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Recent nesting of Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus* at two different sites in the Jhajjar District, Haryana, India

Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus* is considered a Least Concern species because of its extremely large range (Birdlife International 2024a). The species has a wide discontinuous breeding distribution from southern Europe, Africa and Madagascar (as well as Agalega in the western Indian Ocean) to central and southern Asia, the Philippines, Sulawesi and Java in Indonesia; southern New Guinea and Australia (except for the arid interior); and the Atlantic coast of North America and West Indies to north-central Venezuela also occurring more widely as a vagrant (Davis & Kricher 2020). In South Asia, it is known to breed very locally in the northern plains; however, wintering more widely when the population includes an influx of migrants (Rasmussen & Anderton 2012; eBird 2024). While scattered breeding records have been documented from India, including a few older records from the northern plains of India, Gujarat, and Tamil Nadu (Tiware & Rahmani 1998; Venkatraman 2009), there have been only rare instances of breeding that have been reported in recent years. Recently, breeding of the species was documented in Rajasthan in northern India and in Assam in north-eastern India (Sharma et al. 2020; Ranade et al. 2021). A recent study concluded that the species was resident throughout the year in the Anand and Kheda Districts in Gujarat and used the agricultural landscape extensively, suggesting indirect evidence of breeding in these areas (Sundar & Kittur 2019). We document another recent breeding record from the Jhajjar District, Haryana, where we recorded more than 110 Glossy Ibis pairs nested in two different heronries in August 2023; this district of Haryana, bordering Delhi, is included in the National Capital Region (NCR) of India. We ensured that all protocols and guidelines for collecting information and photos from the respective heronries were followed as recommended, including maintaining appropriate distances from the nests (Barve et al. 2020).

On 12–13 August 2023, we visited the wetlands in the Jhajjar District to observe migratory and resident bird species, where we found the Glossy Ibis nesting at two different heronries. These heronries were located near Chhara village (28.70°N, 76.71°E) and Jaundhi village (28.63°N, 76.66°E), which are situated at a

linear distance of 9 km from each other. Reaching both heronries was difficult because the areas were inundated with stagnant water. In the heronry at Chhara village, we observed 12 nests of Glossy Ibis, along with approximate estimates of nests (in parentheses) of other species, such as, Black-crowned Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax* (20), Eastern Cattle Egret *Bubulcus coromandus* (60), Intermediate Egret *Ardea intermedia* (30), Great Egret *Ardea alba* (26), Indian Pond-Heron *Ardeola grayii* (3), and Little Cormorant *Microcarbo niger* (84), all nesting on kikar *Prosopis juliflora* and neem *Azadirachta indica* trees. In the heronry at Jaundhi village, we counted c.100 nests of Glossy Ibis. The nests were placed on kikar *Prosopis juliflora*. Approximate numbers of nests (in parenthesis) of other species that were observed were Black-crowned Night Heron (35), Eastern Cattle Egret (150), Intermediate Egret (40), Great Egret (40), Little Egret *Egretta garzetta* (40), Indian Pond-Heron (2), Black-headed Ibis *Threskiornis melanocephalus* (50), Asian Openbill *Anastomus oscitans* (15), and the majority of nests by Little Cormorant (200). We found that it was easier to count the nests of large wetland birds and species that prefer to nest in the upper canopy than to count the nests of species that prefer to nest in the lower canopy or lower vegetation, such as the Indian Pond Heron. All recorded nests of Glossy Ibis were placed at varying heights, approximately 0.5–5 m, from the surface of the water or the ground. On 22 August 2023, photographs of the nesting Glossy Ibis were obtained at the heronry at Jaundhi village using a DJI Mavic Mini drone operated in a single flight and maintaining its appropriate distance to minimize disturbance and noise [94–96].



94. Aerial view of the heronry at Jaundhi village showing nesting Glossy Ibis.



95. Glossy Ibis at a nest with young chicks.



96. Glossy Ibis incubating eggs at nest along with nesting Little Cormorant.

Wetlands in agriculture-dominated landscapes provide the desired habitat for diverse water birds (Sundar & Kittur 2013). The same scenario prevails in the District of Jhajjar. Both heronries were established along the agricultural wetlands in Jhajjar District, where these wetlands share their boundaries with village settlements and agricultural fields on either side. While some of these wetlands are permanent, some are temporary because they are dependent on rainfall in the region. Subsequent to our observations above, approximately 10 pairs of Glossy Ibises were recorded nesting in the last week of August 2023 in another established heronry at Surajpur Wetland in Gautam Buddha Nagar District, Uttar Pradesh, on the other side of the Yamuna River as it flows through Delhi (Singh 2023). Previous breeding records of the species in Haryana have been reported from Bhindawaas, Jhajjar District (Sharma 2017; Vyas 2019). Our records further corroborate the regular nesting of Glossy Ibis in the Jhajjar District in Haryana in recent years. Interestingly, Glossy Ibis nested at least three different locations in the NCR in 2023, two on the Haryana side (c.50–55 km from Delhi) and one on the Uttar Pradesh side (30 km from Delhi). The Surajpur Wetland in Uttar Pradesh is protected and recognized as an Important Bird Area (IBA) and has hosted an established heronry for several years (BirdLife International 2024b). However, the Jhajjar sites appear to be temporary inundations on agricultural land following heavy monsoon rains in July 2023 and is not legally protected.

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Addition of the Striolated Bunting *Emberiza striolata* to the avifauna of West Bengal

On 08 December 2023, SP, along with four other birdwatchers, recorded a Striolated Bunting *Emberiza striolata*, from Parkidi village (23.256°N, 86.231°E) in the district of Purulia during a birdwatching tour. It was identified as a male due to three bright white stripes on an intricately streaked face, a grey head, and chestnut-brown wings. The bird was observed on the rocky sides of the Dholburu Hills along with Paddyfield Pipit *Anthus rufulus*, Tree Pipit *A. trivialis*, Rufous-tailed Lark *Ammomanes phoenicura*, and Ashy-crowned Sparrow Lark *Eremopterix griseus*, feeding on the seeds of grass growing among the rocks [97, 98]. Striolated Bunting was reported seven more times, until 25 December 2023, from an area of approximately two sq. km around the location of the first sighting, between 0800 h and 1530 h. While it is not certain if all sightings were of the same individual, it is quite likely to be the case. It prefers rocky landscapes with shrubby vegetation, and water bodies nearby are the preferred habitat of Striolated Bunting (Ryan 2020). Open cultivation of Dholburu Hills provides this exact habitat.

Striolated Bunting is a resident in India's western states, mainly in Rajasthan, Gujarat, and Maharashtra (Pawashe et al. 2006; Rasmussen & Anderton 2012; Joshi et al. 2016). Very few records exist in the rest of the country. This record from West Bengal is the first for the state and eastern India. It is also the easternmost occurrence of Striolated Bunting in the Indian subcontinent. The previous easternmost occurrence of Striolated Bunting is from Chitwan National Park (27.556°N, 84.210°E) in Nepal on 18 October 2018 (Nepal Important Bird Records, 2018). For India, the easternmost record to date was from Sirkada in eastern Maharashtra (20.335°N, 79.426°E), which was recorded on