



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



97. Striolated Bunting male sitting on a rock face.



98. Striolated Bunting male feeding on grass seeds.

Both: Subhra Pakhira

27 November 2023 (Poomali 2023). This species is also known to be a resident and nomadic, with small flocks dispersing after breeding (Ryan 2020). The lack of regular sightings farther from its breeding range is probably due to its nomadic nature and lack of active birders in the intervening areas. More research into its diet in the western parts of India could provide clues on where else it could be found in the rest of India.

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Three notable records from the Ganga River Basin, India

We report the occurrence of three notable species from the Ganga River basin in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and West Bengal during a study conducted in 2022 and 2023.

Black-faced Bunting *Emberiza spodocephala* from the Ghaghara River near the Katerniaghat Wildlife Sanctuary, Uttar Pradesh

The Black-faced Bunting *Emberiza spodocephala* is known to be a regular winter visitor to the northeastern states of India from October to April (Ali & Ripley 1983). On 21 March 2023, during a biodiversity assessment, a Black-faced Bunting was sighted in the Ghaghara River near the Katerniaghat Wildlife Sanctuary, Uttar Pradesh (28.278°N, 81.681°E). The species was identified as a non-breeding male by its dark lores, olive grey head and crown, brown coverts with white-tipped wing bars, and pale brown upperparts with black streaks. The tail was dark brown, featuring extensive white on the outer rectrices. Additionally, it had rufous streaks on its flanks and pinkish legs. [99]. This is probably the first confirmed record of this species from Uttar Pradesh, India. This record is not unexpected, as it has been recorded regularly in the eastern Terai region of Nepal (eBird 2024a).



99. Black-faced Bunting 21 March 2023, Katerniaghat, Ghaghara River.

Cokulakrishnan G

Grey Plover *Pluvialis squatarola* from the Bagmati River at Ghonghepur, Bihar and the Ghaghara River near Dant Nagar, Uttar Pradesh

The Grey Plover *Pluvialis squatarola*, also known as the Black-bellied Plover, is a winter migrant to the coastal regions of India. It arrives in early August and departs in late April (Grimmett et al. 2011). It occasionally visits inland wetlands (Ali & Ripley 1983). It has been recorded as far inland as Kashmir, Delhi, Assam, Rajasthan, and Madhya Pradesh (eBird 2024b). On 27 November 2022, while conducting a post-monsoon biodiversity survey of the Bagmati River at Ghonghepur, Bihar, we found a Grey Plover near a reservoir (25.842°N, 86.384°E) located c.500 km away from the nearest coast (Bay of Bengal). The individual was in non-breeding plumage, as evidenced by its plain grey upperparts and speckled grey breast and belly (Grimmett et al. 2011). The bird was observed foraging on the sandy shore of the reservoir, along with Kentish Plover *Anarhynchus alexandrines* and Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius*. On 28 March and 03 May 2023 [100, 101], the species was again sighted during a pre-monsoon survey in the Ghaghara River near Dant Nagar, Uttar Pradesh (26.802°N, 88.355°E). This is probably the first confirmed record of this species from the Bagmati and Ghaghara Rivers located in the