

## Correspondence

### The White-faced Plover *Anarhynchus dealbatus* in Andaman & Nicobar Islands, India

On 21 October 2025, at 1515 h, while birding near a forest camp site at Galathea (6.820°N, 93.864°E) in the Great Nicobar Island, PS & AF first observed and photographed a distant plover which on first impression was paler and more whitish compared to a nearby Tibetan Sand-Plover *Anarhynchus atrifrons*. They showed the image to SG and his group photographing Nicobar Megapode *Megapodius nicobariensis* nearby and decided to get a better look at the individual to rule out any possibility of a Malaysian Plover *A. peronii* or a White-faced Plover *A. dealbatus* due to Great Nicobar Island's proximity to the Malay Peninsula. Two birds were seen feeding together, both with prominent white collar but with one individual standing in behind had much paler legs and appearance than the bird in the front. Photographs of both birds were taken for comparison. One bird fit the description of a Kentish Plover *A. alexandrinus*, a common wintering species in the Andaman & Nicobar Islands. We scrutinized the second individual with paler appearance and transmitted the images to Dave Bakewell and James Eaton, experts on Southeast Asian birds of the Malay Peninsula.

The second bird was later identified, from photographs, as a White-faced Plover, a species that had been reported once previous from the Andaman Islands though with insufficient details and no published photographs (Bhopale 2010). We were lucky to have a side-by-side comparison between the two species and the following details could be noted [240].

1. Though not exactly side by side in position, the bill of the White-faced Plover standing behind is slightly thicker and has a more triangular tip than the Kentish Plover standing in the front [240, 241].
2. The White-faced Plover has a broader white nuchal collar than the Kentish Plover [240].
3. The White-faced Plover has a shorter lateral breast patch; the Kentish Plover here clearly shows a longer and thinner breast patch [240].
4. The brown portion under the eye is darker in the Kentish Plover, almost with the same intensity as the brown in rest of its head. However, in the White-face Plover, the brown seems to smudge and grade into the pure white under it. Though it is still the same brown colouration of the crown, it is paler than the brown behind its eye [240].
5. The White-faced Plover has more pale or whiter fringes to the scapulars and coverts compared to the Kentish Plover [240, 242].
6. Legs appear of White-faced Plover appear paler than the Kentish Plover [240, 242].

The combination of the overall paleness of the upperparts, the contrast between the feather centres and edges of the upperpart feathers, the short lateral breast patches, the greater amount of white on the head (frons, nuchal collar, more restricted brown on the ear coverts) as well as the differences in the bare part proportions and colours helps us conclude this as a White-faced Plover. It is probably a first-winter bird based on the white fringes to scapulars and coverts.



240. Kentish Plover in the front and White-faced Plover at the back. Notice the overall paleness and wider nuchal collar of the bird at the back.



241. White-faced Plover showing the white fringes to scapulars and coverts and the thicker bill.



242. White-faced Plover showing the paler legs.

All photos: Shaktivel G

The White-faced Plover is a scarce winter migrant from the southern coasts of China and northern Vietnam down through eastern Vietnam and into Sumatra favour coastal sandy beaches and mudflats (Limparungpatthanakij & Pyle 2023). There is one previous record of White-faced Plover from South Asia from the sandbar of Smith and Rose Islands, North Andamans on 18 March 2010 (Bhopale 2010). Though the note indicates an identification confirmation from Peter Kennerley, it was not included in the checklist of India or South Asia due to insufficient field notes and non-existence of a published photograph (Praveen et al. 2016). We obtained a copy of the available photograph from Nikhil Bhopale (Praveen J., pers. comm. 26 November 2025), consulted Dave Bakewell with this photograph, and he agreed with the identification as to a male White-faced Plover based on the visible features on this single photograph.

1. The crown appears quite bright orange-chestnut. Given this and the blackness of the lateral breast patch, we expect a Kentish Plover to show blacker on the ear

coverts than this bird does. The very restricted and buff colouration on the ear coverts fits White-faced.

2. The broad, white supercilium fits a White-faced Plover.
3. The lateral breast patch appears dark although it is hard to determine its length.
4. The upperparts appear rather pale sandy brown and there is a pronounced whiter area on the outer median and greater coverts. This fits White-faced Plover and would be very odd in a Kentish Plover
5. The wings are long and pointed and the legs appear not to extend beyond the tail. This rules out Malaysian Plover.
6. The legs appear pale pinkish.

We thank Dave Bakewell for commenting on all photographs and providing useful identification features used in this manuscript. We thank Praveen J for providing the details of the 2010 photograph.

## References

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## A White-throated Robin *Irania gutturalis* from Karachi, Pakistan: An addition to the birds of the Indian Subcontinent

Indian Subcontinent is a rich avifaunal region in South Asia with a total of 1,452 documented species of birds (Praveen et al. 2025). Each year, the growing birding community, hobbyist bird photographers, and ornithologists keep adding new verifiable species through well-documented records with supporting evidence. Generally, these previously unreported species are found in their natural habitat outside their known distribution range. Every year, some five billion land birds from almost 200 species that breed in Eurasia migrate, with half of them being passerines and allied species in related groups (Hahn et al. 2009). These movements involve medium- or long-range round journeys spanning thousands of kilometres (Newton 2010). Birds utilize stopovers during migration to break endurance flights, so reducing immediate and/or future fitness expenses. In ornithological literature, stopovers on ships are regarded as a rare and anecdotal occurrence. Scientific literature documenting avian occurrences on vessels is limited (Sarà et al. 2023). One such case of a single White-throated Robin *Irania gutturalis* was found stranded on a small boat on 11 April 2024 at Karachi Port, Sindh, Pakistan (24.817°N, 66.976°E), posted on Facebook for identification purpose. This previously undocumented species was found trapped inside a chamber of a longstanding, parked



243. Stranded White-throated Robin in the boat.



244. White-throated Robin showing the white eyebrow and orangish underparts.



245. White-throated Robin showing the characteristic white chin.