Taxonomic updates to the checklists of birds of India and the South Asian region—2024

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Introduction

This is the ninth annual taxonomic update after Praveen et al. (2016). Since our last update (Praveen & Jayapal 2023), there have been two revisions in IOC taxonomy (Gill et al. 2023, 2024) and one for eBird/Clements (Clements et al. 2023). The increasing influence of the Working Group Avian Checklists (*hereinafter*, WGAC) under the aegis of the International Ornithologists' Union has brought both the checklists considerably closer to each other, particularly in taxonomic matters that concern birds found in South Asia. We also update the extended fields of the checklists and align them with the taxonomic revisions as effected in this update.

Methodology

In this update, we implement taxonomic changes relevant to South Asian birds, which have been accepted mostly by both the global authorities, namely, IOC & eBird/Clements. As in previous updates, we have revised the taxonomic sequence in line with the latest eBird/Clements taxonomy. In the last iteration, we also independently reviewed the 'species authority' field in our Checklist and found 30 differences with that of eBird/Clements; we have brought them up to the latter's attention and many of these have, since, been fixed by eBird/Clements in 2023. Hence, with this update, we have now completely moved to eBird/Clements for 'species authority' field (in addition to taxonomic sequence), except for a small set of pending differences that are still being considered. Another major policy decision in this update pertains to the style of English names of birds with regard to hyphenation and capitalization of compound names, use of diacritics, and other typological matters; we have now opted to move from the *Howard & Moore World Checklist* (Dickinson & Remsen 2013; Dickinson & Christidis 2014) to eBird/Clements on account of the growing popularity of eBird names among South Asian birders. However, we still retain the Oxford spellings for variously spelt English words (like grey versus gray, and colour versus color).

Our conscious decision to align more towards eBird/Clements than IOC is necessitated by three considerations: (a) disproportionately high uptake of eBird/Clements taxonomy amongst the citizen science community (eBird, iNaturalist) in India, (b) free access to the Birds of the World portal that uses the same backbone taxonomy, and (c) closeness of eBird/Clements checklist to WGAC updates.

Results

In this update (Table 1), five new species have been added to the Checklist following taxonomic splits in the regionally occurring forms of species. Another five changes involved extralimital splits that resulted in a change in the specific epithet of the regional form. In addition, change of generic name has been effected for 15 species, including one that underwent an extralimital split. We have also made two gender related changes to the specific epithet of two taxa. We have also made one family level change. With this update, the taxonomic sequence and scientific names of birds in both, the India Checklist, and eBird/Clements have been aligned with each other, except for four species (Table 2); we learn that at least three of them will be fixed by eBird/Clements in their next update.

We continue to abide by our guiding principle for English names to maintain a nomenclature that is largely stable, familiar to the local birding community, and alive to current global usage and taxonomy. Primary English names of six species had to undergo changes due to taxonomic rearrangements. With our adoption of eBird/Clements for the style of English names of birds in this update, we found over 90% alignment between the India Checklist and eBird/Clements; a large number of non-

Table 1. Annotated list of taxonomic updates and nomenclatural changes to the checklist of the birds of India and the South Asian region

S. No.	English name	Scientific name	Notes on taxonomy / nomenclature	Type of change
1	Taiga Bean-Goose	*Anser fabalis* (Latham, 1787)	Split from Bean Goose *Anser fabalis* (Latham, 1787) sensu lato, following consensus between IOC and eBird/Clements.	Species split
2	Tundra Bean-Goose	*Anser serrirostris* Gould, 1852	As above.	Species split
3	Eurasian Dotterel	*Eudromias morinellus* (Linnaeus, 1758)	Genus change from *Charadrius* to *Eudromias* following IOC and eBird/Clements, based on the recommendations of Dos Remedios et al. (2015); Černý & Natale (2022).	Genus change
4	Caspian Plover	*Anarhynchus asiaticus* (Pallas, 1773)	Genus change from *Charadrius* to *Anarhynchus* following IOC and eBird/Clements, based on the recommendations of Dos Remedios et al. (2015); Eaton et al. (2021).	Genus change

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5	Oriental Plover	*Anarhynchus veredus* (Gould, 1848)	As above.	Genus change
6	Tibetan Sand-Plover	*Anarhynchus atrifrons* (Wagler, 1829)	Split from Lesser Sand-Plover *Anarhynchus mongolus* (Pallas, 1776) sensu lato following IOC and eBird/Clements, based on the recommendations of Wei et al. (2022). Genus change from *Charadrius to Anarhynchus* following IOC and eBird/Clements, based on the recommendations of Dos Remedios et al. (2015); Eaton et al. (2021).	Genus change & Extralimital species split
7	Greater Sand-Plover	*Anarhynchus leschenaultii* (Lesson, 1826)	Genus change from *Charadrius to Anarhynchus* following IOC and eBird/Clements, based on the recommendations of dos Remedios et al. (2015); Eaton et al. (2021).	Genus change
8	Kentish Plover	*Anarhynchus alexandrinus* (Linnaeus, 1758)	As above.	Genus change
9	White-eared Night Heron	*Oroanassa magnifica* (Ogilvie-Grant, 1899)	Genus change from *Gorsachius to Oroanassa* following IOC and eBird/Clements, based on the recommendations of Hruska et al. (2023).	Genus change
10	Western Cattle Egret	*Bubulcus ibis* (Linnaeus, 1758)	Split from Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis* (Linnaeus, 1758) sensu lato following consensus between IOC and eBird/Clements.	Species split
11	Eastern Cattle Egret	*Bubulcus coromandus* (Boddaert, 1783)	As above.	Species split
12	White-bellied Sea-Eagle	*Icthyophaga leucogaster* (Gmelin, 1788)	Genus change from *Haliaeetus* to *Icthyophaga* following IOC and eBird/Clements, based on the recommendations of Mindell et al. (2018).	Genus change
13	Lesser Fish-Eagle	*Icthyophaga humilis* (Müller & Schlegel, 1841)	As above.	Genus change
14	Grey-headed Fish-Eagle	*Icthyophaga ichthyaetus* (Horsfield, 1821)	As above.	Genus change
15	Dusky Eagle-Owl	*Ketupa coromanda* (Latham, 1790)	Specific epithet changed from *coromandus* to *coromanda,* corrected for gender.	Specific epithet change
16	Black-backed Dwarf-Kingfisher	*Ceyx erithaca* (Linnaeus, 1758)	Split from Oriental Dwarf Kingfisher *Ceyx erithaca* (Linnaeus, 1758) sensu lato following IOC and eBird/Clements based on the recommendations from Shakya et al. (2023).	Species split
17	Rufous-backed Dwarf-Kingfisher	*Ceyx rufidorsa* Strickland, 1847	As above.	Species split
18	Blue-eared Barbet	*Psilopogon cyanotis* (Blyth, 1847)	Split from Blue-eared Barbet *Psilopogon duvaucelii* (Lesson, 1830) sensu lato, following IOC and eBird/Clements.	Extralimital species split
19	Malabar Flameback	*Chrysocolaptes socialis* Koelz, 1939	Split from Greater Flameback *Chrysocolaptes guttacristatus* (Tickell, 1833) sensu lato, following IOC and eBird/Clements based on the recommendations from Abhirami et al. (2021).	Species split
20	Grey-lored Broadbill	*Serilophus rubropygius* (Hodgson, 1839)	Split from Silver-breasted Broadbill *Serilophus lunatus* (Gould, 1834) sensu lato, following IOC and eBird/Clements.	Extralimital species split
21	Nicobar Hooded Pitta	*Pitta abbotti* Richmond, 1902	Split from Hooded Pitta *Pitta sordida* (Müller, 1776) sensu lato following IOC and eBird/Clements based on the recommendations from WGAC after Ericson et al. (2019).	Species split
22	Western Hooded Pitta	*Pitta sordida* (Müller, 1776)	As above.	Species split
23	Grey-headed Bulbul	*Microtarsus priocephalus* (Jerdon, 1839)	Genus change from *Brachypodius* to *Microtarsus* following eBird/Clements.	Genus change
24	Black-headed Bulbul	*Microtarsus melanocephalos* (Gmelin, 1788)	As above.	Genus change
25	Andaman Bulbul	*Microtarsus fuscoflavescens* (Hume, 1873)	As above.	Genus change
26	Black-capped Bulbul	*Rubigula melanictera* (Gmelin, 1789)	Specific epithet changed from *melanicterus* to *melanictera,* corrected for gender.	Specific epithet change

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27	Pale-footed Bush Warbler	*Hemitesia pallidipes* (Blanford, 1872)	Genus change from *Urosphena* to *Hemitesia* following IOC and eBird/Clements, based on the recommendations of Alström et al. (2011).	Genus change
28	Bush Warblers and Allies	Scotocercidae	Family Cettiidae lumped with Scotocercidae following eBird/Clements.	Family lump
29	Pale-billed Parrotbill	*Suthora atrosuperciliaris* (Godwin-Austen, 1877)	Genus change from *Chleuasicus* to *Suthora* following IOC and eBird/Clements, based on the recommendations of Cai et al. (2019).	Genus change
30	Olive-backed Sunbird	*Cinnyris ornatus* Lesson, 1827	Split from Olive-backed Sunbird *Cinnyris jugularis* (Linnaeus, 1766) sensu lato, following IOC and eBird/Clements based on the recommendations from Marcaigh et al. (2023).	Extralimital species split
31	Blue-winged Leafbird	*Chloropsis moluccensis* Gray, 1831	Split from Blue-winged Leafbird *Chloropsis cochinchinensis* (Gmelin, 1789) sensu lato, following IOC and eBird/Clements based on the recommendations from Moltesen et al. (2012) and Eaton et al. (2016).	Extralimital species split

Table 2. Species for which taxonomy is different from eBird/Clements (Clements et al. 2023)

S. No	India Checklist	eBird/Clements	Expected changes to India Checklist in future
1	Demoiselle Crane *Grus virgo*	*Anthropoides virgo*	None. eBird/Clements likely to lump *Anthropoides* with *Grus*.
2	Mongolian Gull *Larus smithsonianus mongolicus*	*Larus argentatus mongolicus*	Unclear. Review pending.
3	Cory's Shearwater *Calonectris borealis*	*Calonectris diomedea borealis*	None. eBird/Clements likely to adopt a species split.
4	Pale Crag Martin *Ptyonoprogne obsoleta*	*Ptyonoprogne fuligula obsoleta*	None. eBird/Clements likely to adopt a species split.

Table 3. Species for which authority, year, or addition of parentheses in the South Asia list differs from eBird/Clements (Clements et al. 2023). See Praveen & Jayapal (2022) for details

S. No	Species	Authority in India Checklist	eBird/Clements
1	Indian Thick-knee *Burhinus indicus*	(Salvadori, 1865)	(Salvadori, 1866)
2	Sooty Gull *Ichthyaetus hemprichii*	(Bruch, 1853)	(Bruch, 1855)
3	Tahiti Petrel *Pseudobulweria rostrata*	(Peale, 1848)	(Peale, 1849)
4	Japanese Sparrowhawk *Accipiter gularis*	(Temminck and Schlegel, 1844)	(Temminck and Schlegel, 1845)
5	Chestnut-backed Owlet *Glaucidium castanotum*	(Blyth, 1851)	(Blyth, 1850)
6	Blue-tailed Bee-eater *Merops philippinus*	Linnaeus, 1767	Linnaeus, 1766
7	Sri Lanka Hanging Parrot *Loriculus beryllinus*	(Forster, 1781)	(Pennant, 1781)
8	Pied Triller *Lalage nigra*	(Forster, 1781)	(Pennant, 1781)
9	Spot-breasted Fantail *Rhipidura albogularis*	(Lesson, 1832)	(Lesson, 1831)
10	Nicobar Bulbul *Ixos nicobariensis*	(Moore, 1854)	Moore, 1854
11	Wood Warbler *Phylloscopus sibilatrix*	(Bechstein, 1793)	(Bechstein, 1792)
12	Black-throated Parrotbill *Suthora nipalensis*	(Hodgson, 1837)	Hodgson, 1837
13	Chestnut-cheeked Starling *Agropsar philippensis*	(Forster, 1781)	(Pennant, 1781)

matching entries relate to minor differences arising from British versus American spellings (e.g. grey vs gray and colour vs colour). In all, of the 164 English name changes effected in this update, 158 relate to styling changes.

Though the format of the species authority field in the India Checklist completely matches with that of eBird/Clements, we highlight specific differences between these lists in Table 3. In sum, we implemented 232 changes to the species authority, largely due to the change in citation format.

Table 4. Summary of taxonomic rank

Region	South Asia	Indian Subcontinent	India
Order	26	26	26
Family	116	116	115
Genus	514	508	497
Species	1452	1434	1364

With all these changes and updates, the total number of regionally occurring species now stands at 1,452 (Table 4).

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Namaqua Dove *Oena capensis* from Maharashtra, India

The Namaqua Dove *Oena capensis* is a small sized dove with a long black tapered, graduated tail. The adult male has a yellow and red beak, black face, throat and breast. It is commonly found in Sub-Saharan Africa as well as the Tihama region of Arabia and Madagascar (Baptista et al. 2020).

On 13 October 2021, at 1330 h, we found a male Namaqua Dove at Ambu Island (19.13° N, 72.78° E), near Mumbai, Maharashtra. It was identified by its long tail and conspicuous black face, chin, throat and front of the breast **[264]**. The first record of the species from India was of a female photographed from Khijadia Bird Sanctuary near Jamnagar, Gujarat, on 17 December 2017 (Patel & Raol 2018; Trivedi & Trivedi 2018). Based on the said bird's plumage and feeding behaviour, it was suggested to likely be a wild vagrant rather than an escapee. After this initial sighting, it has been subsequently sighted at different locations in Gujarat, at Nalsarovar Bird Sanctuary (Belim & Multani 2020), at Mahuva near Bhavnagar (Bhil & Bhil 2020), and at Pariej near Kheda (Sagar 2022).

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264. Male Namaqua Dove at Ambu Island.

Given the recent records, this species is now known to be a regular non-breeding migrant to Nalsarovar Bird Sanctuary, Gujarat with a few individuals seen every year. A study on the range expansion of the species in the Palearctic and South Asia treated the initial Jamnagar, Gujarat record as a part of its range extension (Ławicki 2020); however, records from Pakistan (Moazzam et al. 2018) and Iran (Osaei & Jamadi 2008) were considered as vagrants. Our record is the first record of the species from Maharashtra and corroborates further evidence of its range expansion in India. Our sighting in October, in the non-breeding season, is also consistent with the other sightings from Gujarat, which were also reported in the non-breeding season, from early winter until April. Geographically, this location is near Gujarat, and our record, though not unexpected, is significant as it appears to be the first record of the species documented for Maharashtra. Birders must be on the lookout for Namaqua Dove in Maharashtra.