

earliest record in May 1872 from Andaman Island (Ball 1872:288; Abdulali 1964) and subsequently a breeding plumaged bird in Narcondam Island on 11 May 1998 (Sangha 2021). An adult in non-breeding plumage was photographed from 08 till 16 November 2020 at Digha-Shankarpur Estuary, West Bengal (Payra 2021) while another from the North Andaman Island on 21 December 2022 (Govindarasu et al. 2023). It has also been reported twice from Sri Lanka (Samaraweera 2006) and once from Bangladesh (Ahmed & Jannat 2020). Hence, ours would be the fourth report for the Andaman and Nicobar Island and the eighth for the Indian subcontinent.

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The Isabelline Shrike *Lanius isabellinus* from eastern India, including an addition to the avifauna of Odisha

The Isabelline Shrike *Lanius isabellinus* is a polytypic species, widely distributed from Mongolia and Russia in the east, through China, India, Pakistan, the Arabian Peninsula, Africa, the Persian Gulf, and further westward into Europe. It breeds in Central and East Asia and migrates southwest to spend their non-breeding season in the northwestern part of the Indian Peninsula, western Asia, the Arabian Peninsula, and eastern Africa (Yosef et al. 2020). In India, it is a passage migrant and a winter visitor mainly to the northern and western states (Ali & Ripley 1996; Grimm et al. 2011). Records from the eastern and southern parts of the Indian Peninsula are rare (eBird 2024). Instead, the similar-looking Brown Shrike *L. cristatus* is a common winter visitor in these regions. We report two new records of Isabelline Shrike from eastern India, one each from Odisha and West Bengal.

Record from Kalahandi, Odisha

On 27 February 2024, while birding in Tikirapara, Kalahandi

district, Odisha (19.969°N, 83.312°E), at 0823 h, AM photographed a shrike that was identified as a Brown Shrike *L. cristatus* at that moment, since it is common in that region. However, on further scrutiny of photographs, the individual was confirmed to be an Isabelline Shrike: a small shrike with sandy brown plumage, a long rusty tail, mask not extending to the lores, indistinct supercilium, pale or pinkish bill, black iris, and black legs [198]. The overall plumage suggests it belongs to the *arenarius* subspecies, as per Ganpule (2017). To the best of our knowledge, this is the first confirmed record of the species from Odisha state. An Isabelline Shrike was observed in Padampur, Bargarh district, Odisha, in 2012 by Manoj V. Nair (pers. comm. 07 July 2024), but no photographs exist from the state. The closest known confirmed record of the species is c.200 km away in Chhattisgarh state (Fig 1).



198. Isabelline Shrike from Kalahandi, Odisha.

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The bird was perched on an *Ipomoea* bush and did not attempt to fly away despite our close approach. Later, it flew a short distance and hid inside a shrub, avoiding coming into the open. It was also seen moving on the ground briefly, probably foraging for insects. The area where this individual was photographed can be described as a wetland adjacent to agricultural fields, with a few trees dotting the landscape. The water body had *Ipomoea* bushes and *Typha* reeds on the periphery and was a roosting site for Black-crowned Night Herons *Nycticorax nycticorax*. Other species seen on that date include waterfowl such as the Cotton Pygmy Goose *Nettapus coromandelianus*, Gadwall *Mareca strepera*, Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis*, Little Cormorant *Microcarbo niger*, and Common Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus*; along with more typical scrubland/open habitat species such as the Jerdon's Bushlark *Mirafra affinis*, Paddyfield Pipit *Anthus rufulus*, Plaintive Cuckoo *Cacomantis merulinus*, Black-winged Kite *Elanus caeruleus*, Plain Prinia *Prinia inornata*, Zitting Cisticola *Cisticola juncidis*, and Indian Silverbill *Euodice malabarica* (Mishra 2024).

Record from Kolkata, West Bengal

AG photographed one shrike each on 05 November 2015 (0945 h) and 16 December 2015 (1030 h) in Newtown, North 24 Parganas district, West Bengal (22.617°N, 88.457°E). While going through the photographs later, these individuals were confirmed to be Isabelline Shrikes, based on the pale sandy underparts, greyish upperparts, pale base to the bill, diffused face mask, and lacking a clear supercilium [199]. The habit was grassland interspersed by marshland patches dominated by *Typha* reeds.

Other common species in this area are the Paddyfield Pipit *A. rufulus*, Bengal Bushlark *Mirafra assamica*, Zitting Cisticola, Plain Prinia, Booted Warbler *Iduna caligata*, Blyth's Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus dumetorum*, Red Munia *Amandava amandava*, Scaly-breasted Munia *Lonchura punctulata*, and Tricoloured Munia *L. malacca*.



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199. Isabelline Shrike from Newtown, West Bengal.

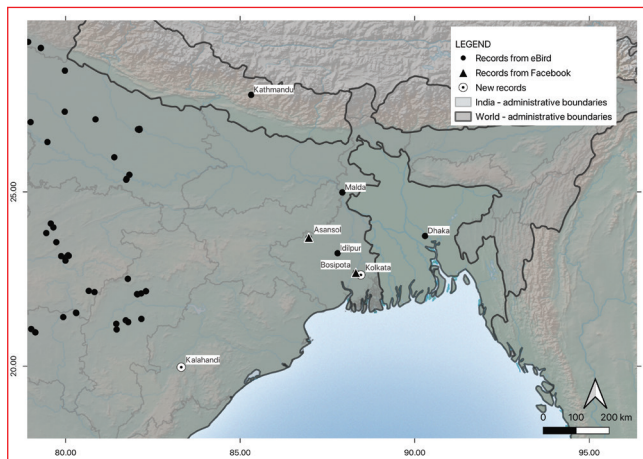


Fig 1. Location of the two new records relative to the species' closest records in the west and recent records in the east.

The Isabelline Shrike has been commonly recorded as far east as Chhattisgarh, but there are no confirmed records from eastern Uttar Pradesh and the states of Odisha, Bihar, and Jharkhand (eBird 2024). Though infrequent, this species has been reported from multiple locations in West Bengal (Fig 1; Table 1) in the winter months, as evidenced by records in eBird and Facebook. It has also been recorded in Dhaka (Miller 2021) and central Nepal (Hearn 2019). These locations are at significant distances from its regular wintering range. Given this new revelation from Odisha and West Bengal, the absence of records from other eastern Indian states may be due to insufficient exploration.

Isabelline Shrike is a Least Concern species on the IUCN Red List (BirdLife International 2024). However, its population in India shows declining long-term and short-term trends, and is a cause for concern (SoIB 2023). A better understanding of its distribution

Table 1. Records of Isabelline Shrike in the eastern region of the Indian subcontinent

Sl. No.	Date	Location	Location	Citation
1	05 November 2015	Kolkata, West Bengal, India	22.616°N, 88.457°E	This work
2	09 January 2021	Dhaka, Bangladesh	23.735°N, 90.299°E	Miller (2021)
3	30 December 2019	Bagmati, Kathmandu, Nepal	27.785°N, 85.316°E	Hearn (2019)
4	24 October 2015	Idilpur, West Bengal, India	23.240°N, 87.792°E	Das (2015)
5	February 2021	Asansol, West Bengal, India	23.688°N, 86.966°E	Chattopadhyay (2021)
6	23 January 2017	Bosipota, West Bengal, India	22.681°N, 88.315°E	Gupta (2017)
7	14 January 2017	Malda, West Bengal, India	24.984°N, 87.929°E	Manna (2017)
8	27 February 2024	Kalahandi, Odisha, India	19.969°N, 83.312°E	This work

in the Indian subcontinent, especially from regions where its records are uncommon, can help strengthen conservation and management strategies for the species.

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