

due to their aerial courtship displays during monsoon (breeding season), whereas females are highly cryptic but have been found to nest typically around male display territories (pers. obsv. MU). It is possible that the male floricans followed the southwest monsoon to DNP as the area received its first heavy rainfall (~140mm) the week prior to the first sighting. Finding a suitable habitat, the males stayed for about a month and even began performing courtship displays. It is yet to be determined if environmental conditions are suitable for these birds to continue breeding activity here. This region exhibits much more arid conditions than the rest of its range. Earlier studies have shown that if rainfall is interspersed with long spells of dry and sunny days, the birds abandon their territories for better breeding sites (Vyas & Sharma 2013). However, this record of Lesser Florican from an arid area outside its known range indicates that with active habitat restoration, such opportunistic species might be able to expand their range and exploit additional suitable areas for breeding. Thus, this finding has important conservation implications in the wake of erratic rainfalls that are mediated by climate change (Ratnam et al. 2016) and the global decline of biodiversity in grassland ecosystems.

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- Shimontika Gupta, Mohib Uddin, Swapna Lawrence, Sadar, Ashish Vyas, Sutirtha Dutta
- Shimontika Gupta, Wildlife Institute of India, Dehradun, Uttarakhand, India. E-mail: shimontikagupta@gmail.com [Corresponding author] [SG]
- Mohib Uddin, Wildlife Institute of India, Dehradun, Uttarakhand, India. E-mail: mohibuddin2065@gmail.com
- Swapna Lawrence, Wildlife Institute of India, Dehradun, Uttarakhand, India. E-mail: swap.lawrence@gmail.com
- Sadar, Bustard Recovery Program, Sam, Rajasthan, India. E-mail: sadarkhan792@gmail.com
- Ashish Vyas, Divisional Forest Officer, Desert National Park, Rajasthan, India. E-mail: ashishvyas.optics@gmail.com
- Sutirtha Dutta, Wildlife Institute of India, Dehradun, Uttarakhand, India. E-mail: sutirthadutta@gmail.com

An Oriental Bay-Owl *Phodilus badius* rescued from Valmiki Tiger Reserve, West Champaran, Bihar, India

The Oriental Bay-Owl *Phodilus badius* is widely, but sparsely, distributed across South and South-east Asia (Bruce et al. 2020). It is scarce throughout the north-eastern hill states of India, the eastern Himalaya, and is a resident of semi-evergreen, and evergreen forests (Praveen 2025). It is strictly nocturnal in habits, and found in low densities. Its secretive nature had contributed to its status as one of India's little-known owls (Ali & Ripley 1987). It occurs from northern Bengal and Sikkim through Bhutan, Arunachal Pradesh, lowland Assam, and all north-eastern hill states except Manipur, where it might surely occur, but has not been reported yet (Ray et al. 2020; Praveen 2025). I document the first record of Oriental Bay-Owl from Bihar, India.

On the evening of 01 December 2022, an apparently exhausted Oriental Bay-Owl was rescued from bamboo thickets from Vijaypur Karmabari village (27.420°N, 83.909°E) on fringes of Valmiki Tiger Reserve, West Champaran District, Bihar by villagers along with the staff of Bihar Forest Department. It was subsequently released into forest after some treatment (Rarity* 2022).

The incident was published in a local newspaper in Hindi which read:

"An owl of rare variety was seen by local people in a bamboo thicket in Vijaypur Karmabari village near fringes of Valmiki Tiger Reserve as being attacked by crows. Local people rescued it and later on officials from the forest department took the bird on 01 December 2022 (same day) from Vijaypur Karmabari. It underwent treatment and was released in Valmikinagar range of Valmiki Tiger Reserve" (translated text)

The identity of the bird as to an Oriental Bay-Owl was straightforward; the image depicted in the newspaper had the characteristic white face with short crest, chestnut wings and whitish underparts. It was not an Eastern Barn Owl *Tyto javanica* or an Eastern Grass-Owl *T. longimembris*; two species that are commonly confused as this species. The bird was not identified

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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– Abhishek Sharma

C/o Prem Prakash Sharma, Harinagar Sugar Mills Ltd., Distillery Division, P.O. Harinagar, West Champaran District 845103, Bihar, India. E-mail: nitinsharmabvm19@gmail.com

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.