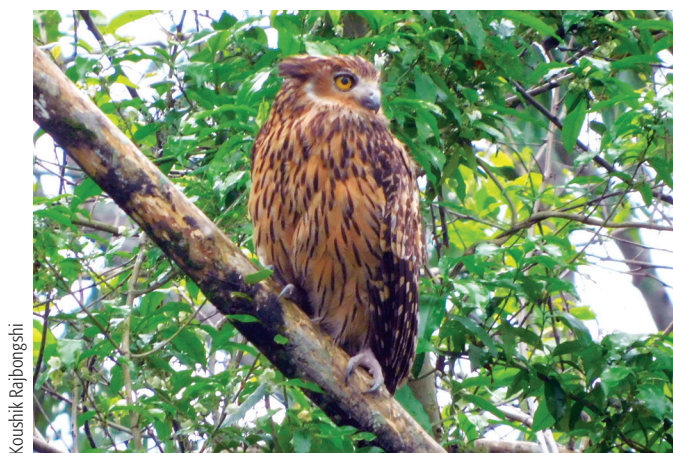


### The Tawny Fish-Owl *Ketupa flavipes* from Manas National Park and its status in the Brahmaputra Valley

On 02 April 2024, during fieldwork near the Beki River at Mothanguri (26.768°N, 90.971°E; c.130 m asl) in Manas National Park, we photographed a large owl perched on a Lali tree *Walsura robusta* at 1100 h on a rainy day. We initially identified the bird as the Brown Fish-Owl *Ketupa zeylonensis*. After scrutinizing the picture further with the help of experts and field guides (Grimmett et al. 2011), we concluded that it was a Tawny Fish-Owl *K. flavipes* [33]. Unlike the Brown Fish-Owl, the bird had an unstreaked orange-rufous facial disc, which shows a streaked buffy facial disc. It had prominent ear tufts and greenish-grey cere and bill. Its tarsi were partially feathered, unlike the Brown Fish-Owl, which has bare tarsi. We observed the bird for nearly two minutes before it flew away. The habitat was moist deciduous forest featuring tree species such as *Walsura robusta*, *Terminalia bellirica*, *Sterculia villosa*, *Duabanga grandiflora*, and *Dysoxylum binectariferum*.



Koushik Rajbongshi

33. Tawny Fish-Owl near the Beki River in Manas National Park.

The Tawny Fish-Owl is distributed widely across the Himalayas, eastern Indochina, southern China, and Taiwan, and it is usually found in old-growth broadleaf forests near fast-flowing streams (Hong 2013; Holt et al. 2020). According to Rasmussen & Anderton (2012), in India, it is found in the Himalayan foothills from Himachal Pradesh to north-eastern India, including the Khasi Hills in Meghalaya, the Mizo Hills (also known as Lushai Hills) in Mizoram and Manipur. There are many records in eBird from the Himalayan foothills in Uttarakhand, Nepal, Bhutan, and Arunachal Pradesh (Chhophel 2023; eBird 2024). It has been recorded as high as 2,450 m asl from Arunachal Pradesh (Bhattacharya et al. 2021). In the Brahmaputra Valley, this species is primarily observed in the plains near the foothills, with regular sightings between 280–400 m asl along the banks of the Noa-Dihing River in Namdapha National Park (eBird 2024). Ritschard & Marques (2007) reported this species from the Bhalukpong plains, close to the Arunachal Pradesh and Assam border at c.100 m asl. Published records of the owl from the banks of the Brahmaputra River in the plains are scarce, with only two confirmed sightings in eBird (Siang Expedition 2022; Vishwanathan & Prashak 2022). Additionally, Baruah & Sharma (1999) mentions that the bird is a rare resident in the semi-evergreen forest, swampy forest, and riparian forest of Kaziranga National Park, whereas Choudhury (2006a) mentions that it is a rare resident in the Dibru-Saikhowa

National Park. Chowdhury (2006b) also mentions its presence in Manas National Park, but no photographic evidence is provided. Ours is the first record with photographs from Manas National Park and the foothill-adjacent plains of the Brahmaputra north bank in lower Assam.

We extend my heartfelt gratitude to the Assam Forest Department for permitting us to enter the park. We deeply appreciate the support provided by the forest guards, whose assistance was invaluable. Special thanks go to Ginu George, Ashwin Viswanathan, and Subramanian Venkataramani for their help in identifying the bird.

### References

- Barua, M., & Sharma, P., 1999. Birds of Kaziranga National Park, India. *Forktail* (15): 47–60.
- Bhattacharya, M., Adhikari, B. S., & Gopi, G. V., 2021. Tawny Fish-owl *Ketupa flavipes* Hodgson, 1836 (Aves: Strigiformes: Strigidae): recent record from Arunachal Pradesh, India. *Journal of Threatened Taxa*, 13 (2): 17837–17840.
- Chhophel, S., Wangda, K., Penjor, T., & Dorji, K., 2023. Avifaunal diversity of Tsirang District with a new country record for Bhutan. *Journal of Threatened Taxa* 15 (8): 23681–23695.
- Choudhury, A., 2006a. Birds of Dibru-Saikhowa National Park and Biosphere Reserve, Assam, India. *Indian BIRDS* 2 (4): 95–105.
- Choudhury, A., 2006b. Birds of Manas National Park. Gibbon Books, Guwahati.
- eBird, 2024. Tawny Fish Owl range map. Webpage URL: <https://ebird.org/map/tafowl1> [Accessed on 26 December 2024.]
- Grimmett, R., Inskipp, C., & Inskipp, T., 2011. *Birds of the Indian Subcontinent*. New Delhi, Oxford University Press. Pp.1–528.
- Hong, S. Y., Sun, Y. H., Wu, H. J., & Chen, C. C., 2013. Spatial distribution of the Tawny Fish-owl *Ketupa flavipes* shaped by natural and man-made factors in Taiwan. *Forktail* 29 (1): 48–51.
- Holt, D. W., Berkley, R., Deppe, C., Enriquez, P. L., Petersen, J. L., Rangel Salazar, J. L., Segars, K. P., Wood, K. L., & Marks J. S., 2020. Tawny Fish-Owl (*Ketupa flavipes*), 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.tafowl1.01>
- Ritschard, M., & Marques, D., 2007. Tawny Fish-Owl *Ketupa flavipes* in Arunachal Pradesh, India. *Indian BIRDS* 3 (3): 108.
- Siang Expedition, 2022. Webpage URL: <https://ebird.org/checklist/S131517734> [Accessed on 26 December 2024.]
- Vishwanathan, A., & Prakash, A., 2022. Webpage URL: <https://ebird.org/checklist/S110733020> [Accessed on 26 December 2024.]
- Koushik Rajbongshi, Leons Mathew Abraham, Jonmani Kalita, Karan Barman & Dhritiman Das  
Koushik Rajbongshi, Aaranyak, 13 Tayab Ali Lane, Beltola, Guwahati, 781028, Assam, India.  
E-mail: [koushik@aaranyak.org](mailto:koushik@aaranyak.org) [Corresponding author]  
Leons Mathew Abraham, Pygmy Hog Research & Breeding Center, Indira Nagar, Basistha, Guwahati, 781029, Assam, India.  
Jonmani Kalita, Aaranyak, 13 Tayab Ali Lane, Beltola, Guwahati, 781028, Assam, India.  
Karan Barman, Fatasil Manpara, Guwahati, 781025, Assam, India.  
Dhritiman Das, Pygmy Hog Conservation Programme-Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust, Indira Nagar, Basistha, Guwahati 781029, Assam, India.

### The Chestnut-headed Bee-eater *Merops leschenaulti* from Punjab, India

The Chestnut-headed Bee-eater *Merops leschenaulti* is found in open areas within wooded country up to 1,500 m asl in the Indian subcontinent (Rasmussen & Anderton 2012). In this note, we report the first photographs of Chestnut-headed Bee-eater from Punjab, India, obtained in Haripur, Rupnagar District, and review its status in the state.

On 16 May 2021, KC visited his family's farm in the hills above Haripur village (30.944°N, 76.677°E; c.390 m asl), Rupnagar District, Punjab. KC saw four Chestnut-headed Bee-eaters and photographed one perched on a thin branch of a bush [34]. A few Asian Green Bee-eaters *M. orientalis* were also flying around, seemingly, in search of food. Chestnut-headed