

by the forest department and I identified it based on the newspaper clip. The original photograph is not available now but I confirmed that the photograph given in the newspaper was of the same rescued individual.

The habitat of the area from where it was rescued was moist-deciduous broadleaf forest with some patches of dense bamboo, with small canals and sugarcane on the forest fringes. This report at Valmiki Tiger Reserve would be the most westerly documented presence of Oriental Bay-Owl till date (Ray et al. 2020). Its presence in Nepal has been suspected but the only collected material (skin) was procured by Hodgson from a shop near Kathmandu, and there is also a possibility that the bird may have originated from elsewhere and transported to Kathmandu (Inskipp & Inskipp 1991; Ray et al. 2020). Hence, this report from Valmiki Tiger Reserve provides some credence to Hodgson's record as this area is the fact a part of the Chitwan-Valmiki landscape, shared between India and Nepal, that exhibits mammalian, reptilian and avian fauna similar to both western and eastern Himalaya (Maheswaran 2024). There are no definitive records from Uttarakhand (Mohan & Sondhi 2017) but a verbal documentation of this species from Dehradun (Mr R. Thomson, verbally, to Mr Hume) mentioned by Blanford (1895)pp. i–xiv, 1–450, text–figs. 1–102, 4 text–figs. (unnum. exist, which indicates the possibility of this bird's presence farther westwards than Nepal.

However, there is also a possibility that the bird was transported here by bird traders as owls are known to be used in black magic, and the bird somehow escaped or was released from captivity. There are chances that the bird was procured from north-eastern India and was on its way to be exported out of country through Nepal. However, the chances of this possibility are remote as the species itself is rare in north-eastern India, and the bird escaping and getting rediscovered within a well-protected tiger reserve in ideal habitats is even more remote. Hence, in all likelihood, this is a truly wild individual.

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The status and distribution of the White-winged Tern *Chlidonias leucopterus* in Goa, India

The White-winged Tern *Chlidonias leucopterus*, although a regular winter visitor to northwestern India and Sri Lanka, is considered a rare winter visitor elsewhere in the Indian subcontinent, likely due to being overlooked (Prasad 2005). There are sporadic records during the winter months across India (as far east as Assam), Bangladesh, the Maldives, the Andaman & Nicobar Islands, and Pakistan (eBird 2025). Grewal et al. (2002) consider it a scarce passage migrant and a winter visitor throughout the subcontinent, occurring more regularly in Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, and Sri Lanka. Based on historical sight records, this species has been included in the checklist of the birds of Goa by Baidya & Bhagat (2018, 2024). In this note, we review the status and distribution of the White-winged Tern in Goa and report its first photographic record. While reviewing historical records of the White-winged Tern from Goa, several discrepancies were noted in previously published sources. Here, we identify these and provide an updated list of records from Goa (Table 1).

On 14 July 2020 at 1000 h, JR witnessed a flock of various terns while birding at the Maina-Curtorim wetlands (15.299°N, 74.008°E), Curtorim, South Goa District, Goa. The congregation was frequently disturbed by a Brahminy Kite *Haliastur indus*. This mixed flock included the Gull-billed Tern *Gelochelidon nilotica*, Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybrida*, and River Tern *Sterna aurantia*. Suddenly, JR noticed a tern distinctly smaller than the rest flew out of the flock. He managed to photograph it [59] before it flew away. The bird had dark ear coverts extending below its eye that looked like earmuffs. Unlike the Whiskered Tern, it had a long, slender black bill, shorter legs, and a different head pattern. It also had black shoulder patches, underwing coverts, and varying amounts of black on the body. It was later identified as a moulting White-winged Tern using various field guides (Grewal et al. 2002; Grimmer et al. 2011; Rasmussen & Anderson 2012). Subsequently, the sighting was submitted to eBird (Rebello 2020).



59. White-winged Tern, Maina-Curtorim wetlands.

Justino Rebello

Table 1 indicates that all sightings from 1993 to 2003 were recorded in the North Goa District. Thereafter, no sightings were reported for 15 years until the record reported in this work, which is the only sighting from the South Goa District. The sightings in 2024 were again in the North Goa District. The sighting locations in both the districts of Goa have been plotted on Fig. 1, and the month-wise distribution of sightings is shown in Table 3.

Table 1. Chronological records of White-winged tern from Goa (NG: North Goa District; SG: South Goa District; S: Sight record; P: Photographic record)

Sr. No.	Date	Max	Plumage	Observed by	Location	Type	References
1	21 March 1993	1	Unknown	Paul Willoughby & Mark Newsome	Mandovi river near Old Goa, NG	S	Willoughby (1996), Newsome M., <i>in litt.</i> , e-mail dated 14 July 2024
2	1996	1	Unknown	Peter Harris	Candolim, NG	S	Harris (1996)
3	06 February 1998	1	An adult in winter plumage	Paul Holt	Carambolim and paddies from the neighboring causeway, NG	S	Holt (1998)
4	18 March 1998	1	Possibly the same bird seen on 06 February 1998	Spalding	Carambolim, NG	S	Lainer (2004b)
5	18 August 1998	1	Molting from summer to winter plumage	Frost, Manville & Heinz Lainer	Morjim Beach, Pernem, NG or Navelim, Divar Island, NG (see Table 2, Row 3)	S	Lainer (2004a,b)
6	13 September 1999	3	One in identical plumage as seen on 18 August 1998, and two in first summer or adult winter plumage	D' Souza, Frost, & Heinz Lainer (see Table 2, Row 5)	Navelim, Divar Island, NG	S	Lainer (2004a,b)
7	17 September 1999	5	Two adults in moult and three first summer juveniles	Heinz Lainer (see Table 2, Row 5)	Navelim, Divar Island, NG (see Table 2, Row 4)	S	Lainer (2004a,b)
8	03 October 1999	1	Breeding	Heinz Lainer (see Table 2, Row 5)	Navelim, Divar Island, NG	S	Lainer (2004a,b)
9	18 November 1999	29	Unknown	Heinz Lainer	Seabird Watch, Anjuna, NG	S	Pittie (1999)
10	28 November 2000	1	First winter	Mark Newsome	Morjim Beach, Pernem, NG	S	Newsome (2000)
11	26 August 2002	1	Molting adult	Mark Newsome and Lloyd Fernandes	Divar Island, NG	S	Newsome (2002)
12	09 September 2003	6+	Unknown	Anand Prasad	Chapora Estuary, NG	S	Prasad (2004)
13	28 September 2003	3	Unknown	Anand Prasad	Chapora Estuary, NG	S	Prasad (2004)
14	29 September 2003	9	Unknown	Anand Prasad	Chapora Estuary, NG	S	Prasad (2004)
15	04 October 2003	1+	Unknown	Anand Prasad	Chapora Estuary, NG	S	Prasad (2004)
16	05 October 2003	1	Unknown	Anand Prasad	Chapora Estuary, NG	S	Prasad (2004)
17	09 October 2003	1+	Unknown	Anand Prasad	Chapora Estuary, NG	S	Prasad (2004)
18	11 October 2003	1	Unknown	Anand Prasad	Chapora Estuary, NG	S	Prasad (2004)
19	13 October 2003	6	Unknown	Anand Prasad	Chapora Estuary, NG	S	Prasad (2004)
20	21 October 2003	11	Unknown	Anand Prasad	Chapora Estuary, NG	S	Prasad (2004)
21	14 July 2020	1	Molting into winter plumage	Justino Rebello	Maina-Curtorim wetlands, SG	P	This work
22	10 September 2021	1	Non-breeding	Siddharth Srinivasan, Deepti Bajaj	Agassaim mudflats, NG	P	Srinivasan (2021)
23	09 October 2022	1	First winter	Rahul Pereira, Lyndon Andrade, Elmo Gomes	Agassaim mudflats, NG	P	Pereira (2022)
24	15 September 2024	1	2 nd summer plumage	Savio Fonseca	Neura Wetlands, NG	P	Fonseca (2024)
25	21 September 2024	1	Juvenile	Sagar Naik & Jalmesh Karapurkar	Agassaim mudflats, NG	P	Naik (2024)
26	23 September 2024	1	Juvenile	Atharva Kasturia	Agassaim mudflats, NG	P	Kasturia (2024a)
27	27 September 2024	1	Juvenile	Atharva Kasturia	Agassaim mudflats, NG	P	Kasturia (2024b)

The following are some discrepancies we found while tabulating Table 1.

Table 2. Discrepancies in earlier publications

Sr. No.	Discrepancy
1	Willoughby (1996) only mentioned single sightings from Candolim and the Mandovi River, both of which are without exact dates. The name of the observer who sighted the bird at Candolim, Peter Harris, was not mentioned. Date and observers were clarified later in Lainer (2004a).
2	Holt (1998) stated that the observation on 06 February 1998 is only the second record for Goa, which is not the case. The sighting by Peter Harris at Candolim in 1996 (Harris 1996; Prasad 2005) is the second record for Goa.
3	Lainer (in Pittie 1998) stated that a White-winged Tern was sighted on 18 August 1998 by Heinz Lainer at the mouth of the Chapora River. Later, Lainer (2004a) stated that the location for the same sighting is Morjim (Pernem), whereas Lainer (2004b) stated the location as Navelim, Divar Island, in the inland estuary of the Mandovi River. So, a single sighting has been attributed to three locations in published literature.

Table 2. Discrepancies in earlier publications

Sr. No.	Discrepancy
4	Lainer (in Pittie 1999) mentioned the sighting of five (two adults, three juveniles) on 17 September 1999 at the Mandovi River estuary. Later, Lainer (2004a) mentioned "Up to 5 birds in various stages of moult and in first summer plumage frequented mudflats on Divar Island between mid-September and the first week of October". It does not mention whether these sightings are from 1998 or 1999. Later, Pittie et al. (2005) stated that Lainer's sightings were between August and September 1998. The above contradictions are settled in Lainer (2004b), which states that the sightings were in Divar Island, one from August 1998, two from September 1999, and one from October 1999 (Table 1, rows 5 to 8).
5	Lainer (2004a) mentioned that the observers of the sightings in Table 1, rows 5 to 8 (referred to in discrepancy 4 above) are Lainer, Frost, and Manville. However, Lainer (2004b) stated that the observers were Lainer, Frost, and Harvey D'Souza.
6	Baidya & Bhagat (2018) wrongly stated that Newsome had three reports from Divar Island in August 2002. Instead, the three sightings were from March 1993, November 2000, and August 2002 from the Mandovi River, Morjim Beach, and Divar Island, respectively. (Table 1, rows 1, 10, 11).

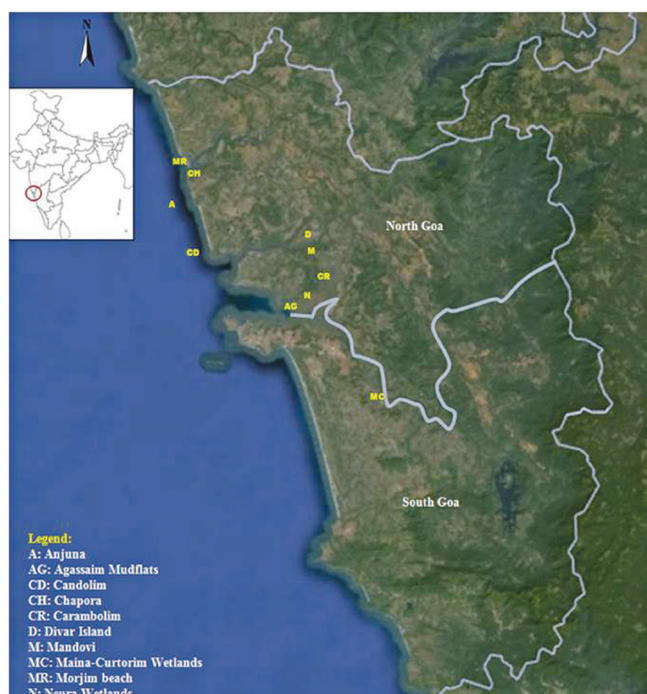


Fig. 1. Location of White-winged Tern sightings in Goa.

Table 3. Month-wise records of White-winged Tern in Goa

January	0	May	0	September	10
February	1	June	0	October	08
March	2	July	1	November	02
April	0	August	2	December	0

Notably, most sightings are in September and October, which are autumn migration months, and there are no confirmed sightings in January, April, May, June, and December (Table 3). As a scarce migrant, gaps in sightings are expected. In December and January, the birds that moved through during autumn are expected to be wintering further south, while from April to June, they are primarily on breeding grounds further north. Additionally, past observations may have overlooked the species among other tern flocks. This review suggests it is a rare passage migrant in Goa, moving to and from wintering grounds further south before and after breeding. It should be noted that historically, observer effort in Goa was limited, with most visiting birdwatchers present between November and March, when the species had already migrated south. Recent interest and broader year-round coverage

by resident ornithologists are improving documentation, likely leading to more recorded sightings.

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Recent records of Eurasian Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus* from the northeastern coast of India

The Eurasian Oystercatcher *Haematopus ostralegus*, an IUCN Near Threatened wader, breeds along the coasts and offshore islands of the Palearctic, the Middle East, Central Asia, western and far eastern Russia, and adjacent areas of China (BirdLife International 2024). It winters on the coasts of Africa, Arabia, India, China, Hong Kong, and South Korea (Hockey et al. 2020). Rasmussen & Anderton (2012), who relied primarily on historical records and museum collections from the Indian Subcontinent, noted that these birds are regular along the coast of Pakistan but irregular along both the western and eastern coasts of India. However, the updated status in the checklist of Indian birds, supported by eBird data, indicates that they are fairly regular winter visitors along the western Indian coast from Gujarat to Kerala (eBird 2024; Praveen 2025). Historically, this species has been considered to be rarer on the eastern coast than the western coast of the Indian Subcontinent (Ali & Ripley 1980; Santharam 1982; Balachandran 1995). In India, it is currently believed to be a common winter visitor along certain stretches of the eastern coast, ranging from Tuticorin in Tamil Nadu to Kakinada in Andhra Pradesh (Praveen 2025). There have been numerous recent observations along the eastern coast of India, particularly from the beaches and backwaters of Tamil Nadu, most notably near Point Calimere and Pulicat Lake (eBird 2024). Additional recent records exist from Andhra Pradesh, around the mouths of the Godavari and Penna rivers, where flocks of up to 16 individuals have been reported (Ravindranath 2023). In contrast, records from further north, along the eastern coast, specifically in Odisha and West Bengal, remain notably scarce (Praveen 2025).

An avifaunal survey (Gopi & Pandav 2007) conducted in the coastal habitats of Bhitarkanika, the second largest mangrove forest along the coast of India, identified the Eurasian Oystercatcher as a common species. However, a general faunal survey (Behera et al. 2021) in the nearby Gahirmatha Wildlife Sanctuary considers this species to be rare there. There also exist a few photographs of the Eurasian Oystercatcher from this area and further east, within the estuary of the Subarnarekha River (Bandi 2014; Chand 2023). This species is considered vagrant in Southeast Asia, with sparse records from the Malay Peninsula and Archipelago (Mann 2008; Putra et al. 2018; Chowdhury 2020; Robson 2020).

During a routine shorebird survey in the Sunderban Biosphere Reserve on 28 January 2023, we, MS, AS, and SM, found a solitary Eurasian Oystercatcher [60] among a group of Eurasian Curlew *Numenius arquata*. All the birds were standing in shallow tidal water on a sandflat at the eastern side of Lothian Island, South 24 Parganas, West Bengal (21.652°N, 88.349°E).

The observation was made at approximately 1330 h, under clear and sunny conditions, as the rising tide gradually submerged the sandflat's edges. SM approached the bird to capture close-up photographs, while AS and MS observed it with binoculars and a spotting scope. SM managed to photograph the individual, an adult distinguished by its red eye, unlike the drab color typically found in immatures (Hayman et al. 1991; Robson 2020). We watched the bird for about six minutes, closing the distance to c.80 m before it flew off toward the G-plot, approximately seven km southeast of Lothian Island.

Following our observation, we shared the photographs with DR, RJ, MM, and SJJ, all officials from the forest department. They assisted in tracking previous records of this species within the Sundarban Biosphere Reserve and alerted forest patrolling staff to remain vigilant for any further sightings in their jurisdiction. After our visit, this species has been reported from Gobardhanpur Beach (21.615°N, 88.405°E) within the G-Plot area on 23 February 2023 (West Bengal Rarities 2023) and from Frezarganj Beach (21.570°N, 88.243°E), near the Ganges River mouth and c.14 km southwest of Lothian Island, on 09 April 2023 (Sarkar 2023). More recently, on 31 January 2024 at approximately 1230 h, AKD photographed two adult Eurasian Oystercatchers near the same sandflat at Lothian Island where we had documented a sighting the previous year [61]. The sightings of Eurasian Oystercatchers for two consecutive years in the Indian Sundarbans, along with recent records from the coast of Orissa, raise questions about whether this species is a vagrant or a regular visitor to the northeastern coast of India. The Eurasian Oystercatcher has also been spotted inside the Sundarbans National Park and Tiger Reserve, where two adults were seen at Narantalar Char, a sandbank on the western side of the Gosaba River, on 01 December 1998 (Chatterjee 2004). One of the forest guards, who guided Prakiti Samsad's team, referred to these birds as '*gajar-thuti*' (Apurba Chakraborty pers. comm, February 2024), a Bengali term that translates to carrot-billed. It accurately describes the distinctive bill colour of the species and suggests that the Eurasian Oystercatcher may not be unfamiliar to the people of the Indian Sundarbans.



60. Eurasian Oystercatcher amongst Eurasian Curlews on 28 January 2023 at Lothian Island.



61. Eurasian Oystercatchers on 31 January 2024 at Lothian Island.

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