Bulbul *Pycnonotus leucotis* in Palamau Tiger Reserve, Jharkhand, India.

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