Savio Fonseca

273. A male Great Frigatebird from Aguada Fort.

Each year, during the southwest monsoon, sight records of small numbers of Lesser Frigatebird *F. ariel* and Great Frigatebird are reported from the shores of India (Karuthedathu et al. 2015). Strong monsoon wind blowing towards land is thought to be responsible for most of these accounts (Sashikumar et al. 2011; Rasmussen & Anderton 2012). According to eBird (2025), the Great Frigatebird has been recorded in recent years from only three states in India other than Goa: Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and West Bengal. The most records (nine) occurred in Kerala, followed by two in Tamil Nadu. West Bengal has one record. Most sightings were in June and July (four in each month), followed by May, August, October, November, and December (with one each). Historical records from Maharashtra are listed in Prasad (2003, 2006).

From Goa, there have been two sight records close to land with no photographs: a female by Heinz Lainer at Anjuna on 16 September 1990 and a juvenile by David Stanton over Anjuna-Baga on 21 August 2008 (Lainer & Alvares 2013). Additionally, a juvenile frigatebird (probably a Great Frigatebird) was reported by Prasad (2004) near Aguada Fort during a sea-watching trip on 27 October 2003. This species was added as a seabird of Goa by Baidya et al. (2017) but was excluded from the checklist of birds of Goa (Baidya & Bhagat 2018, 2024) due to a lack of confirmed documentation. Hence, the present sighting, with photographic evidence, qualifies as the first confirmed record in Goa.

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The Long-billed Pipit *Anthus similis*: Rediscovery and a case study of a lost pipit from West Bengal

A large pipit with pale brown colouring, a relatively long bill, and an extended tail was first observed on 21 December 2023 at the Dholburu Hills (23.255°N, 86.231°E; *c.*981 m asl) of Purulia district, West Bengal by SP and four others during a bird watching trip. The pipit was seen among Paddyfield Pipit *Anthus rufulus*, Tree Pipit *A. trivialis*, and Blyth's Pipit *A. godlewskii*. It was identified as a Long-billed Pipit *A. similis* based on its pale rufous underparts, long narrow buff supercilium, longer tail, and minimal upper part streaking. The last recorded sighting of this individual occurred on 11 March 2024 (Mukhopadhyay 2024) at Gojaburu Hills near Tenyasi. It was noted foraging with other pipits, primarily consuming insects and small arthropods. Sightings in the area took place regularly between 0800 hrs in the morning and 1645 hrs in the evening.

The species was observed again on 29 November 2024 at 1230 h in the same area. It was identified as a Long-billed Pipit by its similar physical traits, though this individual had heavier streaking on the upper parts. It was seen with Indian Bushlark *Plocealauda erythroptera*, Ashy-crowned Sparrow Lark *Eremopterix griseu*, and Indian Robin *Copsychus fulicatus*. The individual was sighted only once for a few hours.

The individual observed on 21 December 2023 displayed upperparts largely grey and free of significant streaking, while the underparts showed uniform rufous tones. Overall, the bird appeared pale brown, with a lightly streaked head and an unstreaked back **[276]**. A narrow, elongated buff supercilium and a distinct black loral stripe were evident **[274]**. The throat appeared faintly white, and the ear-coverts were more rufous than the surrounding plumage. Rufous fringes were also visible on the undertail coverts and tertials. The hind claw was distinctly decurved **[275]**. These features collectively indicated that the bird was likely of the *jerdoni* subspecies, giving it a notably thrush-like appearance.

In contrast, the individual recorded on 29 November 2024 exhibited even stronger diagnostic features of the *jerdoni* subspecies. Its underparts were markedly more rufous than those of the 2023 bird, and the breast showed more pronounced streaking. The whitish throat was clearer, and both the buff supercilium and black loral stripe were more prominent **[277]**. This bird also possessed rufous ear-coverts and a faint but visible malar stripe.

Arka Karmakar

274. Long-billed Pipit, photographed on 25 December 2023.

Arka Karmakar

275. Long-billed Pipit photographed on 25 December 2023.

Subhra Pakhira

276. Long-billed Pipit photographed by Rajib Chakraborty on 25 December 2023.

Subhra Pakhira

277. Long-billed Pipit photographed by Arun Goswami on 29 November 2024.

The Long-billed Pipit has been frequently reported in previous ornithological records from the state of West Bengal. Earlier documented occurrences available to the authors are summarized in Table 1.

The sightings reported here are the easternmost records of Long-billed Pipit from India in recent years. Historically, there are more records from eastern patches of West Bengal, but recent trends have indicated that it is largely a winter migrant to the western and central parts of the country (SoIB 2023). The easternmost record of Long-billed Pipit in the Indian subcontinent lies to the east of this record at Premtoli (24.230°N, 88.241°E) in Rajshahi Bibhag, Bangladesh preceding this record on 23 February 2022 (Anam 2022). In India, the previous easternmost record is on 13 January 2019 from Mohrenga (21.416°N, 81.882°E), Chhattisgarh (Verma 2019) while one has been sighted in Pusu Hills (23.320°N, 85.164°E), Jharkhand on 2 March 2025 (Saquib 2025). The sighting from 2023 is the first record in 54 years from the state of West Bengal after the record from Anderson Weir in 1969. The 2023 and 2024 records are also the only photographic evidence of the species from the state. Few of the historical records have mentioned about the presence of photographs but there are no records of those photographs being published.

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Table 1. Historical records of Long-billed Pipit from West Bengal

Place	Reference	Date	Remarks
Erstwhile Jalpaiguri District of Bengal Presidency	Inglis et al. (2020)	NA	Identified as species number 844 and note as being recorded as far as Sikkim Terai.
Shore of Panchet Reservoir	Gauntlett (1985)	February 1968	Almost unmarked pipit lacking the dark row of covert spots unlike Tawny Pipit. Photograph taken but not published.
Anderson Weir near Durgapur Barrage	Gauntlett (1985)	19 February 1969	Had the same identifying features as the individual of February 1968. Photograph taken but not published. Anderson Weir at present, is a fallow stretch of land on the eastern bank of the Durgapur Barrage according to the sketch map of the Durgapur area provided in the book. That particular name does not exist anymore.
Northern Bengal	Ali & Ripley (1998)	NA	The subspecies *jerdoni* is mentioned as a winter migrant to the eastern part of the country including present day West Bengal.
Northern West Bengal	Home (1973)	NA	NA

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Observation of facial lesions in an Oriental Turtle Dove *Streptopelia orientalis*

An adult *Oriental Turtle Dove Streptopelia orientalis* was observed with noticeable facial lesions on 17 February 2025 during a routine avifaunal survey at Govindgarh Dam (26.430°N, 74.377°E), Ajmer, the site of the Luni River's origin in Rajasthan. The individual was perched on a wire near farmlands and showed no abnormal behavior. However, visible abnormalities around the cere and beak raised suspicion of a possible disease condition.

Close-up photographs **[278]** revealed prominent, crusted nodules on the upper and lower mandibles and cere. The morphology of these lesions suggests a cutaneous manifestation of avian pox, an infection caused by the *Avipoxvirus*. This virus affects numerous avian taxa worldwide (Williams et al. 2021), typically producing proliferative sores on unfeathered skin regions.

Rounak Choudhary

278. Oriental Turtle Dove displaying raised, crusted lesions on the mandible and cere.

Although avian pox remains the most probable diagnosis based on external characteristics, other potential causes should be considered. Trichomoniasis, caused by *Trichomonas gallinae*, produces caseous lesions in the crop and oral cavity that may extend externally to the beak (Stabler 1954). Ectoparasitic infections caused by *Knemidocoptes* mites can also lead to crusty growth around the beak, although these are usually accompanied by generalized skin thickening (Wade 2006). Neoplastic growth, while rare in wild birds, cannot be completely excluded (Zehnder et al. 2016). Based on the lesion's appearance and location, avian pox remains the most plausible cause, followed by trichomoniasis or mite infestation. Nevertheless, the precise etiology remains uncertain in the absence of clinical examination or histopathological confirmation.

Cutaneous avian pox lesions have previously been recorded in Rock Pigeon *Columba livia* (Hibl et al. 2019), Mourning Dove *Zenaida macroura* (Pledger 2005), and Speckled Pigeon *Columba guinea* (Bwala et al. 2015). Such lesions are typically wart-like and occur in unfeathered areas including the eyelids, cere, legs, and perioral regions. In India, *Avipoxvirus* infection has been reported in several species of wild birds (Pawar et al. 2011). Transmission of avian pox occurs both through direct contact between birds and via mechanical vectors, notably mosquitoes (Greenacre 2005).

This observation may represent an isolated incident. However, consistent monitoring of visible abnormalities in free-ranging bird populations, supplemented by citizen science initiatives that screen publicly shared photographs for disease symptoms, could serve as an effective early-warning system for tracking disease dynamics in avifauna, particularly in regions where wildlife increasingly interfaces with human-altered landscapes.

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