

although not uncommon during winters at Mount Abu, coincided with a cold wave gripping North India. The area was surveyed the following morning, and 12 individuals were spotted. They were seen perched on dry grass and shrubs. Some individuals periodically perched on wild rose hedges bordering the area and on electrical wires running across the field, before returning to forage on seeds of flattened grass in a marshy area. On 14 December 2024, the field on which they were found foraging was tilled, and the area began experiencing disturbance from farmers and tractors. However, 4-6 individuals were spotted in the area until 16 December 2024, after which the birds appeared to have moved from the area.

Discussion

In the Indian Subcontinent, the Little Bunting occurs as a winter visitor, primarily to the eastern parts of the region, from central Nepal to Arunachal Pradesh, northern Bengal, the Assam Valley, hills south of the Brahmaputra, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram, and northeast Bangladesh. It is mostly found below 1,800 m asl but can be observed at higher altitudes during passage. Several records exist in the Western Himalaya from northern Kashmir to western Nepal. It is also reported occasionally from southern West Bengal, Andaman & Nicobar Islands, and southwest Bangladesh (Rasmussen & Anderton 2012; SolB 2023; eBird 2024). There are at least seven independent reports of Little Bunting from western Peninsular India, Maharashtra, Karnataka, and Kerala (Eaton & Mathew 2016; Praveen et al. 2018; eBird 2024).

However, this species has not been mentioned from Tripura, Haryana, Rajasthan, and Punjab in published literature (Grimmett et al. 2011; Rasmussen & Anderton 2012; Vyas 2015; Kalsi et al. 2019; Kumar & Chakrabarti 2019), and we could not find any records on social media and citizen science platforms. Thus, the records from Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan, and Tripura, presented in this work, represent the first records from these states. The record from Jharkhand is the first photographic record from the state. Other than the above observations, there have been increasing sightings from Uttarakhand and southern West Bengal. In the last decade, eBird reports about 36 individuals across 13 sightings from Uttarakhand and over 50 individuals from southern West Bengal (eBird 2024). Multiple sightings from different states away from the known distribution range, especially the flock of 12 individuals in Rajasthan, coupled with repeat sightings from Tripura, Jharkhand, and Punjab, indicate a possible extension in its wintering range. Perhaps, the trend in the next few years will better indicate whether the above sightings were instances of vagrancy or a true range extension.

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The Black-throated Munia *Lonchura kelaarti vernayi* in Odisha, India

The Black-throated Munia *Lonchura kelaarti* is a small passerine bird in the family Estrildidae. It comprises three subspecies in the Indian Subcontinent: the nominate *L. k. kelaarti* occurring in Sri Lanka (Payne 2020); *L. k. vernayi* occurring in eastern India in the north-eastern Ghats of southern Odisha (historical) and north-eastern Andhra Pradesh, and a more widely distributed western subspecies *L. k. jerdoni*. The last one is sporadic and local in north-western Ghats from Mumbai region till about Goa but more regular in the Western Ghats of Karnataka and further south as well as in Biligirirangans, Servarayan, and Kolli hills in south-eastern Ghats and outcrops of Palani and Vasundhara hills

in Tamil Nadu (Praveen 2025). Dudhane (2015) reported the species from Mulshi, Pune, and (Bhagat 2015) reported it from Bhimashankar Wildlife Sanctuary, Pune. The latter marks the northernmost limit of distribution for the species known so far. The distribution is largely limited to the Western Ghats and parts of Sri Lanka (Rasmussen & Anderton 2012) with a few scattered records from the Eastern Ghats.

On 17 September 2022, at 0700 h, on a birding trip to Similipal National Park (NP), Mayurbhanj District (21.734°N, 86.360°E), Odisha; VR observed a small group of Munias perched on a tree. It was raining, but VR managed to photograph them [69, 70] which was later identified as Black-throated Munia based on the following characters; black face and throat, streaked mantle and crown, and the lack of clear white rump and underparts (Rao 2022). Out of the four Black-throated Munias, there were three adults and one juvenile perched on the branches of a tree along with five Scaly-breasted Munias *L. punctulata*.



Vipin Rao

69. Black-throated Munia showing black face and throat at Similipal NP, Odisha on 17 September 2022.

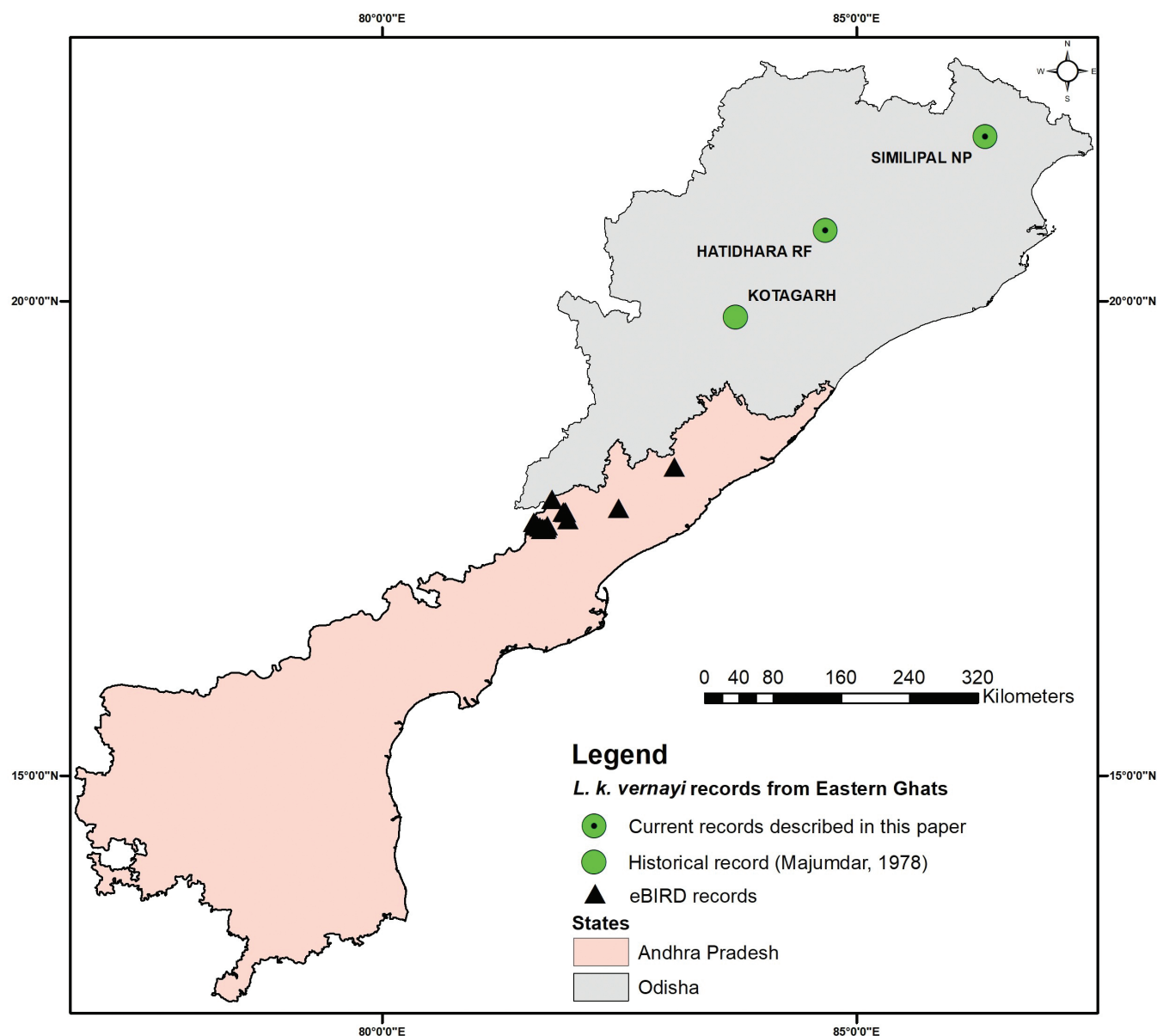


Fig. 1: Distribution of Black-throated Munia in Odisha State.



Vipin Rao

70. Black-throated Munia (on the top) showing brown rump with pinkish-white cross-like marks and light yellowish-brown upper tail-coverts at Similipal NP, Odisha on 17 September 2022.

On 05 December 2023, at 1043 h, during a field survey at Hatidhara Reserve Forest, Angul District (20.730°N, 84.670°E), Odisha, SKM observed a Black-throated Munia in a mixed flock of seven Scaly-breasted Munias [71]. The bird was identified by its characteristic black throat, brown upperparts, and pinkish-white underparts (Mohanta 2023) using reference books (Ali & Ripley 1983; Grimmett et al. 2011). The habitat of this location in the Eastern Ghats of Odisha (337 m asl) is largely northern tropical moist deciduous and dry deciduous forests.



Siddhanta Kumar Mohanta

71. Black-throated Munia from Hatidhara RF, Angul District, Odisha on 05 December 2023.

Photographs from these observations suggest that the birds belong to the *vernayi* subspecies, as indicated by the brown rump with pinkish-white cruciform marks, and light yellowish-brown upper-tail coverts. Three specimens of Black-throated Munia (ZSI#33387–89) were collected by P. K. Das on 25 May

1972 from Boudhkhondmals and one specimen (ZSI# 33390) was collected by Majumdar on 22 March 1976, from Kotagarh, Phulbani District (Majumdar 1979). Though, the species has been reported from Similipal in northern Odisha before (Ramakrishna et al. 2006), this is the first time when it has been documented with supporting evidence. Hence, these records constitute the first definite reports of the Black-throated Munia from northern Odisha, and the northernmost record from the Eastern Ghats (Fig. 1).

Based on the records in eBird (Fig. 1), the current population size of the Eastern Ghats *vernayi* may be small, with patchy distribution in its range and infrequent reports. This emphasizes the need to understand its habitat and ecology across its range. The sightings of the Black-throated Munia in different forest types across Odisha suggests that its range may be more extensive than previously documented and underscores the importance of regular monitoring and further targeted surveys.

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