Sightings of Blyth's and Amur Paradise-Flycatchers from Telangana, India

Paradise-Flycatchers are a group of sexually dimorphic species of the genus *Terpsiphone* placed under the family *Monarchidae*. They are found in Asia and Africa and are predominantly resident, while a few species are migratory. They are observed in evergreen, deciduous, and secondary forests at elevations ranging from sea level to 1800 m asl (Rasmussen & Anderton 2012). The morphological, mitochondrial DNA divergence and vocal differences within the Asian Paradise-Flycatcher populations led to a split, resulting in three species, the Indian Paradise-Flycatcher *Terpsiphone paradisi*, Blyth's Paradise-Flycatcher *T. affinis* and Amur Paradise-Flycatcher *T. incei* (Fabre et al. 2012; Bristol et al. 2013; Anderson et al. 2015; Eaton et al. 2016). According to Clements et al. (2023), the Amur Paradise-Flycatcher is monotypic, the Blyth's Paradise-Flycatcher contains 10 subspecies, and the Indian Paradise-Flycatcher contains three subspecies. We describe sightings of Blyth's and Amur Paradise-Flycatchers from Telangana and review their status across India.

Blyth's Paradise-Flycatcher *Terpsiphone affinis*

On 11 April 2021, a Blyth's Paradise-Flycatcher female was observed at Damagundam (17.273°N, 77.943°E), Pudur, Vikarabad District (Patibanda & Kolla 2021) **[103, 104]**. The area held several Indian Paradise-Flycatchers, which facilitated the comparative identification of Blyth's Paradise-Flycatcher, primarily distinguished by the noticeably shorter crest. Other characteristics noted were a blackish crown, dark grey hood that fades into a light grey breast, pale belly, rufescent vent, and undertail coverts. The bird was observed hunting insects around a stagnant water pool along with Black-naped Monarch *Hypothymis azurea*, Indian Paradise-Flycatcher, Spot-breasted Fantail *Rhipidura albogularis*, Asian Brown Flycatcher *Muscicapa dauurica,* and Brown-breasted Flycatcher *M. muttui*. The area was surveyed extensively by birders between 12 and 16 April 2021, during which two individuals were found. The sightings continued for at least two weeks (Ramachandran & Reddy 2021). Birders revisited their photos of Paradise-Flycatcher and found that some photos that were initially identified as Indian Paradise-Flycatchers were Blyth's Paradise-Flycatchers. This led to the addition of records to eBird for the year 2019 from the Mallavaram Reserve Forest in East Godavari District, Andhra Pradesh (Ineni & Polimati 2019), and for 2020, where a juvenile male was observed at Gubbala Mangamma Thalli Temple, Kavadigundla Reserved Forest (RF), in Bhadradri Kothagudem District (Parvatala & Reddy 2020).

Gopalakrishna Ramachandran

103. Blyth's Paradise-Flycatcher (dorsal view) from Damagundam RF showing its short crest.

Harikrishna Patibanda

104. Blyth's Paradise flycatcher with a greyish throat and breast (ventral view) from Damagundam RF.

According to Rasmussen et al. (2022), the subspecies of Blyth's Paradise-Flycatcher most prevalent in the Indian subcontinent is *T. a. saturatior*, and it occurs in eastern Nepal, Sikkim, Bhutan, the Northeast India states, Bangladesh, and the Andaman Islands (Rasmussen et al. 2022). The other subspecies of Blyth's Paradise-Flycatcher noted in India is the *T. a. nicobarica*, a resident of the Central Nicobar Islands with no known vagrant records. *T. a. saturatior* has demonstrated significant vagrancy, with records as far south as Vietnam, Thailand, and Indonesia (Dijkstra 2018). It breeds in the hills, moves south into river valleys and plains after breeding, and winters at lower elevations (Rasmussen et al. 2022). Given that this subspecies is migratory and that there are records of vagrants very far away, it is likely that this is also the subspecies observed in Telangana and Andhra Pradesh.

In support of our interpretation, there was one extralimital documentation of a white morph adult male from the Digha-Shankarpur Estuary, Purba Medinipur District, West Bengal, in November 2020 (Payra 2020). The sightings from Telangana (Parvatala & Reddy 2020; Patibanda & Kolla 2021; Ramachandran & Reddy 2021) and Andhra Pradesh (Ineni & Polimati 2019) are the furthest known extralimital sightings in mainland India from their year-round range in Northeast India. Hence, we anticipate more records from both these states, Odisha, and southern West Bengal, in the future. Consistent records from 2019, 2020, and 2021 in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana suggest that this species could be a rare but regular migrant to these parts, and future records may help establish this pattern.

Amur Paradise-Flycatcher *Terpsiphone incei*

During a birding walk conducted by Hyderabad Birding Pals at Gubbala Mangamma Thalli Temple, Kavadigundla RF (17.348°N, 81.306°E) on 18 and 19 March 2022, a single Amur Paradise Flycatcher was seen and photographed by many birdwatchers (Patibanda et al. 2022) **[105, 106]**. Due to the early summer heat, the streams were nearly dry and, in many places, reduced to pools of stagnant water. These pools had attracted insects, and around one such pool next to a small rocky hillock, several Black-naped Monarch and Indian Paradise-Flycatchers were seen. At approximately 0845 h, a rufous morph, Paradise-Flycatcher, lacking an obvious crest and sporting a greyish breast, was observed. It was shy and was hunting insects at a distance, making photography extremely challenging. Since there were previous records of Blyth's Paradise-Flycatcher in the area, these birds were assumed to be Blyth's Paradise Flycatcher. It was identified several months later from the photographs as

a female Amur Paradise-Flycatcher, as it showed a lilac glossy upper crown, strong contrast between the black hood and grey breast, and white vent and undertail coverts. The identity was revised based on recommendations from eBird reviewer James Eaton. As of 16 June 2024, according to the eBird database, this is the only confirmed sighting of the Amur Paradise-Flycatcher from mainland India.

The Amur Paradise Flycatcher is monotypic, and it breeds in eastern China and winters in the Thai-Malay Peninsula (del Hoyo et al. 2020). There is a large overlap in the ranges of the Amur Paradise-Flycatcher and the Blyth's Paradise-Flycatcher. It has been recorded at multiple locations in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands from 2017 to 2022 (Holla & Chaudhry 2017; Grundsten et al. 2018; Gohain 2022; eBird 2024). These regular sightings warrant studying whether it is a vagrant or a rare migrant to the island. The nearest known record of the Amur Paradise-Flycatcher to mainland India is from Nabang fields, Yunnan, China, which is *c.*250 km from the closest Indian geopolitical border (Su 2024).

105. Amur Paradise-Flycatcher showing a black throat and white vent from Kavadigundla RF.

Both : Harikrishna Patibanda

106. Amur Paradise-Flycatcher with lilac glossy upper crown from Kavadigundla RF.

Considering the records published here, Kavadigundla RF has become the only location in India to have confirmed sightings of all three species that resulted from the split of the erstwhile Asian Paradise-Flycatcher. This forest in Telangana is a distant section of the Eastern Ghats that is geographically separated from Papikonda National Park by the Godavari River. The villagers residing around Gubbala Mangamma Thalli Temple continue to offer animal sacrifices every Sunday, and the constant supply of animal remains attracts many insects and insect eaters. The streams, when present, carry some of these offals deeper into the isolated areas in the reserve forest to stagnant ponds, offering an ideal place with an abundance of insects for flycatchers. Both the Blyth's Paradise-Flycatcher and the Amur Paradise-Flycatcher were observed in such areas of the RF. The Damagundam RF, where we recorded the Blyth's Paradise-Flycatcher, is one of the two major forests in Vikarabad District, Telangana. The RF is characterized by a rocky terrain, dry deciduous trees, scrub, and grasslands. The Damagundam Temple area is unique within this wider habitat as a narrow perennial stream flows through it, the moisture from which leads to the presence of large tree species such as *Ficus religiosa, Butea monosperma, Lannea coromandelica, Tectona grandis*, and a shrubby undergrowth of *Terminalia catappa,* which is ideal for insects and insectivores.

We thank Hyderabad Birding Pals for organizing the bird surveys and the forest departments of the governments of Telangana and Andhra Pradesh. We thank James Eaton for his invaluable assistance in identifying the Amur Paradise-Flycatcher.

References

Andersen, M. J., Hosner, P. A., Filardi, C. E., & Moyle, R. G., 2015. Phylogeny of the monarch flycatchers reveals extensive paraphyly and novel relationships within a major Australo-Pacific radiation. *Molecular Phylogenetics and Evolution*, 83: 118–136.

Bird Record Thailand, 2018. Webpage URL: https://ebird.org/checklist/S49963555 [Accessed on 25 May 2024.]

Clements, J. F., P. C. Rasmussen, T. S. Schulenberg, M. J. Iliff, T. A. Fredericks, J. A. Gerbracht, D. Lepage, A. Spencer, S. M. Billerman, B. L. Sullivan, and C. L. Wood. 2023. The eBird/Clements checklist of Birds of the World: v2023.

Bristol, R. M., Fabre, P. H., Irestedt, M., Jonsson, K. A., Shah, N. J., Tatayah, V., Warren, B. H., & Groombridge, J. J., 2013. Molecular phylogeny of the Indian Ocean Terpsiphone paradise flycatchers: Undetected evolutionary diversity revealed amongst island populations. *Molecular Phylogenetics and Evolution,* 67:2, 336–347.

del Hoyo, J., Collar, N., Christie, D. A., & Kirwan, G. M. 2020. Amur Paradise-Flycatcher (*Terpsiphone incei*), 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. https://doi.org/10.2173/bow.amupaf1.01

Dijkstra, F., 2018. Webpage URL: https://ebird.org/checklist/S68127960 [Accessed on 25 May 2024.]

Eaton, J. A., van Balen, B., Brickle, N. W., & Rheindt, F. E., 2016. *Birds of the Indonesian Archipelago: Greater Sundas and Wallacea*. Lynx Edicions, Barcelona, Spain.

eBird 2024. Blyth's Paradise-Flycatcher species map. Webpage URL: https://ebird.org/map/blypaf1 [Accessed on 17 June 2024.]

Fabre, P. H., Irestedt, M., Fjeldså, J., Bristol, R., Groombridge, J. J., Irham, M., & Jønsson, K. A., 2012. Dynamic colonization exchanges between continents and islands drive diversification in paradise-flycatchers (*Terpsiphone*, Monarchidae). *Journal of Biogeography*, 39: 1900–1918.

Gohain, P., 2022. Webpage URL: https://ebird.org/checklist/S123191515 [Accessed on 11 March 2024.]

Grundsten, M., Sångberg, O., & Thankachan, D., 2018. First documented record of Chinese Paradise Flycatcher *Terpsiphone incei* on the Andaman Islands, India. *Birding ASIA*. 29: 44–45.

Holla, Y., & Chaudhry, S., 2017. Webpage URL: https://ebird.org/india/checklist/S43609412 [Accessed on 11 March 2024.]

Ineni, K., & Polimati, J., 2019. Webpage URL: https://ebird.org/checklist/S83866434 [Accessed on 11 March 2024.]

Patibanda, H., & Kolla, S., 2021. Webpage URL: https://ebird.org/checklist/S85316725 [Accessed on 17 June 2024.]

Patibanda, H., Ramachandran, G., Reddy, S., Chary, M., & Pals, H. B., 2022. Webpage URL: https://ebird.org/checklist/S105214598 [Accessed on 11 March 2024.]

Payra, A., 2020. Webpage URL: https://ebird.org/india/checklist/S141850635 [Accessed on 11 March 2024.]

Ramachandran, G., & Reddy, S., 2021. Webpage URL: https://ebird.org/india/checklist/S85450150 [Accessed on 11 March 2024.]

Rasmussen, P. C., & Anderton, J. C., 2012. *Birds of South Asia, the Ripley guide Vols. 1 and 2*. Second Edition. National Museum of Natural History: Smithsonian Institution, Michigan State University and Lynx Edicions, Washington, D.C.,

Michigan and Barcelona.
Rasmussen, P. C., del Hoyo, J., Collar, N., Christie, D. A., & Kirwan, G. M., 2022. *Blyth's Paradise-Flycatcher (Terpsiphone affinis), version 2.0. In Birds of the World* (N. D. Sly, Editor). Cornell Lab of Ornithology, Ithaca, NY, USA. https://doi.org/10.2173/bow.blypaf1.02
Su, P., 2024. Webpage URL: https://ebird.org/checklist/S170933216 [Accessed on 26 May 2024.]

– Harikrishna Patibanda, Sriram Reddy & Gopalakrishna Ramachandran
Harikrishna Patibanda, N-203, Aparna Sarovar, Nallagandla, Serilingampally, Hyderabad, 500032, India. Email: p.harikrishna@gmail.com
Sriram Reddy, H. No. 403, Block C, RK towers, Mayuri Marg, Begumpet, Hyderabad, 500016, India. Email: sriram.birdwatcher@gmail.com
Gopalakrishna Ramachandran, Tata Institute of Fundamental Research, 36/P, Serilingampally, Hyderabad, 500046, India. Email: gopalakrishnaiyer@gmail.com [Corresponding author]

Falcated Duck *Mareca falcata* from Hokersar Wetland: An addition to the avifauna of Jammu & Kashmir

Falcated Duck *Mareca falcata* is distributed from eastern Siberia, Mongolia, and northern China to the Kuril Islands and northern Japan, and it winters to southern Japan, Korea, eastern China, northern Vietnam, west to Myanmar, and India (Carboneras & Kirwan 2020). It is listed as Near Threatened as per the IUCN Red List, owing to moderately rapid declines in China because of very high levels of hunting (BirdLife International 2024). The male Falcated Duck is unmistakable in identification, having a bottle-green head, a maned hindneck, and black and grey elongated tertials (Grimmett et al. 2011). In India, Falcated Duck is distributed from the northern plains of Punjab and Haryana to the Assam Valley, the lower parts of the southern Assam hills, southern West Bengal, and western Gujarat (Rasmussen & Anderton 2012; Abhinav & Dhadwal 2017). It is rare in the western parts of the country and uncommon, although regular, in Northeast India (Rasmussen & Anderton 2012).

On 15 February 2023, I was birding in the Hokersar Wetland near Zainakote, Srinagar District of Jammu & Kashmir (34.097°N, 74.716°E), when I saw an unfamiliar duck *c.*100 m away among the thousands of ducks of various common species. It had a greenish head, white throat, greyish body, elongated black and grey tertials, and a yellowish patch bordered by black at the rear end of the body. The bird was identified as a male Falcated Duck. The duck did not come close to the shore, so clear photographs could not be taken **[107]**. It was again observed at the same location on 17 and 25 February 2023 but not thereafter (Sofi 2023). On 13 March 2023, a male Falcated Duck was seen in Wular Lake, Bandipora District, Kashmir, by multiple observers (Jeelani 2023). It could not be ascertained whether it was the same individual seen in the Hokersar wetland or a different individual.

Hafizullah Sofi

107. Falcated Duck at Hokersar Wetland on 15 February 2023.

Falcated Duck has not been reported from Jammu & Kashmir previously (Ward 1907; Grimmett et al. 2011; eBird 2024), and the record from Hokersar Wetland is first for the Union Territory. The species has been included in the recently published checklist of birds of Jammu & Kashmir (Kichloo et al. 2024) on the basis of the records mentioned in this note (Muzaffar A. Kichloo pers. comm. dated 07 June 2024). This note provides the details of the sightings. The present findings were not unexpected, as there have been records of this species from further west in northern Pakistan (Grimmett et al. 2011) and from adjacent Himachal Pradesh (Abhinav & Dhadwal 2017).

I thank C. Abhinav for his help in preparing the manuscript.

References

Abhinav, C., & Dhadwal, D. S., 2017. Falcated Duck *Mareca falcata*: An addition to the avifauna of Himachal Pradesh. *Indian BIRDS* 13 (6): 154–156.
BirdLife International 2024. Species factsheet: *Mareca falcata*. Webpage URL: http://datazone.birdlife.org/species/factsheet/falcated-duck-mareca-falcata [Accessed on 22 March 2024.]
Carboneras, C., & Kirwan, G. M., 2020. Falcated Duck (*Mareca falcata*), 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. Webpage URL: https://doi.org/10.2173/bow.falduc.01 [Accessed on 22 March 2024.]
eBird, 2024. Species map: Falcated Duck *Mareca falcata*. Webpage URL: https://ebird.org/map/falduc [Accessed on 22 March 2024.]
Grimmett, R., Inskipp, C., & Inskipp, T., 2011. *Birds of the Indian Subcontinent*. 2nd ed. London: Oxford University Press & Christopher Helm. Pp. 1–528.
Jeelani, I., 2023. Website URL: https://ebird.org/checklist/S130823813 [Accessed on 22 March 2024.]
Kichloo, A. M., Sharma, N., Suhail, I., Shagoo, P., & Kumar, P., 2024. A checklist of the birds of Jammu & Kashmir, India. *Indian BIRDS* 19 (6): 163–180.
Rasmussen, P. C., & Anderton, J. C., 2012. *Birds of South Asia: the Ripley guide: attributes and status*. 2nd ed. Washington, D.C. and Barcelona: Smithsonian Institution and Lynx Edicions. Vol. 2 of 2 vols. Pp. 1–683.
Sofi, R. 2023. Website URL: https://ebird.org/checklist/S128486997 [Accessed on 01 June 2024.]
Ward, A. E., 1907. Birds of the provinces of Kashmir and Jammu and adjacent districts. Part IV. *Journal of the Bombay Natural History Society*. 17 (4): 943–949.

– Hafizullah Sofi
Hafizullah Sofi, Zainakote, HMT, Srinagar, 190012, Jammu & Kashmir, India.
E-mail: reyansofi2@gmail.com

Masked Shrike *Lanius nubicus* from the Union Territory of Ladakh

On 04 June 2024, PG, TAS, and SC visited Hanley (32.773°N, 78.984°E), eastern Ladakh, to search for the Pallas's Fish Eagle *Haliaeetus leucoryphus*. As we could not find the eagle, at approximately 1730 h, we decided to bird around the Khaldo Bagh plantations until 1900 h. Soon enough, a small pied bird flew right in front of us and perched on a *Salix* tree a few metres ahead, giving us a few seconds to photograph it under low light conditions. We identified it as a shrike *Lanius* sp. and confirmed its specific identification as an adult female Masked Shrike *L. nubicus* using the Merlin app. Adult males and females are generally unmistakable (Shirihai & Svensson 2018), and our bird had neat, glossy black upperparts, black crown, black eyeline starting from behind the eye and arching to meet the crown, white face, orangish breast, and white lower belly and vent **[108]**. In flight, the otherwise blackish bird had two broad white wing mirrors formed by the basal half of the primaries, large, white and puffy wing coverts, white outer tail feathers, and a noticeably grey mantle; the last feature confirms that it is a female **[109]**. The bird was observed again at 0600 h on 05 June and was seen continuously feeding on insects and caterpillars. More images are available in Gyalpo (2024a, 2024b).